

Harrisburg men en route to playoffs

By **MEGAN RESSER**
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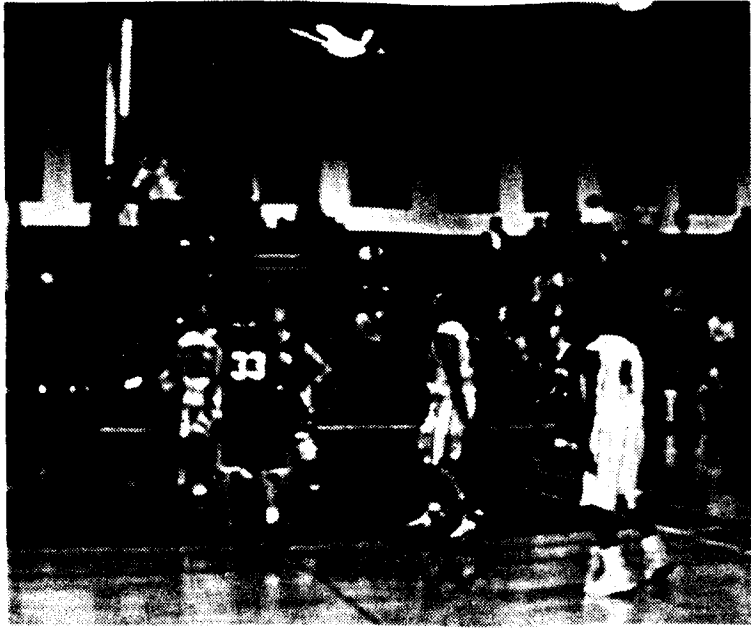


Photo by SUPAT KANCHANASAKU/The Capital Times

Harrisburg and McKeesport watch the basketball in anticipation. Harrisburg squeaked out a victory from McKeesport, which they will face in their opening playoff round.

On Feb. 6 and Feb. 12, the Penn State Harrisburg men's basketball team split a pair of home contests, losing 54-50 to Penn State Fayette on Feb. 6 and upsetting the previously undefeated Penn State McKeesport team on Feb. 12, 66-65. Between these two home contests, the men's team traveled to Penn State Beaver and came away with a close 65-62 win.

Following the home contests, the men's team split another pair of games. They traveled to Delaware County, where they lost 86-61, then traveled to Penn College where they exacted revenge from an earlier loss and came away with a 91-77 victory. This now brings the men's overall win-loss record to 11 wins, 10 losses.

Coming off of a previous 7-point loss to Penn State Fayette, the men's team was hoping to exact some revenge at their home court. Although Harrisburg fought hard, Fayette managed to come out on top as the last buzzer rang. The low scores are indicative of how close a game it actually was.

Fayette took an early lead, but Harrisburg never allowed them to lead by more than a 4-point margin. At half-time, the score was Fayette 23, Harrisburg 19.

Harrisburg started the 2nd half strong by tying the score at 25-25. The score continued to go back and forth with Harrisburg taking a 48-44 lead with about three minutes left to play. However, Fayette fought back. George Lemon, who would score 20 points, tied the game at 50-50 with 40 seconds left. He

scored again by tipping in a loose bounce to make the score 52-50.

At this point, Harrisburg still had a chance to win. Unfortunately, a Fayette player fouled. He made two clutch free throws, bringing their lead to 4, which was just too much for the Harrisburg team to overcome in the remaining time.

The Harrisburg men put forth a phenomenal team effort, with no one player taking center stage. Nealy Rawlings, senior, played solid defense, coming up with three big blocked shots in a row. He also contributed offensively by dumping in 13 points.

Abe Hitz, sophomore, added 13 points of his own, while Steve Molek, sophomore, had 10 points. Padraic Wood, Hasahn Wright, Craig Martin, and Tim Hurtack also scored.

On Feb. 12, the men's team hoped to have a better outcome against undefeated McKeesport. In their previous meeting, McKeesport won by a 16 point margin. Harrisburg accomplished this goal by fighting hard, keeping the score close and having 83% overall free throw accuracy. McKeesport gained an early lead, but it didn't last long. Hitz was fouled while sinking a 3 point shot and he scored the free throw to give Harrisburg a 13-11 lead with about 10 minutes left. Harrisburg held onto that lead for the rest of the half, heading into the locker rooms with a 36-32 score.

Harrisburg continued their scrappy offensive play and had a 10-point lead for the first part of the second half. McKeesport was then handed several technical fouls and Hitz capitalized on this by scoring six

free throws in a row. Rawlings and Wood also had great offensive games, with Wood scoring 11 of his 16 points in the second half alone. Things were looking very good for Harrisburg, as they lead 62-49. McKeesport didn't just sit back and watch. They went on a 13-0 run to tie the game up at 62-62 with a 1:15 left. Wood sank a 3-point shot, but McKeesport answered right back with three of their own. The score was tied at 65-65, and it was looking like overtime. The excitement continued, however, when Harrisburg's Mike Schweigler was fouled taking a shot as the game-ending buzzer rang. Much to the chagrin of the McKeesport team, he missed his first free throw, but made the second, giving Harrisburg a 66-65 win.

On Feb. 22, Harrisburg beat Penn State York 82-68, while Mont Alto upset heavy favorite Penn College. The combination of these two events earned Harrisburg a playoff spot. Harrisburg will now face McKeesport Tuesday, Feb. 28 in the first round. Good luck to the Harrisburg Nittany Lions!!!

Featured Athlete

By **ANDREW KOSE**
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After scoring 45 points in a big win over Penn College, Abe Hitz helped earn the win that solidified a spot for the team in the Penn State Athletic Conference playoffs. A week earlier, Hitz led the Lions with 27 points to their biggest win of the season over previously unbeaten McKeesport.

"The win over McKeesport was a great confidence builder for our team to see that we can be a top contender in this league," said the sophomore business management major.

A 2003 graduate of Annville-Cleona High School, Hitz was recruited by other colleges for his basketball ability but chose PSH

because he wanted to be part of a new program. "I definitely wanted to be a part of building the foundation for it. I also chose here because it was closer to my hometown and my family could attend more games."

As the season is winding down, Hitz' reflections are positive. "It is a great feeling because for this being our first year, we have grown at unbelievable rates, and the future of this program is looking

very bright. We wanted to develop together ultimately to become like a family, and the friendships that have come about are very important to the success of the squad."



Photo by AN DREW KOSE/ The Capital Times

Grap gabs about Penn State bball

By **JAMES GRAP**
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While the entire focus of Nittany nation was on Penn State football recruiting, the Penn State basketball team picked up a top recruit very much under the radar. If you blinked, you would have missed it. That is what I'm here for.

The Penn State basketball team made big headlines this year toppling Indiana and dismantling Illinois in what may have been the upset of the year. They are in contention for the NIT and the current players are playing good basketball.

However, they lack a major scorer at the guard position to take some pressure off Geary Claxton and Janelle Comley. They may have just filled that need with big time recruit Talor Battle. This 5'11" 160 pound guard hails from Albany, NY.

Only a junior, Battle was already a nationally ranked player. He is an outstanding shooter averaging an amazing 29 points per game, and a pure scorer with two 40-point games under his belt already. Basketball analyst Dave Komykoski said, "Battle is the scoring punch Penn State has been lacking in the guard position."

He is not only a tremendous scoring threat but has the ability to get his teammates involved in the game as well. He is a fast paced player and should fit into the Penn State system very well. He is capable of driving the lane or pulling up from long distance making him a very hard match up.

Playing point guard for his high school right now, Battle has developed great leadership skills. Even though offense is his strength, Battle is a good defender who should give the Nittany Lions a much-needed lift on that end of the floor. Maybe, most importantly, he is a winner.

Battle has the winning attitude that is much needed at Penn State. Basketball analyst Steve Barkanic had this to say, "[Battle] is a tremendous pickup for Penn State, just a tremendous pickup." Don't look now but the basketball team is gaining ground on the football team.

U.S. skates away empty

By **TIM DAHLBERG**
AP Sports Columnist

TURIN, Italy (AP) - Moments like this don't come often. Chances for redemption sometimes don't come at all.

Sasha Cohen took the ice Thursday night a favorite to win gold in the premier event of the Olympics. She left it with a forced smile, the moment having gotten the best of her once again.

The gold was gone on her first jump. She thought she lost both the silver and bronze on her second.

Four long years of training didn't prepare her for what turned out to be four of the longest minutes of her life.

The falls were shocking enough, winning a silver medal anyway almost a gift.

Still, she had hoped to be the third different American winner of women's figure skating in the last three Olympics. Instead, she will be remembered for one medal that got away.

That's because gold matters to Americans as much as it does to Cohen.

The sponsors were ready to put her on cereal boxes and in soft drink ads as America's new skating darling. By some estimates, \$20 million in endorsements was at stake. Divide that by two falls and you have \$10 million a fall on a night when the gold was there for the taking.

Figure skating is all about rising to the moment, and no place is that more magnified than at the Olympics.

Win, and you win the lottery. Lose, and you're just another pretty face on skates. Unfortunately for Cohen, it's a story she knows well.

She came in burdened with a history of bombing when it counted. After winning the short program, she carried even higher expectations on the night when America finally paid attention to the Winter Olympics.

Four years ago she was in third place the final night and skated poorly to fall from medal contention. She lost nationals, too, after winning short programs and faltering when it really mattered.

But she thought she had put the failures behind her, and she was determined to do things her own way in Italy. Cohen trained far from teammates, avoided the media and even skipped practice on Wednesday.

Her own coach shook his head, as

if to say Cohen was going to do what she wants to do.

Indeed, she was going to win - or lose - on her own terms.

She knew she had to skate four nearly perfect minutes, but she also knew when she fell on a jump in her warm-up that this was not likely to be that night.

Just 15 seconds into her program she was already on her rear. On her next jump she ended up sprawling and having to grab the ice with both palms to keep from falling farther.

"I had a really tough time with my jumps in warm-ups," Cohen said. "It wasn't a surprise."

She skated well after that, but all that was left seemed to be to see how far she would drop in the standings behind eventual winner Shizuka Arakawa of Japan, who skated brilliantly just behind Cohen.

Cohen kept her composure off the ice, just as she did after she fell on it. She was proud that she had been able to come back from the falls and skate well.

"I was able to believe when everything looked very dark and gray," she said.

Still, Cohen had no illusions that it was good enough for a medal. She took off her skates, changed from her costume and got ready to congratulate the winners.

When the skaters after Arakawa faltered, she had to quickly put the costume back on and lace up her skates to take the medalists' curtain call.

"I definitely didn't think I was going to get any medal, so it was a surprise," she said.

Somewhere back home, meanwhile, Michelle Kwan had to be wondering what could have been.

Kwan was the rare skater who prospered despite never winning Olympic gold, but her career will always be noted for the lack of it.

She came to Turin hoping she would finally get that elusive gold. She left after a day knowing that her body would simply not give her one last chance.

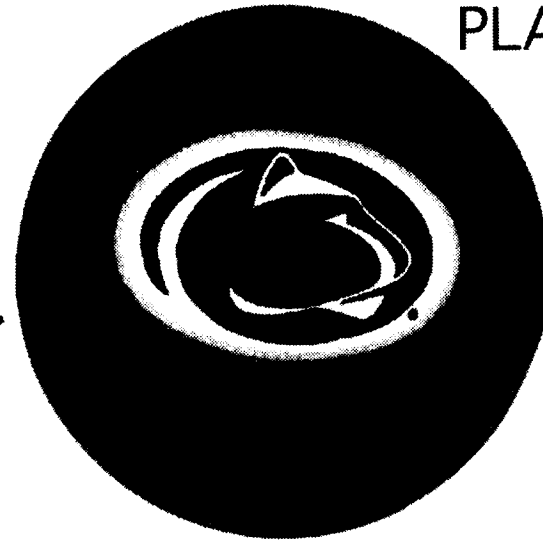
Cohen seems even more fragile. The chance of her lifetime was here, and just as quickly it was gone.

Cohen has an agent and sponsors. She knows the riches that could have been her reward. "Ultimately," she said, "it's four minutes of one day of my life."

It was, but it was the four biggest minutes of the biggest day Cohen will likely ever have.

It's Harrisburg's Time to Shine, 'Cause the 28th it's... **PLAYOFF TIME!!!**

Let's Go Lions!!



Watch Harrisburg take on Hazleton Tuesday, Feb. 28 @ 7 p.m. in the CUB **GO! FIGHT! WIN!!!**

PSH Volleyball Club

First Men's Game vs. Messiah College
Thurs. Feb. 9 at 6 p.m. in the CUB

Come out and support our team!!

Students interested in joining the volleyball club or the men's team, contact Ben Davis @ **BVD5001@PSU.EDU** or Kevin Larkin @ **KPLARKIN@COMCAST.NET**