



Tony Beck competes on the pommel horse March 20.

Abby Drey/Collegian

# Trying season teaches PSU

By Jim Mauro  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

The returning members of the Penn State's men's gymnastics team wasted little time getting ready for next season.

Though the season is over, the No. 8 Nittany Lions were already back in the gym practicing and preparing for next year.

A fourth-place finish in the first qualifying session for the National Collegiate Championships ended Penn State's season a bit earlier than it had hoped.

The Lions expected to place no worse than third in the session and advance to the finals.

"[This season] was rough, but it really lit a fire under our butts," freshman Tony Beck said. "It's going to really push us for next year to do even better and show what we actually have as a team."

The Lions' season was a roller-coaster ride, never establishing consistency from meet to meet. They started the year winning

three of the first four meets, only to end the regular season losing four out of five.

However, Penn State posted a season-high score in its final meet and used that momentum to take third at the Big Ten championships. Senior Matt Greenfield said the passion his teammates showed at Big Tens made him feel like the Lions won the meet. He said that spirit was something last year's team lacked.

The Lions had 11 freshmen on the roster, and such youth and inexperience could be reasons for the inconsistency. While he said it is tough to enter a season with major changes to the lineup, Penn State coach Randy Jepsen believes his gymnasts have the talent to succeed at the collegiate level.

"It's not just hard work and smart work, but you have to go out there and earn it," Jepsen said. "They put in a lot of hard work and smart work and did what was asked of them, but to step on the floor and then prove it is that next step."

Though the Lions didn't accom-

plish all of their goals, this season served as a learning experience for the returning gymnasts.

Greenfield will not be with the Lions next season because of graduation, but he hopes his younger teammates will remember his message. He will to enjoy every day, even the bad days, because it makes the whole experience better.

Beck said his teammates instilled confidence in him this season. For example, he now knows he can execute his routines cleanly.

But the gymnasts were not the only people who benefited from this season. Jepsen admitted he is not a patient person, but this year's squad helped him in this area.

The Lions' effort this season helped Jepsen realize immediate success is not always necessary.

"I had high expectations too, and some of those weren't realized this year," Jepsen said. "But it wasn't because everybody didn't give their best and try."

To e-mail reporter: [jbm5058@psu.edu](mailto:jbm5058@psu.edu)

# Seniors after records, national titles

By Zack Feldman  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

After finishing her final lap on Penn State's 200-meter track at practice last week, senior Aleesha Barber fell to her knees, exhausted.

In their final season of eligibility, Barber and other Nittany Lion seniors are not letting up, instead going after team and personal records not yet attained by the fourth- and fifth-year students.

With a handful of school record-holders on the roster, all of them consider their record marks only temporary. Bridget Franek, Barber and Fawn Dorr each hold at least one school record, and coach Beth Alford-Sullivan said there is a lot more to be done before the close of the season.

"I think we'll see some record runs. We certainly have potential for that," Alford-Sullivan said. "We have school record-holders still running their events. Fawn Dorr in the 400-hurdles, she got that school record from Aleesha Barber, who will also be running

the hurdles. Bridget Franek holds the steeplechase. The 4x4 too, they're still running after those records. If you're talking to me in May, I think we'll have some under our belt."

Dorr is the only athlete to break a school record so far this season, shattering her own record in the 400-meter hurdles. Dorr said she has gotten much faster over the past year, referring to her record-breaking run as a "hideous mess." Dorr is confident there is plenty more time to take off.

"When you get a lot faster, the 400-hurdles is all about rhythm," she said.

"You usually take 17 steps between hurdles. And if you get a lot faster, you take part of those steps out, so it messes with your rhythm. The entire race is different when you're faster. I'm just really trying to control my speed and distribute it properly. It's all about finding my rhythm, so I don't have to switch legs when I'm not supposed to."

Franek, the Penn State record-holder in the 3,000-meter steeplechase, said she is after the record again in her final season, as long as she remains focused on the

"I think we'll see some record runs."

Beth Alford-Sullivan  
Penn State coach

steps she needs to take to get there.

Beyond school records, one thing several athletes have in mind is to be the national champion in their event. Dorr is just one athlete with her eyes on the ultimate goal.

"I am running for national champion. And if I don't get it, I don't want it to be because I didn't run a race properly or because I fell short somehow," Dorr said. "I want to 'PR' at nationals, and if someone beats me when I have a 'PR,' well on that day, they were better than me and that's it, no excuses."

On the field side of the team, javelin thrower Karlee McQuillen placed second at the Big Ten championships a year ago and is ranked No. 3 in the nation. McQuillen said her goal, while lofty, is also to be a national champion in the javelin. Alford-Sullivan said McQuillen shows as much

promise in the event as anyone in the country.

"Karlee's got the tenacity of an athlete that's been exposed to competition at all levels, so she'll be ready to go," Alford-Sullivan said.

"She certainly could compete for it. It's easily something she'll be going after for sure."

Brittney Maun tied the Penn State indoor record in the high jump, but the outdoor record of 1.84 meters — nine centimeters above her personal best — is Maun's goal by the end of the season.

Alford-Sullivan said she believes most of the records will fall and national championships are possibilities, but runners like Barber are even more determined to prove themselves.

"I would really like to win nationals in the 100-hurdles. I've been running since the age of 5, so it's been a long, long journey, especially here at Penn State for my fifth year," Barber said. "I came back to work on what I need to work on to actually go after that title."



Fawn Dorr, who has a school record, sprints at track practice.

Ryan Ulich/Collegian

To e-mail reporter: [zef5005@psu.edu](mailto:zef5005@psu.edu)

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