

SPORTS

Penn State stopped by Northwestern

By Ray Parrillo

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(KRT)

STATE COLLEGE, Pa. — The pass was there and so was Michael Robinson, the Penn State receiver with the surest hands and the burning desire to make up for a mistake that had put the Nittany Lions into an early hole.

If that scenario sounds hopeful for the angry, frustrated folks who trek to the middle of nowhere and file into Beaver Stadium believing things just can't get any worse for Coach Joe Paterno and his team, well, you haven't been following Penn State football these days.

What came next now that's Penn State football. In full stride and with a step on his defender at the Northwestern 2-yard line, Robinson dropped the perfectly thrown pass from Zack Mills with under four minutes remaining in the fourth quarter and Paterno and the Nittany Lions were once again left to grope for explanations for yet another loss.

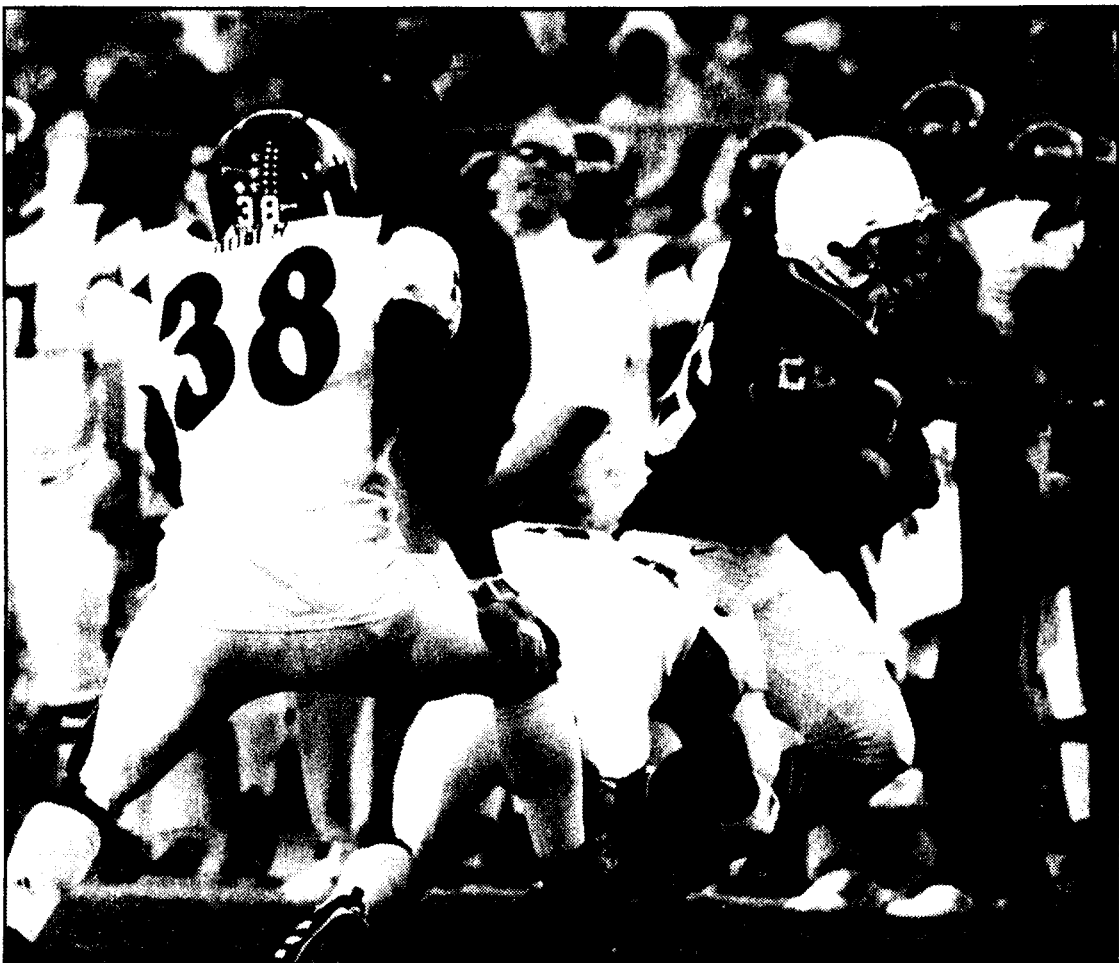
This time, Penn State went down, 14-7, in a Big Ten Conference game as Northwestern took advantage of a poorly thrown pass by Robinson to get an early touchdown, then used its massive offensive line and the tough running of Noah Herron to protect its first ever win at Beaver Stadium.

"Oh man, I've got to make that catch," Robinson said after Penn State (2-7, 0-6 Big Ten) lost a conference game for the 13th time in the last 14 tries and sank below Illinois into last place. "As soon as I came off my break the ball was right there and it kind of shocked me. I got my hands up a little late. But at this level I've got to make that play and I didn't. It was a great pass."

Although the attendance was announced as 100,353 in the 108,000-seat stadium, there appeared to be at least 15,000 empty seats. There's no logical reason to expect to fill a stadium for a team that has so many problems on offense.

When Mills tossed a 2-yard pass to tight end Isaac Smolko to tie the game, 7-7, just before the half-time break, it was Penn State's fourth TD in the past six games. Mills, who once again was serenaded with boos, pointed to the sky and briefly pumped his fist.

"It was about time, you know," said a dejected



Tony Hunt (26) of Penn State runs the ball against Northwestern defense in the fourth quarter. Northwestern defeated Penn State, 14-7, in State College, Pennsylvania, on Nov. 6, 2004

Nabil K. Mark/Centre Daily Times

Mills, who completed 21 of 34 passes for 183 yards, but will likely step aside next week against Indiana so that freshman Anthony Morelli can get some work.

"Everybody's always wanting something new," added Mills, a fifth-year senior who returned after sitting out last week's game against Iowa with a concussion. "They'll get it in two more games."

Afterward, Paterno said he put aside his plan to give Morelli some playing time because he thought the team had a better chance of winning with Mills.

"I told him (Morelli) a couple of times to get ready," Paterno said. "I was very close. If we had gotten behind by more than a touchdown I

probably would have stuck him in, but I didn't want to sit Zack on the bench when I thought we still had a shot at it."

On its first play from scrimmage, Penn State tried some razzle-dazzle. Good idea. Bad execution. Mills handed the ball to running back Tony Hunt, who then gave it to Robinson. Mark Rubin was open deep, but Robinson, pressured from behind, threw a pass to Hunt that was intercepted by strong safety Dominique Price at the Northwestern 33-yard line.

"The primary receiver (Rubin) was way down field and he was open but I didn't think I could get it to him," Robinson said. "And then I saw Tony wide open and tried to get it to him, but the

safety came over and made a great play. He read my eyes."

The Wildcats (5-4, 4-2) cashed in. On third-and-10, Jonathan Fields made a nice cutback and broke free for 51 yards after taking a screen pass. A facemask penalty against Penn State's Alan Zemaitis was tacked on to the play, giving Northwestern first down at the 8-yard line.

Herron ran to the 1 but left the game in a daze after taking a big hit from cornerback Anwar Phillips. Terrell Jordan plowed into the end zone for a 7-0 Northwestern lead.

Herron made a remarkable comeback, running for 175 yards on 30 carries. He scored the eventual game-winner with a 1-yard TD early in the fourth quarter, finishing off an impressive 83-yard drive.

"He was out of it for a while, not knowing what was going on," Northwestern Coach Randy Walker said.

Penn State's offense knows the feeling. Anyone wondering why the Nittany Lions have scored 47 points in their seven losses can reference an ugly sequence in the third quarter, when the score was tied, 7-7 and Penn State had first down at the Northwestern 12-yard line.

First down: a 10-yard penalty on tight end John Bronson for an illegal block. That was followed by a 2-yard completion, an incompletion, a draw play for 6 yards and, finally, a missed 31-yard field goal by Robbie Gould.

In a reference to Penn State's unhappy followers, Paterno said, "Nobody likes to lose. I appreciate any of the sentiments of the people who are upset with our losing. They have every right to be upset. That isn't what concerns me because I can't do anything about them being upset. I've got to do something about trying to make our team better."

Notes. Linebacker Dan Connor, a freshman from Strath Haven High, had 16 tackles in his second start of the season, the most by a Penn State player in two years. Defensive tackle Scott Paxson, a junior from Roman Catholic High, had his fifth blocked field goal this season, and the seventh of his career.

Pittsburgh Steelers are the NFL's keystone

by Chris LaFuria
sports commentary

For all of you Pennsylvanians who have followed the Pittsburgh Steelers religiously, watched as the team of the 70s suffered throughout the 90s, mourned the Steelers' inability to make the playoffs, and witnessed a countless amount of failed prophets at the quarterback position, this might just be your year.

As of Week 9 of the 2004-2005 NFL season, the Pittsburgh Steelers sit atop the NFC North with a record of 7-1. Led by rookie sensation "Big Ben" Roethlisberger, running back Duce Staley, wide receiver Hines Ward, and a defense that has given up the second fewest offensive yards all season, the Steelers have already surpassed pre-season expectations.

In the 2004 preseason, Tommy Maddox was at the helm of the Steelers. After going 1-1 in the first two games of the season, an injury to Maddox left the Steelers with many questions as to the future and direction of the team.

In comes Ben Roethlisberger. The 11th pick of the 2004 draft, Roethlisberger took control of a team that doubted his ability. Many coaches in the NFL avoid starting a rookie in the same way people avoid telemarketers. Upon hearing of the team's decision to go with Roethlisberger, all-pro left guard Alan Faneca stated that he didn't appreciate "going to work with some little young kid that just got out of college." Ignoring all negative criticism, Roethlisberger is now 6-0 as a starter.

The ancient sports cliché states, "Offense wins games, and defense wins championships." If the Steelers wish to bring the Lombardi trophy back to western PA, their defense, who only allows 81 rushing yards a game and has held teams to under 17 points a game, needs to maintain their stable attack and keep up strong performances by linebacker James Farrior and safety Troy Polamalu.

Head Coach Bill Cowher, who started his

era in 1992, has made some critical and highly criticized moves that have been proven beneficial to the team. Cowher, at the depth of the Steelers failure, was teased by many sports analysts who testified that the only reason he was the coach is the intimidation effect he had on his players.

One anonymous writer is credited with saying, "The only reason Cowher is coach is because he spits when he screams." This chronic spitter is the mastermind behind the decision to start Roethlisberger when people disagreed and named the obsolescent Jerome Bettis starter in place of the injured Duce Staley.

The Steelers have relied on a myriad of stars to lead each week. In week 9, a surprising Bettis carried the ball 33 times for 149 yards and was named offensive Player of the Week. Hines Ward caught a touchdown pass and ran for another in the win over the Eagles. In week 6, James Farrior recorded 6 tackles and 2 sacks as the Steelers defeated the Dallas Cowboys. Week 6 was also the week in which the offensive Player of the Week honor went to Tom Brady.

Another leading factor in the Steelers' success is their quality wins. In consecutive weeks, the Steelers have managed to dethrone two undefeated teams at Heinz Field. The New England Patriots charged into Pittsburgh with a 21-game win streak and were dealt a 34-20 loss. The undefeated Eagles, led by the obnoxious Terrell Owens, saw their undefeated record destroyed by the Steelers defense by the score of 27-3. The amazing stat of the two games is the time of possession. In the two games, the Steelers maintained the ball for 84:47 compared to their opponents 35:13.

Is this the Steelers' year? Can they overcome their recent struggle to obtain a greater status among NFL teams? We may not know the answers but the evidence proves advantageous for Steel-City. It may only be midseason, but if nobody can contain the Steelers' offense and suppress their defense, we may see a dynasty in the making.

Fan Jam tips off Behrend basketball season

by Bryan L. Spry
staff writer

The 2004 Fan Jam tips off the Behrend men's and women's basketball season tonight at 7:00 p.m. Fan Jam is a yearly event to promote the upcoming basketball season.

This year's Fan Jam will include two inter squad scrimmages, one by the men's team and one by the women's, performances by both the Behrend cheerleading team and Behrend dance team, free food, and a chance to win great prizes.

Fan Jam begins tonight at 7:00 p.m. in the Junker Center with free pizza for those in attendance. The Behrend women's basketball team will then be introduced to the crowd, after which they will be divided up to play a fifteen minute inter quad scrimmage of blue vs. white.

Next, the Fan Jam crowd will be able to cheer along as the Penn State Behrend Cheerleading team and dance team fire up the tremendous Behrend school spirit that we all possess. Each team is sure to put on a spectacular show to get everyone wanting a lot more, basketball that is.

The Behrend men's basketball team

then takes the floor. After their introduction, they will put on another fifteen minute inter squad scrimmage. This is sure to be a great preview of what the men's basketball team is bringing to the AMCC this year.

After the scrimmages have ended, the crowd will be invited to participate in all sorts of exciting games with chances to win coupons from our sponsors, including Mc Donald's and Burger King. There will be an event held at each basket on the court. There will be a free throw competition, a three point shootout, an elbow shot, and the crowd favorite, make a lay-up with the "Big Ball."

Everyone is invited to attend. Stacy Pondo, the assistant to the director of athletics said, "This is a chance for the community, as well as the student body and faculty of Behrend, to come out and meet the Penn State Behrend basketball team players before the season begins." Our goal is to raise the Penn State Behrend school spirit to the level I know we can achieve," said Stacy Pondo.

The Director of Athletics at Penn State Behrend, Brian Streeter, says, "The Fan Jam also gives the little lions a chance to come out and partici-

pate in the sport with the actual Behrend basketball teams. The Little Lions are the kids from the community that have attended the summer basketball camp offered here at Behrend," Brian Streeter said.

"I think that Fan Jam is a great thing because it promotes the school as well as the athletic teams," said freshman Morgan Coleman, DUS. Coleman also said, "It gets the school spirit up before the season begins and gives the students and community a chance to meet the players."

The Penn State Behrend basketball season begins next weekend with the Behrend Tournament. The men are scheduled to play Case Western Friday Nov. 19 at 8 p.m. The Lady Lions will start their season the following night, Nov. 20 as they host Juniata.

This year's men's basketball team is looking forward to bettering their record from last year and going deeper into the AMCC tournament. The women's team is trying to defend their AMCC title from last year. The support from the student body is always an advantage to the team, so come out and show your school spirit tonight at 7 p.m. in the Junker Center.

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