

The Behrend Beacon

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Six in a row

Lions offense powering an impressive streak



PHOTO BY HEATHER MYERS/BEHREND BEACON

Keith Lepionka has been a major part of the Lions recent success hitting two home runs in one day.

by Kevin Fiorenza
staff writer

While pitching has been a strength for the baseball team all year, it was the team's powerful bats that guided it to victory this past week.

The team played three

doubleheaders against Lake Erie, Mount Aloysius, and Pitt Bradford. On Friday, the Lions traveled to Lake Erie College to play their much delayed double bill. In the first game, Behrend jumped out to an early 2-0 lead in the first inning.

The Lions never lost the lead whie

Ryan Seyler pitched a complete game giving up only three runs and eight hits. He also accumulated four strikeouts and two walks.

In the second game, the Lions' offense exploded for 18 runs. The main catalyst for Behrend's offensive production was outfielder Mitch Reckner.

He pounded three home runs, one of which was a grand slam. Reckner now leads the AMCC in batting average (.475), hits (48), RBIs (38), and triples (5). For his work, he was named the AMCC and ECAC player of the week.

Second baseman Tony Azzato also went yard in the game.

Pitcher Jason Shaffer got the win for Behrend with five innings of work to go with one hit, one run, one walk, and five strikeouts. Steve Pflugh finished the job with two innings pitched, three hits, one run, and five strikeouts.

The next day the Lions returned home for a doubleheader against Mount Aloysius. In the first game, Behrend's lineup picked up where it left off the day before by scoring at least one run in every inning.

Mount Aloysius offense didn't get rolling until the last three innings, but it wasn't enough to overcome the Lions. The final score was 13-7 in favor of Behrend.

As in the games against Lake Erie, Behrend's offense was led by Reckner and Azzato. Reckner had two triples and Azzato hit another home run. The pitching also continued to be solid.

Matt Szymanski got the win after pitching for five innings with 10 hits, four runs, one walk, and two strikeouts. Pflugh finished the job again with two innings, five hits, three runs, two

walks, and one strikeout.

The next game exhibited more of the same for Behrend. The Lions scored five runs in the first inning and didn't let up. The final score was a dominant 13-1 victory. The Lions' offense was led by Reckner, with a homerun, and Adam Best and Keith Lepionka, who each had a triple.

Chad Hein picked up the victory after pitching for five innings with six hits, three strikeouts, and no runs. Ray De Vaul finished it off with two innings and two hits, one run, and four strikeouts.

The Lions next game was on Tuesday against conference rival Pitt-Bradford. Once again, Behrend's pitching and hitting strengths were on display. In the fourth inning, Behrend was ahead 4-2 when it exploded for 10 runs over the next two innings.

This explosion put the game out of reach, even after a late rally from Pitt-Bradford. In the end, the Lions won by a commanding 13-5 score.

The star of the game was clearly first baseman Keith Lepionka, who hit for the cycle. Pitching was also key, as Seyler got another complete game win with eight hits, five runs, two walks, and one strikeout.

Coach Paul Benim said, "That's what seniors are supposed to do and they carried us in very important league games."

The second game was a more highly contested match up. Behrend led the entire game, but Bradford was never far behind. In the top of the seventh, it looked as though Bradford would make its move.

The score was 8-4 and Bradford had the tying run at bat, but couldn't get

the job done. They accumulated two more runs for a final score of 8-6 in favor of Behrend.

Once again, Lepionka led the way with his second home run of the day. Pitcher Brent Gabel also made a solid contribution. He threw for 4 2/3 innings, five hits, four runs, five walks, and four strikeouts. Shaffer finished up the game with 2 1/3 innings and three hits, two runs, and three strikeouts.

The wins on Tuesday raised Behrend's record to 21-8 overall, and more importantly, 7-2 in the AMCC, good for second place in the conference. For their efforts, the Lions also rose to No. 8 in the NCAA Mid-Atlantic Region.

Said Lepionka, "The team played excellent this past week, we are really on a roll." We are finally beginning to fire on all cylinders as a team."

The team hopes to continue its superior play throughout this week when it takes on Hilbert, La Roche, and Grove City. As they have been all season, the team's expectations are high.

"We need to beat La Roche twice and finish the doubleheader against Altoona with a win and we will host the AMCC tourney. Right now, that is tops on our list of priorities, that is our main challenge," said Lepionka.

Benim added, "I'm very pleased with our squad's team effort. It has literally taken effort for all 24 players and four coaches to get to this point. We must continue to attempt to get better every day."

Water polo earns bid to national championship despite tough finish

by Adrian Rhodes
staff writer

The women's water polo players departed campus with swimsuits in their bags, good performances in their minds, and hopes for a bid to a national championship in their hearts. On April 11, the No. 11 seed Behrend's women water polo team competed in the Southern Championship at Bucknell University.

At the end of the tourney, the Lions came out with three losses and a solo win under their belts and made their dreams of the third-year team making it to a national competition a little bit more nightmarish.

The day started with a 9-3 loss to Princeton.

The Lions continued their trend of scoring three points in their game against Gannon. Gannon managed to defeat Behrend with a final score of 13-3, bring the Lions' overall record to 5-17.

With the lessons learned from the losses inflicted by Princeton and Gannon earlier in the day, the Lions' fighting spirit won out in the war against rival Grove City, seeded ninth in the tournament. The game was close, but in the end Behrend held strong and finished with a 7-6 win over the Lady Wolverines.

Sophomore Christine Williams scored five of the Lions' seven goals.

In their final game, the Lions lost a battle with rival Washington & Jefferson, ends the chance for an automatic bid to the national tournament. Washington & Jefferson nearly doubles up Behrend, 13-7.

The Lions' season record moved to 6-18. Season play continues on Tuesday, with a game against Grove City at 5:15 p.m. and Gannon at 9 p.m.

If the Lions get approval from athletic director Brian Streeter, the women will be California bound. Behrend received an open bid from the Collegiate Water Polo Association to compete in the national championship, held in California May 1-4.

Despite slipping further down the AMCC standings, Lions still fighting for wins



PHOTO BY HEATHER MYERS/BEHREND BEACON
Captain Cheryl Peterson lays it all out for a hard earned run.

by Jennifer Osborne
contributing writer

Willie Stargell said it perfectly: "People like us are afraid to leave ball. What else is there to do?"

This year has been a growing experience for the Lions softball team, which stands at 5-21 overall.

"We're a young team, and we'll grow through our mistakes. I guarantee next year we are one of the biggest threats in the AMCC," right-fielder Jacquie Bonneau said. "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger."

The future looks bright for the Lions, who devastated Fredonia in a seventh inning win on

Tuesday. They went into the seventh inning down 7-4 and pulled it together by taking advantage of several Fredonia errors, timely hits, and lot of heart. The final score of 8-7 was a team effort with almost the whole lineup batting around.

Leacy Sauer had an amazing game, going three for four with six putouts. Emily Allen had two RBIs and Lindsey Stankus hit a double. Freshman pitcher Kim Raff, freshman pitcher, contributed three strikeouts and in the next few years will be a real threat to AMCC play.

The Lady Lions will be home against Hilbert today, play in Grove City on April 22, and at Lake Erie on April 23.

For many Lion softball players who will graduate or move on after this year, last week

was when they had everything to prove to the AMCC and to themselves. To move onto the AMCC tournament, which takes the top four placed seeds, Behrend had to beat Frostburg.

The goal was not reached and the team dropped to 2-8 in the AMCC. Although the Lions did not pull out any wins this week, they walked off the field with their heads held high after setting new goals for the rest of the season.

"We grew as a team throughout the season, and have kept positive attitudes, but it's just so hard losing when we are such a good team and we all know that," said outfielder Roberta Baker.

On Thursday, the team lost to Allegheny 9-0 and 5-2. The Lions' Bonneau brightened the second game with two doubles as she went two for three and drove in a run. Brandy Polinick also came out of the game one for two.

Coach Kellie Diehl knows the confidence level isn't where it should be.

"I always try to tell them to have confidence that if you have done a little thing well, you can do a bigger thing well, too," said Diehl.

The Lions felt the pressure going into Saturday's game against Frostburg as it competed for the fourth place playoff seed. As they led most of the first game, Jill Woodriddle who went two for three, and Erika Mack, two for two, kept the Lions in the ballgame until Frostburg's hits connected and Behrend fell 7-3.

Becky Corbin pitched outstanding with five strikeouts, three including in one inning. The Lions could not get the momentum back and took a 7-1 defeat at the hands of the now fourth place seed.

"We may be struggling on the field this year, but overall we have a very cohesive team that's positive with one another all the time," Diehl said.

"Even when we are down, our team manages to pick each other up."

That is just what the Behrend Lions did after the game. Captain Cheryl Peterson set a new goal for herself and the team on Saturday. The Lions plan to finish off the season adding 10 more wins to their record, two in AMCC play.