

SPORTS

Kovach competes at the NCAA diving championships

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Sophomore diver Krystal Kovach has accomplished something that no swimmer or diver in Behrend's history has ever done, compete at the NCAA championships.

Kovach finished seventeenth in both the women's three meter and one meter events with scores of 381.75 and 351.70 respectively.

The championships were hosted by Macalester College at the University of Minnesota Aquatics Center in Minneapolis on March 18-21.

"I think that I did well for my first year at nationals," said Kovach. "I would have liked to place better but competition was tight. There were a lot of good girls there."

Kovach had to prepare physically by practicing every day. She was dedicated and determined throughout spring break as she practiced when most students returned home or headed to the beach.

"Physically, I stayed on campus during break and practiced every day," said Kovach. "I didn't try to do anything drasti-

cally different, just keep myself healthy and rested."

Not only physically, but mental preparation was needed going into the NCAA championships.

"Mentally was a little more difficult," said Kovach. "It was hard to keep focused on practice because I was constantly psyching myself out about the competition. It was frustrating messing up dives in practice because I felt like I needed them all to be perfect and my coach was tight on corrections."

Head coach Jen Wallace was thrilled of Kovach's accomplishment and performances.

"I am very excited about Krystal's performances," said Wallace. "Even with a few setbacks, she kept her composure under pressure. We now know what it takes to compete at the higher level and can make improvements to place higher in the next two years."

The swimming and diving coaches kept pushing Kovach during practices to improve.

"Your height is nice but you

can never be high enough [coach] will always tell me," said Kovach. "When you're preparing for a big competition like national championships, there is always something else you can improve and every dive can be better."

Before the NCAA championships, Kovach competed in the ECAC championships.

In the one meter event she placed fourth and in the three meter event Kovach finished seventh with a score of 405.35 and 422.8 respectively.

"Krystal consistently scored crucial points for the Lady Lions," said Wallace. "She even scored in some swimming events. But it is the teamwork on this year's team that led to the team successes."

Kovach has been very successful in her two year diving career at Behrend.

She holds all four school diving records, captured the AMCC Women's Diver of the Year in her freshman and sophomore years, and seized the Junker Center pool record in the three meter event.

According to the Penn State Behrend website, Wallace said, "Krystal has proven to be a great addition to our Behrend Lions squad. This is a wonderful accomplishment for Krystal and sets the tone for seasons to come."

Kovach plans to continue to improve for the next diving season.

"I'm always setting higher goals for myself," said Kovach. "Last year's goal was to have all the team records. This year was to make it to nationals. Next year my goal is not only to be invited to NCAAs but to compete and place in the top eight to be All American."

Wallace believes that Kovach's success will bring more divers to Behrend.

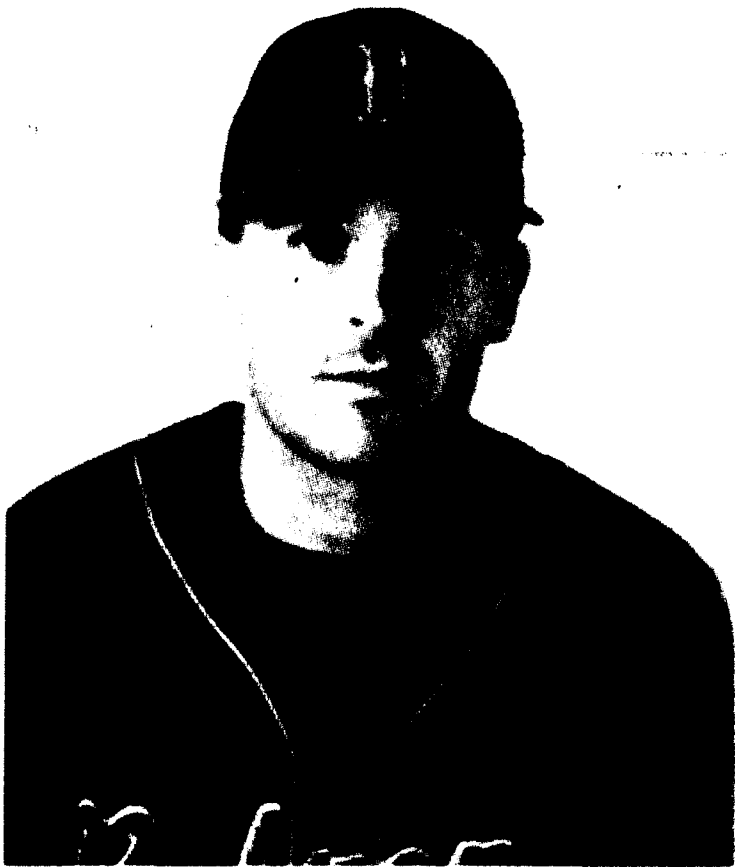
"Put plainly, it [Kovach competing in the NCAA championships] is very cool," said Wallace. "And will hopefully give us a bit of an edge when recruiting. Success breeds success. With Krystal's accomplishments we hope to interest other quality divers."



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Kovach performs her routine as she dives during an event

ENTERPRISE RENT-A-CAR ATHLETE OF THE WEEK



NAME: Ryan Smith

SPORT: Baseball

CLASS: Senior

DATE: Mar. 27, 2009

The Penn State Behrend Lions relief pitcher Ryan Smith (Franklin, PA/Franklin) has been named the Enterprise RENT-A-CAR athlete of the week for the week of March 23, 2009. Smith's efforts also earned him the AMCC Pitcher of the Week.

Smith has been a pivotal part of the back end of the Behrend Lions pitching staff over his first three years at Behrend. Smith continues to be a force on the mound for the Behrend Lions. In three appearances in Fort Pierce, FL Smith would tally two saves and a win.

Smith would come up big in back to back appearances against conference foe Frostburg State to open AMCC play. Smith would close out game one after a stellar performance from starting pitcher Dave Koerbel (Pittsburgh, PA/Central Catholic). Smith would come in with two outs in the bottom of the seventh with the tying run on second and the winning run at the plate. Smith would get the batter to ground out to third to end the game and get the important first win in conference play.

Smith would be called on again in game two to shut the door on another Frostburg State comeback. Andrew Chrobak (New Castle/Laurel) would pitch six strong innings of baseball before he gave way to Smith in the bottom of the seventh. With the Behrend Lions up four-to-two Smith would take the mound with one out and runners on first and second. Smith would strike out the next batter and get the final batter to ground out to shortstop. The win would put the Blue and White at 2-0 in conference play and 9-1 overall.

On the year Smith is 1-0 with four saves. Hitters are batting a measly .188 against the senior closer. Smith has only given up two earned runs in eight innings of work while striking out five batters. Smith holds a number of Behrend pitching records including career ERA (2.37) and career saves (17). Smith is also number two on the career appearance list with 51 only eight behind the leader.

The Blue and White will travel to Fredonia State to take on the Blue Devils on Tuesday, March 24 at 2:00 pm. They will then have their home opener on Wednesday, March 25 against conference rival Medaille.

Current NHL Standings as of 3-27-09

East

1. Boston (102 pts)
2. New Jersey (97)
3. Washington (97)
4. Philadelphia (90)
5. Carolina (89)
6. Pittsburgh (88)
7. N.Y. Rangers (86)
8. Montreal (83)
9. Florida (81)
10. Buffalo (78)
11. Toronto (75)

West

1. San Jose (107)
2. Detroit (107)
3. Calgary (90)
4. Chicago (89)
5. Vancouver (87)
6. Columbus (85)
7. Anaheim (80)
8. Edmonton (79)
9. Nashville (78)
10. Minn. (78)
11. St. Lou. (77)

The final day of the regular season is April 12. It should be a hectic race to the playoffs.