

Female cagers invade PS

By REBECCA BRIA
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Jill Chocallo wanted to continue playing basketball after high school. With a little persistence, she got her wish.

Thanks in part to Chocallo, the Pennsylvania State University's Wilkes-Barre Campus has a women's basketball team for the first time.

"She begged me as a freshman to start women's basketball," Jack Monick, women's basketball coach and athletic director at Penn State Wilkes-Barre, said of Chocallo.

Monick says the team was made possible by campus Chancellor Charles Davis who gave him the permission to start it. It was also the willingness of 12 young women, most with no prior basketball experience, to come out and give the sport a shot.

Because the majority of the women knew nothing about basketball and were actually volleyball players, Monick had to teach them the basics. Chocallo, 20, a former Lake-Lehman basketball standout, was patient with her teammates as they learned the game. The women practiced from 7:30 to 9 a.m. every weekday because of their varying class and work schedules.

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The team's goal was to score 10 points each half during the first game. Although they lost, the team's final score for its first game was 21.

"We broke our first goal our first game," Monick said.

Penn State Wilkes-Barre women's basketball team plays against other Penn State branch schools. This year's season was only a test run, but next year, the women will officially be in the Penn State University Athletic Conference (PSUAC).

Prior to the PSUAC, athletes at Penn State branch schools played against community colleges. The PSUAC was formed in 2003 due to the fact that many students from Penn State branches now earn their four-year degrees at the schools. The PSUAC will join the United States Collegiate Athletic Association this fall, making teams - including those at Penn State Wilkes-Barre - eligible to compete for national championships.

The women received brand-new blue away uniforms and their white Lady Lions home uniforms came from University Park, although the hand-me-downs are too big on the Wilkes-Barre team because the women on the University Park team are typically taller and stronger.

The last game of the women's basketball season was played on March 4 at Penn State Worthington. The final season record of the team was 0-12, but Monick insists the team is strong. He says every team his women played showed their support and complimented him on Penn State Wilkes-Barre's teamwork after a game.

"This group, man, it's like adopting 12 new daughters when I already have two of my own," Monick said. "It was one of the best teams in my life. This was the closest bunch of women from all parts of life and all different towns that have come together."

Many of the women live in the dorms and were friends before the basketball season began. Those friendships blossomed while others were conceived. This fall, Chocallo will dorm with Britney Jette and Natalie Vasquez at University Park as a result of their basketball association.

Other new sports for women at Penn State Wilkes-Barre include co-ed tennis and co-ed cross country. Years ago, the university branch offered women's softball. Flossie Finn coached the team, but it eventually fell apart. Monick says it would be difficult to have a softball team because it requires a lot of members and is challenging without a good pitcher.

Several of the women's basketball team members are leaving for University Park this fall and Monick is trying to recruit new members. Every Penn State Wilkes-Barre female student is eligible and no one is turned away.

Rebecca Bria, a staff writer for The Dallas Post, may be reached at 970-7436.

DMAC is fun-damental

The Dallas Mountain Aquatics Club swim team has been in existence for five years and is open to residents of the Back Mountain and surrounding communities between the ages of 5 and 14. The club provides a fun, competitive swim team environment for the novice and experienced swimmer.

DMAC is a member of the NE-PAGSL, the Northeastern Pennsylvania Age Group Swim League and participates in meets from December through championships in March. This year, the club has 71 swimmers from Dallas Elementary, Dallas Middle School, Gate of Heaven, Lake Noxen, Lake Lehman Jr. High, Lehman-Jackson Elementary, Wilkes-Barre Academy, Wyoming Seminary Lower School and Wycallis Elementary.

Graduates of the club have gone on to swim for Dallas High School, Holy Redeemer and Lake-Lehman High School and have competed in the Keystone State Games and the State Games of America.

The team's website may be viewed at www.dmac-swimming.org.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Members of the Dallas Mountaineers Aquatic Club swim team are, from left, first row, Abby Curtis, Ian Backus, Evan Sabecky, Kady Mamola, Paige Lewandoski, Lauren Delamater, Malika Kodial, Thomas Manzoni, Tyler Manzoni, Taylor Cercone, Julia Tranguch and Madison Hurst. Second row, Rachel Habib, Samantha Delamater, Samantha Rinehimer, Allison DeBoer, Elizabeth Bauer, Emily Bauer, Catie Mitchell, Amanda Schwerdtman, Julia Adonizio, Juliana Pillets, Ivy Chamberlain, Porter Luksic and Dominic Wright. Third row, Danny Burkhart, Shelby Backus, Chris Colacito, Reid Luksic, Luke Matusiak, Tara Zukosky, Amanda Rando, Wesley Price, Jessica Ravert, Krista Vivian, Krishani Patel, Will Colacito, Patrick Gelso, Annalise Chesire, Jordyn Miller, Mira Patel and Emma Berger. Fourth row, Dylan Hertel, Dana Yu, Mason Palissery, Lucy Reilly, Abby Berger, Christopher LaFratte, McKenzie Kincer, Nell Adams, Michelle Thompson, Wendy Greenwood, Garret Geise, Jacob Plank and Brandon Goble. Fifth row, Coach Dan Allen, Coach Mike Fasulka, Coach Erica Wilbur. Sixth row, Coach Alex Tasco, Coach Silvia Sutkowski, Ramja Gajula, Rachel Gerstein, Caitlin Barry, Gates Palissery, Matt Yurko, Morgan Silvestri, Catherine Coslett, Grant Luksic, Connor Daly and Jack Matusiak. Absent at the time of the photo were Samatha Davis, Jenna Lombardo, Sarah Pomfret, Sai Abhishek and Ariana Michak.

DYB SIXTH GRADERS WIN TOURNAMENT



Kyle Razawich scored 21 points and Aaron Napkora added nine to lead the DYB sixth grade boys over Valley West, 34-30, in the championship game of the annual DYB Sixth Grade Boys Tournament. Dallas won its second straight tournament championship, finishing with a record of 4-0 and holding its opponents to an average of 26 points per game.

Dallas 29/ Gate of Heaven 28

Dallas reached the final with a 29-28 victory over Gate of Heaven. Aaron Napkora had eight points while Matt Saba added six and Brian Banas led the Gators with 16 points.

DYB 35/ Valley West 24

DYB opened pool play with a 35-24 win over Valley West behind 16 points from Kyle Razawich. Blake Williams added eight while Nigel Stearns scored three. Justin Brojakowski and Jory Brezinski added two points each, while Michael Baur had four points for Valley West. Andrew Crossin added three.

Dallas 40/ Lake-Lehman 27

Dallas defeated Lehman-Jackson, 40-27, behind six points from Matt Saba and five points from Chris Behm. Chad DeBona controlled the offense and added two points.

Valley West 45/ Gate of Heaven 35

In other pool-play games, Valley West reached the final with a 45-35 win over Gate of Heaven. Michael Sands led the Spartans with 10 points. Michael Boland and Chase Makowski led the Gators with seven each.

Other games

Gate of Heaven defeated Lehman, 42-20, and Valley West edged Lehman, 47-34.

DMS LADY CAGERS WIN CHAMPIONSHIP



The Dallas Middle School girls' basketball team recently won the Wilkes-Barre Seventh Grade League championship and finished the season with an unblemished 12-0 record. Members of the team are, from left, kneeling, Brianna Koneck, Jessica Hiscox, Ashley Dunbar and Morgan Gilhooly. Standing, Madeline Mulhern, Marlee Nelson, Rachel Olszewski, Tanner Englehart, Allysa Menzel, Brittany Harris and Coach Edward Grant.

WRESTLERS WIN AT CANTON TOURNAMENT



Members of the Back Mountain Wrestling Club who placed at the recent Canton Tournament are, front row, Justin Hutchins, first. From left, second row, Conner Martinez, fourth; John Hutchins, fourth; Aiden Martinez, third; and Jerry O'gurkis, second. Absent at the time of the photo was Nick Luzetski, second.

SPORTS BRIEFS

Junior Knights set registration

Registration for players and cheerleaders in the Lake-Lehman Junior Knights football program will be held from 5:30 to 7 p.m. on Thursday, March 20, at the Lake-Lehman High School.

All those registering must bring a copy of their birth certificate and insurance card and a recent photo.

For further information, call Lesa Bonner at 371-8503.

Junior Mounts registration

The Dallas Junior Mounts Football and Cheerleading Association will hold registrations from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, April 12, at the Dallas American Legion.