

TOPS Soccer Program returns to Behrend for the eighth time

By Jessica Carlson
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If you come to the Junker Center between the hours of 6-8 p.m. you may think that the circus has come to town. You will see children running around with soccer balls, playing on the mats, shooting hoops, playing duck-duck-goose, and being chased around the track by Behrend students. No, the gym is not turning into a daycare center; what you are witnessing is TOPS Soccer.

TOPS - The Outreach Program for Soccer is a program that reaches out to disabled children and gives them the opportunity to participate in a recreational activity. U.S. Youth Soccer, whose mission statement is "to foster the physical, mental and emotional growth and development of America's youth through the sport of soccer at all levels of age and competition" designed the nation wide program. The program is geared more towards the development of a child as opposed to the actual competition of the game.

Dan Perritano, head coach of the men's soccer team, brought the program to Behrend in 2000. The first year started off with 12 children and has since grown close to 70.

The program is comprised of children with varying disabilities ranging in age from three to young adult. Disabilities amongst the participants may include autism, Down syndrome, muscular dystrophy and cerebral palsy. The program takes place once a week on Wednesday evenings in the Junker Center.

Children are paired with a Behrend student volunteer who becomes their "buddy" for the entire eight-week program. Volunteers for the



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TOPS participant Brett Ferrell became involved with the program after watching his brother Jordan, who's been involved since 2000.

program vary from student-athletes (not just soccer players), to non-athletic students. "The volunteers are what make this go and they have always committed and done a great job connecting with the player they are working with," says Perritano.

The objective of the program is not necessarily to teach the child how to play soccer, but to give them the opportunity to be active. Each child receives a t-shirt and their own soccer ball the first day, but more importantly, there is hope that each child will form a close bond with the student volunteer they are paired with.

Deanna Ciccarelli has been a volunteer for TOPS all four of her

years at Behrend. The last three years she has worked with the same child, Jordan Hitzges who is autistic. "I look forward to seeing Jordan each week and trying to make him have fun while being around others," says Ciccarelli. Hitzges, who is now 15, has been coming to TOPS since its start in 2000. When asked why she decided to get her child involved with TOPS, Hitzges' mother, Pam Ferrell says, "I wanted to get him active in sports, and I liked the idea of him spending one-on-one time with his own coach." Hitzges has a younger brother, Brett Ferrell, who is also in the program.

Jacob Silva is another player who has been involved with TOPS for its eight-year existence. Silva's mother, Bonita Silva, says she "was wanting an exercise for Jacob to be involved with and a group-type of sport to learn how to work with other people." In regards to having a volunteer working with her son who has never had experience with a disabled child Silva says, "I'm always watching. I am pleased that there are so many people who are willing to work with this population, give their time, and show they are really interested in my kid."

Although the program is called TOPS soccer, this does not limit the activities to revolve only around soccer. Some children prefer to play basketball, run around the track, or simply sit on the floor and roll the ball with their buddy. The point of the program is for the child to have fun and be active. "The program is about fun and getting kids to work towards their physical potential whatever that is," says Perritano who has a daughter, Emma that participates in the program each year.

"Jacob looks forward to this every year, so the program must be doing something right," says Silva. More information on TOPS can be found at www.usyouthsoccer.org, or contact Coach Perritano at dpp2@psu.edu.

Student athletes recognized for their hardwork

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There are over 300 student-athletes at Penn State Behrend who know how difficult it can be to excel in athletics, as well as juggle a heavy course load, and even find time to contribute to the community in some way. Sunday, April 6 marks the 21st annual celebration of National STUDENT-Athlete Day, an undermined yet noteworthy day where student-athletes are recognized for their efforts on the field/court/rink, etc, their excellence in the classroom, and their contributions to the local community. In the spring of 2007, 83 Penn State Behrend student-athletes were named with academic all-conference honors. In order to be eligible, student athletes must maintain a cumulative

GPA of 3.0 or better and partake in activities throughout the local community.

The annual celebration began in 1987 by the National Consortium for Academics and Sports (NCAS) and the Northeastern University Center for the Study of Sport in Society. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) are co-sponsors of the event. Throughout the years, over 2.5 million high school and college student-athletes have been honored for their accomplishments on and off the field.

Along with recognizing the student-athlete, parents, teachers and coaches are acknowledged for putting forth the effort and providing the materials and means for every individual to exceed and become a part of the commendable organization.

Men's tennis on four-game winning streak

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The Penn State Behrend men's tennis team is on a four game winning streak, three of which were conference matches. On Tuesday, March 25, they began their conference play with a victory over Pitt-Greensburg.

They then had three matches over a three-day span. On Friday, March 28, the Blue and White gave Alfred University their first loss of the season by defeating them 6-3 and improving their overall record to 5-6. On Saturday, March 29, the men took on Frostburg State University, resulting in a 7-2 victory. The tennis team continued to prevail on Sunday, March 30, when they defeated Penn State Altoona 7-2.

With the strong performances over the weekend, the men sit atop the AMCC with an undefeated record of 3-0 followed by Penn State Altoona with a record of 3-1. Frostburg sits in the No. 3 spot with a 0-2 conference record and an 11-game losing streak. Pitt-Greensburg sits at the No. 4 spot with zero wins and three losses.

The roster is comprised of 16 players, eight returners and eight freshmen. For the returners there are three seniors, Miles Boyea, Trevor Dougherty and Jim Palmer. Boyea was named the 2006

AMCC Player of the Year. Boyea and Dougherty are the captains for the Lions and will be looked upon to provide leadership for the young team. James Getty is the lonely junior on the team accompanied by four sophomore competitors Kelly Manning, Shane Mosier, Brad Nagel and Evan Shaffer. Getty was named the 2006 Rookie of the Year while Nagel was honored as the 2007 Most Improved Player. Nagel, Mosier and Manning provided a handful of key doubles victories for Behrend in the 2007 season and will look to excel again in 2008. Shaffer will be working for a few strong wins throughout the season as well.

The eight freshmen are Kyle Amy, Sami Badri, Elliot Blackstone, Jacob Fling, Jason Grosch, Jon Henderson, John Michalko and Erkin Nasirli. Blackstone is this week's *Enterprise Rent-A-Car athlete of the week*. Blackstone contributed to the Lions three-game weekend winning streak by tallying up all three singles and doubles victories. Nasirli is named the AMCC player of the week for the week of March 31.

On Thursday, April 3 the Lions lost at home to Juniata College 7-2, giving them an overall record of 7-7.

The Blue and White will have one more home match on Tuesday, April 15, against Bethany College at 4 p.m. Prior to that, however, the men will have a hectic few days when they travel to Pitt-



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Captain Trevor Dougherty will be looked upon for leadership this season.

Greensburg for the first of three matches over the weekend beginning on Friday, April 4. They will then head further south into Maryland to take on the Frostburg Bobcats on Saturday, April 5. To finish off the regular season conference matches the men will then travel to Penn State Altoona on Sunday, April 6, for a match 10 a.m. The post-season AMCC Championship tournament will be held the following week on Sunday, April 13, at the Oxford Athletic Club in Wexford, PA.

ENTERPRISE RENT-A-CAR ATHLETE OF THE WEEK



NAME: Elliot Blackstone
SPORT: Men's Tennis
CLASS: Freshman
DATE: April 4, 2008

Penn State Behrend freshman Elliot Blackstone (Wexford/Pine Richland) has been named the ENTERPRISE RENT-A-CAR athlete of the week for the week of April 4, 2008.

Blackstone helped contribute to the Blue and White's three-game winning streak for the weekend of March 28. Two of the matches included AMCC opponents Frostburg and Penn State Altoona.

The next match for the Behrend Lions is Friday, April 4 at Pitt-Greensburg. They then travel to Frostburg on Saturday, April 5, followed by a match on Sunday, April 6 at Penn State Altoona.

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RUB Desk: 898-6242

Catch the bus to go shopping this Saturday:

Depart Behrend	Arrive/Depart Millcreek Mall	Arrive Behrend
9:45 a.m.	10:20 a.m.	10:50 a.m.
10:55 a.m.	11:30 a.m.	12:00 p.m.
12:05 p.m.	12:40 p.m.	1:10 p.m.
1:15 p.m.	1:50 p.m.	2:20 p.m.
2:25 p.m.	3:00 p.m.	3:30 p.m.
3:35 p.m.	4:10 p.m.	4:40 p.m.
4:45 p.m.	5:20 p.m.	5:50 p.m.
5:55 p.m.	6:30 p.m.	7:00 p.m.
7:05 p.m.	7:40 p.m.	8:10 p.m.
8:15 p.m.	8:50 p.m.	9:20 p.m.

Pickup times are the same every Saturday

