

Softball warms up for season

by Ben Raymond
staff writer

The Lady Lions softball team is looking to pick up some extra bases and make some positive changes for the spring season.

With a new coach in control and what seems to be good team chemistry, good things are expected in the next couple months.

Coming off of a losing season last year with a record of 4-8 in conference action, the softball team had a different kind of mentality when they headed down to Florida over Spring Break for a number of spring training games.

"The girls have been bonding since before they went to Florida," said head coach Stacy Pondo. "One of the goals for this year is to get them to be more open and communicate better amongst themselves and the coaches."

Although the final scores of the Florida games were not in favor of the Lady Lions, it is not a fair representation of the team's abilities. Half of the games played resulted in a loss by only one run and on one occasion went in to extra innings. With closer scores and what would appear to be better attitudes on and off of the field, Pondo and her team say this should be a very positive season.

"We didn't get blown out of any game. We fought with every team we went up against. Over all we did have a good week. We went out and looked better than we have in the past two years I've been here. I see a big improvement in our team," said junior shortstop Charity Marsh. "Fundamentally we are strong and sound. And our team is sticking together. We are all there for each other on and off of the field."

Even though the girls did not post any marks in



Catcher Jill Wooldridge throws a runner out on a bunt play during the team's game against Baldwin-Wallace over Spring Break in Orlando, Fla. The team went 0-10, losing six games by just one run.

PHOTO BY LAUREN PACKER/BEHREND BEACON

their win column during their trip to Florida, they did gain plenty of experience. With a very young team consisting of seven freshmen, five sophomores one junior and three seniors, communication and teamwork are going to be the glue and nails holding the team together through the season.

Upon their return to Erie, the ladies got right to work improving on their mistakes and reinforcing their strong points. Most of the team has been literally wrapped up in practice this week.

With batting being one of its big issues, the team has been spending most of its practice in the batting cage this week.

Pondo stressed that hitters will be breaking down their swings and working on the fundamentals.

At the first practice back from Florida, the Lions picked up their gloves briefly to warm up. What followed was nearly two hours of dry swings, hitting off a tee and live pitching.

Marsh later added, "We are out to make a statement this season. We have had our problems in the past, but that's where they are staying in the past. Coaches can only get us so far, now it's our turn to step up and show the conference what we can do."

The young squad will rely on the talented freshmen class. Centerfielder Loriel Herist batted .379 during the training trip and started all 10 games. Herist was named to the AMCC "Best of the Rest" this week.

Pitcher Sandi Jaussi mastered the mound in her first collegiate start and continued her dominance of batters throughout the week. She will be looked upon to continue her brilliance throughout the AMCC season.

The Lady Lions square off at home against Medaille on Tuesday.

Tennis hits halfway mark

Ready to begin AMCC play

Sophomore Jon Barber and freshman Matt Meyer picked up a win at second doubles, 8-3. Freshman Brian Espin and senior Jeremiah Guthrie walked away with a 8-0 win at third doubles.

Deimel also provided a 6-2, 6-0 win at first singles, followed by Barber at third 6-1, 6-4. Sophomore Kevin Fiorenzo won 6-2, 6-3 as Meyer finished out the lineup with a 6-0, 6-1 win.

On Tuesday the Lions lost to Lake Forest, 2-5, in a match that could have gone either way.

Deimel and Marini took the only doubles win at first doubles, 8-3. Deimel provided another win at first singles 6-2, 6-1. Barber had the only other win for the Lions. After splitting sets (6-3, 0-6) Barber moved into a tie breaker, winning 7-6.

Behrend played its second double-header of the week on Monday against Upper Iowa and Mount Union. The Lions took a tough loss to Mount Union, 3-4 that morning.

Marini and Deimel once again provided a win at first doubles, 8-2, along with Meyer and freshman Garrett Grenek at third doubles, 8-6. Deimel and Meyer tallied up wins at first and sixth singles.

The Lions quickly rebounded that afternoon against Upper Iowa, only dropping one match. Marini and Deimel, Barber and Espin, and Meyer and Grenek swept all three doubles positions.

Deimel took first singles 6-2, 6-0; Barber took third 6-0, 6-1. Espin won at fourth 6-1, 6-0, Fiorenzo continued the pattern at fifth 6-3, 6-1 while Meyer rounded out the lineup 6-2, 6-2.

On its first day of play the team took home two wins over Emory and Henry 5-2, and Hiram 6-1. The Lions had previously beat both teams during its 2003 season, also starting off a seven match winning streak.

"We had some tough matches, I don't think our record shows how good we really are. We played some tough teams in Hilton Head," said Grenek. "There were some tough matches that could have

gone either way. We just came up short."

"We started out strong during the week. Both our mental and physical ability dropped below our standards so it affected our game," said Barber.

After rounding out the week with three straight losses, the team will have to look to rebound during practice before its next match.

"I think we've already rebounded," said Grenek. "We're just going to continue to practice hard."

The blue and white will next host Pitt-Greensburg to kick off conference play Saturday. The Lions went 2-0 against Greensburg last season beating them 9-0 both times. After losing its two top players to Westminster College, Pitt-Greensburg's lineup will be hard to predict.

"We're all definitely pretty tight after Hilton Head," said Meyer. "I think we have plenty of confidence."

Though most teams look for confidence, too much confidence in this situation might end up hurting the team.

"The team expects to win," said Marini. "Personally I'm not going in over-confident. We have to take it seriously cause it's a conference match. We can't let being over confident get in the way."

Being over-confident isn't the only thing the team has to watch for. Weather conditions play a big part in the team's play. While playing outside all week the team had a chance to get used to playing through weather conditions. This week the team will be forced the play indoors due to snow.

"It's different surfaces along with weather," said Barger of the team's transition from outdoor to indoor play. "There will be no weather conditions to play through."

"The transition will help our play," said Grenek. "We don't have to deal with a lot of natural elements. Also, as a team we play more indoors anyway."

As for the rest of the season the team sees Hilton Head as the preparation they needed to begin its race for the AMCC crown.

"I'd say the experience in Hilton Head was good," said Marini. "We played teams that are better than in our conference. I think we're prepared."

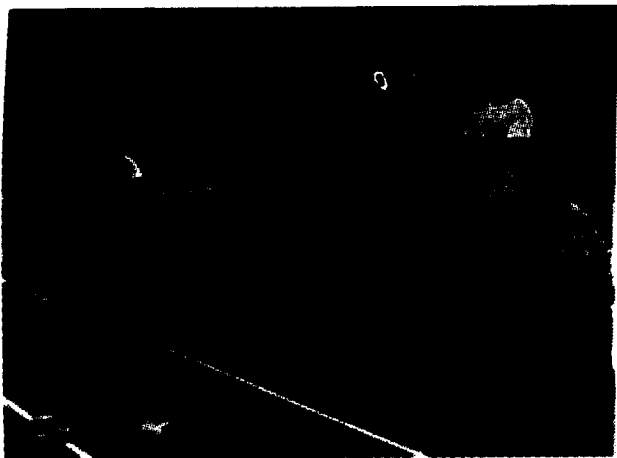


PHOTO BY AMY FRIZZELL/BEHREND BEACON

The men's tennis team (6-6) looks to start off a winning streak on Saturday against Pitt-Greensburg in its first conference match of the season.

by Amy Frizzell
sports editor

While many students took Spring Break as a chance to relax the men's tennis team opted to travel to Hilton Head, S.C. where it played nine matches in six days. After going 4-5 for the week, the Lions passed their season midpoint along with returning a record of 6-6.

"At this point in the season I'm pretty happy with 6-6," said head coach Jeff Barger.

On Friday the Lions took on Green Mountain, a 2003 Division II nationally ranked team from Vermont. The men were given a break early on due to Green Mountain not being able to field a complete team. Despite only needing two wins to take the match, the Lions were not able to pull it together, losing 6-3.

Thursday proved to be just as hard as the team dropped its third loss to Vassar, 9-0, and then its fourth to St. Scholastica, 9-0, later that day.

Behrend picked up its fourth win of the week Wednesday against Eastern Nazarene, 6-1. Junior Ryan Deimel and sophomore John Marini teamed up at first doubles for an 8-4 win.

Track opens season at Disney Relays

by Lauren Packer
editor in chief

After a week's worth of fun and sun, the men and women's track teams culminated their spring training trip at the Disney Relays. Escaping the snowstorms of Erie and taking advantage of Florida's climate, the Lions attacked the outdoor records. In all, 11 records fell in the first meet of the outdoor season.

The Disney Relays gave Behrend a chance to run events that the team does not normally run.

Even though the teams arrived on Sunday and did not race until the following weekend, the Lions used the time to get acclimated to the warmer climate.

"We aren't used to running in such heat," said runner Clayton Kirschner. "It made it a little bit easier to practice for a couple of days before going all out at the meet."

On the women's side, five relay records were shattered. The combination of Nikki Mineweaser, Marlana McNutt, Claire Manelick, Hollie Weinheimer, Jessica Sarver, Leslie Gentile, Jessica Knapp and Staci Banaszek produced the record setting times in the five relays.

Sarver, Gentile, Manelick and Knapp combined forces in the 4X800m relay and the 4X1600m relay with times of 10:05.19 and 21:49.88.

Mineweaser, Weinheimer and McNutt were three of the four runners in both the sprint medley relay and the 4X200m relay. Manelick completed the quad in the sprint medley that crossed the finish line at 4:29.52. Banaszek completed the 4X200m relay team that crossed in a time of 1:54.39.

Cross-country stars Sarver and Knapp, along with Mineweaser and Manelick, set the new record for the distance medley relay with a time of 13:01.27.

For the men, a handful of runners and a pole vaulter set new records. Donnie Hackworth vaulted 14' 5.25" to set a new Behrend record. Tim Schultheis finished the 3000m in 9:39.38.

The remaining four records belong to relay teams. Isiah Meek, Ben Nosko, Clayton Kirschner and Mike Barlett set a new sprint medley relay in 3:39.02.

The distance medley relay of Craig Davis, Hackworth, Dan Alvis and Schultheis crossed the finish line in 11:26.30. Hackworth, Ken Carpenter, Greg Hackett and Dave Masilunas finished the 4X200m relay in 1:38.96.

The last record the men set was the 4X1600m relay, with Brent Beauseigneur, Davis, Barlett and Kirschner finishing in 18:57.48.

The reason for both team's success can be attributed to better conditioning and a strong freshmen class, said Kirschner.

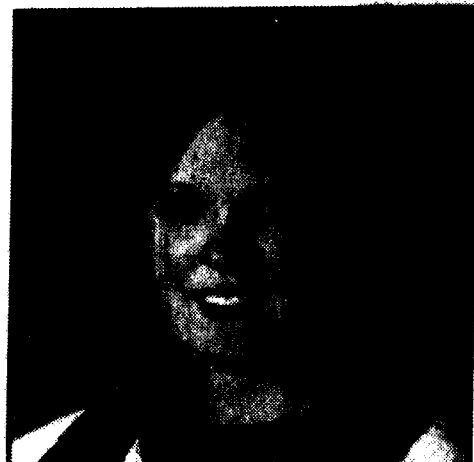
"We also have depth in each event, which helps out a lot," Kirschner said. "Everyone runs different events too. Our runners are pretty versatile."

Up next for Behrend is Division II Clarion. Kirschner believes both teams will have a good shot at winning the meet.

"We always do really well against them, even though they are in a higher division."

PENNSYLVANIA
Housing & Food Service

Athlete of the Week



TARA BRADEN

Sport: Women's Water Polo
Class: Senior
Date: March 17, 2004
During the week's loss against Hurst, Braden tallied 17 saves, including one blocked penalty shot. She stepped up for the white team which will be playing at the Behrend Invitational which will take place March 20-21 at 9 a.m. in the Jucker Center pool. Braden has accumulated 17 saves. Braden for the white team which will be playing as a defender but took over the goalie spot this season and is averaging 8.67