

SPORTS

Lions softball team poised to repeat as AMCC champions

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Winter is a long and bitterly cold season in Erie, Pa. but there are signs that this season is coming to an end.

It is a sure sign that spring is coming when the ping of an aluminum bat, or the slap of a leather mitt echoes through the air.

The Penn State Behrend softball team is back in action and they are looking to repeat the successful season they had last year.

Last year, the Lions won the AMCC championship. It was the Blue and White's second championship in three years.

The Lions had an overall record of 33-14 and had a record of 13-5 in AMCC play.

The Lions also earned the leagues automatic bid to play in the NCAA tournament.

This season, the Lions have been picked to repeat as AMCC champions, and Head Coach Stacy Pondo is confident in the team's chances.

"I feel pretty confident as to where we are, however, there is always something that needs worked on," Pondo said.

The team just returned from Florida and posted a 6-4 record in their spring training, and Pondo plans on getting all of the kinks out of the machine.

"We are currently working on some of the problem areas

that we noticed in Florida," Pondo said. "Our goal is to concentrate on one game at a time while getting stronger each game that we play. We want to make sure the team peaks at the right time."

The Blue and White have eight returning seniors this season, including Katie Whitby, who is a three-time first team all-AMCC member.

Whitby posted a .388 batting average last season, had 57 hits, seven triples and two homeruns.

Also returning as a senior is second baseman Nikki Kaschauer. Kaschauer was selected as a second team all-AMCC member in 2008.

Kaschauer led the team with a .405 batting average last season, and had a 20 game hit streak.

Kaschauer led the AMCC in hits with 60, and scored 34 runs with 34 runs batted in.

Pondo is impressed with the play of the two senior leaders.

"I would expect nothing less. Both are off to great starts this year," Pondo said. "They are both great leaders and are willing to help out and teach the underclassmen every aspect of the game of softball."

Pondo also stressed the fact that everyone on the team is extremely important.

"Not only have Nikki (Kaschauer) and Katie (Whitby) been major contributors, but also the other seniors: Allison Babish, Lindsay Baughman, Laura Frischkorn, Rachelle Lawrence, Cassie Miksic and Julie Koman," Pondo said.

"The special part about our team is that you do not always have to have the big numbers, it could be anyone whether it is a senior or a freshman that steps up at the right time. Each person has made many contributions at any given time."

On the defensive side of the ball, the Blue and White have a very solid starting pitcher returning in senior Julie Koman.

Koman was named the Preseason Pitcher of the Year this year, and is a three-time first team all-conference selection.

Koman finished last season

with staggering numbers, leading the AMCC in all major pitching statistics.

She had a 1.60 ERA and 156 strikeouts in 161.2 innings pitched, and was ranked nationally in wins and hits allowed. She completed 14 games and posted a 20-6 record.

Pondo knows that Koman is a big contributor to the team, and she also is a great teammate.

"Julie (Koman) has definitely put up some amazing numbers. She has proved that she belongs on the mound and is a major contributor to the team," Pondo said. "One of the traits that I like about her is she is always willing to help out and support her teammates no matter what type of situation we are in."

The senior class isn't the only group of players contributing to the Lions' success. The underclassmen have been huge factors in the team's winning ways.

"We have a pretty strong underclassmen class," Pondo said. "As sophomores, Maddie Wieser will get some playing time on the mound and at first base. Lia Sorce is in our starting rotation in the outfield and has provided depth at bat by hitting two homeruns in Florida with additional hits along the way. Beth Papalia will provide depth at second base for us this year."

The team just returned from Florida from spring training and earned a key win against Ithaca and now are ready for regular season play.

The regular season opens up for the Blue and White, on the road, on March 25 against Medaille. Pondo says the team is ready to get going.

"We are definitely ready to get outside and play ball. Being inside does not always give you the same perspective as being outside," Pondo said. "We look forward to getting outside to practice and play as much as possible."

With a solid core of returning players, and an up and coming underclassmen group, the Behrend Lions look good to repeat as AMCC champions.



Top: Penn State Behrend senior pitcher Julie Koman

Bottom: Head Coach Stacy Pondo hits fly balls to get her outfielders ready for the game



Behrend senior Nikki Kaschauer stands in the batter's box awaiting an incoming pitch

THIS WEEK'S SPORTS SCHEDULE

home games in bold

SATURDAY, MARCH 21

The Men's Tennis team (3-6) plays Pitt-Bradford (1-0) at home at 3 p.m.

The Behrend Baseball team (7-1) plays at Frostburg St. (7-7) at 1 p.m.

The Women's Water Polo team (0-3) has an exhibition game at Chatham (N/A) at 4 p.m.

SUNDAY, MARCH 22

Traveling to Washington and Jefferson (1-5), the Women's Water Polo team plays at 10 a.m.

TUESDAY, MARCH 24

The Men's Tennis team plays another home match at 2 p.m. against Pitt-Greensburg (N/A).

The Baseball team travels to Fredonia (7-1) for a 2 p.m. game.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25

The Softball team (6-4) plays at Medaille (6-4) at 3 p.m.

The Baseball team takes on Medaille (2-4) at home at 1 p.m.

LAST WEEK'S SPORTS

All wins in *italic text*

FRIDAY, MARCH 13

M. Tennis: Behrend 0 Trine 9

All scores based from Sports Calendar and individual team page results. If your sport is not listed and you feel that it should be, contact cen5060@psu.edu

Beat The Experts

Connor Matt Rachel Christine Nick

NCAA MEN'S BASKETBALL

Tenn. vs. Oklahoma St.	Okla. St.	Tenn.	Okla. St.	Tenn.	Okla. St.
Utah St. vs. #23 Marquette	Marquette	Marquette	Marquette	Marquette	Marquette
E. Tenn. St. vs. #4 Pitt.	Pitt.	Pitt.	Pitt.	Pitt.	Pitt.
Dayton vs. W. Virginia	W.V.U.	W.V.U.	W.V.U.	W.V.U.	W.V.U.
USC vs. Boston College	Bost. C.	Bost. C.	Bost. C.	Bost. C.	Bost. C.
Portland St. vs. #20 Xavier	Xavier	Xavier	Xavier	Xavier	Xavier
Wisconsin vs. #16 Florida St.	Flor. St.	Flor. St.	Flor. St.	Flor. St.	Flor. St.
Temple vs. #19 Arizona St.	A.S.U.	Temple	A.S.U.	A.S.U.	A.S.U.
Cornell vs. #9 Missouri	Missouri	Missouri	Missouri	Missouri	Missouri

NCAA WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Drexel vs. Kansas St.	Kans. St.	Drexel	Drexel	Drexel	Kans. St.
Gonzaga vs. #20 Xavier	Xavier	Xavier	Gonzaga	Xavier	Xavier
Montana vs. #15 Pittsburgh	Pitt.	Pitt.	Pitt.	Pitt.	Pitt.
Charlotte vs. Purdue	Purdue	Purdue	Purdue	Purdue	Purdue
Lehigh vs. #8 Auburn	Auburn	Auburn	Auburn	Auburn	Auburn
Marist vs. Virginia	Virginia	Virginia	Virginia	Marist	Virginia
Fresno St. vs. #13 California	Cal.	Cal.	Cal.	Cal.	Cal.
Georgia vs. Arizona St.	Georgia	A.S.U.	Georgia	Georgia	A.S.U.
San Diego St. vs. DePaul	DePaul	DePaul	DePaul	DePaul	DePaul
Season Totals:	77-48	65-60	85-40	78-47	68-57

Rachel went 17-1 in last week's games and has a commanding lead. Christine comes in second while Connor is one game behind her. Nick is fourth while Matt is in last place. Want to play? Email cen5056@psu.edu for a list of next week's games to see if you can "beat the experts."