

Behrend wins AMCC, gets home court for playoffs

by Zoe Rose
contributing writer



PHOTO BY HEATHER MYERS/BEHREND BEACON

Number 30 David Hairston has become an outstanding supporting actor in Behrend's cast of talented players led by James Curren (not pictured).

Unlike their Division I counterpart at University Park, the Penn State Behrend men's basketball team is shining.

With two games left to go in the season, a home match-up against Medaille and a visit to Pitt-Greensburg, the Lions have secured first place in the Allegheny Mountain Collegiate Conference. With a bye in the first round of the Conference, Behrend will host the championship weekend games.

La Roche has clinched the No. 2 position and will host seventh seeded Penn State Altoona next Wednesday.

Claiming the No. 3 spot is Pitt-Bradford, which will wait till after Saturday's games to know who their number six opponent will be.

Last Saturday the Lions lost against La Roche (75-63) and then moved on Tuesday to snatch a win away from Carnegie Mellon (63-57).

In a 1-1 week for Behrend, the Lions started off with action at La Roche. In what was only the second conference loss for the Lions the entire season, junior James Curren again posted double-digits, scoring 21 points, and seven rebounds. Behrend stayed within striking distance until the second half, with assistance by senior point-guard Steve Merrill and Casey Ponsoll, who had 10 points a piece. David Hairston followed with nine points and nine rebounds. Even with the free-throw shooting advantage (66.7 percent), the Lions were unable to grab the win being outscored 46-29 in the second half.

The Carnegie Mellon Tartan basket-

ball team watched two Behrend Lions have stellar games lead the visitors to a 63-57 win in non-conference action. Curren hit six of 12 field goals and six of eight free throws for 18 points and dominated the boards and grabbed a game-high nine rebounds.

Tom Lulich joined in with 18 points as well off of four of six shooting from inside the perimeter and made eight of 11 free-throws.

The Tartans stayed in the game until halftime with an even score of 27. Carnegie Mellon barely out-shot the Lions from inside the arc with 41.7% over Behrend's 41.4 percent in second half action. It was a lop-sided game as the Tartans dominated three-pointers while the Lions held them back by shooting 62.5% from the line.

The Lions are now 16-7, 9-2 for 2002-2003. Curren has had an outstanding year, averaging of 17.5 points per game. He is 66.7 percent from three-point land and averages 6.9 rebounds. Holding the number two spot on the team is classmate Ponsoll with 8.2 points per game and hitting 29 of 34 free throws for 85.3%.

With an average of seeing 17.3 minutes of action per game, Hairston has proved to be a vital player with 44.3% field-goal shooting and 4.7 rebounds.

Behrend hopes to keep winning before heading into the AMCC. "The win streak was fueled by pure desire," said Hairston. "Knowing what we needed to do to accomplish our preseason goals of winning the tournaments we played in, with the AMCC regular season, with the AMCC tournament, and go to the NCAA's, pushed us to be strong during

that streak. We now have to get that back for the home stretch."

Having already beating La Roche, Pitt-Bradford, and Pitt-Greensburg, the Lions know that they're still not necessarily out of danger.

The playoff picture may be clear, but Behrend still needs to focus on finishing out the regular season strong. Then and only then, will they know that they have the absolute advantage heading into the AMCCs, and hopefully securing the championship.

Last year, the Lions headed into the tournament in roughly the same position as they are in now, but ended up watching Pitt-Bradford obtain the title.

The Lions host Medaille on Thursday then travel to face their last opponent of the season on Saturday against Pitt-Greensburg. Penn State Behrend is ready for its home stretch to the AMCCs.

Lions have one last shot at AMCC regular-season title

by Kevin Fiorenzo
staff writer

After an important conference victory against La Roche and a tough defeat at the hands of Grove City, the women's basketball team now heads to Pitt-Greensburg to play for the regular-season conference title and home-field advantage in the AMCC tournament.

On Saturday, the Lions played conference opponent La Roche. In their first meeting the Behrend squad won handily by a score of 48-36 and hoped to

have the same success this time. While the game was closer than the previous contest, the Lions were in control for much of the way and came out on top, 64-59. Leading the way for Behrend was guard Carly Cochran with 19 points, and forward Amber Krumpke, who added 13 points. The win raised their record to 13-10 overall, and 9-2 in the AMCC, keeping them in second place behind Pitt-Greensburg.

Coach Roz Fornari said that some of the keys to the game were, "defensive hustle, our bench contributing in key times during the game, and execution."

Next up for the Lions was a home game Monday

against out-of-conference opponent Grove City College. The game was tight throughout and the Behrend squad went into the half with a 25-23 lead.

After the intermission, the game continued to be hotly contested. Towards the end, though, Grove City began to pull away and outscored Behrend 41-31 in the second half. Thanks to their superior second half play, Grove City got the win by a score 56-54. The Behrend squad felt lack of execution at the end of the game that did them in.

"We played well most of the game. It came down to who made their shots at the end and they were able to and we didn't," said Fornari.

The loss dropped their record to 13-11, but didn't affect their conference record. The Lions are now left with one final game against Pitt-Greensburg. The winner of the match up will win the regular-season conference title and earn the right to host the AMCC tournament, which will be played from Feb 28-March 1. The Lions go into the game as underdogs, but they won their previous against them and are feeling confident.

"Greensburg is a balanced scoring team," said Fornari. "They like to push the ball up the floor and score in transition. They are not a great half court team. The last game we made them play in the half court and execute every time down the floor. That will be the way we play them on Saturday."

Though a lot is riding on the game for both teams, Fornari downplayed the importance of home-court advantage.

"Home court advantage is an opportunity to play in a familiar environment and in front of family and friends. It certainly doesn't dictate the outcome of the game. It is a matter of who comes to play on a particular day/night," she said.

The Behrend women have to win the game against Pitt-Greensburg to get home-court advantage, but they know what the keys to their success are.

"We have a lot of individual ability. Our team is young and continues to adjust to each other. I think our biggest strength is our defense. We play good defense and work hard at it every day. We continue improving each game and practice."

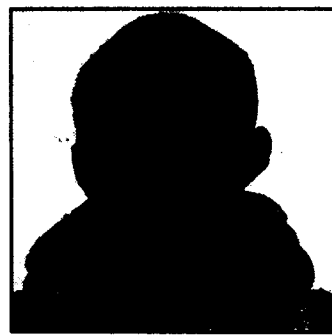


PHOTO BY JEFF HANKEY/BEHREND BEACON

Carly Cochran has turned it up at just the right time scoring 15 against Grove City.

Housing
and
Food Service
Athlete
of the Week
PENNSTATE
Erie

Isiah
Meek



SPORT: Men's
Indoor Track & Field
CLASS: Sophomore
DATE: Feb. 17

Isiah Meek (Wayne/
Wayne) was named
this week's Beacon/
Housing and Food
Athlete of the week.

At Slippery Rock
University Invitational
this past Saturday,
Meek finished second
in the 55 meter
hurdles race in 8.02.

His performance
enabled him to qualify
for the ECAC Champi-
onships and estab-
lished a new Behrend
record. Meek has
placed first or second
in all four indoor
meets this season.

Next up for the blue
and white will be
another indoor meet
at Mt. Union on Satur-
day, February 22.

Housing and Food
Service Athlete of
the Week is selected
by the Sports Infor-
mation Staff.