

Athletics: Softball

2011 Review

The Muhlenberg softball team took great offense to first-year head coach **Marissa DeStasio**, but you won't hear any complaints from her or the players.

The Mules reached double figures in runs a program-high 10 times and shattered four more offensive records en route to winning a record-tying fifth Centennial Conference title and securing the school's ninth trip to the NCAA Tournament.

After tying for second during the CC regular season, Muhlenberg peaked during the conference tournament.

The Mules used a 16-hit attack to dispatch Washington, 8-4, in the opener. In the second game, freshman **Colleen O'Donnell** hit a solo home run and senior **Ashley Brewer** surrendered only four hits as the Mules avenged a pair of regular-season losses with a 1-0 shutout of top-seeded Dickinson.

Facing the Red Devils, and the CC pitcher of the year, again on Sunday, Muhlenberg scored three runs in the top of the seventh, capped by junior **Brittany Blohm's** RBI single, to come back from a two-run deficit and capture the conference title with a 4-3 win.

While the Mules, who finished 25-17, showed they could win close games during the playoffs, blow-outs were the highlight of the early portions of the season.

Muhlenberg needed only five innings to win three of the first four games during the Spring Break trip to Florida. The Mules scored 47 runs to go 4-0 in their first four games.

After dropping the next two decisions, Muhlenberg closed out Spring Break with an 8-1 win over eventual NCAA Tournament qualifier Lesley. Upon returning home, the Mules split three straight doubleheaders before being swept for the first time.

But Muhlenberg responded with a sweep of Swarthmore in the CC opener, 11-1 and 3-1.

Three more splits followed before Muhlenberg won four straight against McDaniel and Franklin & Marshall to move into first place in the conference. Brewer, Blohm and O'Donnell all homered in an 8-3 win in the nightcap against the Diplomats to tie the team record for round-trippers in a game.

But five losses over the next six games put the Mules in a win-or-stay-home scenario during their final CC doubleheader at Ursinus.



Senior Jess Kasza tied her career high with 16 RBI in 2011. She ranks fourth on the program's all-time doubles list with 28.



Brewer is Muhlenberg's career leader in RBI (93) and home runs (13). She also ranks second all-time in extra-base hits (47), slugging percentage (.575) and total bases (238), and third in hits (157), runs (92) and steals (42).

Brewer was named CC player of the year, first-team all-region, first-team academic all-district and third-team Academic All-America after smashing the school records for home runs (7, old record 4) and RBI (51, old record 36) in a season. She was the first Mule softball player to earn Academic All-America honors since 1993. Her home run total not only surpassed the season mark, but the career mark as well. She also broke the record for total bases (93) and tied the extra-base hits record (20). In the circle, she went 13-8 with a 2.61 ERA and a school-record-tying 20 complete games.

Freshman **Erica Wenzel** joined Brewer on the all-conference squad, being named to the second team after breaking the school record for runs in a season (40).

While she finished second to Wenzel, sophomore **Devon Barber** also broke the previous runs scored record with 37. She led the Mules with a perfect 17-for-17 effort in steals.

Senior **Alyssa Epstein** set new career highs for runs, hits, RBI, doubles and steals, while classmate **Alyssa Bruckner** went 6-3 with one save in her final season in the circle.

Blohm led the team with 12 doubles and finished second in RBI with 26. Junior **Shelby Smith** appeared in 21 games, batting .323. Sophomore **Angie Sisco** set a career high with six wins and her second shutout in the circle, and classmate **Jessica Costa** scored 10 runs on the year.

Three other freshmen played prominent roles for the Mules. **Kelly Kline** drove in 25 runs to go along with nine doubles and three home runs, while O'Donnell's .311 average led Mule freshman regulars. **Chelsea Benjamin** scored 17 runs and was the only player to start all 42 games.

Needing at least one win to clinch a spot in the postseason, Muhlenberg swept the Bears to earn the third seed. The Mules used a four-run fifth to break a 1-1 tie en route to a 7-2 win in the opener. And then Brewer hit two of Muhlenberg's three home runs, including a game-winning, three-run blast in the sixth, for a 7-5 win in the nightcap.

Muhlenberg closed out the regular season with a pair of wins over Eastern before sweeping through CC Tournament.

The Mules traveled to Ithaca, N.Y. for the opening rounds of the NCAA Tournament, where they fell to top-seeded Messiah and Western Connecticut State.

Muhlenberg finished one win shy of the school record and shattered the marks for runs (249, old record 205), doubles (74, old record 48), home runs (18, old record 12) and extra-base hits (97, old record 67).

But the Mules were not just an offensive juggernaut; defensively they posted the second-highest fielding percentage in school history (.965) and turned 13 double plays and a triple play.