

## Tennis coach sets all-time wins record

by Lauren Packer  
editor in chief

Head coach Jeff Barger thought his team's win over Waynesburg on Feb. 28 was just another ordinary win. It wasn't until one of his players congratulated him on becoming the all-time winningest coach that Barger realized this win was different.

"I don't really pay attention to that type of stuff," Barger said. "I guess I get credit for the victory, but all I really do is send the players out there. They are the ones who earn the wins and losses."

Barger surpassed Herb Lauffer, who coached from 1969-77. Barger set the new record with 42 wins and currently has 47. He has 104 total wins, 64 total on the women's side. Barger already holds the all-time wins record for women's tennis.

And Barger has had his share of talented players since he came to Behrend in 1998. During his six years as head coach at Behrend, the three-time AMCC Coach of the Year has guided the women's team to three AMCC championships in five years.

From 2000 to present, Barger has produced five first-team all-conference selections on the men's side and seven on the women's side. In 2000 and 2001, Barger coached Julie Leininger and Angela Albertson to Player of the Year honors.

Unofficially, Barger can be named all-time winningest head coach of the AMCC, according to Brian Streeter, director of athletics. The AMCC has been in existence for seven years, and Barger is the only coach to have remained in the conference for six or more years.

Despite this success, Barger is quick to shift the focus on the players and give them the credit.

"Most of the players are already established tennis players," explained Barger. "I don't try to

change too much if it is working. With tennis, it's tough to try and change somebody's style."

He realizes his players' talent and lets them work on their own.

"I try to get them to make the changes themselves," Barger said. "They are smart enough to figure it out. When they can't or don't want to, that's where I step in. I'm pretty laid back if somebody is playing up to his or her potential. Most of all, I try to make them feel relaxed. If they are feeling pressured, it's not coming from me."

Barger credits his laid-back style of coaching to two former high school coaches, Jim Kelso and Russ Storil. Through the years, the three have remained in contact with each other, playing golf, talking tennis and "hanging out." Kelso has since moved to Florida and Storil is deceased.

"They were huge influences for me," Barger said. "I can remember things little things about them that I can't remember about other coaches. They had such a positive demeanor, never getting too pissed off or too low."

Every now and then, Barger finds himself acting like the two.

"Some days at practice I can catch myself saying little things that those two did."

Accepting Behrend's offer to coach tennis and teach ESACT classes came as a chance. Barger previously coached high school women's basketball for 11 years and then men's and women's tennis for five years.

"At the time, I was looking for a career change," Barger said. "I figured it was probably now or never, so I took the chance."

Coaching has provided Barger with the opportunity to stay involved in sports. An active athlete in high school and a letterwinner in tennis

during college at Fredonia State University, he explained why coaching seems a perfect fit for him.

"I always enjoyed sports and after you're done playing, you look for a way to stay involved in your sports," Barger said. "It's not your run-of-the-mill job because it's different every day, every year. It fills the void when you aren't playing anymore."

What keeps Barger coming back, season after season, is the players. He still keeps in touch with a good amount of past players, who he "guesses...liked me and still like me."

In addition to the friendships forged through the seasons, the players have provided Barger with on the court memories that have stuck with him throughout the years.

"Senior Angela Albertson was trailing 5-1 in the second set after already having lost the first set against Frostburg in the AMCC championship," Barger recounted. "She fought back and eventually won the match, but watching her struggle was just an emotionally feeling for me. She was losing and I knew she was going to be heartbroken if she lost her last match. It felt so good to see her battle back and win, and then to be named Player of the Year later, it just felt really good for her."

That individual accomplishment has stuck in Barger's memory since Albertson pulled out the impossible in 2001. Another trip down, not so far back memory lane for Barger stirred thoughts of



Men's and women's tennis coach Jeff Barger is in his sixth season here at Behrend, gathering 104 victories in that time.

a great team accomplishment. "The 2002 men's team was just a bunch of overachievers," laughed Barger. "One day it just came together and out of nowhere we beat Frostburg to take second. It still is hard to believe that we took second."

## Baseball team splits doubleheader with Penn State Altoona

by C.J. Ianini  
staff writer

The Penn State Behrend baseball team opened AMCC conference play on Tuesday against Penn State Altoona.

The Lions split the doubleheader with Altoona, with Behrend winning the first game 7-3 and Altoona capturing the win in the second game, 2-1.

In the first game, sophomore Chris McCartney pitched all seven innings for the Lions. Within those seven innings, McCartney only gave up five hits, had six strikeouts and provided no earned runs for the Lions.

On the other side of the ball, the Lions were led by last year's AMCC Conference player of the year, senior Adam Best. Best went three for four from the plate, hitting a double as well as a triple. He also drove in three runs and hit the only homerun of the game.

Senior Tyler Wiand contributed to the Behrend win, driving in two runs of his own. Designated hitter Mike Coats provided one RBI as well.

Offensively, the Lions racked up seven runs in seven innings. Six players provided hits for the team, all playing a role in the Behrend win. The win in game one pushed the Lions' overall record to 6-4, 1-0 in conference play.

In game two of the doubleheader the Lions fell short on finding production from the bat. The team had three hits in seven innings. Sophomore Tony Kordecki led Behrend with one hit and one RBI. Best and senior Tony Azzato provided two more additional hits, but the Lions were unable to drive in the tying or go-ahead run.

Defensively, game two showed some young depth within the Behrend bullpen. Freshman Christian Necheff pitched four innings, only giving up three hits and one earned run. Relieving Necheff was another freshmen, Brian Hart. Hart pitched



The baseball team opened conference play on Tuesday, splitting a doubleheader at Penn State Altoona.

two innings, giving up only one hit and no earned runs for the Lions.

"We feel very good about our freshmen class," said head coach Paul Benim. "They have the potential to be our strongest recruiting class."

With the loss in game two, Behrend pushed their overall record to 6-5, 1-1 in conference play. Nothing to worry about yet, as this team last year began the season 0-4 and still went on to win the AMCC Conference and ECAC Southern Region Title.

"We have high expectations for this season," said Benim.

Yesterday the men swept Hilbert in its doubleheader home-opener. Next the Lions will take on Frostburg State on Saturday.

## Tennis begins AMCC play, shuts out Pitt-Greensburg

by Amy Frizzell  
sports editor

After coming off three consecutive losses, the men's tennis team was able to bounce back on Saturday against Pitt-Greensburg, when the team defeated the Bobcats 9-0 in its conference play opener.

"Being our first conference match we were really confident," said coach Jeff Barger. "We played really well."

The Lions were forced to play without its No. 1 player, junior Ryan Deimel, due to a one-match suspension. This might of been a setback but the team was able to still focus and pick up its first conference win.

"We knew the loss of Ryan was going to be tough but we just had to give it everything we had," said freshman Brian Espin.

Sophomore John Marini stepped into the No. 1 position, coming away with a 6-2, 6-1 win. Sophomore Jon Barber took over the No. 2, spot where he won 6-1, 6-1.

Espin beat out Greensburg's No. 3, 6-2, 6-0, while sophomore Kevin Fiorenzo took the win at No. 4, 6-0, 6-0. Freshman Matt Meyer finished out the winning ways at fifth singles, 6-2, 6-0.

Barber and Espin took charge at first doubles in place of Marini and Deimel, winning 8-2. Meyer and freshman Garrett Grenek served up an ace at second doubles, winning 8-0 and sealing the deal for a shut-out victory.

"I'm ecstatic about our team's performance against Greensburg," said Barber. "We all stepped up to the challenge."

The team's spirits may have been in the dumps returning from Hilton Head but after its blowout win the team has regained some much needed confidence.

"We played very strong. It definitely gave us confidence," said Espin. "I think this is the inspiration the team needed to hopefully set off a winning streak that will last the rest of the season."

Not only did the team earn a much needed win, two members also earned athletic honors. Barber was named AMCC Player of the Week for his win at second singles and first doubles. Espin was named Housing and Food Services Athlete of the Week for his wins at third singles and first doubles.

"I'm honored to have this great recognition of achievement," said Barber of receiving the season's first AMCC Player of the Week award.

"It's an incredible feeling," said Espin. "Barber and I have a huge confidence boost. We're both stoked."

"I think it's great for the team and Behrend tennis," said Barger. "It's the first week for AMCC Player of the Week and it's nice to have someone from our team be named it along with Espin being Housing and Food Services. It's great for their confidence and also the recognition of the team."

With only nine matches left the team is looking toward a winning streak. But first it will have to get past Penn State Altoona and Frostburg State, two teams that are projected to be the team's biggest challenge.

"Altoona and Frostburg will be our toughest opponents left this season," said Barger. "They are conference matches, which means we have to play them twice. We're going to have to prep between matches."

The Lions will face Altoona for the first time on Saturday. The team has been building on its confidence all week as it has been fine-tuning its strengths and building on its weaknesses.

"We've been focusing on strong doubles," said Espin. "Which was somewhat lacking in Hilton Head."

"We're working on our overall game, practicing everytime," said Barger. "But doubles is definitely key."

With the match coming up, the team has not shown a sign of withering confidence.

"We feel confident we'll pull out a win," said Barber.

"I think that if we play strong doubles it will set the tone for the rest of the match," said Barger. "They'll only have 2-3 matches played while we will have 13 under our belts, which gives us an advantage since we've played together longer."

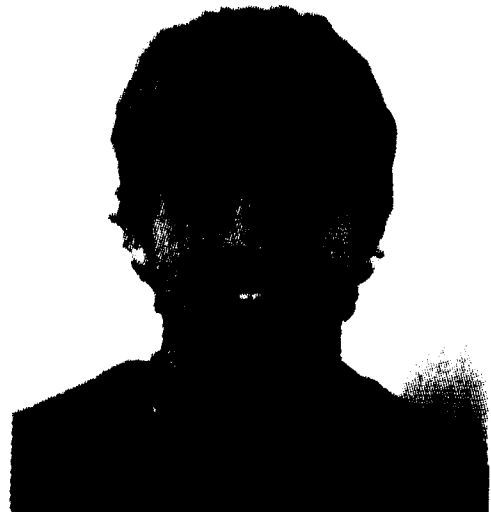
Not only is the team projecting a win on Saturday it is also looking to not lose another match.

"We feel we should go undefeated," said Barber. "As long as we have no more injuries we should be fine," said Barger.

After the Lions take on Altoona on Saturday they will host Thiel on Sunday.

PENNS STATE  
Housing &  
Food Service

### Athlete of the Week



**Brian Espin**

Sport: Men's Tennis

Class: Freshmen

Date: March 22, 2004

Score: 8-1. In

ng in defeated Josh

and 6-0, help-

g Behrend to take the win

over Greensburg, 9-0.

During Penn State's first conference

match-up against

Greensburg, Espin won

both the No. 1 doubles

and the No. 3 singles

Paired up with Jon Barber

he defeated Tim Lang and

noon.