

## SPORTS

## As team reels, will Paterno take fall?

By John Mullin  
Chicago Tribune  
(KRT)

STATE COLLEGE, Pa. Maybe the people at Penn State, Joe Paterno among them, knew this was coming. So they said he was innocent before the crescendo of cries that he was guilty.

This year's Penn State media guide, a 350-page report on the football team that also serves as the program's recruiting booklet, starts its history of coach Joe Paterno by playing defense.

"In the era of video cell phones," is says, "Joe Paterno is every bit as relevant as he was when Harry Truman occupied the Oval Office, the Dodgers were in Brooklyn and Paul Bryant was a coaching novice at the University of Kentucky."

That seems a curious way to begin a testimonial that doubles as a 12-page biography of Paterno. It reads like a defense brief for what Penn State anticipated would be a time of assault on the Paterno legend.

Actually, Paterno might be as relevant now as he was in the Truman era. But he wasn't a head coach then, as many are suggesting he shouldn't be now.

Paterno is in his 39th season as head coach and 55th on Penn State's staff. Rip Engle brought him in as a 23-year-old assistant in 1950, and Paterno assumed the top job in 1966 when Engle retired. He turns 78 in December and, in a statement of endearing optimism, received a four-year contract extension after a 3-9 record in 2003.

Now, despite the 324 victories, the high graduation rates and other accomplishments, calls are growing louder with each defeat, most recently the Nittany Lions' 14-7 loss Saturday against Northwestern.

"I appreciate the sentiments of people who are upset," Paterno said. "They have a right to be."

Paterno has made the situation acute by involv-

ing son Jay, with the title of quarterbacks coach, in running the offense along with Galen Hall, 63, a veteran of several top national programs. Some insiders will not be surprised if this is Hall's first and only year in suddenly Unhappy Valley.

"Hall has run national-championship offenses," wrote Mike Gross in the Sunday News of Lancaster, Pa., "and the party line is that Jay Pa is in over his head."

Worse, the players "are powerless," wrote David Jones in the Sunday Patriot-News of Harrisburg, Pa. "And they are infected by a disease emitted from the top."

The Penn State football program is reeling, although not all believe that should be the end of Paterno, particularly around town.

"We always abandon our heroes when they fall," said Nancy Brassington, an art teacher at Penn State from Bellefonte, Pa., and a supporter of Paterno. "I think it's simply mean to make him quit after all he's done."

Part of Paterno's difficulties, said Northwestern coach Randy Walker, stem from changes in the landscape of college football. Walker cites greater parity among schools, which means greater difficulty in standing above the pack.

"You give them a touchdown every game and they'd be undefeated," said Walker, a staunch Paterno supporter.

But Paterno critics suggest that giving Penn State touchdowns is in fact the only way the Nittany Lions' offense will score any.

Talent has been there, even recently. Penn State had a school-record four first-round selections in the 2003 draft: Bears defensive end Michael Haynes, St. Louis defensive tackle Jimmy Kennedy, Arizona wide receiver Bryant Johnson and Kansas City running back Larry Johnson.

The 2002 team that produced that group, how-



CRAIG HOUTZ/CENTRE DAILY TIMES  
Penn State University head coach Joe Paterno watches his team against Indiana.

ever, went a modest 9-4 with a loss to Auburn in the Capital One Bowl. It was the only team of Paterno's last five to post a winning record.

Perhaps more tellingly, the NFL has found few Nittany Lions of even second-round quality in the other three of the last four drafts. Penn State had one player drafted in the third round this year and no one higher than the fourth in 2002, when only

two players were selected.

Paterno has drawn sharp criticism the last two weeks for using his distinguished history as a shield.

"He's been coaching for 55 years," he has said twice; don't question him," wrote Penn State reporter Heather Dinich of the Centre Daily Times in State College. "Actually, it's all the more reason to."

## Penn State football lettermen help fallen brother

By Ron Bracken  
Knight Ridder Newspapers  
(KRT)

STATE COLLEGE, Pa. They were bonded, most of them, by the shrill, nasal voice screaming at them, by the building roar that thundered just beyond the Beaver Stadium tunnel, by the shared pain of the spring drills, the preseason two-a-days and the Bloody Tuesdays.

Theirs is an exclusive fraternity and the only path to membership is long and hard, leading across peaks and valleys high and deep. And once they've traveled it, once they've received the distinctive white chenille block "S" letter that marks their status as a Penn State football letterman, their place in that proud family is permanent.

They have a newsletter, which keeps them in touch with one another. They pay their annual \$40 dues. They come back for home games some for every game, some once or twice a year. Some classes have well-organized reunions, others have more casual get-togethers. For the most part, it's a happy group that revels in telling war stories from the practice fields and game days of long-ago autumns. But it's also a group that is protective of its own, one that rallies to help one of its brothers who has been chopped by fate.

Someone like Kevin Baugh.

Earlier this fall the word arced like ground lightning through the football family that Baugh, who had been a wide receiver/kick returner for the Nittany Lions from 1980-83, had been beaten to death in what appeared to be a drug deal turned bad.

That was shocking enough for those who had known him as a talented teammate with a sunny disposition.

Then the word began to circulate that Baugh was virtually desitute when he was killed, that he had no immediate family to claim his body and take it back to Deer Park, N.Y., that there was no money for a burial. This gifted athlete, who once thrilled hundreds of thousands with his speed and agility, was headed for a pauper's grave.

Then his extended football family stepped into the picture.

Mike Meade was a teammate of Baugh's at Penn State, a fullback who played from 1979-81. And when he became aware of the situation he called Michalene Franzetta, who is a member of the football staff and is the administrative assistant to the Letterman's Club.

"Mike called and asked what he could do to help," Franzetta recalled. "This hit home for everyone." Conversations among Meade, Franzetta, associate athletic director for foot-

ball operations Fran Ganter, and director of athletics Tim Curley solved the issue.

The solution was "Eleven for Kevin". Meade drafted a heart-wrenching letter that was sent to every member of the Football Letterman's Club asking them to send a check for at least \$11 (11 was Baugh's number at Penn State) in Baugh's memory.

"I remember, when it happened, I was talking to Franny and he was explaining the situation to me," Meade said. "It hit us at the same time, that Kevin was destitute and we both said it was time that we stood up for him." Almost to a man these ex-Nittany Lions, going back to those who played in the 1940s, have stood and delivered. That was no surprise to Meade.

"I expected our guys to stand up," Meade said, "particularly the guys from our era who played with him, who knew him. We all went through the good times together and now we're all suffering for what he's gone through. I expected they would (stand up), knowing the caliber of guys I played with at Penn State." Franzetta, who Meade described as "the driving force behind this," is the liaison among all of the lettermen from the different classes. She opens the envelopes which arrive daily. She sees the checks and the hand-written notes that accompany them.

"The response has been overwhelming," she

said. "There have been over 300, from guys who just graduated last spring to guys who played back in the 40s."

"I have a whole folder of notes they've sent. They say, 'We're his family, we'll take care of him.' There were guys who sent \$11, guys who sent \$111. One said his jersey number was 84 so he sent a check for \$84. Another said he had five members in his family so he sent a check for \$55."

"I feel so blessed to be able to open those envelopes and see those notes. I have never been more proud of this group, never ever." The Lettermen's Club dipped into its emergency fund to pay the \$7,000 bill for Baugh's burial. Already it has recouped that amount and more from the donations from the members.

It's evidence of the strength of the bond that was forged all those years ago.

"When you're there you start forming those bonds at an age when you are becoming a man," Meade said. "You are creating a real brotherhood. You're there for four or five years and during those times you become bonded. You played for the same guy, went through the same system."

"No one is advocating the lifestyle Kevin led. We don't know the circumstances he was in. But he's still one of us."

## Be an athletic supporter if you can't be an athlete



K.J. MARGRAFF/BEHREND BEACON  
Junior Justin Jennings starts the blue's offense at fan jam.

Commentary by Kyle Woodside  
staff writer

I must say that I am looking forward to the upcoming men's and women's basketball seasons here at Behrend, especially since, in a way, I get to be a part of the team.

I am interning with the Sports Information department here, under the direction of Coach Paul Benim and graduate student Keith Cerroni.

For the opening tournament this weekend, I have the privilege to do the scoreboard and

I did the scorebook for my high school basketball team when I was a sophomore because I didn't play that year due to illness.

High school is a time when you are forced to interact with your peers, whether you liked them or not. Most of us can say we excelled in high school (especially in sports) and then came to the realization that we are just average in college compared to everyone else.

Well, if you can't perform in front of the Behrend community like you could in high school, why not support the ones that are able to? You are an invaluable asset to the teams.

The coaches and players love the fact that you have taken the time out of your busy college schedules and come to support them. That gives them so much more incentive to play hard.

I admire the groups that come on out to watch the games, i.e. "TOE". They cheer as hard as anyone else in that gymnasium. Bring a group of friends out and root your Behrend Lions on. It's a good time.

Gary Bonanno, a senior who is majoring in history at Behrend, is one of the members of the infamous "Front Row" fans.

"We like being in the front row," said Bonanno. "It makes us feel like we're right amidst the action."

He also hopes that someday all the Behrend basketball games will be like the NCAA play-off game was last year.

"That game was insane," said Bonanno. "Almost everyone was standing and cheering; what a rush."

What I don't admire is the groups that come to the games and end up talking on their cell phones the whole time the game happening.

That is just ridiculous. We're not in Beverly Hills. If you aren't there to at least watch some of the game, then you are wasting everyone's time. Where's your sense of school pride?

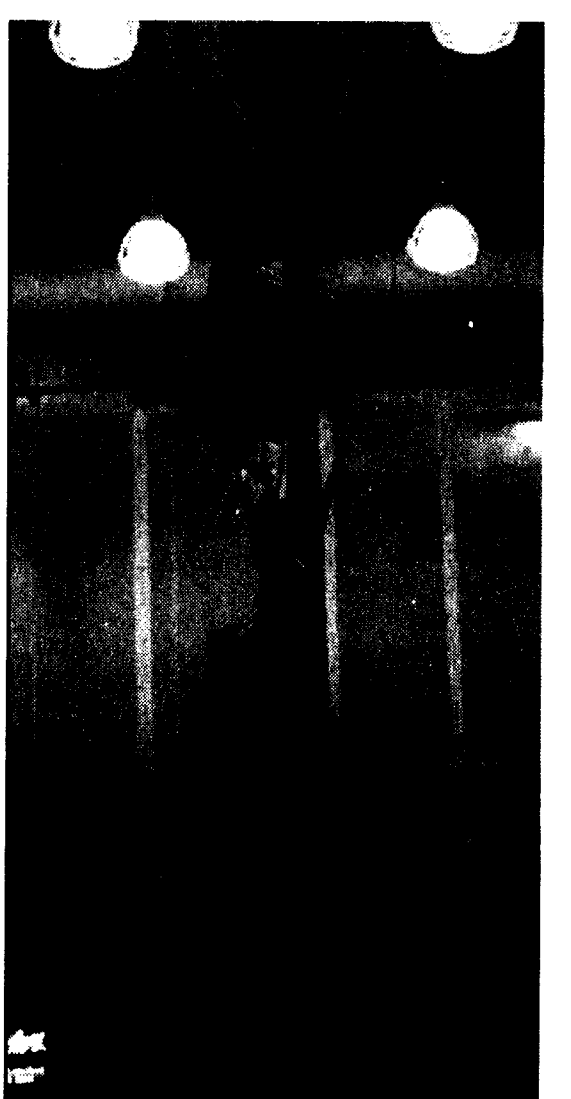
Why are Behrend basketball games better than high school basketball games? Simple: this is college - a place where we can put our personal discrepancies aside a lot easier because we are more mature.

This is where your fondest memories are made and your best friends are solidified. We remember things like getting painted up for basketball games more than most other things done in college.

If you don't believe me, think of it this way: do you remember social events from last year more, or information from lectures you received in class yesterday?

"Showing your support by cheering at basketball games gives you ownership of the school and you feel like you are more of a part of the Behrend community," said Bonanno. "Being at the games gives you a common thread to connect to other Behrend students."

How can you create these memories and friends? Go on out and watch the games. Yell so your vocal chords are dysfunctional for a couple days. You'll have some great stories to tell your kids someday.



K.J. MARGRAFF/BEHREND BEACON  
The cheerleaders and dance team performed between games at fan jam.