

Penn State Sports

Men's volleyball team clinches EIVA title with weekend victories

By Wynton J. Somerville: Collegian Staff Writer

In order to clinch their 28th EIVA conference title, the No. 7 Nittany Lions would have to defeat two conference opponents that they had previously swept this season. Sounds simple enough, right?

The Lions swept Sacred Heart on Friday, 3-0 (25-19, 25-22, 25-15), behind a strong defensive performance including a season high 15.5 blocks. Penn State held Sacred Heart to a .085 hitting percentage and easily handled its weaker conference opponent.

Friday's victory meant a decisive Saturday match against Harvard, the second-ranked team in the EIVA, for home court in the conference tournament. The Crimson — who had a 17-4 record going into Saturday, including big victories over No. 12 Cal-Northridge and George Mason — were ready to complicate things for Penn State.

Harvard jumped out on the Lions taking the first two sets, but mid-match adjustments allowed the Lions to come back in five sets, 3-2 (20-25, 21-25, 25-13, 25-21, 15-10).

"You know they swept us at home, they handled us pretty easily and we knew coming in that we'd played matches this year where we could compete against a team like this," Harvard coach Brian Baise said. "It was both a confidence booster and a reminder of how good Penn State can be."

Harvard was more than ready to compete. With Penn State leading 13-8 in the first set, the Crimson strung together a 9-0 run stealing the early momentum and frustrating the Penn State offense.

Coach Mark Pavlik was forced to make some surprising adjustments. Facing a five-point deficit late in set one, Pavlik pulled All-American setter Edgardo Goas for senior Tor Cavello. Goas, a redshirt senior, struggled to control the offense early and Pavlik sat him briefly to help him renew his focus.

"Jay, Colin and I wanted Eddy to understand some things point blank that we needed to be doing," Pavlik said. "At that point I felt it was more important for him to hear that message than to be on the court."

The coaches' message was delivered effectively and after hitting .059 in set one as a team, Eddy was able to regain control of the offense finishing with 59 assists as the team went on to hit .319 overall.

Trailing an EIVA foe at home was unfamiliar territory for the Lions, who haven't been in a 2-0 hole against a conference opponent since 2010 against Rutgers-Newark.

"It was really weird, I can't remember the last time I ever did that," junior Nick Turko said. "Got a stern talking to from the coaches and came back out. We just had to mentally focus more."

The team looked physically and mentally sharp, dominating set three with a .500 hitting percentage, as the Lions rode the momentum to take set four.

As the teams battled in the definitive fifth set, a crucial moment occurred for Penn State. Leading the Crimson 10-7, the two teams duked it out in a rally that lasted over a minute filled with dazzling blocks and digs from both sides. Redshirt freshman Nick Goodell was able to slam a kill from Goas to the back of Harvard's court, demoralizing the Crimson and putting the Lions over the edge to win the match.

Though their block struggled early, Goodell and freshman Aaron Russell were able to combine on a booming block to win the set and match point 15-10.

Goodell and redshirt senior Joe Sunder led the offense with 22 and 17 kills, respectively, on .429 and .481 hitting. The 22 kills were a season high for Goodell. Sunder also had a strong defensive output compiling 11 digs. Turko also stepped up with 10 kills and three aces.

With the win, Penn State solidifies home court advantage for the EIVA playoffs starting April 26th. Even with homecourt, Pavlik expects a competitive playoff.

"It's really nice to see an EIVA team when you're not playing well make you pay for it," Pavlik said. "The EIVA has good teams in it this year and we have to be ready for them."



Photo Courtesy of DailyCollegian.psu.edu

Penn State women's lacrosse outplayed in 14-7 loss to No. 1 Northwestern

By Matt Howland: Collegian Staff Writer

Under the night lights of Penn State Lacrosse Field for the first time, and under the spotlight of facing the No. 1-ranked team in the nation, the Nittany Lions came up short.

The Penn State women's lacrosse team lost to No. 1-ranked conference foe Northwestern Friday night 14-7, dropping the Nittany Lions' American Lacrosse Conference record to below .500, at 1-2 on the season. The Lions now possess a 8-4 overall record. The loss was the team's second in a row, with both coming to highly-ranked opposition, after it lost to No. 4 Florida last Sunday.

The Wildcats jumped out to an early 3-0 lead and never looked back after 2011 Tewaaraton Trophy winner Shannon Smith scored three goals in the first 19:06 minutes of the game.

Northwestern took a 7-3 lead into halftime, and opened the second half with two more consecutive goals to effectively end the contest.

Penn State was also on the short end of a six turnover margin in the second period after committing fewer turnovers than Northwestern in the first half.

The Lions' leading point-scorer, sophomore Mackenzie Cyr, played only limited time after sitting out the team's previous game. Cyr's limited time meant Penn State was deprived of the talented player who has scored 21 goals and tallied 14 assists on the season for stretches of the game.

The Lions' top goalscorer, freshman Tatum Coffey, did manage to get on the scoresheet for her team-best 27th goal of the season, but Penn State's goal scorers didn't find the back of the net enough times to make the contest a close one.

Penn State managed to score consecutive goals only once, when freshman Haley Ford and senior Elaine Welch scored back-to-back goals in the second half.

However, the Lions never got any closer than five goals down. Despite the loss to the higher-ranked opposition, Penn State had at least one bright spot, which was a breakout performance from freshman Haley Ford.

Ford came into the game with only one goal on the season, but scored three in the Friday night game for almost half of Penn State's goals.

Penn State has the chance to rebound against lesser opposition on Wednesday, when the team travels to 6-6 Lehigh, who the Lions have never lost to in 20 matches all-time.

With only four matches left in the season, Penn State will look to have a strong finish to the season. The Lions will need wins against Ohio State and Johns Hopkins to head into the American Lacrosse Conference Championship in less than a month with a conference record above .500.

Men's tennis falls twice over weekend

By Matt Smith— Collegian Staff Writer

For the Penn State men's tennis team, the holiday weekend was one of mixed results.

The Nittany Lions hit the road to face two Big Ten opponents in No. 47 Minnesota and Wisconsin, with the hopes of remaining competitive and possibly earning a victory on the trip.

Things wouldn't fall that way, however, as the Lions dropped both matches to come out of the weekend with a feeling of disappointment.

Penn State began the weekend with a matchup against the Golden Gophers, who were ranked No. 47 heading into the match.

The Lions, however, would drop the opener, losing 5-2 to the Gophers. Coach Jeff Zinn was pleased with the overall play, however.

"We competed really well," Zinn said. "It was a good match against a good opponent."

The Lions couldn't come away with the doubles point to start, with tandem Russell Bader and Bryan Welnetz the only pair of Lions to come away with a victory,

8-6.

Taylor Cohen and Tomas Hanzlik made things interesting however, pushing their match to a tiebreaker before falling to their Minnesota competitors, 9-8 (5).

Singles play proved to be competitive as well. The Lions managed to earn a couple of points with Hanzlik earning a strong straight set victory (6-2, 7-6 (4)) while Christopher Hasyn battled through three sets to earn his own victory, 3-6, 7-6 (6), 10-4.

The rest of the matches would fall in Minnesota's favor however. Bader found himself up against No. 80 Leandro Toledo and was bested in three sets, 6-4, 3-6, 6-4. Cohen lasted three sets as well, but ended up on the losing end, 6-7 (4), 6-4, 10-3.

Wisconsin also defeated sophomore Chris Young and Welnetz to round out their 5 points.

The 5-2 loss was tough to take, especially with some good three set matches played, but the Lions immediately set their sights on the badgers of Wisconsin.

Unfortunately, the Lions would again find them-

selves on the losing end, losing to the unranked Badgers, 5-2.

Penn State got off on the wrong foot right away, dropping the doubles point as tandems Cohen/Hanzlik and Griffin/Hasyn went down.

Hasyn and Griffin's match was close, but the duo could not prevail, as Wisconsin took the set 9-8 (10-8) and therefore the doubles point.

From there, the Lions moved onto singles play, where Hasyn would even things up with a quick dismantling of his Wisconsin competitor, 6-3, 6-0. Hanzlik would also rebound nicely from his doubles loss with a straight set victory of his own, 6-4, 6-4.

But it wouldn't be enough, as Penn State dropped the remaining singles matches.

The team now looks forward to a return home next weekend, where they'll take on Northwestern and Illinois.