

## SPORTS

## Behrend runners take AMCC title

By Christine Newby  
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The men and women's cross country team raced their way to victory last weekend at the AMCC Championships held at Penn State Altoona.

The men's team repeated as champions as they claimed their second consecutive AMCC title.

"I am really pleased with how everyone ran," said junior Andy Iams. "We accomplished our goal which was to return as AMCC champs. Mentally and physically the guys were ready and they proved it."



DANIEL SMITH - The Behrend Beacon  
Justin DiPenti and Steven Monnie run to the finish line.

Junior Kevin Gorny finished first for Behrend and second overall out of 71 runners. Iams followed closely behind as he came in second for the Lions and third overall.

Sophomore Matt Alto was also thrilled with the men's performance at the championship in which nine total teams competed.

"Our goal from the beginning was to win the AMCC," said Alto. "Going into it, we knew that we were the best team, so we really were not surprised. We are all glad as a team to win."

The AMCC Men's All-Conference team this year consists Gorny, Iams, junior Bob

Shrawder, sophomore Bob Cizek, and freshman Carl Kallgren.

The women's team placed third out of the eight this year. Last season the women won the AMCC.

"Going into it [AMCC Championships], we had a lot of goals, but we fell short," said sophomore Jenna Fatica. "We gave it our all so that's all you can ask for."

Sophomore Emily Berry was first for the Lions and fifth overall out of the 73 runners. Fatica placed second for Behrend and eight overall.

The AMCC Women's All-Conference team includes sophomore Emily Berry, Fatica, and sophomore Mallory Souleret.

"The men's team was expected to win and they did," said head coach Greg Cooper. "The women's team had probably one of the best races of the season. They performed the best they could and there is nothing more that we could have done."

Not including the AMCC Championships, Fatica and Iams have been the top finisher for the Behrend Lions in all five races this season.

"By working hard in practice and my teammates pushing me," said Fatica when asked how she has accomplished placing first. "I don't consider it an individual sport at all, it is a team sport. I've fortunately been able to lead the team."

Iams attributed his success this year to becoming a more steady and constant runner.

"Personally, I've been working on being a more consistent runner," said Iams. "I've been fortunate with no injuries. Coach Cooper's training has been great and has contributed a lot."

The cross country team's next challenge is the NCAA Midwest Regional at Waynesburg University on Nov. 15.

"We will be working hard this week to maintain aerobic capacity and then tapering off next week to rest the legs," explained Cooper.

Fatica also realizes that hard work in practice will lead to better results at regionals.

"The next two weeks we will continue to work hard," Fatica said. "Obviously it is the last race so we want to do well, place well as a team, and set personal records."

Not only physically, but mentally the cross country team is preparing for the next race.

"For the AMCC we adjusted the mileage so our bodies would be well rested," Iams said. "With any long distance, mental preparation is huge and we are trying to be positive."

The AMCC Championships helped prepare the cross country team for regionals.

"It is always good to be in a championship situation," Cooper said. "The men and women faced good competition which should prepare us for upcoming meets."

After regionals, the Behrend Lions are hoping to send runners to nationals.

According to Cooper, the automatic bids to go to nationals are the top two teams who finish in regionals and the first seven individuals who are not on a qualifying team.

"We have one of the best teams that we've had in a while," Alto said. "We want to perform well at regionals and hopefully send people to nationals."

Iams is determined to continue the success achieved at regionals into nationals.

"Regionals will be some of

the best competition we will see all year," explained Iams. "With the victory this weekend [AMCC], hopefully we can ride the wave of success into regionals."



DANIEL SMITH - The Behrend Beacon  
Sophomore Emily Berry placed first for the women's team.

## Behrend's Natalie Engel receives national recognition from ESPN

SUCCESS ON AND OFF THE COURT LEADS TO RECOGNITION FROM NATIONAL MAGAZINE

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If you happen to turn on ESPN, or look at *ESPN The Magazine*, you would probably see the airtime, or writing, not only dominated by A-Rod talk, but by college basketball as well.

It is very rare; in fact, there is never any talk about Behrend sports or its athletes. However, a Behrend athlete has received recognition from *ESPN The Magazine*, one of the nation's largest sports magazines.

Penn State Behrend's Natalie Engel has been named to the magazine's All-District Academic First-Team by the College Sports Information Directors of America (CoSIDA).

Engel, a team captain, is a senior on the women's basket-

ball team and has been a standout her entire career with the Lions.

Engel is averaging 13.9 points per game and is averaging 29.9 minutes of playing time per game.

She also has 53 rebounds, 35 steals and 23 assists this season, and has started all 19 games for the Blue and White.

She ranks in the top ten at Behrend all-time in free throw percentage, and she is among the top 15 all-time in assists, steals, 3-pointers made and free throws made.

Not only is Engel a standout on the basketball court, she is a standout off the court as well.

Engel is a Biology major and is currently carrying a 3.95 GPA and has been named academic all-conference the past three years. It is this success that has gotten her the recognition from ESPN.

"Coach told me at practice,"

Engel said. "I didn't really expect it, so when I heard I was really surprised."

Engel credits being a perfectionist to her incredible success on and off the court.

"I have always been a perfectionist, so I have to have everything right. I've always been like that," Engel said. She also says that basketball has helped her off the court.

"Basketball has definitely helped me," Engel said. "It has been a big motivator because I have to get all of my work done to be able to play."

Engel also had a good high school career, which helped her on the court in college.

"I had a really good high school coach and a good senior year," Engel said. "I just worked really hard to get here."

Engel won't be done with school when she is done here at Behrend. She is going to

graduate school for Genetic Counseling, which is within her major.

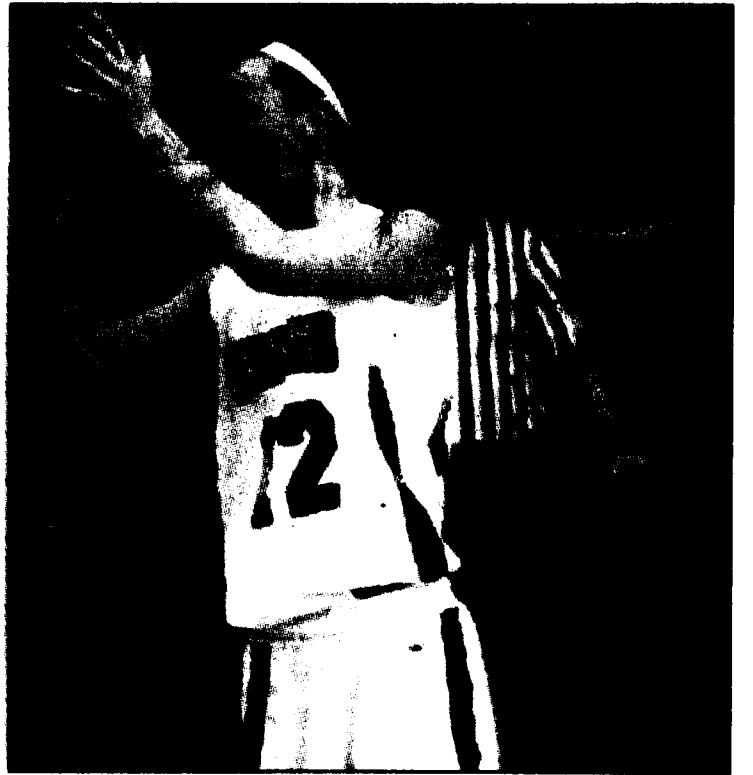
Engel has had a long career and has a few favorite moments. "There have been a lot of good times. When we beat Medallie my sophomore year really stands out," Engel said. "Other than that, everything."

Sometimes it gets tough, but Engel says that you have to just push through.

"It's hard and stressful at times, but you just have to make time for it."

For any young athletes who are looking to be successful in sports and in the classroom, Engel has some advice.

"I would say that school is first for sure," Engel said. "If you put the time into it, and you really want to be good at it, anything is possible."



Natalie Engel prepares to take an open shot. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

## Kovach competes at the NCAA diving championships

FIRST SWIMMER OR DIVER IN BEHREND HISTORY TO GO TO NCAA

By Christine Newby  
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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 drastically 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 NCAA 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.