

Eye on Sports

Into the big time

All PSU Delco teams will have four-year athletes

By ANTHONY IEZZI
Lion's Eye staff writer
API103@psu.edu

Sports programs at the Penn State Delaware County campus are making a significant transition, from two-year to four-year sports.

The move marks a big change for sports teams at Penn State Delco. Until last year, all sport teams except men's basketball and volleyball were two-year programs, meaning athletes had only two years of playing eligibility. Once their two years were up, athletes had to transfer to four-year programs, or accept the fact that their college athletic careers were over.

No longer.

Athletes will now be able to get the standard four years of collegiate eligibility right here on the Penn State Delco campus, and the impact that change may have could be significant.

The reason for the change is the growing amount of four-year majors offered at Delco, meaning students now have a larger selection of majors that can be completed here on campus without having to transfer.

What that means, basically, is that the Delco campus is more of a four-year school athletically, and by recruiting athletes looking for a complete athletic career on one campus, can soon be competing with other four-year campuses.

"We are looking forward to see how many students we can acquire and keep over a four-year period."

— Athletics
Director Joe
DiAntonio

"The coaches are looking for the opportunity to keep student/athletes for more than two years," Athletics Director Joe DiAntonio said.

Students having the ability to finish their college careers on the campus they started out at will could also greatly help the recruiting process.

"We haven't seen the effects of the four-year program at our campus," DiAntonio said. "We are looking forward to see how many students we can acquire and keep over a four-year period."

At the very least, coaches can now build better relationships with their athletes, because they'll have them for a longer period of time. That could result in making team chemistry stronger than before, when a player entering only his or second



Photo by Matt Kelly

Athlete Stacie Mann, a former member of Penn State basketball and volleyball teams, goes over her future with Athletic Director Joe DiAntonio, thanks to the institution of more four-year programs.

season would be a "veteran."

Players will have a new sense of stability and confidence with their school and coaches, DiAntonio foresees.

The switch from a two-year program to a four also makes way for tough competition, with schedules possibly including such local four-year colleges as Neumann, Widener and others. It could also make a thing of the past rivalries with Delaware County Community College and Williamson, which don't have four-year eligibility.

"Playing better teams will only make our teams better," said sophomore Mike Thornton, who plays for the Delco basketball team.

"Our teams will be stronger, as well as the competition," said DiAntonio.

Men's soccer, baseball, and women's basketball

will no longer play in the Eastern Pennsylvania Collegiate Conference as a result of the switch in competition. The EPCC is a league of teams two-year eligibility programs. Games against EPCC teams can still be played, but will not be counted as a league game for Penn State.

The switch also makes way for certain academic standards for the student-athletes, according to DiAntonio. A student-athlete looking to pursue four-year eligibility will have to take on full-time student responsibilities.

The change can make PSU Delco's athletic programs stronger, and they could continue to grow for many years to come, according to athletic department officials, who also indicate that students should take part in the transition by showing their support at the sporting events.