

On Deck Behrend Athletic Events

Friday
Women's Basketball
AMCC Tournament
1 p.m.

Men's Basketball
AMCC Tournament
6 p.m.

Saturday
Men's and Women's
Indoor Track & Field
@ Mount Union
9 a.m.

Men's Tennis vs.
Waynesburg
1 p.m.

Men's and Women's
Swimming
@ ECAC
TBD

Women's Basketball
AMCC Tournament
Championships
1 p.m.

Men's Basketball
AMCC Tournament
Championships
3 p.m.

Thursday
Men's and Women's
Swimming
@ ECAC
TBD

Club Schedule

Saturday
Club Volleyball
vs. John Carroll
noon

Sunday
Club Volleyball
@ Case Western
11 a.m.

Intramurals Schedule

COED 4 vs. 4
Basketball
Play begins March 17

Men's, Women's
and COED Volleyball
Entry Deadline
March 5

Men's tennis splits double header

by Amy Frizzell
sports editor

On Saturday the men's tennis team traveled to Cleveland for its first match and double header of the season. After falling to Baldwin Wallace 8-1, the Lions downed Thomas More with a score of 8-1.

"We knew it was going to be a hard match but we just had to try our hardest," said sophomore Jon Barber of the team's expectations going into the Baldwin match.

"They are an experienced team who field a few regionally ranked players."

Sophomore John Marini and junior Ryan Deimel teamed up at first doubles against the Yellow Jackets' regionally ranked doubles team. Marini and Deimel walked away with the only win for the Lions at 8-5.

"It was the best match I've seen doubles wise since I've been here," said Coach Jeff Barger of the pair's win.

The men's second and third doubles teams were not so lucky, falling at both spots. Deimel dropped his singles match, 6-2, 7-6. Following his loss was Marini losing 6-0, 6-0. Barber lost at third 6-4, 6-3.

Freshman Brian Espin fell at fourth 6-1, 6-1. sophomore Kevin Fiorenzo lost 6-1, 6-2 and completing the pattern was freshman Matt Myers, losing with a score of 6-2, 6-2.

The Lions were able to bounce back against Thomas More, allowing only one match to be lost. The team was also at an advantage because Thomas More had only five players, forcing them to forfeit a singles and doubles match. Marini suffered the team's only loss, at second singles 8-2.

Deimel and Marini teamed up for an 8-4 win, along with Barber and Espin winning 8-0. Deimel downed his opponent 8-1 at first singles.

Barber served up an ace, winning 8-0, while Espin recorded a 8-2 win. Fiorenzo finished out the winning lineup with a score of 8-2.

The team will next take on Waynesburg College on Saturday.

"I predict a pretty close match," said Barger.

"They picked up some new players so it will be a good match."

During last season the Lions rolled over Waynesburg, only dropping one match with a score of 6-1.

"The team will be harder to beat than last year considering they gained two new starters to their line-up," said Barber.

"I feel the team is still confident in

being able to come away with a win though."

The next move for the team will be a trip to Hilton Head, S.C. where they will play eight matches in six days. It will take on such teams as Emory and Henry, Mount Union, Hiram, Upper Iowa, Lake Forest, Eastern Nazarene, Vassar and Green Mountain.

During the 2003 season the team was able to start off its winning streak against Emory and Henry, a streak which also took Mount Union as a victim.

"Playing Emory and Henry and Mount Union first will be helpful," said Barger.

"It'll give us an idea of where we stand from last year."

This year the team will have to work harder to keep a streak going against Green Mountain, whose team was ranked No. 18 regionally.

Baseball looks to repeat success



Paul Benim, left, works with a member of the pitching staff. This year the baseball team hopes to repeat its success from last year as it defends its AMCC title and ECAC Southern Regional title.

by Kevin Fiorenzo
sports editor

After capturing the AMCC and ECAC Southern Region titles last season, the baseball team will open its season next week at Spring Training in Florida.

The baseball team finished last season with a 33-10 overall record and 9-3 in the AMCC. After defeating Frostburg State to claim the AMCC title, the team went on to overtake Waynesburg and win the ECAC Southern Region.

As a team, the Lions led the conference in batting average (.346) and were second in ERA and scoring, behind Frostburg State.

Though they performed at a stellar level throughout the season, it ended on a disappointing note as the team was not selected to play in the NCAA tournament.

This season, the Behrend squad will return several players from last year's championship team. Last year's AMCC player of the year, senior Adam Best, will return to his starting spot in centerfield. Best led the AMCC with a .493 batting average; he was also fifth best in Division III, and in stolen bases, with 27 pilfers. Best was also a member of the ECAC First Team.

He will be joined by fellow outfield-

ers and seniors Mitch Reckner and Tim Stafford. Reckner hit .427 last year and led the conference in RBI's, a school record 56, and triples, with seven. Stafford finished the year with a .411 BA and 53 hits.

The infield will also benefit from having some veteran experience to work with. Seniors Tyler Wiant and Tony Azzano will help the infield at third and second base, respectively. Rounding out the infield will be junior Vince Canzano at shortstop and sophomore Eddie George at first. Designated hitter duties will be taken by sophomore Shane Elzer. The backstop will be manned by senior Brad Shamitko.

Though it lost two starters in senior Ryan Seyler and freshman Brent Gabel,

Behrend's mound crew looks to continue to be one of the team's strengths. Last year's Most Improved Player, junior Jason Shaffer, finished last season with a 7-1 record and 54 strikeouts. Also returning are junior Matt Szymanski and sophomores Ray DeVaul and Chris McCartney.

Head coach Paul Benim said, "We are fortunate to have a strong group of experienced players and expect our seven seniors to set the tone with their play and positive attitudes."

Along with its returning players, the team hopes to get some added help from new players.

"We have some talented freshman and one transfer who have all added to our program," said Benim.

"Our freshman class could be one of our best recruiting classes in my tenure."

The team begins its 2004 season in Port St. Lucie, Fla., on March 7 with nine games that will hopefully improve the players and prepare them for the rest of the season. They will be playing against teams such as Manhattanville, Susquehanna, Simpson, Bethany, Rivier, Clarion, Northland and St. Scholastica.

Benim said, "We try to get just a little better every day and hopefully by year's end we have improved a great deal and can make a postseason run."

PHOTO BY LAUREN PACKER/BEHREND BEACON

Softball reloads with new coach, players

by Amy Frizzell
sports editor

The women of this year's squad are optimistic that spring will bring more than just new grass, sunshine and warm temperatures. They Lions enter this season with a new mentality and revive hopes of earning an AMCC title for the first time since 1999.

The addition of first-year head coach Stacy Pondo and eight talented freshmen have ignited a spark among the returning players.

"Coach Pondo is bringing a new perspective to the team," senior pitcher Stephanie Covert said. "She stresses fundamentals and teamwork. She's about starting small and working your way up, which is what we need with eight freshmen."

A new coach and new players just might be what the doctor ordered to help the blue and white get back to form in both conference and non conference play. The Lions posted a 4-8 conference record, 12-22 overall.

Seniors Becky Corbin, Covert and Brandy Polinick will return to lead the team to its goal to make it to the conference tournament. Last year Corbin led the team from the mound in 117 innings. She also led the team with triples.

Covert plans on returning to the pitching position after an injury kept her benched last season. Polinick will return to centerfield where she played 64 games in the last two years.

Marsh, the lone junior, will return to play infield/catcher.

With five sophomores returning, the Lions will have a lot to work with over the season. Leacy Sauer will be returning to the outfield. Also returning will be Lindsey Stankus, Kim Raff, Shelle Roberts and Jill Woodridge.

Freshmen Amy Barrett, Loriel Herist, Sandra Jaussi, Kristen Macha, Brittany Mays, Shannon Rupprecht and Bethany Slomski will provide a promising future for the team.

"Even though this year's team is very young we have a very competitive team," said Polinick. "Our hitting is a lot better than in past years and I believe that we should be one of the top teams in the AMCC."

The team will start off its season in Kissimmee, Fla., where it will compete

in the Rebel Games. During six days the Lions will play five double headers against such teams as US Coast Guard, John Carroll, Ohio Wesleyan, Hiram, Mount Union, Baldwin-Wallace, Marietta, Anderson, McKendree and Misericordia.

"I have high expectations for Florida. We should be able to come home with anywhere from eight to 10 wins," said Polinick.

"It will be good for our team to get out there on the field and compete."

Upon their return the women will travel to Bethany, host Medaille and travel again to Westminster. The Lions will then start AMCC play against Pitt-Greensburg on March 27.

The team is very positive about almost every aspect of its game this year.

"Everyone is very positive about the upcoming season and we have been working hard at practice," said Corbin. "We have a better sense of 'team chemistry' than I remember having in any of the past three years, which should help us to play better together and win some more games."

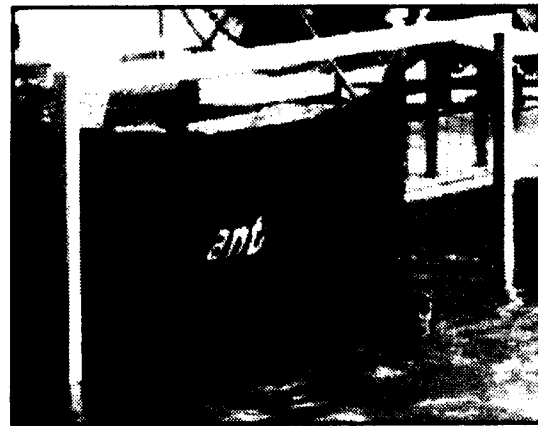
The Lions will head into their spring training games full of confidence.



Junior Charity Marsh will play a key role in the softball team's season as a versatile player.

PHOTO BY AMY FRIZZELL/BEHREND BEACON

Water polo splashes into new season



Colleen Applebaugh, above, and Jackie Slagle will fill the goalie position this season.

by Scott Soltis
assistant managing editor

The Lady Lions will have a new look this season under first year coach Joe Tristan. Tristan inherits a team that went 8-23 last season, but has some senior hunger to finish out their career on a positive

note. One of the returning seniors is center Sarah McGarvey who is very eager to start the new season with a fresh face at coach. "He (Tristan) is ten times more knowledgeable about the game compared to Heynes (the former coach)," McGarvey said. She continued to say that this would be an asset for the team's many freshmen this year.

Another senior, driver Amanda Brown, is equally excited about the change. "Overall I think the team is doing a good job adjusting to our new coach," said Brown. "He is very team oriented and involved with all of the players."

Brown and McGarvey make up all that is left from the inaugural women's water polo team of 2001. Tristan will look to

the two for leadership on the team. "Sarah has a very strong will...as a captain she's really stepping it up as a leader as well as a player," said Tristan. Brown, McGarvey, and fellow senior Tara Braden are the tri-captains that hope to lead the squad this year.

The team has six freshmen this year, but returning junior driver Samantha Cibula sees this as an asset. "We have gained two freshmen who have polo experience and the girls that have never played before that are on the team have tremendous speed and endurance," said Cibula. Overall this is a young team with seven of the 11 players on the team as underclassmen.

Aside from the youth of the team, the Lions have been plagued with injuries. Both Brown and Cibula are nursing injuries and the team lost returning player Erin Troester for the season due to a lacerated liver. The injuries to Brown and Cibula are very untimely as the team squares off

against Salem International and Washington and Jefferson on March 6 and 7 to open their season.

A final uphill struggle for the squad will be replacing key lost veterans. Both of Behrend's leading scorers from last year, Christine Williams and Hollie Stash are not back this year as well as the only goalie the team had ever known in Lauren Packer. Williams transferred from the college, while Stash and Packer voluntarily left the team, Packer to pursue her softball career at the college.

Despite several odds stacked against them the team remains optimistic. Tristan has set three goals for his team, become a top Division III team academically, make it to the Eastern Championships and get a selective bid to the DIII Collegiate National Tournament. How the Lions fare in their opening weekend will go along way to determining their ability to reach two of their coaches' goals.