

ILLINOIS: Another win for the Nittany Lions

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play, but when I was running, did you see how easy that was?" Williams said. "It was the guys up in front of me that did their jobs, all I had to do was run."

Barely touched on the return, Williams cut back at the 20 and outran Illinois' last defender, Nate Bussey into the end zone as a light drizzle fell on the field. Arm extended, he pointed a finger in front of him as he crossed the goal line, whipping the 109,000 fans packed into Beaver Stadium into a frenzy.

"The little things are frustrating," exasperated Illinois coach Ron Zook said. "The

kickoff coverage — that I'm just pulling my hair out on that one. I don't understand that."

Save for a few brave Illinois fans adorned in bright orange, Beaver Stadium was packed with fans dressed almost entirely in white.

The "White House" is what Penn State calls it, and afterward the crowd hooted and hollered as if Paterno had just won a presidential election. Actually, it was just Paterno's 377th career win, allowing him to remain one ahead of Florida State's Bobby Bowden, whose Seminoles defeated Colorado earlier Saturday.

Penn State had rolled to four nonconference victories

by easy margins, lighting up the scoreboard like a pinball machine. This time, they faced an offense that could keep pace — though Illinois was held back by a bunch of mistakes.

Eller missed a 33-yard field goal after Illinois ran the ball down the field against what had been a stout Penn State rush defense. Juice Williams connected with a wide-open Benn for the 54-yard touchdown catch to draw Illinois within 31-24 with 12:48 left in the game.

Clark then found tight end Andrew Quarless for a 17-yard touchdown to put the Nittany Lions ahead 38-24 before Daniel Dufrene's fumbled. He finished with 96 yards on 14 carries.

Illinois dropped to 0-6 at Happy Valley. The Nittany Lions opened the season with five straight victories for the first time since 2005 — there's that year again.

Illinois' woes started in the first half. One second-quarter drive was snuffed out by two holding penalties, while another drive ended after a poor pass by Juice Williams was intercepted by diving safety Anthony Scirrotto.

Penn State took the lead in between the two Illinois hiccups, with Clark and Derrick Williams coolly leading the way.

Clark opened the drive with a 24-yard strike down the right sideline to Deon Butler to the Illinois 33; Williams finished it off with a 5-yard score off an

end around to give Penn State a 21-14 advantage in the second quarter.

On a weekend full of upsets, including losses by Top 10 teams Southern California, Georgia, Florida and Wisconsin, Penn State is poised to make a big jump in the polls — and possibly enter the national title picture.

"We're not focused on that," Williams said with a slight grin before correcting himself. "We are focused on that. We think every day the national championship ... if we're not thinking that right now, we shouldn't be playing this game at all."

TOUGH ROAD: Third national title may be in reach

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penalties.

Bowman, an athletic sophomore who has emerged as a potential standout, had 10 tackles and forced Illini tailback Daniel Dufrene to fumble midway through the fourth quarter.

With Norwood down, Williams stepped up to deliver a TD performance unseen in Paterno's 43 years as head coach. His kickoff return of 94 yards gave Penn State a two-touchdown lead early in the fourth quarter.

"He had a lifetime game," said receiver Graham Zug, who took many of the snaps typically reserved for Norwood.

It was the type of competitive matchup Penn State hadn't faced in its four nonconference blowouts. The outcome pleased Paterno, who often likes to say that he can't judge how good

his team is until they've faced adversity.

And that's not even counting the off-field troubles the Nittany Lions have encountered over the past 18 months.

"They are a good bunch of kids to coach," Paterno said. "They listen. They are trying to make sure no one gets in trouble. It's good to see a bunch of kids have success with all of the junk going on around them."

One of those kids who appears to be back on track is Bowman, who had been suspended in the offseason for his involvement in a fight at the student union a year ago.

Asked if Penn State should be considered national-title material, Bowman responded, "That's up to you guys. We're just working hard and trying to be the best team we can be. I mean, I don't know, are we good enough?"

PURDUE: Penn State remains unbeaten

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Purdue kicker Chris Summers missed a 45-yard field-goal attempt wide right on the first play of the second quarter to leave the game scoreless.

Penn State responded with the game's first scoring drive. Penn State running back Dan Lawlor was stopped on a third-and-goal from the 1, and Purdue appeared to have Penn State stopped on fourth down, Officials ruled that the fourth down play didn't count because the previous play was being reviewed. The original call that Lawlor was short of the goal line stood, but Purdue fans were upset that the team's key stop was taken away. On the fourth down play that counted, Clark scored on a quarterback sneak, and Penn State took a 7-0 lead.

Summers was wide left on a 36-yard field goal with 3:41 left in the second quarter. Penn State

kept the ball for the rest of the half, and finished the second quarter with a 25-yard field goal by Kevin Kelly that increased the Nittany Lions' lead to 10-0 at halftime.

Royster scored on a 4-yard run with 8:02 left in the third quarter to make it 17-0.

Late in the third quarter, Penn State safety Drew Astorino intercepted Painter and returned it 29 yards to the Purdue 30. Kelly made another field goal early in the fourth quarter, to make it 20-0.

Joey Elliott replaced Painter and quickly led Purdue down the field. Elliott's fourth down completion to Desmond Tardy put the Boilermakers at the Penn State 1, and Sheets went over the top for Purdue's only points to make it 20-6.

Penn State ran out the clock after that, and Paterno earned his 378th career win.

Penn State receiver Derrick

Williams said though the other coaches communicate well on the field, Paterno's presence is irreplaceable.

"It was very difficult," he said. "With Joe there, you're always alert about what's going on."

This wasn't the first time a health issue has slowed Paterno.

Paterno's left leg was broken and knee ligaments were torn in November 2006 when he was hit on the sideline during a game at Wisconsin. He was forced to miss a game and then had to coach the Outback Bowl in a coaching box above the field.

He also coached the second half of this season's win over Temple on Sept. 20 from the press box. He said he decides where he will coach the day of each game.

"I take some stuff," he said. "Some days I feel great, some days I don't. So I wasn't sure whether I was going to be on the field or coach upstairs. Today was a tough day."

