COMMENTARY

Fleury and Johnson faceoff for starting position

SEAN NEELY
senior reporter

After a disappointing collapse against the Boston Bruins on Wednesday, the Pittsburgh Penguins rebounded with a win on Friday, Nov. 12. For a team with quality talent and a record of 8-8-1, just 17 games into the season, should fans begin to worry?

What has been the scene thus far? Shaky goaltending? Check. Defensive collapses? Check. Questionable coaching decisions? Check. You get the picture. Of course, this is sarcasm and in no way, shape, or form should any hockey enthusiast, or Pens fan for that matter, be concerned.

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Brent Johnson has a 6-2 record this season with a 2.1 GAA and .927 save %.

However, what has been most interesting this year has been the goaltending situation. People have been calling for Fleury's head this year. Yes, he has not played well, but should we really resort to giving up on him just 17 games into the season? Absolutely not.

Now, I know what you are thinking; Johnson should be playing. If you were to look at the stats alone you would be correct in that assumption, but, again, we are very early into the season. Look at Philadelphia last year; they were bottom dwellers in the Eastern Conference. They went through a coaching change, and got into the playoffs by winning a shoot-out that would have decided who would go on to the playoffs. Some of you may remember that game between the Rangers and Flyers. Then, with the 8th seed, the Flyers went on to the Stanley Cup Finals to lose to the Chicago Blackhawks.

What about the Pittsburgh Penguins? Remember in the 2008-2009 season when the Pen's nearly missed the playoffs. They fired, at that time, head Coach Michael Therrien, and then brought in Dan Bylsma. What did that team do? Oh yeah, that's right, they won the Stanley Cup with Fleury in goal.

Listen, the hockey season is long. In fact, we still have 65 more games to go. Hockey is full of ups-and-downs; the proof has been in the history of the league, not to mention what has happened in the past two years.

However, there is no denying that the Pen's goaltending situation needs to improve. The answer will be Fleury. This is guaranteed. The guy has won a cup, and is capable of rebounding.

What's more troubling, is the fact that the Pen's new contracts, specifically Milan Michalek, and Paul Martin (Defensemen) have been, well, underachieving. Defensive breakdowns are not the goaltenders fault. So, next time we go to blame Fleury, think before you do so.

Not convinced? Let's see what veteran defensemen, Paul Martin, has to say about the situation,

"Defense is our attitude. You have to want to do the little things, and do them right. Some of it's sacrificing, getting hit, taking a hit to make a play, getting down early and coming back. But, at the same time, we can't make excuses."

Excuses is the key word there, but what is the excuse for the Pens embarrassing 7-4 loss on Wednesday? It wasn't goaltending; I wouldn't even blame Johnson for the loss.

Listen, goaltending will only be solid if the team in front is solid. Solid, the Pen's defense has not been. Sure the Pen's defense leads the league in points, but they aren't exactly playing perfect in their defensive end. Currently, the Pen's defense ranks in the middle of the pack, giving up 2.76 goals-per game. That's not a bad number, but there have been many games that have inflated that number, like the 7-4 loss to the Bruins on Wednesday night. If a defense takes away chances, and prevents the other team from quality scoring chances, which has not been the case this year, then yes, a goaltender will have trouble from preventing those quality scoring chances from going in. Whether it is Johnson, or Fleury in net, neither will have success unless the defense in front of them does.

"I like Johnson, but there is a reason why he has been a backup his whole career. Look at Brodeur, he's not exactly off to the greatest start this year either," Bryan Fleeson, a sophomore Behrend student said.

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Marc-Andre Fleury has a 2-6 record this season with a 3.23 GAA and .860 save %.

Has Fluery been great? No, but he's not entirely to blame. I would like to see the Pen's defense stop pinching up the ice as much, and play a game focused around what Michalek and Martin were brought in to do: play great solid defense in their own end.

Until then, we still have 65 games to go. Injuries, and issues will come and go, but the Pen's will make the playoffs, with Fleury leading the way. Mark my words.

COMMENTARY

Auburn star and Hiesman hopeful accused of cheating

BRANDON BOYD
opinion editor

Despite off-field troubles, Auburn quarterback, Cam Newton, continues to make defenders look silly on the field.

Newton, who became the eighth player to throw for 2,000 yards and rush for 1,000 yards in a season on Saturday, is under heat due to "pay-for-play" allegations in which his father, Cecil Newton, is accused of selling Newton's services to the highest bidder. The allegations were brought to light from allegations that Cecil Newton and another man, John Bond, tried to secure payment from Mississippi State during Cam Newton's transfer from a junior college. The rumored amount was $180,000.

Newton has proclaimed his innocence, saying "I haven't done anything wrong," during a press conference.

Still, his checkered past is not helping matters. Newton was accused of stealing a laptop computer from a Florida State student, where he started his collegiate career. Recent reports also suggest Newton would have been facing expulsion for cheating three times during his short tenure at Florida State. After last week's victory, Auburn Coach, Gene Chizik, discussed Newton: "Let me tell you something. This is a great kid," he said. "I can speak intelligently on that one. This is a great kid. And you can go back and you can talk to elementary coaches, high school, this is a great kid and he's been a great kid at Auburn University every day he's been around me, this staff and his teammates."

Regardless of the off-field controversy, it can be confidently said that Newton is among the elite of college football. He has repeatedly dominated opponents from the stacked SEC conference. He has thrown for 21 touchdowns and rushed for 17 against opponents like LSU and Arkansas. He is without a doubt a Heisman candidate, and the likely leader at this point.

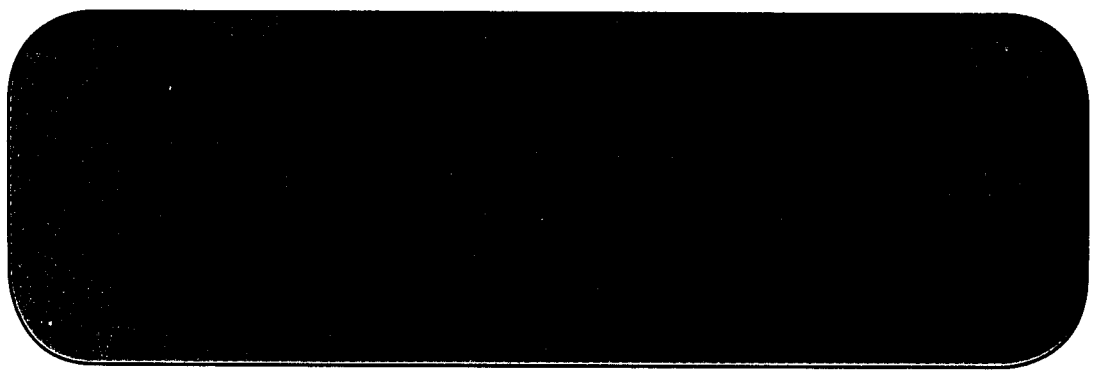
However, the negative press surrounding Newton brings his on-field dominance into doubt. The Heisman Trophy Trust stripped Reggie Bush of his 2005 Heisman trophy after Bush was found to have taken improper benefits. In fact, the Heisman website now skips the year 2005 in their list of Heisman winners, wiping Bush's jaw-dropping year from their history.

The Heisman Trophy Trust would likely want to avoid a similar fate with Newton, which could lean voters to vote against him, despite not yet being proven guilty. The question of whether Bush deserved to be stripped of his trophy (an argument for another day) and the issue of whether or not college players deserve to be paid (ditto) should not come in to play when voting for the Heisman trophy winner.

The Heisman trophy should be decided by on-field play only. Players who have done worse than what Newton is accused of doing are still listed as Heisman winners.

O.J. Simpson, who was accused of killing his wife and a man, is still listed as the 1968 winner. If O.J. Simpson can still be listed as a Heisman winner, despite his off-field troubles, why can't Newton or Reggie Bush? Both allegedly took money, and while they may have the money to afford expensive manicures and jewelry, their hands are clean of blood. While it would be hard to say that Newton and Bush are likely innocent of taking money, their actions pale in comparison to the supposed actions of one O.J. Simpson.

With the FBI now getting involved in the drama surrounding Newton, there is a chance that Cecil Newton could be guilty of taking money for his son's services. These allegations loom over Newton's Heisman candidacy in the same way that his 6'6" frame towers over most of the other players – and that's just not right.



SAMANTHA MEYERS
staff reporter

Sunday, Nov. 7 the Cleveland Browns dominated the field against the New England Patriots with a 34-14 win. The Patriots entered this game with the league's best record of 6-1-0 in hopes of winning against the Browns with a record of 2-5-0.

The Browns took the lead early in the game with a thirty-eight yard field goal from Kicker, Phil Dawson. The Browns gained a 10-0 lead with a two yard run for a touchdown from Running Back, Peyton Hillis. The Browns entered the second quarter with the 10-0 lead but the Patriots soon changed that with a two yard pass to Rookie Aaron Hernandez, getting the Patriots on the board. But the Browns did not let this bother them by scoring an eleven yard run touchdown from Wide Receiver, Chansi Stuckey.

The Browns started the third quarter again in their favor with a sixteen yard pass from Rookie Quarterback Colt McCoy, giving the Browns their third touchdown of the game and making the score 24-7. The Browns opened the fourth quarter with a thirty yard field goal from Kicker Phil Dawson giving the Browns a 27-7 lead.

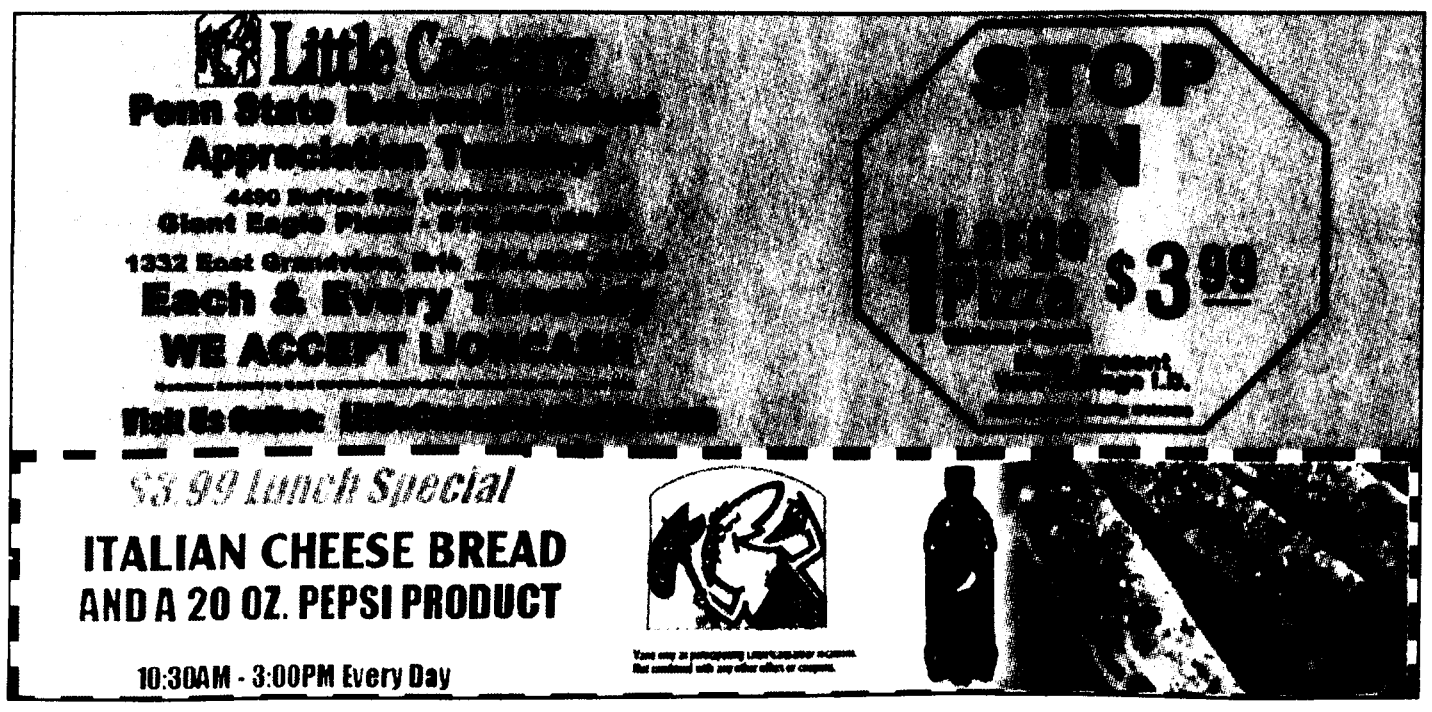
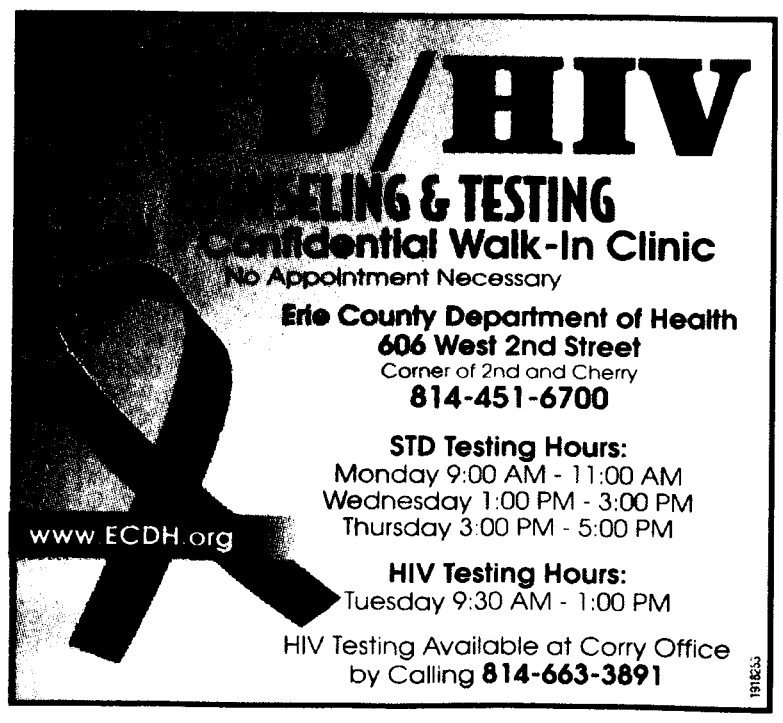
But the Patriots were not down and out yet. The Patriots raised the score by gaining another touchdown from Rookie Tight End Aaron Hernandez, making the score 27-14. But Browns sealed the deal late in the fourth quarter by scoring a thirty-five yard touchdown from Peyton Hillis, making a final score of 34-14.

Colt McCoy played a great game on Sunday and looks to be the answer the Browns have been looking for. Browns fans hope to see Colt McCoy to continue playing and hope to see their team gain more wins. Peyton Hillis also played a good game, if he can stay healthy and work on his ball control; he could be a challenge for defense in future games.

"I think the Browns finally found a quarterback in Colt McCoy," says Browns fan, Cory Anderson, senior from Russell, PA. "The Browns dominated the Patriots from start to finish."

"The Browns had a pretty awesome trick play on the offense that resulted in a touchdown," says Patriots fan Thomas McDowell, freshman from Houston, TX. "I can't deny that I'm happy to see the Browns enjoying some success. They really needed a win more than the Patriots did. It just serves to get the Patriots good and angry for their game against the Steelers."

This game was a record setting game for both teams. The Patriots' Rookie Tight End Aaron Hernandez recorded his first two NFL touchdowns and Logan Mankins made his debut as Left Guard.

The Browns welcomed back Mohamed Massaquoi after he suffered a concussion in a game against the Pittsburgh Steelers. Also, Rookie Quarterback Colt McCoy completed 13-of-18 passes for 167 yards in the game. Peyton Hillis finished the game with a career high of 181 yards and two touchdowns on twenty-eight carries. His previous career high was 144 yards which he earned against the Baltimore Ravens earlier this season.

The Browns looked good again this week as they took on the New York Jets. They showed their ability to keep the game close as the battled it out to a hard loss in overtime. The fact that the Browns are no longer the team to make fun of because of their multiple losses. While the Steelers still have the upper hand, Browns are beating teams that the Steeler's could not. So long the days of the pathetic loosing Browns, we all used to laugh at? Time will tell if this team has really become a force to reckon with.