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SPORTS

Steelers Football recap

Associated Press story

PITTSBURGH - The Pittsburgh Steelers lost Sunday for the first time in more than a year during regular-season play, and it's no coincidence that it was also the first time their offensive line didn't play well.

The line didn't protect quarterback Ben Roethlisberger and it didn't open holes for running back Willie Parker in the 23-20 loss to the Super Bowl champion New England Patriots.

The Patriots showed a variety of defensive looks and the Steelers never seemed to get a handle on what New England was doing.

"It was not our best game as an offensive line," Pro Bowl guard Alan Faneca said. "We did not give our best effort today."

Roethlisberger was sacked four times for losses of 26 yards. Parker, who had run for 161 and 111 yards in his first two games, was held to 55 yards on 17 carries. Take away one 11-yard run and Parker had 44 yards on his other 16 runs, an average of fewer than three yards per attempt.

"They gave us a lot of different looks," Faneca said. "They were looks that we've seen before. I don't know exactly what was wrong. That's something we'll have to look at."

The inefficiency manifested itself in other ways. Guard Kendall Simmons was twice called for false starts and picked up a holding penalty on the Steelers' final scoring drive.

"We just didn't execute," left tackle Marvel Smith said.

GIVING IT AWAY:@ The Steelers turned a long gain into a nightmare with the type of flashy, high-risk play that coach Bill Cowher dislikes.

Wide receiver Antwaan Randle El caught a pass from Roethlisberger and was near the Patriots' 10-yard line when he was about to be tackled.

Randle El, who had gained 49 yards on the play, turned and tried to lateral the ball to teammate Hines Ward. Ward was running at full speed and couldn't grab the unexpected toss. The Patriots' Eugene Wilson recovered the fumble.

"Hindsight, obviously, you wouldn't want to do that in a game like this," Cowher said. "Against this caliber of team, you cannot ruin opportunities like that. He understands that. It was just one of those things that happens."

"He was trying to make a play. I just told him to let it go, learn from it and let's move on. Don't dwell on it."

STREAKERS:@ The Steelers had a 16-game regular season winning streak snapped by the team whose record-setting streak they ended last season. The Steelers beat the Patriots 34-20 on Oct. 31 to halt New England's 18-game streak.

The Patriots came back to Pittsburgh to win the AFC championship game in January, then won the Super Bowl. The Steelers obviously took a lesson from that.

"It was a great run, but for us, it's all about where you end up," Ward said. "If this loss is going to make us better, then so be it. We're not really caught up in streaks or anything."

Penn State tests revamped offense at Northwestern

By GENARO C. ARMAS
Associated Press Writer

STATE COLLEGE, Pa. Copyright 2005 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed. Penn State head coach Joe Paterno realizes that, sometimes, you just can't please everybody.

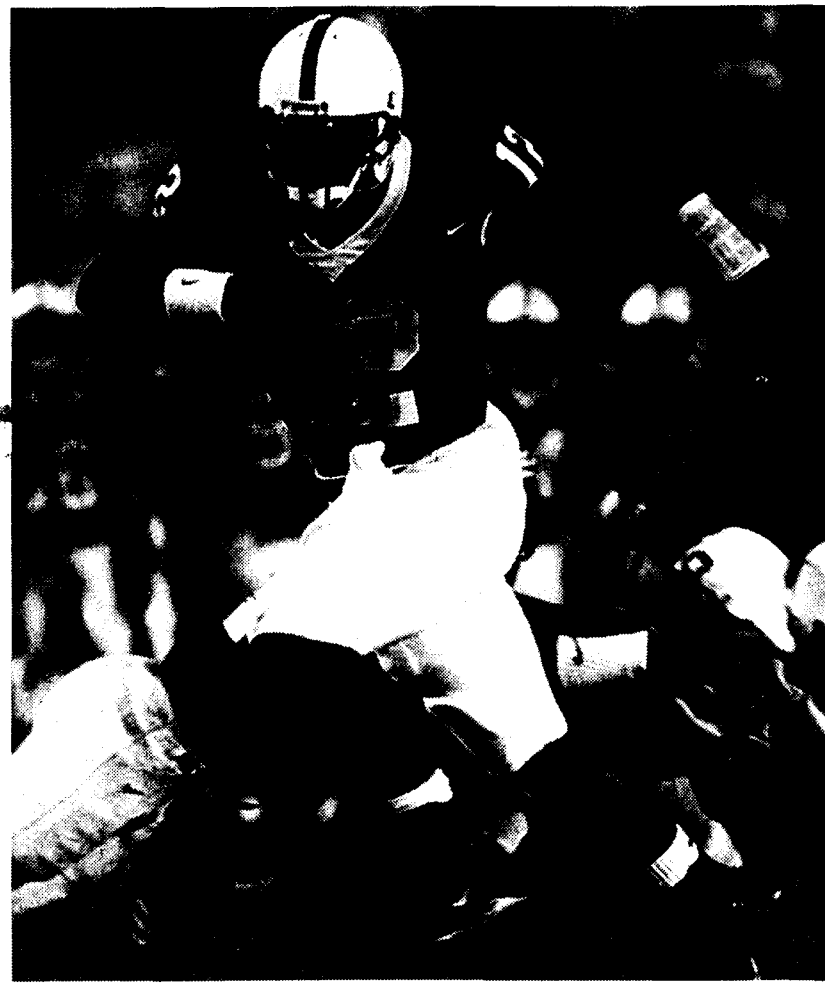
Take the offense, for example, which has displayed a quick-strike, big-play capability over the season's first three weeks that hasn't been around for a while. Last week alone, Penn State had two touchdown passes of 55 yards and another for 47 yards against Central Michigan. Last year, Penn State's longest TD

reception was for 37 yards.

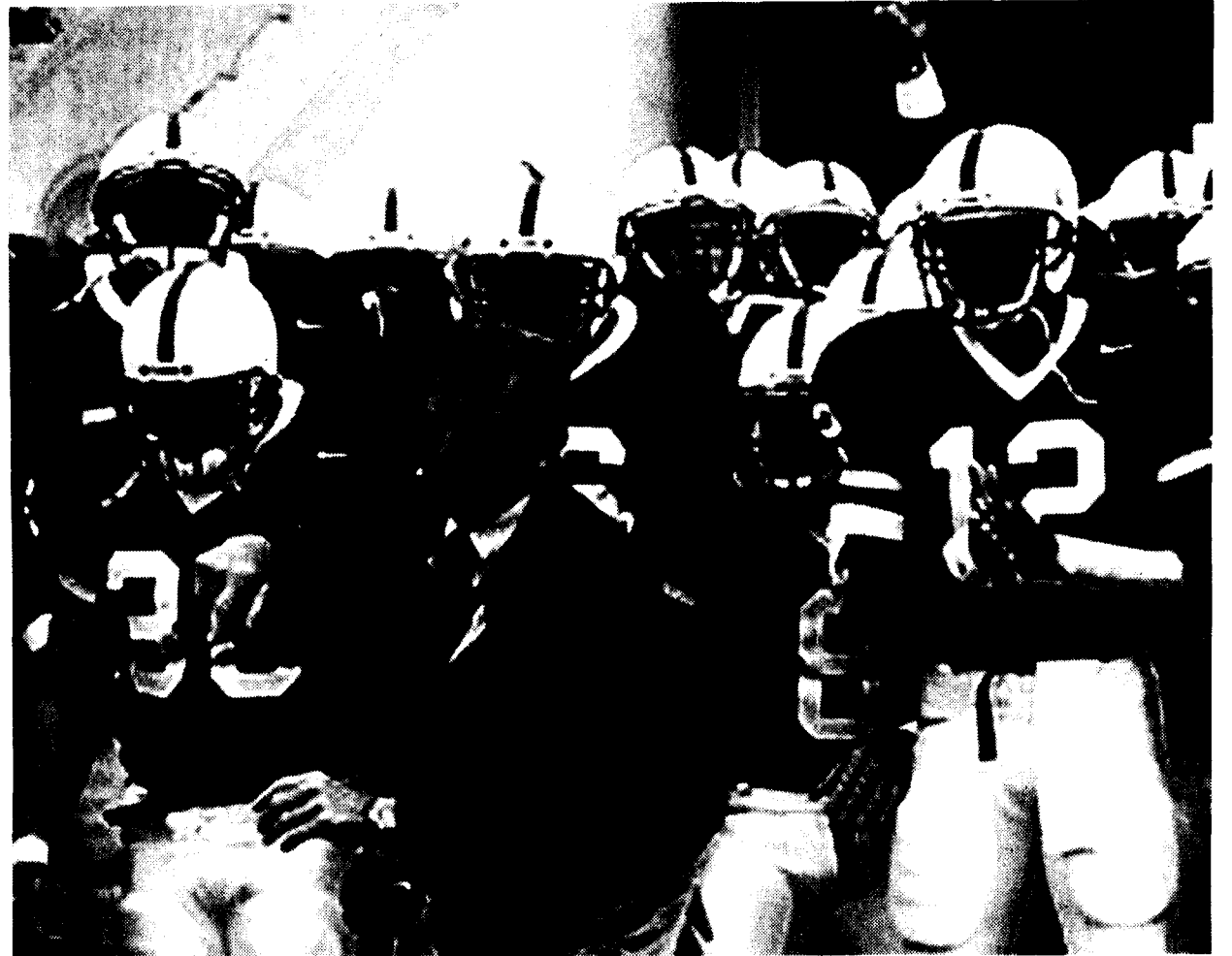
"If we're just going four yards, four yards, five yards, then you would be asking the question 'How come we don't have any big plays?'" Paterno said Tuesday at his weekly news conference. "We happen to have some people who can make some big plays."

The need for big plays is something that Paterno harped on during the offseason after the offense took much of the heat last year for Penn State's 4-7 record. The additions of freshmen Deon Butler, Derrick Williams and Justin King have injected much-needed speed to the receiving corps.

"What are you going to do? Sit there with hands behind the back and say 'Don't throw



Penn State's quarterback Michael Robinson.



Photos courtesy of google.com

Joe Paterno leads his team to the field

the ball, because somebody is going to ask me on Tuesday how come we don't sustain drives?" Paterno said. "No I don't think about it. All I'm worried about is what we can do to win a football game, period."

While impressive, Penn State's steady improvement on offense this season hasn't exactly come against top-notch defenses. Northwestern, Penn State's next opponent, hasn't done too well so far either, having given up 773 yards in a 52-21 loss at Arizona State last week.

Still, the Wildcats and Nittany Lions have a history in the Big Ten. Penn State has lost to Northwestern the last two seasons, including a 14-7 defeat

at Beaver Stadium last year.

"The last few years against Northwestern... we felt we could have done a lot better than we did," tight end Isaac Smolko said Tuesday.

The Wildcats use a spread offense led by senior quarterback Brett Basanez, which could mean another active day for Penn State's defense. Smolko said he hopes the Nittany Lion offense can chip in with long drives.

"It'll be a big part of this game," Smolko said. "Being on the field a little longer will help the defense."

A win against Northwestern would be the 100th for Penn State since joining the Big Ten in 1993, a milestone that Paterno said

wasn't one of his major concerns. The Nittany Lions finished 2-6 in conference play last year.

"We would like to prove to the Big Ten that we can still play with them. We lost some games last year that I felt we could have won," Paterno said. "I am just anxious to play, whether it is a Big Ten team or not a Big Ten team."

In the teams' last meeting in 1990, the Nittany Lions shut out Alabama, 9-0, at Tuscaloosa, Ala.

Look for continued coverage of Penn State's football season in upcoming Capital Times issues.

PSH baseball working hard to play catch-up

By Kathryn Herr
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With no belts, socks or hats, and only three practices before their first game the team was a real life rendition of the Bad News Bears.

Some players have never played baseball before and most of the experienced players haven't picked up a baseball in years. Out of shape, out of practice and inexperienced and thrown together at the last minute is how the season began for Penn State Harrisburg's new baseball team.

Their first game against Penn College was a catastrophe. With their hats arriving on game day, they were unprepared to say the least. Penn College had already played seven games before beating the pants off of Penn State Harrisburg 20-3. To add salt to the wound, all but one of the teams on PSH's schedule have had baseball teams for at least the past three years. The exception is Penn State York, which has at least one semester on PSH.

Corey Daniel, senior pitcher allows a smile to cross his face

as he explains the difficulties the team is facing. Daniel says he came to school especially to play sports and he will play in any condition. "Education is second on my list," he says. With his whole heart in the game, Daniel is optimistic that the team will improve despite the chaotic start of the season. Daniel hasn't played baseball in three years, but that won't keep him from getting back on the mound.

The first three games were tough and discouraging for the players and coaches, but they keep practicing. Fayette swept a doubleheader with PSH 17-10 and 23-3. Fayette swept the doubleheader. However, each game is a learning experience for them.

The coaches are torn between teaching the fundamentals and raw mechanics of baseball to some players while preparing the rest of the team for game day.

"Our first three practices were terrible," says Andrew Dale, senior back-up shortstop, with a laugh. Although the team has not won a game yet they are in high spirits with hope of improvement.

Head coach Bob Maschmeyer

says some players need to learn the very basics such as how to throw a ball, catch a ball, hold the bat and move their feet. He is utilizing the actual game plays to teach the novice players the basics. "There are teaching moments at every turn," he says. The experienced players are taking an active role in building the team's skills. Those who are familiar with the game are taking the others under their wing, teaching them techniques and handing out tips.

"Matt Carol is a leader behind the plate. Leading the defense begins behind the plate," says Maschmeyer.

The chemistry of the team is something that will come with time. "We're still building communications," said Daniel.

The players are still getting to know one another and their coaches. While knowing a teammate's name is helpful, knowing their strengths and weaknesses is essential to function as a team. Dale says he doesn't know 90 percent of his teammates yet and most of them he has never seen on campus. "I'm still learning names," says Daniel.

"It's gonna take some time for them to get to know me and my philosophy of baseball," said Maschmeyer. Working together is already making a difference.

Dale says it's the competitive nature of sports that draws him to play baseball. "I play the bench," says Dale with a chuckle. Being part of the team and competing together is worth the aches and pains of practice for Dale even if he doesn't start.

On Tuesday the team finally came together and their hard work paid off. "They played a great game," says Maschmeyer. Although the team lost the game to New Kensington it was a huge win for them. Committing only two errors, opposed to the 11 errors made on Saturday, the team made a vast improvement.

Playing for the first time as a team, instead of individuals, they discovered a good mix of communications and skills.

"It's a huge step for us defensively and mentally," says Maschmeyer.

Daniel pitched a complete game, all nine innings, with seven strikeouts and only three walks. A total of 127 pitches. Tuesday was only the second time Daniel

has pitched a baseball game in three years.

"We turned a corner between Saturday and yesterday," says Maschmeyer. Tuesday's game changed the perspective of the players. They held their heads higher and talked proudly about their last game.

When asked about the first three games some would comment on the shape of their team with humor; saying 'we're so bad it's funny', or just shaking their heads at the question.

"We've come a long way," said Dale. "It was a different story two days ago."

Many of the players now believe in their teammates and themselves and are eagerly looking forward to the next game; the next chance to improve.

The team finally got their wins during a rough doubleheader with Scranton last weekend with scores of 7-4 and 14-4.

The wins were bittersweet as the next day they took two losses to Wilkes-Barre with scores of 10-6 and 7-3. Another loss to McKeesport (9-6) this week left them battered and worn, but the season is far from over and these 'Bad News Bears' have a winning team inside.