



Pawprint

February/March
2006

Page 1: Student-Athlete Formal

1st Annual Student-Athlete Formal:
“Athletes Clean Up Nice!”

**By Meredith Hoover
Women’s Gymnastics**

“The outcome of their efforts was evident,” said Miller. “The food was delicious, the DJ rocked and the transportation ran smoothly. It was just great to see everyone having such a good time.”

event but does see room for improvement. “I’d like to see registration and payments occur online next year,” Cantalupi said, noting that it would automatically keep track of who has paid and prevent problems with paperwork. Also, corporate sponsorship will be an area to investigate. “I would love to have some corporate sponsors match the money raised. I feel that if people got the word out, companies would be more than willing to support such a great event,” said Miller.

**Page 2: Foreign Student-Athlete Profile:
Santiago Lopez**

The SAAB student-athlete formal, held on January 14 in Celebration Hall, raised money for THON and was a huge success according to the two main event organizers, Brian Cantalupi and Kristen Miller. “Everyone had a blast. It was great to see our community come together for once outside of the athletic realm,” Miller said.



Pages 2-3: Penn State Myths

Pages 3-4: A Mother’s First-Hand Experience with THON

The formal was an idea that was brought up last spring, and planning began at the start of the 2005 school year. A committee of 15 to 20 student-athletes represented almost all of the teams throughout the organization of the formal. “We virtually spent most of November and all of December meeting once a week or every other week,” said Cantalupi. The group discussed several possible locations for the formal, transportation methods, as well as music, food, and drink selections at the formal. Each member of the planning committee provided some assistance in generating the end result. Student-athletes went to the possible locations and discussed what the venues could provide for the hundreds of athletes who would come.

The event did run just as planned. Buses were sent from both Rec Hall and East Area Locker Room about every fifteen minutes to run continually to Celebration Hall to either drop off or pick up students. The spread of food was set up in a room adjacent to another room with a dance floor and DJ. People were mingling and going from room to room throughout the evening.



More student-athlete social functions such as a dodge ball and/or wiffle ball tournaments are being considered for the spring semester. For now, though, the event committee is pleased with the outcome of the first student-athlete formal and hopes that its success will continue in the future.

Page 4: SAAB Dancers

Pages 4-5: SAAB Dancer Looks back on THON Experience

Page 5: Softball’s Spring Break in Hawaii

Additionally, SAAB raised just under \$5,000 for THON through this event. This total was made possible by contributions from the Varsity S Club, both Miller and Cantalupi said. Tim Curley and Mark Sherburne were essential in helping financially, and Miller added, “It really speaks to us as athletes that our administrators believe in us and support our ideas.”

The planning committee hopes to make the formal an annual

“I would just like to thank everyone involved with making it all so incredible,” said Miller. “The committee, the athletic administration, Celebration Hall, Nittany Entertainment, and, of course, all who came to or supported the event.”

Hot and Cold
By Jen Orlando
Women's Gymnastics

If you ask Penn State gymnast Santiago Lopez what the differences are between Penn State and Mexico, surprisingly, he doesn't mention the temperature difference. Instead, he points out the language barrier he had to face, as well as customs that many Americans don't think twice about.



(Santiago Lopez)

Santiago was born in Ensenada Baja California, Mexico. He began gymnastics when he was only three years old and developed into a very successful athlete with many honorable accomplishments. Santiago was a six-time Mexican national champion and was twice captain of the Junior National Team. In 2002, he placed fourth in the floor exercise at the Central American Games. Santiago also competed at the 2003 World Championships representing Mexico.

Santiago lived in Ensenada until he was 18, when he decided to come to the United States for college. He chose Penn State because of "the great aca-

demical and athletic level and the support they give to international athletes and students". Unfortunately, he only gets to visit his home during the winter break and for some time in the summer.

In his first experiences as a college student, Santiago faced the adjustments that every student has to make. Living on his own and living with a roommate were his two biggest adjustments. Santiago said that he noticed a difference in the way people interact with each other in the United States compared to Mexico. One additional challenge Santiago had to overcome was language. He said that it was very difficult to get in the habit of using English all the time.

Now a sophomore, Santiago has had just as much success in gymnastics as when he competed in Mexico. Last year, he scored a 9.475 to earn a second place finish on the vault in the event finals of the Big Ten Championships and placed sixth with a 9.475 at the NCAA Team Championships on the vault. With these accomplishments, Santiago earned All-American honors on the vault in his first collegiate season, a rarity for most freshman athletes. He has had solid performances this season as well. Most recently, Santiago earned second on the vault and third on the parallel bars at the West Point Open.

Majoring in Engineering Science, Santiago plans to graduate in 2008 and plans to move home after he finishes school. "Even though I have loved every second spent at PSU, I would probably go home. My whole family is there, and I want to maintain close to my culture and my traditions".

Penn State Myths: Fact or Fiction?

By Rachel Ahrenhold
Women's Swimming

Some Penn State myths have circulated around campus for years and years. Is there a law against having sorority houses at Penn State? Is Penn State actually *in* Happy Valley? Here are some common misconceptions that have been tossed around throughout the years. (Source: <http://www.psu.edu/ur/about/myths.html>)

Myth: Penn State's University Park campus is located in Happy Valley.

Fact: That may be the popular assumption in some quarters, but in truth there is no geographic place in Centre County formally designated "Happy Valley." Happy Valley is generally used in an informal or even a slang expression often used by journalists and is not part of the University's official title. The University Park campus and the community of State College are located in the Nittany Valley. The origin of the name Happy Valley as applied to this location is unclear. There seems to have been some local usage as early as the 1950s, but the term apparently became widely used and recognized starting in the late 1960s, about the time when network telecasts of Nittany Lions football games began and therefore might be attributed to sports writers and broadcasters.

Myth: There are no sorority houses at Penn State because of an old Pennsylvania law that defined a dwelling that housed a certain number of unrelated women as a brothel.

Fact: Sorority houses did exist on the University Park campus, and there is no state law or any University prohibition against sorority houses per se. The first sorority house on campus was [Stone House](#) (a former faculty residence), which in 1928 became home to a women's social club, Nita-Nee, which became Kappa Alpha Theta in 1930 and occupied the house until 1949. Other sororities also had campus houses but, like Kappa Alpha Theta, moved out soon after World War II and into newly available suites in residence halls. The sororities rented the suites from the University—as they continue to do today. The advantages of residence hall suites and the high cost of private housing in the post-war era discouraged off-campus sorority houses.

Myth: The sun dial on the lawn of Old Main marks the geographic center of the state.

Fact: The sun dial is a gift of the senior class of 1966 and was presented that same year. It holds no geographic significance. The geographic center of the Commonwealth is in Centre County, but the latest calculations by Penn State cartographers place it near Fisher-man's Paradise along Spring Creek, near Bellefonte. For many years, based on older methods of calculation, the center was thought to be near Aaronsburg, along Route 45, about 25 miles east of the University Park campus.

Myth: Penn State began as a high school.

Fact: Penn State was incorporated in 1855 as an agricultural college having the power to grant baccala-

ureate degrees. Its aim was to encourage the application of science to farming. But many farmers didn't trust the traditional college curriculum that emphasized the study of rhetoric, ancient languages, philosophy, and other "classical" subjects. To stop these suspicions, the University's founders named the institution The Farmers' High School, a designation that lasted until 1862.

Myth: The word "Nittany" is derived from Princess Nita-nee, a member of the Native American tribes who once lived in central Pennsylvania.

Fact: Princess Nita-nee was "invented" by author and publisher Henry W. Shoemaker and has no basis whatever in fact. Shoemaker's mention of the princess first appeared in print in 1903. At that time he attributed the tale to "an aged Seneca Indian named Isaac Steele." Shoemaker, a well known Pennsylvania folklorist, later admitted that both Steele and Nita-nee were "purely fictitious."

A Perfect Match

By Jen Orlando
Women's Gymnastics

In March, 2003, Renee Messina's daughter Isabella was diagnosed with Acute Myloid Leukemia. This was a very scary time for Isabella and her parents. They had no idea what was to come physically, financially, and emotionally. Looking back, Renee would tell you that they shouldn't have worried one bit about the kind of support they would receive from the Penn State community.

The Messina family became aware of THON during their first trip to the children's center at Hershey. With a lot going on,

however, they did not become immediately involved. Then, in the fall of 2003, Dr. Yukelson talked to Renee about the possibility of becoming a THON family. He explained that SAAB wanted to adopt Isabella as their THON child and that this would be a wonderful experience for their family and for the students involved.

Renee calls SAAB a "perfect match" for Isabella. Many student-athletes knew who Isabella was from her visits to the training room and had even sent her gifts when she was first diagnosed with AML. Renee knew that this group would be committed and loving toward their family.



(THON dancer Kristen Miller with Isabella Messina)

In February, 2004, the Messina's attended their first THON as a family. Although Renee says it was exhausting, she said it was an incredible experience. Isabella had been off of chemo for two and a half months and was able to enjoy every minute of THON when she was in Rec Hall. She spent time with her parents, the dancers, and with students from SAAB. Renee says that first year was especially meaningful, and their family still stays in touch with some of the dancers from

THON '04.

In the years before Isabella was diagnosed with AML, Renee tried to attend THON as much as she could. She enjoyed supporting the students she knew and also enjoyed the atmosphere. However, in just a few short years, Renee has developed a new understanding for THON and now finds it an extremely emotional and amazing event. She says that Isabella, who is now 4, still doesn't really understand what THON is or even why she is there. Renee believes that Isabella may not remember her first years as a THON child, but she still has great fun when she is there. Renee says that her family will be involved and deeply thankful for THON for many years to come.

Dancing For A Cure
Tara Berardi and Kelly Silvis
Penn State Dance Team

Dancing in Penn State's Dance Marathon is an unforgettable and life changing experience that few people can say they've had. Though standing on your feet for 48 hours straight may seem more painful than anything else, being a dancer is a highly coveted position for Penn State students.

This year, six Penn State athletes prepared to have the chance to play their part in the Thon experience and make a difference. This year's Student Athletic Advisory Board (SAAB) dancers were Heather Tomko (Women's Soccer), Sarah Dwyer (Women's Soccer), Kim Holm (Women's Volleyball), Rachel Arndt (Fencing), Brian Cantalupi (Wrestling), and Dave Walters

(Men's Soccer).

With Thon only a week away, each dancer did what they could to prepare their minds and bodies for the event. "I stopped drinking caffeine and got at least 8 to 10 hours of sleep a night," said Walters. Cantalupi says he didn't sleep for four days in order to build up his immunity. He planned to go barefoot at Thon



(SAAB Dancers David Walters, Sarah Dwyer, Brian Cantalupi, and Heather Tomko)

The main reason for Thon is supporting the kids; however, each individual has a love for Thon that comes from his/her own personal memories or from people that have inspired them. Walters' inspiration comes from his fellow teammate Grady Renfrow who returned to Thon 2005 to "win the dance-off after battling cancer just one year before." Cantalupi has fond memories of performing in the Athlete Pep Rally his freshman year when "at the end of the dance, we flipped our heavy-weight backwards and the crowd went insane. I'll always remember that as long as I live."

One of the biggest attractions of Thon, and Arndt's favorite event, is the Athlete Pep Rally that took place on Saturday, Feb. 18. Dancers draw energy from watching various

teams show off their dance moves and give them something to laugh about.

These dancers would not have been able to participate in Thon if it wasn't for the efforts of SAAB. Cantalupi, also the president of SAAB, says that canning at athletic events raises a lot of money.

"I just want to say thank you to all of the SAAB representatives who took time out of their busy schedules to raise almost \$11,000 for Thon," said Walters. The dancers are grateful for the opportunity, and clearly the support from SAAB has not gone unnoticed.

Being A THON Dancer:
A Look Back At An Unforgettable 48 Hours

By Rachel Ahrenhold
Women's Swimming

Former men's soccer star and captain, David Walters, wasn't too sure what he was getting himself into when he became a THON Dancer this year. The experience ended up being something he never could have fathomed. "I never knew how many athletes were involved from the first hour until the last," he said. "A lot of people stayed and supported people right through the weekend, not just coming to the pep rally."

When most students, especially student-athletes think about staying awake for 48 hours, the thought seems unimaginable. But was the feeling at the end of the weekend worth those hours of commitment and dedication? "Absolutely!" Walters said. "It was right up there with winning a Big Ten Championship as far as I'm concerned, but something like that you can never fully explain it until you do it yourself,"



(SAAB Dancers David Walters and Brian Cantalupi Get A Little Crazy!)

Obviously, Walters took more from this experience than he thought he would. Although anxious at first about the ordeal, he said he would do it again in a heartbeat. "Would I dance again? Yes, of course I would! But I think knowing how great of an experience it is, I would want someone else to be able to do it, instead of taking a spot."

Spring Break:
Penn State Softball in Waikiki
Hawaii
By Katie Stauffer
Softball

Katie Stauffer here. Thought I would enter my two-cents on our trip thus far. The rumors are true; this place is definitely paradise. The sun and 80 degree weather is a far cry from the ice storm we found ourselves in a few days ago in Happy Valley, so you won't find any of us complaining about our less-than-flattering softball tan lines (knee caps and forearms only)...don't be jealous. Please allow me to recap the weeks' events starting where Maegan left off: Monday night we Hawaii 5-0'ed the Warriors (us 5, them 0); then, Tuesday we mercy-ruled Detroit Mercy. I could go on

and on with the lame clichés, but I digress.

Tuesday evening we dressed up in our best "Hawaiian" outfits for a luau at Paradise Cove. With our families, we boarded a bus and left for what was sure to be a fun-filled event. Upon arrival, we did some "cultural" things including making our own leis, spear throwing, and taking pictures of the beautiful men, I mean scenery. Seriously though, the setting was gorgeous – tables set on the beach overlooking the Pacific, palm trees and beautiful flowers everywhere, and a hut-like stage where a local band played soothing background music. After we ate the pig that had been roasting in the ground all day, the real fun began.

A witty M.C. took over the stage, and before we knew it, the entire team was on stage for our very own hula lesson. Our lesson was many things, but graceful was not one of them. After a valiant effort and a lot of laughs, we left the stage and made way for the professionals. About a dozen Hawaiian men and women began performing various Hawaiian dances - some graceful hulas, some fierce and to the beat of drums, all thoroughly entertaining. Looking around, I could not find one pair of eyes that were not focused on the dancers whose moves were simply astounding to watch. As darkness set in, one of the male performers whom we affectionately came to call, "Fireman," performed the most impressive display of "flaming baton" throwing we had ever seen. Nothing I write could do his performance justice, but his strong and speedy movements with the flaming sticks created a show none of us will soon forget.

After the show, the dancers came out into the crowd in search of a few lucky folks to accompany them back onto the stage for one last dance lesson. Our very own Jen Williams, dancer extraordinaire, was one lucky winner chosen (or maybe forcefully volunteered) to re-appear on stage. Before we knew it, Jen was shakin' it with one of the handsome Hawaiians in what became her own real-life music video. We all cheered and cackled with laughter, but secretly we were all green with jealousy of Jen and her dance partner...lucky girl. Sadly, the night finally came to an end, and we had to leave, but not before each one of us had our picture taken with "Fireman"...and you better believe we invited him to our games the next day.

Wednesday our winning streak continued on the field in a thrilling come-from-behind victory over UC Santa Barbara and another mercy-rule vs. Detroit Mercy. Thursday we were rained, or should I say monsooned out. I guess the weather can't be perfect all the time...