

# Eye on Sports

## 76ers - Midpoint

By John Henry - *Lion's Eye Staff Writer* - jah5698@psu.edu

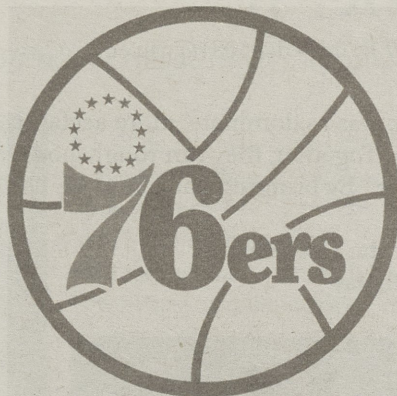
We are at the midway point of the 76ers season under the Doug Collins era and there have been some highs and lows.

To start, one of the biggest pleasant surprises thus far was the acquisition of the 23 year old shooting guard Jodie Meeks. He has been a dependent shooter from behind the arc, shooting 39% and averaging 9 points per game. Another player who they had high hopes for when they first acquired him was Elton Brand. In '08 and '09, Brand was a disappointment to say the least, but this year he has been the most consistent solid player in Doug Collins system. Brand's veteran leadership is very evident this year on the court because we have seen him be a communicator to the younger players.

Two minor disappointments thus far in my opinion have been Evan Turner and Spencer Hawes. Turner, the second pick in this year's draft has been less than average at the free throw line and somewhat poor defensively. Teams have taken advantage of his poor defense and exploited it numerous times in the course of games. At the line he is shooting only 78.8%, which is below average for a shooting guard.

Spencer Hawes, who was acquired from Sacramento in exchange for Dalembert has also been a minor disappointment. He has been an upgrade over Sammy, but that's not saying much. What has hurt Hawes early before the regular season begun was a lower back injury, which pushed his progress back 16 days. It took Hawes about 10-15 games to get comfortable and during that time he looked like a deer in a headlights on the court. Currently Hawes is looking much improved but he still has a lot of work to do.

The most improved Sixer and the most exciting to watch in my opinion has been Jrue Holiday. At only 20-years old, he is running this team like a 10-year veteran. His strongest attribute has been his ability to



drive the lane and be a strong finisher close to the basket. His great defense is credited to Ben Howland of UCLA in how he always preached defense. Holiday's ability to control the pace of games is a big reason why the Sixers would be in the playoffs if they started today.

The Sixers have also had some nice wins but also a couple horrific, back-breaking losses like the most recent Orlando game. They were leading by 4 late in the game and Iguodala fouled a three-point shooter where he made the shot and then the free throw to complete the four-point play. The Sixers ended up losing that game 99-98 in OT. It's also hard to forget the two losses in Washington, one where Cartier Martin heaved a desperation three point shot at the buzzer resulting in a 116 to 115 loss. Three weeks later Evan Turner fouled John Wall 35 feet from the basket which also resulted into a 116-114 loss. These are just a couple of the tough Sixer losses thus far, but these can be learning experiences so they eliminate mistakes like these in the future.

Overall the Sixers are a much more improved team this year under Doug Collins. He has had success everywhere he has been thus far and hopefully he continues to do the same here. It should be a fun second half, hopefully they progress nicely towards the playoffs and who knows, they might shock the world by winning a playoff series.

## PSU Basketball

By Sean Morgan - *Lion's Eye Staff Writer* - sdm5219@psu.edu

Most people think of Penn State University's football team when they think of the school's athletics, but Penn State's Men's Basketball is making a name for themselves.

The Men's Basketball team has recently done something that they haven't done in over 50 years, and that's beat a ranked opponent in consecutive games.

The Nittany Lions picked up a tough victory against the Spartans of Michigan State on Saturday, January 8th in the second game of a three-game home-stand. Michigan State was ranked 19th in the country at the time, giving Penn State their first win against a ranked opponent this season.

Ed DeChellis, the head coach of the basketball team had his team ready to play the Spartans tough.

"They were focused the whole game, they were excited to play. It was a great crowd on a Saturday afternoon, and it was just a good game overall," Ed said in a postgame interview by GoPSUsports.com.

Three days later the Lions upset a ranked Fighting Illini team. At the time the Illinois basketball team was ranked 16th in the country.

DeChellis knew the team was in serious need of a boost of confidence, which is exactly what the two wins gave them.

"They need some confidence. During the non-conference season, we were so up and down that we had to find a rhythm. We played a tough schedule, but we still had no rhythm. The team has started to gel nicely and guys are playing well individually," DeChellis said.

Students at Penn State University were also buzzing about the team's recent success. Stephanie Duross, a Penn State University student, was excited about the team's recent play.

"The team had really been struggling lately, so these two wins are huge. It was nice to come back to school after

winter break to the buzz of how good the men's basketball team was doing. Sports can make a campus of thousands of students feel close knit. The team is something everyone who goes here can cheer for," Stephanie said.

The Lion's winning streak did not last long though. On Saturday, January 15th Penn State traveled to Ohio and fell to the Ohio State Buckeyes in one of the biggest games for Penn State in recent memory. The Lions played the 2nd ranked at the time Buckeyes close until the end. The team played a lot better than most people thought they would.

Talor Battle, the Nittany Lion's scoring leader, had a chance to send the game into overtime, but could not hit a tough three pointer at the end.

"That's a situation where you can only get one shot, you can only do so much," Battle told GoPSUsports.com in a postgame interview.

Four days later Penn State went on to lose another close game against a ranked Purdue team. It was the second time Purdue had beaten them this season.

Penn State started their season winning seven of their first nine games but then fell into a slump shortly after that. These couple of wins and close games against ranked opponents should help their cause when the selection committee meets to see who will be in the tournament in March.

Penn State has six more games against ranked opponents this year and they have the Big Ten Conference Tournament to play in. They will need to win a significant amount of these games to be playing beyond the regular season.

## Rodgers Keeps Eagles from Flying High

By Sean Morgan - *Lion's Eye Staff Writer* - sdm5219@psu.edu

The Philadelphia Eagles suffered a disappointing playoff loss to the Green Bay Packers on Sunday, January 9th, losing them their chance to make it to Super Bowl XLV.

Aaron Rodgers connected on a seven-yard pass to Tom Crabtree near the end of the first quarter to give the Packers a lead that they would hold for the rest of the game. The Eagles offense struggled in the first quarter, gaining a total of only 38 yards.

Rodgers threw his second touchdown pass of the game in the second quarter to James Jones in another successful red zone score for the Packers. The Eagle's offensive struggles continued as they managed to kick a field goal on their only drive of the second quarter.

The Packers defense dominated the Eagle's explosive offense in the first half. "Defense played great. They've been carrying us a lot this season," Rodgers said to ESPN.com.

On the other side of the ball, Aaron Rodgers looked perfect and was doing his best to win his first career playoff game.

Michael Vick and the Eagles went to work in the second half. Vick led the Eagles to their first touchdown of the game in the third quarter when he hit Jason Avant on a 24-yard pass. This touchdown got the crowd back into the game and rejuvenated the offense.

The next drive for the Packers silenced the Eagles and the Philadelphia faithful. Rodgers and rookie James Starks picked apart the Eagles defense on an 80-yard drive that ended in a 16-yard touchdown pass to Brandon Jackson.

The Eagles spent the rest of the game playing catch up. They looked like they were going to make it a one-possession game early in the fourth quarter, but David Akers missed his second field goal of the game.

"I've made a lot of kicks in my day. Today, missing them, it hurts. I don't

know what else to say. I didn't do what I should be doing," Akers said in the locker room after the game.

Philadelphia managed to put together another touchdown drive when Vick scored on a 1-yard rushing touchdown, but he threw an incomplete pass on the two-point conversion. This left the Eagles down 21-16 late in the game, with a touchdown being the only way the Eagles could win.

Vick and the offense got one last shot to win the game, but blew it when Vick threw an interception in the end zone to Tramon Williams, sealing the deal for the Packers.

The biggest surprise in the game for the Packers was not the success of Aaron Rodgers, but the effectiveness of the unknown rookie James Starks. Starks carried the ball 23 times for a total of 123 rushing yards. Aaron Rodgers credited his success to the young running back.

"When you've got James Starks rushing for 123 yards, that takes some pressure off the passing game," Rodgers said to foxsports.com.

The Packers will continue their pursuit of glory while the Eagles look ahead to next season. A key to the Eagles this year was Michael Vick's reemergence. The Eagles will look to sign Vick to a new contract during the offseason.

Matt Donegan, a Penn State Brandywine sophomore, is optimistic a deal will get done.

"Andy Reid gave him a shot last year when no one else would. I think Vick and the Eagles will work out some sort of deal," Matt said.

Matt was also very critical of the Eagle's head coach.

"The Philadelphia Eagles are bound to have a disappointing loss like this every year. Under Andy Reid's pass first offense, the Eagles may never be Super Bowl champions."