

MEN'S AND WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

AMCC championship tournament

Men's season rolls on as they defeat Altoona 57-48

AMANDA STETZ
senior reporter

The Behrend Lions came out on top in an exciting game for the start of the playoff season.

The Lions took on Penn State Altoona at the Junker Center on Tuesday to start off the playoffs for the AMCC Championships.

The game started off slow, with neither team scoring any points in the first five minutes. Behrend missed their first five shots, and Altoona missed their first six.

The slow start was mainly due to familiarity and nerves from the start of the playoffs, but that changed when Russ Conley put the first points on the board with his layup.

From there, the Lions fed off his energy to continue forcing turnovers and turning them into points against Altoona.

"This is the third time we have played Altoona, the second time in four days, so we were very familiar with them," said senior forward Adam Potter. "That, in addition to maybe some playoff nerves on both sides, led to a slow first start, and thankfully Russ's layup got the ball rolling for the rest of the game."

After Conley's layup, it was a close battle with Altoona. Behrend made 11 out of the 22 shots from the floor in the first half, 10 of which were scored by junior guard Justin Kovac, while Altoona managed to tie the game with a layup.

However, by forcing 11 turnovers, Behrend was able to get ahead, leaving the court at the half leading 29-23.

The men came out of the locker room after halftime ready to finish and determined to advance to the next round of the playoffs. With Behrend taking charge on the court, they scored the first nine points in the second half. This half was very controversial as the officials handed out numerous fouls to Behrend. However, the Lions refused to let the calls take their victory away from them.

"We tried to ignore the officials and play our game," Kovac said. "They are an uncontrollable factor. We just concentrated on the job at hand, which was the other team."

The second half success came mostly from the hand of Kovac, as he had 19 points. Potter added 11 and Chris Saltzman totaled eight.

In the final minutes of the game, freshman guard Adam Palcic came off the bench contributing six rebounds.

The excitement in the crowd at the Junker Center was extremely high in the final minutes of the game. Behrend finished with a score of 67-48, knocking Penn State Altoona out of the playoffs.

"Bradford is a tough physical team and we expect nothing but their best shot in the playoff," Potter said. "Right now we are really starting to play well as a team both offensively and defensively, and if we play with the same energy like we did tonight, I like our chances against anyone."

The Lions will play Pitt-Bradford on Friday. Pitt-Bradford is ranked second in the AMCC while Behrend is third.

"We expect a hard fought game," Kovac said. "We beat them twice during the regular season with each contest being very physical. They play hard and are a good team; we will have to play well to come out on top."

AMCC tournament road ends prematurely for women

SEAN NEELY
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It was a disappointing loss for the women's basketball team as they had high hopes going into the AMCC Playoffs, but fell to Penn State Altoona 72-63.

The women would lose two games in a row (their last regular season game against Altoona), and their rematch against Altoona three days later in the playoffs.

Altoona led by 21 points going into halftime, but as is the case with Behrend all season long, they charged back and brought the deficit to only two points. In a game that saw back and forth momentum the Blue and White battled back basically the entire game.

An 11-point run was not enough to counter Altoona's 21-point run through the course of the game.

Behrend would have trouble stopping Alicia Glasser and Marissa Lucas from Altoona, as both combined for 31 points. Also, Lucas led all players with nine rebounds.

Senior forward Christine Krankota said that, "throughout this season, we have dealt with more than our fair share of adversity, and I believe the experience we gained played a big role in us nearly completing a 21-point comeback against Altoona."

Behrend had caught Altoona in the midst of a three game winning streak. On the other hand, the Lions were on a five game winning streak before being derailed by Altoona in the last regular season game of the season. However, it seemed as if Behrend has had trouble against Altoona for most of the season, Behrend put up a fight in the AMCC tournament, and also ended with an overall winning record.

Behrend would finish the season with an overall record of 14-11. On the other side, Altoona would set a school record for wins, earning their 20th win of the season against Behrend.

Following the game, several players reflected on their overall season.

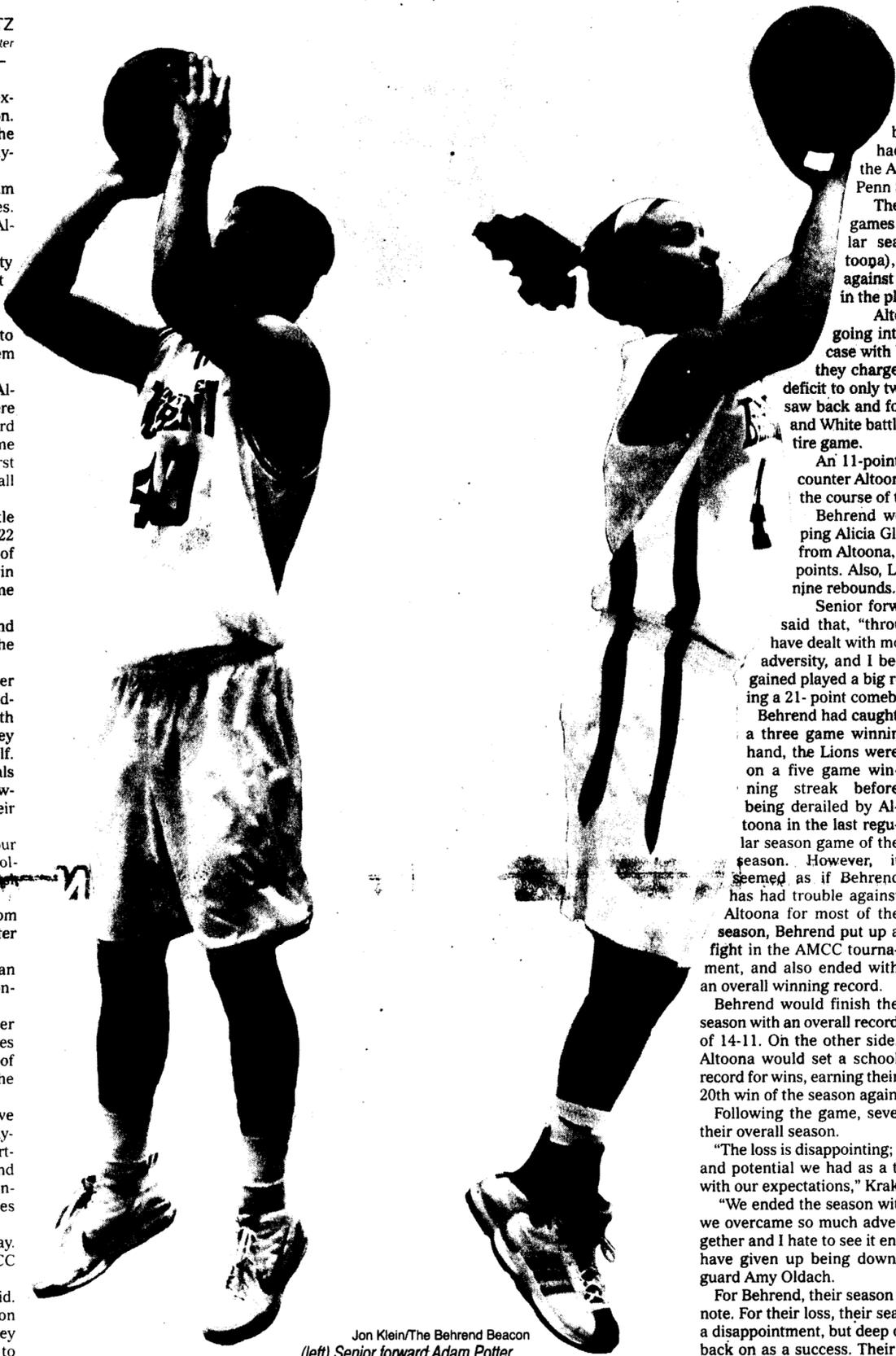
"The loss is disappointing; with the amount of talent and potential we had as a team, this wasn't on par with our expectations," Krankota said.

"We ended the season with a winning record, and we overcame so much adversity; we really came together and I hate to see it end. Any other team would have given up being down 21 points," said junior guard Amy Oldach.

For Behrend, their season would end on a negative note. For their loss, their season may be looked at as a disappointment, but deep down it should be looked back on as a success. Their strong effort and desire will set them apart for future Behrend teams to come.

"We ended the season with a winning record, and we overcame so much adversity."

Amy Oldach
junior guard



Jon Klein/The Behrend Beacon
(left) Senior forward Adam Potter.
(right) Freshman guard Aly Eagle.

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

Krystal Kovach sweeps AMCC diving

The junior diver captured every Behrend women's diving record this year

ALEC ITALIANO
sports editor



PSB Lions.com
Junior Krystal Kovach took first place in both the 1-meter and 3-meter dive at the AMCC tournament in Grove City last week.

Krystal Kovach, an accomplished gymnast, never imagined herself standing on the high dive competing at the collegiate level coming into college, much less going to the NCAA tournament as a sophomore and qualifying for it again as a junior.

She has had much more success as a diver than that though and after placing first in both the one and three meter dive at Grove City last week, Kovach was named the Enterprise Rent-A-Car Athlete of the Week.

Kovach, a junior majoring in biology who is looking to focus in wildlife and fisheries, is from Scott Township, Pa. (Chartiers Valley). She had absolutely no expectations when she jumped off the board for the first time in the Junker Center for Behrend as a freshman.

"I was hesitant to call head coach Jen Wallace about trying for a spot on the team because I've never dove before, and I didn't know what to expect from college diving and didn't plan to become a part of Behrend swimming and diving until about

two weeks before I started my freshman year at Behrend," Kovach said.

Her short diving career proved very successful. Her most impressive accomplishment is breaking all the previous team diving records at Behrend. These include three Behrend pool records, two at Chatam University and one a piece at Grove City and Gannon.

Kovach also won AMCC's all three years competing and is the first Behrend aquatic athlete to compete in the NCAA tournament.

Often found with her iPod in before a dive, Kovach is very focused before a meet and tries to block everything else out before stepping up on the board.

"I work on fixing things during practice that week and try to let my body do its thing during competition," Kovach said. "Before I do a dive, I visualize what I want the dive to look like and work through the motions on the pool deck, but I try not to think too much about anything before I dive."

Although most of her time is now focused toward diving, that was not always the case.

"I like diving, but I wouldn't call it my

passion," Kovach said. "If I had to pick a sport that was my passion it would be gymnastics, for which I have many more accomplishments."

Kovach showed great strides in gymnastics, making it to level nine nationals her last two years competing in the sport. There are only ten levels in gymnastics, so level nine in gymnastics is pretty close to the top of the sport.

Athletes are considered for world competitions, including the Olympics, at the junior and senior elite levels after level ten.

Aside from traveling to level nine nationals her last two years competing, she was also the level nine state champion her last year and won many individual first place awards in the sport before retiring a successful gymnastic career. Kovach transformed that into an outstanding diving career so far for Behrend.

"Before I officially became a part of the team and up until the middle of my first season, I wasn't sure if I could make it in college diving, but I wanted to try, and I'm glad I did," Kovach said. "It's funny, you never know what you can do until you try, and you can do anything you put your mind to really."