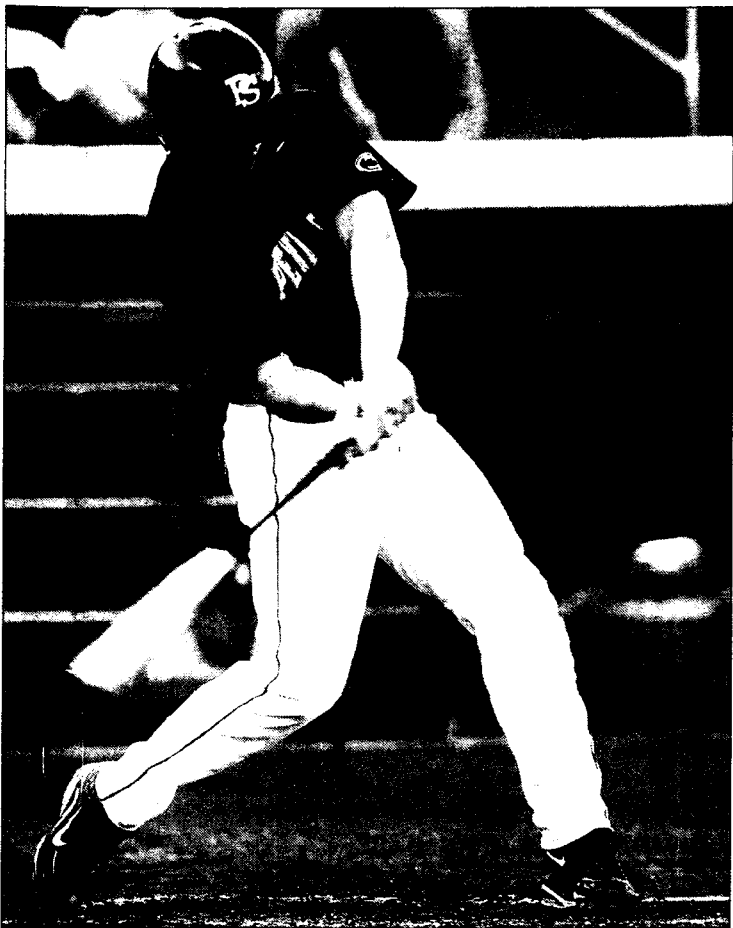


# Heath having potentially historic season



Asit Mishra / Collegian

**Junior catcher Ben Heath** swings at a pitch against Kent State on March 31. Heath, a Huntersville, N.C., native, is on pace to have a historic power hitting year. Earlier this season, he put together a 19-game hit streak.

By Ryan Loy  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

This past weekend's series gave Ben Heath a chance to match up against Ohio State's Dan Burkhardt — one of the top catchers in the nation — and Heath shined.

**BASEBALL**

The Buckeyes' backstop is the reigning Big Ten Player of the Year and was voted by PING! Baseball and the National Collegiate Baseball Writers Association as a second-team preseason All-American.

After Heath's performance during the Penn State baseball team's (17-22, 4-8 Big Ten) series win against Ohio State where Penn State took two-of-three, the Nittany Lion catcher has a case for consideration as the best catcher in the conference.

Heath batted a combined 7-for-14 in the three games and had three home runs, seven RBI and six runs scored.

His performance earned him Big Ten Baseball Co-Player of the Week honors.

Despite seeing Heath play in just three games, Ohio State pitching coach Eric Parker could see the junior's ability.

"Looking at his numbers and getting to see him play for one weekend, he's obviously having a great year and doing a great job

"Not only is he hitting the ball out of the ballpark and driving in some runs, but he's getting base hits."

Robbie Wine  
Penn State baseball coach

back there [at catcher]," Parker said. "I can't really speak for all the other coaches, but he's definitely going to be up for consideration [for an All-Big Ten team]."

While Heath excelled offensively in the series, Burkhardt's presence in Ohio State's lineup was also noticeable.

The Buckeye catcher was held hitless but walked seven times, scored twice and had two RBIs.

Parker said it's difficult to compare the two catchers since, he's only seen Heath play in three games.

However, the Lions catcher has a significant advantage in batting statistics this season.

Heath's .379 batting average is .51 points higher, and he has 15 home runs while Burkhardt has none.

Penn State coach Robbie Wine pointed to Heath's consistent production throughout the entire season.

"It's not like he's going on tears," Wine said.

"He's just being consistent. Not only is he hitting the ball out of the ballpark and driving in some runs,

but he's getting base hits and getting on base."

Heath said he saw the ball well in the weekend series against Ohio State. The junior said he's trying to stay relaxed at the plate while focusing on the mechanics he's been working on.

His approach at the plate has him in position to break the school record for home runs in a season.

Heath needs just three more long balls to break the record set by Dave Simononis in 1978.

The catcher's 19-game hitting streak earlier in the season was also good enough for the fourth-longest in Penn State history.

With all of his success this season, Heath has opposing pitchers aware of his spot in the lineup.

"He's a guy going in to the weekend that you're going to have to make quality pitches to in order to get outs," Parker said.

"Knowing that, if you're going to make a mistake, with the season he's having, he'll have the chance to hurt you."

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# Consistent reliever keeps steady approach

By Alex Angert  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

On Sunday against Ohio State, senior David Lutz made history — and he had no idea it happened.

Pitching in his third game in as many days, Lutz unknowingly recorded the 76th appearance of his collegiate career to move into a first-place tie in the Penn State record books.

But when asked about the milestone, Lutz's first response was a surprised, "Oh, really?"

With the team hosting La Salle at 6:35 p.m. on Tuesday, Lutz will have a shot at passing former record holder Jeff Emerich and move into sole possession for all-time appearances.

"I have all the respect for everybody who came before me," Lutz said. "There's a lot of history in the program with a lot of great guys and great pitchers. But it's about the guys around me and having the opportunities for the coaches to be able to put me out there."

Lutz, a West Chester native,

"He's a sidearm guy who is not going to overpower people, but he understands his game. He's a workhorse out of the pen."

Ben Heath  
junior catcher

played an instrumental role during this past weekend's series victory at Ohio State.

On Saturday — in a game with a combined 28 runs scored — he pitched more than half the game to pick up the win without allowing a single run to cross the board.

Then Sunday, after pitching 4.2 innings of relief the day before, Lutz came out of the bullpen for the fourth consecutive game to get the first batter he faced to hit into an inning-ending double play.

"He was big for us all weekend," catcher Ben Heath said.

"He's a sidearm guy who is not going to overpower people, but he understands his game."

"He comes out and he throws strikes. He's a workhorse out of the pen."

Heath, who often times catches

for Lutz, added that many outsiders don't realize how difficult it is to pitch so many games in a row and that the pitcher has a certain toughness that allows him to be so successful.

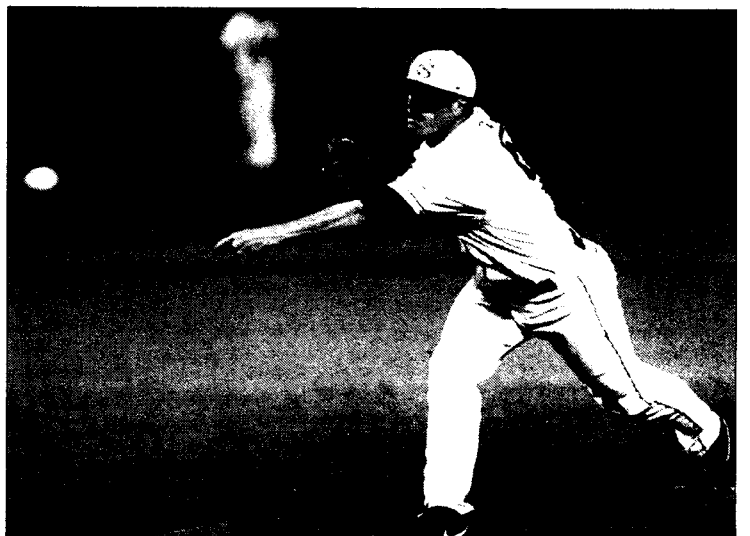
Coach Robbie Wine attributed the senior's toughness and dependability to how he takes care of himself.

Lutz's conditioning and the way he handles himself are what allows Wine to confidently throw Lutz into close games with regularity.

For instance, the coach admitted he didn't want the reliever to pitch Sunday.

But he knew Lutz would be able to face a hitter or two while staying around only 10 pitches.

And that is exactly what happened.



Steph Witt / Collegian

Redshirt senior David Lutz throws a pitch last Tuesday at Medlar Field.

"Being able to go back-to-back-to-back days and the four innings sounds like a lot but he didn't throw a lot of pitches," Wine said.

"That's just the way he is. It's quick. They either get ahead quick or they are out quick."

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