

Basketball, tennis finish seasons

by John Flyte

"We had an up and down season, the talent was there, but things just didn't fall into place for us the last game." That's how sophomore Scott Answini surmised the 1990-1991 basketball season.

The team had an overall record of 17 wins and 10 losses. That is the second year in a row they had won 17 games. For the CCAC conference, the Lions of Penn State Hazleton had a record of 7-3, and lost the one playoff game against the Lions of Berks.

The most important game the Lions played was, of course, the last game against Berks. But the team had two other exciting games against Bucknell and the Centaurs of Allentown College where Dr. Tom Caccese, head coach for our team states, "...we played our best basketball against those two teams."

I asked Dr. Caccese if there were any problems this year with the team. He pointed out that there was a problem with the guard spot. Scott Answini was placed in this spot after Christmas break (originally Scott played a two-point guard). Dr. Caccese has to give credit to both Scott and sophomore Brian Powell, because both played out of position and did a great job. Since Scott was moved to point guard, Brian was "bumped" up to two-guard, taking Scott's place (Brian originally was a small forward).

"Everyone got shuffled. Having players out of position forced us to change strategy," said Coach Caccese.

"We did a real fine job getting into the play-offs. Three returning players, Scott Answini, Brian Billig, and Brian Powell did a great job as did Tony Dunkelberger," stated Caccese. And indeed they did. Tony Dunkelberger broke the record of the most rebounds in a game. The record stood at 23 rebounds for 7 years, until Tony broke it at 25.

Brian Billig broke two records. One was for the most foul shots made in a season; he made 113 foul shots, breaking the old record of 98. The other was for the most foul shots in a career; he made a total of 204 foul shots, smashing the previous record of 191.

Coach Caccese is expecting the returning players to be the nucleus, and incoming freshmen to add depth at the guard position.

"I'm very optimistic with the freshmen," said Coach Caccese. "They didn't get a lot of playing time due to the sophomores, but next year's team could possibly be as good as any team we had in the past ten years. The strong suit for next year is defense, and we are staying with the same philosophy."

"Winning is never accidental" will be the motto on the practice jerseys next year. The captains

will be Buddy Johnson and Chris Jemo. Coach Caccese is still looking for a few good men to fill the shoes of the sophomores that left, surely not an easy task.

I asked the coach how he gets freshmen to come to Hazleton to play basketball. His response was, "I offer the freshmen the reputation we have at Penn State Hazleton, an impressive and attractive schedule which entails 26 games against top competition, and a Penn State education." The coach cannot offer athletic scholarships since the basketball team is in division three.

The basketball team wasn't the only interscholastic sport to do well. Mrs. Deidre Jago sums up her men's tennis season by saying, "We had a very good season, the players progressed nicely, but their performance at the tournament was a little disappointing, primarily because they had tough matches in early rounds."

The tennis team had an overall record of four wins and two losses and came in second in the conference. "We have several players coming back and a very good freshman coming next year who is looking forward to playing. As with every sport we are going to strive to do better than last year; we always have a chance," comments Mrs. Jago.

Next year will prove to be interesting for athletics. With excellent potential, practice, and attitude there isn't anything that can stand in the way of Penn State Hazleton's sports.