

Rugby rucks through first season

By Lauren Weaver
staff writer

Rucks, scrums, zulu's, and an oddly shaped soccer-football hybrid? Rugby was born in 1832 in the middle of a soccer game at the Rugby School in England when William Webb Ellis, "took the ball in his arms and ran." Here on the Penn State Behrend campus there is a rugby club team comprised of 16 men, with a few women practicing with the team, under coach and biology professor Dr. Heather Jones. Behrend students started out last spring with the intentions of having both a men's and women's team, but were only able to form a men's team. Due to lack of competition and forfeit, Behrend has only played one other college team, Allegheny, this fall season. They won that game, and have also played the Erie men's Rugby Football Club (RFC) and the Akron men's RFC.

To the untrained spectator there may seem to be a few peculiar things about this hybrid of soccer and football. The rugby ball, originally made of a pig's bladder, is now a conglomeration of latex, polyurethane, synthetic leather, glue and laminated leather; a complex critter with a flattened oval shape. Rugby is a simple sport says junior physics major Jeff Machusko. "It's just if you have the ball then you run and if the other guy has the ball, you hit him. It's a lot of fun," said Machusko. Other ways of describing the sport are "intensely aggressive" and "non-stop action."

Here in the Erie area, there are some more intriguing rugby idiosyncrasies that can't be found anywhere else. Machusko explains the infamous zulu. "After you score your first try (touch-down) you have to streak around the bar or the pitch (field) and whoever's there will pour beer on you. It's like a rite of passage. It's just all in fun."

Rugby is seen as a rugged and brutal game. Earlier in its history, the intention of rugby was to build character and team play in young men of the privileged class. This past June, in southern Russia, rugby players were mistaken and detained for being opposing gangs brawling in a field outside the city. The teams were informed they had to make their practice plans public to the police. Today it is still deemed to be the most team oriented sport there is, even if it has a seemingly violent nature.

Anyone interested in playing rugby here at Behrend can meet for practice in the field behind the apartments at 5p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, or Thursdays to meet the players and try the sport out for themselves.



Kevin Jackson fights for the ball in a recent match.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

HOUSING AND FOOD SERVICES ATHLETE OF THE WEEK



NAME: Lisa Wagner

SPORT: Volleyball

CLASS: Senior

DATE: October 23, 2006

Lisa Wagner (New Castle/Laurel) has been named the Housing and Food Services Athlete of the Week.

Wagner led the women's volleyball squad to a 2-0 week as they cruised past both Medaille and Mt. Aloysius in three straight games. Wagner saw action in all six games, accumulating 18 kills, 26 digs, and three service aces. The women are now a stunning 25-2 overall, and a perfect 8-0 in the AMCC.

Volleyball travels to Penn State Altoona on Saturday October 28 for a 5:30p.m. match. Wagner's accomplishments were acknowledged as part of senior night.

Housing and Food Services Athlete of the Week is selected by the Sports Information Staff.

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DESIGNER SKIN

Ruffo caught running away

By Thomas Phillips
staff writer

The Penn State Behrend men's and women's cross-country teams will attempt to win their conference titles this weekend. The teams will compete in the Allegheny Mountain Collegiate Conference (AMCC) Championships at Lake Erie College in Ohio on Saturday.

Behrend cross-country coach Dave Cooper says his team is looking forward to the competition it will have in the conference championships. "We will get a lot of competition from Frostburg State," Cooper said. "Hopefully we will come out on top. It will be a tough fight." Cooper says that consistency by the entire team is necessary for success in the tournament. "All five of the scorers will have to do well," he said.

Senior captain and last year's AMCC Runner of the Year Brad Ruffo will lead the men's team in the conference championship. Ruffo won the AMCC Championship title last year, and finished 12th in the NCAA Midwest Regional. Last year he became the first runner in Behrend history to qualify for the NCAA Nationals. Ruffo will be joined this year by two pairs of runners on the men's team. Cooper says that freshman Kevin Gorny and junior Andy Marshall will run in one pair, with freshmen Andy Iams and Rob Shrawder running in another pair. Marshall was named Most Improved Runner on the team last year.

For the women's team, sophomore and 2005 AMCC Newcomer of the Year Jenny Bailey will lead the way. She finished in second place in last year's AMCC Championships, as well as a 35th place finish in the NCAA Regionals. Cooper says juniors Leisl Soergel and Willa Paterson will run together, and freshmen Lisa Brozewicz and Jenna Zeyfang will run in another pair. Last season Soergel was named to the AMCC All-Conference team, while Paterson was named to the NCAA All-Region Freshman team in 2004. The pairs "need to stay together," Cooper said.

Some of the best things this season have been the way teammates have been able to motivate each other, according to Cooper. "Both teams have competition among themselves. They push each other in practice," Cooper said. The cross-country teams hope this practice will pay off on Saturday when they race for the AMCC championships.

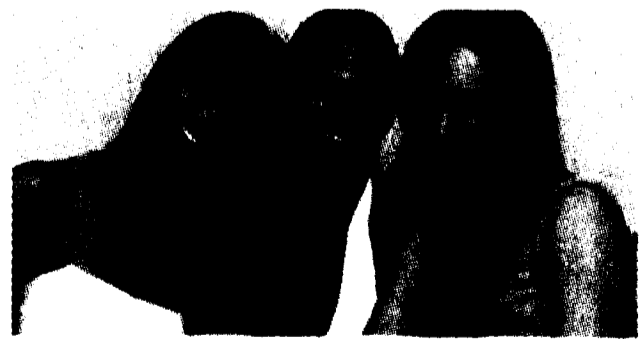


Ruffo leads the pack at a recent invitational.

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