

April 11, 2008

Track leaps past competition at PSAC West Challenge



STEVE REED/THE ROCKET

Junior Amy Minium finishes her jump during last weekend's PSAC West Challenge. Minium finished fourth with a jump of 5.03 meters, helping the women's squad run away with the team competition. The Rock rolled to 282 points, besting its closest challenger, Lock Haven (144), by 138 points. The men's team also cruised to victory, scoring 244.50 points.

By Terry Rodgers
Rocket Contributor

As the sun peeked out from behind the clouds to shine down on N. Kerr Thompson Stadium last Saturday, the SRU track and field team did a little shining of its own.

The Rock hosted the Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference West Challenge and ran away with two convincing team wins over what appeared to be inferior competition.

The SRU men's team doubled up its next closest competitor, California University of Pennsylvania, by a score of 244 to 120. Indiana University of Pennsylvania captured third place with 100 points.

It was more of the same on the women's side.

The SRU women amassed 282 points compared to Lock Haven University's 144 and Clarion University's 108.

"It was a big win for both our men's and women's program," said Rock Head Coach John Papa. "It shows we are definitely headed in the right direction."

Nate Hardic, a junior from Turbotville, Pa., led the way for the men while Lacey Cochran, a junior from Freeport, Pa., paced the women.

Hardic, a javelin thrower, won his signature event with a toss of 211 feet, 10 inches.

That throw was good enough to earn a berth in the NCAA Division II national championships to be held at the end of May in Los Angeles.

"I hit it pretty hard... (the javelin) just took off like a rocket out of my hand," Hardic said. "I knew I had it in me."

Papa agreed.

"He's been struggling a bit this year," Papa said. "We knew he had it in him, it just had not come out yet."

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Rock continues up and down ways in split with Mansfield

By Phil Swartzlander
Rocket Assistant Sports Editor

Win one, lose one.

That has been the trend for the Rock baseball team after they earned splits in three doubleheaders this week.

On Wednesday, the Rock let one slip away as the team split a doubleheader with Mansfield University. This was after they went 2-2 against rival California University of Pennsylvania on Saturday and Sunday. The Rock also lost a nine-inning match-up against Seton Hill on Tuesday.

In the first game against Mansfield, the Rock pounded out 16 runs on 18 hits in a 16-5 win.

"It was great to see the bats come alive," Rock Head Coach Jeff Messer said.

Sophomore pitcher Sean Holliday (3-2) fell behind early, giving up a three-run homer in the top of the first. The Rock responded with nine runs in the bottom of the inning to

take a 9-3 lead after one. The Rock chased Mansfield starter Mike Martin after just one-third of an inning.

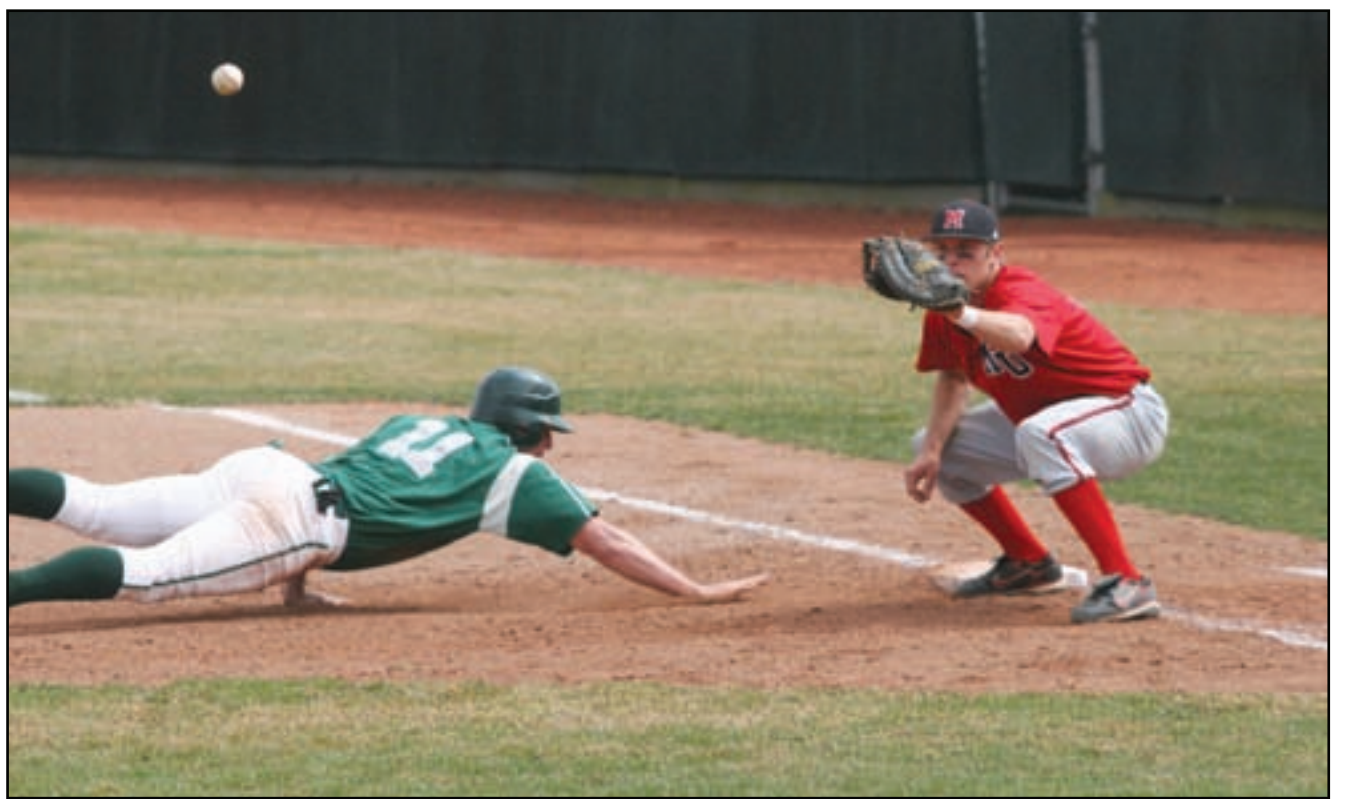
Holliday gave up 11 hits in six innings and was charged with all five of Mansfield's runs.

Messer's squad scored in all but one inning, the fourth, and saw every starter get at least one hit and one RBI in the game.

"Some of the guys have been putting too much pressure on themselves to try to carry the team," Messer said. "We know we need 12 to 15 guys to contribute every game."

Junior right fielder Scott Bender paced the effort, going 3-for-4 while scoring twice. Senior designated hitter Scott Hugney went 3-for-3 with two RBIs and two runs scored.

Offense was again on display in the second game. This time, though, Mansfield got the better



NATE DAYMUT/THE ROCKET

Sophomore left fielder Jacob Oswalt dives back to the bag during the Rock's 16-5 game one victory over Mansfield University on Wednesday afternoon. Oswalt went 2-for-3 with two RBIs. On the season, he is batting .333 with 13 RBIs. Every Rock starter had at least one hit and one RBI in game one.

SEE MESSER PAGE C-3

Tennis nets another sweep, improves to 16-1 on the year

By Andy Barlow
Rocket Contributor

Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference Western Division Player of the Week Kayla Blackburn led the SRU women's tennis squad to another dominant showing last Saturday, this time victimizing Dowling College and host Bloomsburg at the dual meet.

The team defeated Dowling in a sweep, 9-0, while shutting out Bloomsburg as well, by a score of 5-0.

Blackburn won her singles matches 6-0, 6-0, against Dowling and 6-4, 6-2 vs. Bloomsburg. In her doubles matches with partner Laura Handy, the pair defeated Dowling's top tandem 8-1 and bested Bloomsburg's top tandem 8-0.

Samantha Blackburn and Jessica Hilborn worked hard to come up with close victories in each of their doubles matches, while the tandem of Lara Rizzi and Chelsea Gibson earned a pair of victories also.

Handy, a sophomore, noted that even

though victory was essentially expected by her and her teammates, their approach to the match was no different.

"As a team, we played with intensity and never let our guard down," she said.

Intensity, focus and a sense of team unity are only some of the many components this team is made of, at least from what has been witnessed thus far.

Rizzi, a junior, feels that the best is yet to come. She said that defeating Bloomsburg was a huge step.

"Bloomsburg has been one of our rivals for years," she said. "This is the first time we beat them since the 2003-2004 season, so it was an accomplishment for our team."

Following the 9-0 victory over Dowling, Rock Coach Matt Meredith's troops turned their focus on Bloomsburg, which could do nothing to stop the Rock, as the Green & White capped off another perfect performance.

SEE BLACKBURN PAGE C-3

Seething over playoff seeding



ROCCO
CREMONESE

View from The Rock

It's been a weird postseason year in the wide world of professional sports. So how else does one explain the unexplainable?

In the NFL, the No. 5 seed in the AFC, the Jacksonville Jaguars, had to hit the road to play the No. 4-seeded Pittsburgh Steelers despite having a better win-loss record.

In the NCAA men's basketball tournament the No. 1 seed in every bracket made it for the first time in history. And in the NHL, the Southeastern Division champions, the Washington Capitals, captured the third seed in the playoffs

despite finishing in a three-way tie for eighth place in total points in the Eastern Conference.

Admittedly, this hasn't been a problem for the NHL or the NCAA basketball tournament. In both these sports, a higher seed means little more than bragging rights when the puck drops or the tip-off takes place.

The NCAA gets around the issue by having its tournament at neutral sites, while in the NHL, a lower-seeded team can ride a hot streak to playoff superstardom. Because of this, the Caps' unearned inclusion as the No. 3 seed will be forgotten in a few weeks. It's happened before.

So why was it a topic of the recent NFL owners' meetings—but not in the NHL—when both leagues are simply following preexisting rules? And why is the NCAA tournament committee absolved of major controversy in its seeding process? Call it an educated guess, but it could be that the ownership realizes that home-ice

SEE NFL PAGE C-3