

SPORTS

"Wait, we're #3?"

A BREAKDOWN OF PSU FOOTBALL'S NCAA BOWL HOPES

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For most Penn State freshmen, this year's NCAA football season has been a surreal experience. Last year, the team made brief appearances in the top-25 AP poll and settled for a victory over Texas A&M in the Alamogordo Bowl. This year, the team has consistently outplayed opposing teams, and counts itself among only five teams that remain undefeated: Penn State, Alabama, Texas Tech, Ball State, and Utah. Though a national championship is certainly a possibility when then-first ranked Texas lost to then-#7 Texas Tech, Penn State finds itself ranked third amongst BCS teams.

Several scenarios could propel Penn State into the national championship; others could hold them back due to the BCS considering their weak schedule. All of the scenarios involving Penn State playing in either the National Championship or Rose Bowl include the Nittany Lions winning the rest of their games. With a road game at unranked Iowa, then two home games against unranked Indiana and Michigan State, the Blue and White have a very high chance to finish their season undefeated. The last time that Penn State did that was 1994, a year in which they only made it to the Rose Bowl, behind quarterback Kerry Collins.

However, this year's Penn State team has a good chance to secure a spot in either the National Championship or Rose Bowl.

PSU in the National Championship

First, the most obvious scenario would involve Alabama and Texas Tech losing. If they were to both lose, Penn State

would be the only remaining viable undefeated team atop the BCS. In that scenario, Penn State would likely face Texas, currently ranked fourth, or Florida, sitting at fifth. If both top two teams were to lose, Penn State would be almost completely certain to nab a national championship berth.

The chances of that happening, though, are rather low. Alabama's remaining schedule features a matchup with #16 LSU that they could lose, and Texas Tech faces tough games versus #9 Oklahoma State and #6 Oklahoma. While not unprecedented, especially after last year, having both teams lose this late in the season is unlikely.

Secondly, if either Alabama or Texas Tech were to lose by itself, Penn State could grab the #2 spot. Alabama seems much less likely to lose than Texas Tech at this point, but one of them losing remains a large possibility. Many analysts are calling the Texas Tech-Oklahoma matchup to be a marquee game of the year. It certainly has championship implications for the Nittany Lions, as it could let Penn State move up.

For this scenario to come true, not only would one of the top teams have to lose, Penn State would have to fend off the one-loss teams chomping at its heels in the BCS ranks. Texas (8-1), Florida (7-1), Oklahoma (7-1), and USC (7-1) could make a case through strength of schedule for the #2 spot. However, Texas, Florida, and USC don't have big enough games throughout the rest of the year that could catapult them past the Nittany Lions. Oklahoma, with their big game against Texas Tech, might be able to skip ahead of Penn State and grab a #2 spot,

facing Alabama, if they win convincingly enough.

The last scenario could be some type of mixup at the top of the ranks without any of the top three teams losing. The only way that this could work in Penn State's favor is if Alabama plays badly enough in their last three games (barely grab a win against LSU, almost lose to 4-5 Auburn and 8-2 Mississippi State) they might be edged out by Texas for the top spot and by Penn State for #2. However, this is pretty unlikely to happen - Alabama will very likely blow away Auburn and Mississippi State.

(there are five, so they would need to drop no further than the #10 spot). If they lose two, they could again find themselves in a non-BCS bowl.

The most likely non-National Championship scenario would land the Nittany Lions in the Rose Bowl. If Alabama and Texas Tech win all of their games convincingly enough to keep #1 and #2, Penn State would likely roll in third. Even if one of the 1-loss teams jumps Penn State, the Blue and White will still find themselves ranked fourth, good enough to grab a berth in the Rose Bowl. Again, Oklahoma remains the largest threat for jumping Penn State.

top 10 currently, that would very likely put Penn State in the 7-10 range of rankings.

By the end of the season, either Oklahoma State or Oklahoma will drop out of the top ten. Each school faces Texas Tech in the next two weeks. Even if both win, they will face each other in the last game of the season. Again, if Penn State loses a game, they will probably not be ranked below Big 10 rival Ohio State, currently sitting at #11. Putting the Nittany Lions at #10 leaves room for them to move up late in the season and secure a #9 or #8 spot, which would put them in one of the other four BCS bowls (Rose, Sugar, Fiesta, or Orange). A one-loss Penn State team would be looking at grabbing a spot in the bowl, perhaps one of the undefeated teams, Utah or Boise State.

The only way that Penn State would drop out of contention of a BCS bowl is if they were to lose two of their remaining three games. While extremely unlikely, Penn State would drop down to the other side of the BCS teams, and find company with #13 Georgia (7-2), #14 Missouri (7-2), or #20 Georgia Tech (7-2).

While Penn State fans have a lot of things left to watch, there are still many possibilities unexpected here that could lead Penn State into a range of rankings. A weak schedule could help them in a year for their bowl game, and counting on them and them a spot in the National Championship.

BCS RANKINGS Week 10 (11/2)

1. Alabama
2. Texas Tech
3. Penn State
4. Texas
5. Florida
6. Oklahoma
7. USC
8. Utah
9. Oklahoma St.
10. Boise St.

PSU in another BCS Bowl

If the Nittany Lions lose a game, they will likely drop to #11. Ohio State, currently ranked #11, have a case to be ranked above Penn State, but teams like #10 Boise State (8-0) and #8 Utah (8-0) will likely be ranked above Penn State. The biggest threat of a loss comes from #18 Michigan State, which will face Penn State in both games of the season. Michigan State will be coming off of a bye weekend against Perdue. They lost to the only ranked team they faced, Ohio State, three weeks ago. Though they bested Wisconsin and Indiana in tough inter-Big 10 games, they have yet to succeed against a top-10 team.

Probably the likeliest situation for another BCS bowl would involve Penn State losing to Michigan State in the last week of the season. Barring any major mixups in the

PSU in the Rose Bowl

If Penn State misses out on the National Championship game, they will almost certainly play in the next-highest game, the Rose Bowl. For this to happen, in any scenario, they will need to finish out their season undefeated.

If Penn State loses a game, they could still very well be featured in a BCS bowl

TEXAS (8-1)

- 11/08: BAYLOR
- 11/15: @ KANSAS
- 11/27: TEXAS A&M

FLORIDA (7-1)

- 11/08: @ VANDERBILT
- 11/15: S. CAROLINA
- 11/27: CITADEL
- 11/29: @ #22 F.S.U.

TEXAS TECH (9-0)

- 11/08: #9 OK. ST.
- 11/22: @ #6 OKLA.
- 11/29: BAYLOR

PENN STATE (9-0)

- 11/08: @ IOWA
- 11/15: INDIANA
- 11/22: #18 MICH. ST.

ENTERPRISE RENT-A-CAR



ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

Kevin Gorny Cross Country Junior

Kevin Gorny, a Penn State Behrend junior, has played a big role for the Behrend Lions cross-country team.

Gorny is an Erie native and a graduate of McDowell High School in Erie. His cross-country career started in his freshman year of high school.

Gorny did not play any sports in middle school, but in ninth grade decided to go out for the cross-country team.

"I almost joined the team in eighth grade, but I decided not to," said Gorny.

Although he joined the team in ninth grade, it took a little encouragement from his dad.

"I wasn't going to join in ninth grade, and I told my dad," said Gorny, "he told me to just go and try it out, so I did," he continued.

Gorny went to practice and the first day went well, but the second day was a little bit of a struggle.

"The first day of practice, I ran the whole time. But the second day of practice, I didn't quite run the whole time," said Gorny.

In his very first race, Gorny finished in first.

"I started in Junior Varsity, and I ran in my first race and won the whole thing," he said. After that race, Gorny was placed on the Varsity team and remained

Athlete Spotlight: Kevin Gorny

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there for the rest of his high school career.

Gorny's favorite memories come from his senior year on his 4x800m relay team.

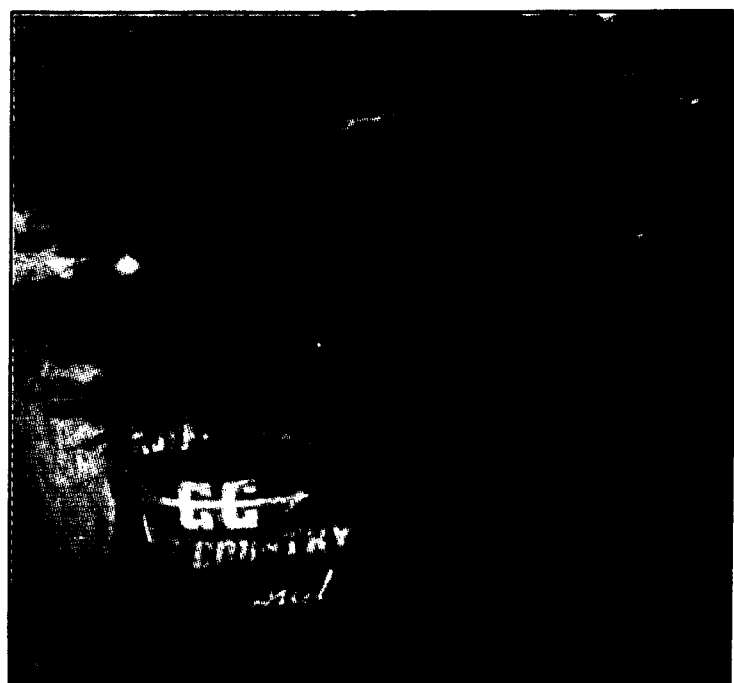
"It was my senior year at the Butler Invitational and we finished second. We earned recognition in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*," said Gorny.

Another memory came from the District 10 Championships.

"We won the District 10 Championship and advanced to the state meet," said Gorny.

"Those are probably the two memories that stick out in my mind," he continued.

Gorny's top three college choices were Gannon, Allegheny



DANIEL SMITH / The Behrend Beacon
Gorny drives a Gator, leading athletes along the running route at the Behrend Cross Country Invitational.

and Penn State Behrend.

Gorny ended up choosing Behrend for a couple of reasons. "Well, I talked to Coach Cooper and I really liked the campus," said Gorny. "I really liked the look of the campus and the fact that it was a Penn State school," he continued.

This past weekend, Gorny ran in the AMCC Championship.

He led the Lions to a first place finish. Gorny ran in the 8K race and finished with a time of 27:45.

He was the top Behrend finisher and second overall.

The Behrend men logged 31 points and held off Franciscan who finished with 48 points.

The top ten finishers earn AMCC All-Conference honors.

This is the second year in a row that the Behrend Lions have won the AMCC Championships. The blue and white also won the AMCC Championship in 2000 and 2007.

Gorny is a Management Information Systems major and after he graduates, he plans on going south for a job.

He also said that coaching may be in his future.

"I wouldn't mind being a coach. I don't want to run competitively after I graduate, but I'd like to be a coach."