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Sports
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Glance

Sports

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Well, now that the thrill of football is over, it is time to switch gears to other sports. For some, football is the only sport out there, but Penn State basketball is at its halfway point and it's time to review.

For the Penn State men, the struggles continue. At time of printing, the men had a record of 7-13, with a conference record of 1-6. Hard to believe, but there is actually good news. The men are on pace to eclipse last years' total wins, which were nine.

Aaron Johnson, the 6-foot-9, 240-pound junior forward, has led the team; he has led the team with an average of 14 ppg and 10.5 rpg. The team has also gotten good play out of Travis Parker and Geary Claxton, who has been a presence on the court leading 17 blocks this season.

But the Lions are losing in two key categories. Overall, they are averaging 3.5 points less per game than their opponents and are averaging four more turnovers.

For any team that wants to be successful, they must be able to score points and not turnover the ball. The men have to work harder if they hope to get a couple more wins this season. They have some big games in their conference coming up, so better play is essential.

For the women, well it is just another year in paradise. Well, maybe not that good, but they are doing well. They are once again ranked in the Top 25 and on their way to another appearance in the NCAA Tournament.

Currently the women are boasting a 13-7 record. That includes a 9-0 record at home, but poor showing on the road; only 4-7. In the Big 10 conference, the Lady Lions are 8-1.

So who leads this team anyway? Well, they are led by five seniors; the most notable being Tanisha Wright, who leads the team in scoring, averaging a little over 20 ppg; Ashli Schwab, leader in rebounding; and Jess Strom, leader in field goal and three-point percentage.

Ahead for the Lady Lions are teams such as Northwestern, Ohio State, and Indiana. The team has broken the Top 25 rankings, but it remains to be seen if they will be as good as the team that made it to the elite eight last season.

So, the results are the same when it comes to PSU Basketball so far this season. The women are playing well once again, and the men continue to struggle.

For the women, the senior leadership on the team and Rene Portland will take them to the NCAA Tournament again. Whether or not they will be successful is another story. Expect more excitement when March rolls around.

For the men, it will be a struggle all season long. The good news is that they will probably eclipse the win total of last season by a few wins. The bad news is that, barring a miraculous showing in the Big 10 tournament, they will probably miss the big dance.

There is one match-up to look for in the coming weeks. On Feb. 16, the guys will play top ranked Illinois in "Happy Valley." It probably will not happen, but how sweet it would be if Penn State pulled off the huge upset. In college basketball, anything can happen.

Eagles' fans die hard

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By the time this article is read, Superbowl XXXIX will have been signed, sealed, and delivered. Fans of either New England or Philadelphia will be basking in the joy of ultimate bliss for a while. But while New England fans have already enjoyed their smorgasbord of championships for a couple

years, Philly has not seen a title since 1983. So what would it mean for a city that has suffered through disappointment after disappointment to win a title? More than anyone would even comprehend.

Let's see. Many things have changed since the Philadelphia 76ers knocked off the Los Angeles Lakers in 1983. Atari has been replaced by the Playstation and X-Box. The Hooters have been replaced by

Maroon 5. And lets not forget, The Facts of Life has been replaced by Joey.

Now a lot has happened in the 22 years in between, but something has stayed the same. Something has not changed.

Losing in Philadelphia since 1983 has become sort of expected. The Flyers were always going to get close to the cup, but they were not winning the darn thing. The 1993 Phillies may have been lovable and John

Kruk was cool, but a World Series championship? Yeah right. And the 76ers? Well with the exception of 2001 when they made it to the NBA Finals, there has not been much to cheer about.

So how about the Eagles? Well, it was a pretty rough time for the guys in green. The Marion Campbell years were something to forget and the team was not very popular.

In 1985, the Chicago Bears and that great defense won the Superbowl. The leader of that squad of suffering was Buddy Ryan and soon enough, Buddy was the main man in Philly.

Ryan did not disappoint, particularly with his defense. But what did that team and its coach, most noted for placing a bounty on Cowboys kicker Luis Zendejas, accomplish? Well in classic Philly fashion, nothing except for a few playoff appearances and a lack of a championship. Classic Philly style!

So time went on and still no championship for the beloved birds. Coaching changes happened and even a new owner took control. Then came 1999 when the Eagles hired Andy Reid, an unknown assistant coach from Green Bay. Nothing was expected of Reid when he came to Philly. Perhaps a few playoff appearances or even a division title here and there would be good enough.

But who would have thought that six years into his tenure, Reid would have a chance to erase the ultimate loser mentality that fans in Philadelphia have had since 1983. Yes the Eagles are one win away from a Superbowl title, but its magnitude on fans from that city is huge.

Many people like to pick on Philly fans for being whiners and idiots. In some cases, they are

right. Why throw snowballs at Santa?

In reality however, fans in Philadelphia are some of the most passionate fans in all of sports. Not only are they there for the team, but they will brave the coldest weather to cheer for their beloved teams.

That was evident when the Eagles played the Falcons in this year's NFC Championship Game. In temperatures that struggled to get out of the single digits, it was a struggle for both teams just before halftime. But the Philly fans cheered for their team and had faith that the Eagles were finally going over-the-top and into the Superbowl. And the cheering and faith finally paid off.

After three years of championship heartbreak, the Eagles have finally gotten a chance to compete for an NFL title. For Philly fans, years of frustration and pain were washed away if even for one day. And now it is their time.

Fans of Philadelphia will still be celebrating or crying when this article is read. If they celebrate, they deserve it. If the Eagles lose, they should not be ashamed.

Let's face it, the Superbowl is the biggest T.V. event, sporting or not. It is an unofficial holiday when everyone pays attention to one game and one game only. It is estimated this year that almost 800 million people around the world will watch the spectacle.

Just imagine this...the Philadelphia Eagles win the Superbowl and everyone around the globe is shouting E.A.G.L.E.S. As said before, the result will be known before this article is read. But for Eagles fans that have suffered through disappointment and heartache, nothing could be sweeter.



Photo courtesy of www.philadelphiaeagles.com

Wide receiver Terrell Owens answered many questions in recent press conferences, and left no doubt that he'll play in the Superbowl against New England.

Herb recounts the NHL's greatest players

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Greatest Hockey Players of All Time

5. Mark Messier
4. Ray Bourque
3. Gordie Howe
2. Mario Lemieux
1. Wayne Gretzky

Now, did you really think there would be a different player ranked number one on this countdown? Even the most casual hockey fan knows the name Wayne Gretzky. Gretzky, known as "The Great One," was, without a doubt, the greatest player ever to lace up a pair of skates. For the 20 seasons between 1979 and 1999, Gretzky put up numbers that will never be reached.

In other sports, there is no clear-cut, number one, greatest player. In basketball, Kareem Abdul Jabbar had the most career points, but he is rarely

mentioned in the same breath as Michael Jordan. In baseball, Hank Aaron has the most home runs in a career, but does that make him better than Ty Cobb or Babe Ruth? Gretzky had the skill and domination of Jordan with the numbers of Abdul Jabbar to back it up.

Over his two decades on the ice, Gretzky amassed enough trophies to fill a dozen mansions. He won the scoring title an amazing ten times, including seven straight from 1981 to 1987. He won the league MVP award nine times and he earned plenty more awards too numerous to mention. He also added four Stanley Cups to his trophy case.

The only thing greater than the number of trophies Gretzky has earned is the number of records that he still possesses. He holds, or shares, more than 60 records, including most goals, assists, and points in a season and most goals, assists and points in a career. These are probably his most impressive and famous records. His career goals mark is 150 higher than the next active player, and he has 700 more assists than the player ranked second on the list. His career point record has an even bigger

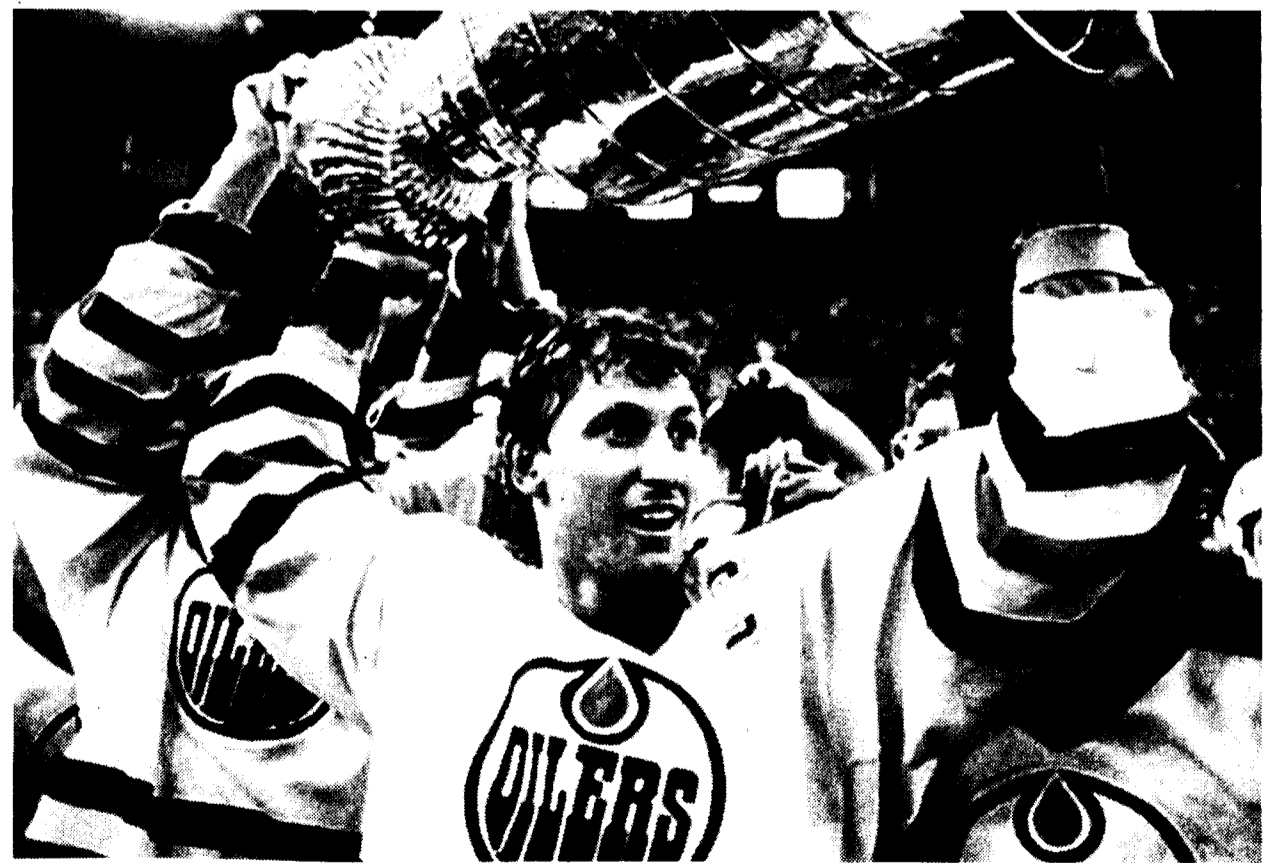


Photo courtesy of sportingnews.com

Hockey legend Wayne Gretzky holds one of his four career Stanley Cups high.

cushion. Gretzky's next closest challenger is nearly 1,000 points behind him.

His single season records are just as impressive. Great players of today score about 40 goals a season, and get about 60 to 70 assists a season for a points total of around 100. Gretzky's best

seasons in those categories were; 92 goals (1981-82), 163 assists (1985-86) and 215 points (1985-86). Plain and simple, the players' best of today does not even compare to Gretzky's best; not even close. This is the reason why Gretzky was given the name "The Great One." If any

player in sports deserves that nickname, it is Wayne Gretzky. No player in any other sport has ever dominated his sport enough to be called the greatest ever. It is safe to say, there is only one Wayne Gretzky, and his records are the safest in all of sports.