

Eye on Sports

Baseball's run ends just short of final

By JOHN HICKEY
Lion's Eye staff writer
JWH244@psu.edu

The PSU Delco baseball team put a halt to its season just Tuesday, only one game away from playing for the championship in University Park.

PSU Abington, the Lions' opponents, was challenging Delco for the third time this season. Because of PSU Delco's success on the first two games, the Lions naturally took the home-field advantage.

Unfortunately, the outcome was different this time around. It was a frustrating way to end the season, having two games of proof that skills shouldn't be a problem. But any athlete knows that beating a team once is one thing, and putting it away in multiples is another.

It became apparent, after talking with coach Jeff Vickers, that inconsistent performance was a major issue, perhaps one that played a factor in postseason results.

"It's been a strange year," said Vickers. "I've been coaching for 15 years and never have I had more extreme highs and lows."

When any team enters its season with only four returning players, it can expect some adversity.

"We had a real strong team last year, but this year we had a lot of new kids," said Vickers. "We all had to go through some growing pains."

But Vickers is proud of his team. As the season progressed, he noticed that certain players decided to take it upon themselves to step up their individual level of play, which naturally encouraged others to do the same. Frank Flaim (shortstop) and B.J. Pietropola (pitcher/center fielder), both returning varsity players, showed enough of this attitude to be named captains.

The team's record indicates an average season, nothing to get excited about. Numbers and statistics however, can sometimes shade the truth.

"We had just as good a chance as anybody," said Vickers. "We could have easily been 7-2 with our four one-run losses."

The club finished the regular season at 4-4, granting it a third seed heading to the playoffs. Vickers seemed quite confident that his team could compete with anyone in the league. Although the team struggled somewhat at the plate, it looked completely different when it took the field.

Contributing to the team's exceptional defense were two first-year-players from Sun Valley High, David Gray and Carl Jaskowski, who found themselves in the first and second pitching slots, helping to carry the team through the season.

"We had a very strong defense and when Dave and Carl were pitching, we could have beaten anybody," said Vickers.

Anyone who saw the team in action wouldn't argue that it could have gone either way. The season's progression probably resembled a roller-coaster ride for most fans, and that can make for a frustrating time on the baselines.

No one can deny, however, the team's dedication and periodic sensational level of play, which took them all the way to the semifinals.

"What's fun is that they work hard and they like being around each other," said Vickers.

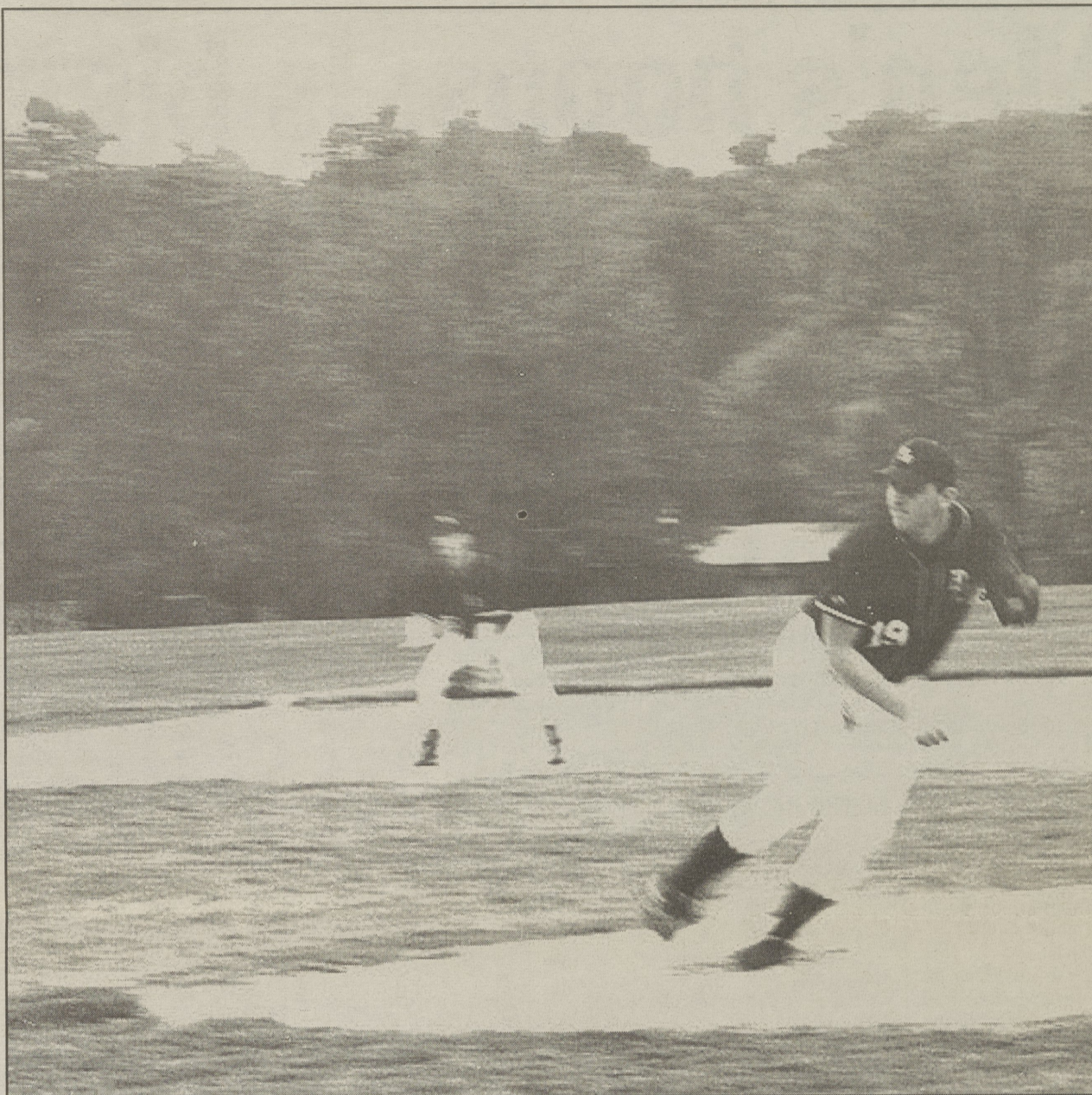


Photo by John Hickey

Pitching was a key as the Penn State Delco baseball team stayed in the pennant race through the semifinals before being eliminated Tuesday by PSU Abington.

Soccer wraps it up



Photo by John Hickey

The Penn State Delco soccer team ended its season in early October after coming up short in a bid for the playoffs. The young Lions have high hopes for an improved season next year.