

# Sports

## Men's baseball

### Lions hope to improve on disappointing '89 campaign

by Tony Viola  
Collegian Staff Writer

The Behrend nine hopes to improve on their disappointing 5-26 season that they went through last year. Hopefully, the first week of the '90 campaign is not an indication of how this year will be.

The Lions started their season last weekend against West Virginia Wesleyan and Davis & Elkins down in West Virginia.

The game against Davis & Elkins was cancelled due to bad weather conditions.

The Lions dropped the first game with West Virginia Wesleyan, 12-2, last Friday. The Lions were also defeated in the second game, 12-2.

Fifteen players are not returning this season for Baseball Coach Mike Bari. Several of the players not returning could have been major contributors.

Some of the key returning players include the four captains, who are pitcher Ray Cerqua, right fielder Scott Fleshman, second baseman Percy Gum, and left fielder Darin Wotus.

Junior Robert Toth, a transfer from the Penn State-Mckeesport Campus, is expected to help the team in the field. Center fielder Jim Goard and Wotus are the other juniors returning from last year.

Sophomores returning this season include left fielder-second baseman Kirk McKinney, right fielder Bill Taylor, and catcher-first baseman Paul Benim.

Captains Cerqua and Fleshman are the main pitchers

for Behrend. For the Lions to become a better ball club, they will have to come up with a couple more tough pitchers.

The schedule is more promising this season. Behrend doesn't play as many Division II schools, but the Lions still play colleges located near Erie which Behrend usually plays tough. Behrend plays more Division III teams this year so the Lions will be playing teams closer in caliber of play.

The Lions have average speed in running the bases, but Coach Bari plans to use the hit and run to their advantage.

Behrend is more of a line drive, contact hitting team versus a powerful hitting club.

If the Lions do get any power production, some is expected from freshman Alex Horwath, who is one of the power hitters for the Lions. Sophomore Bill Taylor is also expected to be a long ball threat for Coach Bari.

The freshmen are going to be a major part of the chance to turn things around since there are only nine returning upperclassmen playing this season.

Sophomore Kirk McKinney stated, "Coach Bari has helped the freshmen adapt to college life and athletics, which shows in their performance."

**NOTES:** Behrend travels to Virginia next weekend to play Shenandoah and Gettysburgh Colleges....In Division III play, the Lions will play only one ranked team, Allegheny College. The Gators are ranked ninth in the nation....Behrend plays nine more games this year than last season.

## March Madness

### Writer makes his predictions as NCAA tournament play begins

by Tony Viola  
Collegian Staff Writer

The Ides of March have arrived, and with them comes the beginning of the NCAA Division I Basketball Tournament.

The Final Four will be played at high altitude Denver, so endurance will be a major factor in this year's championship.

The toughest region is the Southeast and the weakest is the East Region.

A record setting seven teams from the Big Ten landed bids in the tourney. They include Michigan, Michigan State, Purdue, Illinois, Ohio State, Minnesota, and Indiana.

Michigan State got the number one seed in the region and should have no trouble making the sweet sixteen. The last time Michigan State was seeded first they went on to win the national championship. It won't happen this year because Magic Johnson isn't playing for them.

LSU plays Villanova in one of the best matchups in the first round. The winner will take on the Georgia Tech-E. Tennessee St. victor. Georgia Tech should win both of these games with very little trouble.

Watch out for Bobby

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## Members of Behrend community participate in the Erie Rugby Club

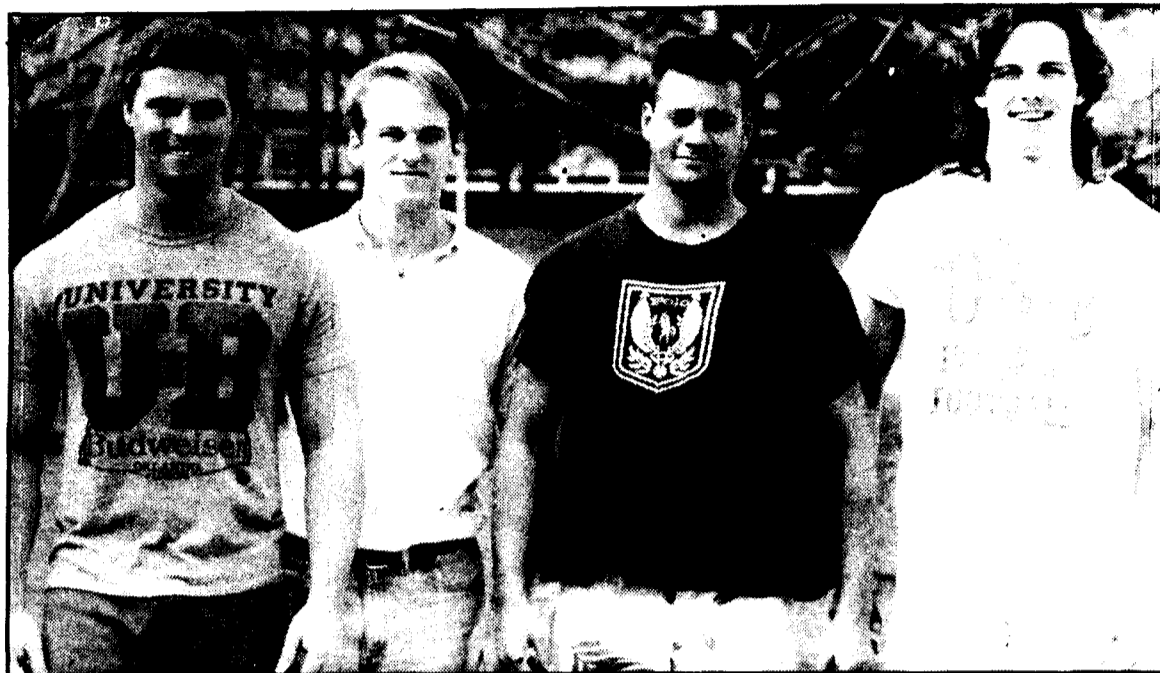


photo by Rick Brooks

**Rugby members:** Several Behrend students are members of the Erie Rugby Club. Four of them are Robert Druschel (far left) Marty Cunningham, Todd Raible, and Mike Piotrowski.

by Jennifer Flanagan  
Collegian Staff Writer

The men who play for the Erie Rugby Club all have a very high regard for the game and the tradition that surrounds it. John Downey, a member of the Behrend faculty, has been playing the game for almost four years and can't get enough of it.

Through his influence, several Behrend students have gotten interested in the game. Those students are seniors Marty Cunningham and Todd Raible, and sophomores Brian Dwyer and Mike Piotrowski.

Dwyer, in describing the spirit of the game, says, "You play as hard as you can with good sportsmanship. The point of the game is not to hurt the other player."

Downey elaborated, explaining that "It's very important, the spirit of it all. It's very much a tension type of fun. You're still competing with them and you still want to beat them, but they're still friends. There's that respect...it's just accepted that there's no fighting with it."

Another unique aspect of rugby is that the players wear no protective equipment. As Downey puts it, "It really takes a toll on you."

So why do these guys keep playing?

"It's give and take, it may be hard on your body, but it's just a really fun game," explains Raible. "Nobody else really plays it, so it's sort of a novelty. It's not your average game."

Dwyer agrees. "It's different from any sport I've ever played. It's new to me."

Cunningham thinks of the game as "an incredible stress reliever. You're worried about school and you go out there, really get into it and forget about everything else. People aren't playing to intentionally

hurt you, so it's not too bad." They all agree that it's a very team-oriented game. According to Cunningham, "While it is very team-oriented, it's structured in a manner that allows the individual to excel. It's very satisfying to me personally." Elaborating, Piotrowski says, "If you don't work as a unit, the team breaks down. It may not look like it when you're watching, but there is coordination in what is going on."

Downey adds that "You just can't hog the ball in rugby because as soon as you get tackled, you have to get rid of the ball. Which is the exact opposite of our instincts as Americans because that's a fumble, that's 'bad.' The key in rugby is to either get off a pass before you get hit or if you get down, to let go of the ball right away. So this tells you, you have to be thinking about the person you're going to pass to; where are your friends, so to speak."

Piotrowski also feels that "The tradition surrounding the game is part of what makes it so appealing." Some of these traditions include giving three cheers for the opposing team at the end of a match, welcoming the visiting team off the field, giving the visitors a place to shower, and then sponsoring a party for them with food, drinks, and festivities.

"That's the unique thing about rugby," says Cunningham. "You are able to hang out with the other team afterwards no matter how hard you played, or who won or lost."

Dwyer explains that "you play against people as hard as you can, but once the game is over, you're as friendly as you were fierce."

Raible adds, "You have all these cities that play each other from New York, Ohio, and

Pennsylvania, but everybody knows each other. It's like a bunch of buddies and you always throw a party for them afterwards."

Rugby is a sport in which everyone gets to play.

"There is a certain etiquette, if a player wants to play, he'll play," says Downey. "If one team comes with 30 men and the other team comes with 15, that team with 15 men plays twice because you just don't 'not play.'"

When asked what he would tell someone who was interested in rugby, Piotrowski said that "You don't have to score to be proficient, but you do have to play your position well. When you run, you run fast. When you hit, you hit hard. When everyone on the team is doing that, then you're really operating as a whole, which is essential."

"Playing is much more important than winning," says Raible. "It is hard to explain. You can watch it and you can go to practices, but until you play a match, you just haven't experienced it."

Dwyer says, "It's definitely a sport I'd encourage someone to play. It's a tough game though, which borders on dangerous if it's not played right."

"It's not your typical run of the mill type of sport that you see in America," says Downey. "But if you don't have that competitive spirit... you're better off with some other sport where it's more for fun. It's also a contact sport, to say the least. If you are into that and you want a spirit of camaraderie to go along with it, then it's definitely for you."

**NOTES:** The Erie Rugby Club always welcomes new players. Practices are Tuesdays and Thursdays at 5 pm at East High field and Saturdays at 1 pm until the season starts.