

Lions Court Success Depends on Many 'Ifs'

By Ray Koehler

Backed against the wailing wall and clothed in the traditional coach's mourning togs, John Lawther, skipper of the Penn State basketball squad, went on record yesterday as saying that the Lions' 1948 court outlook is, at the present time, extremely obscure, but that several big "Ifs" could brighten the picture considerably.

The squad has been practicing since Registration Week, and outside of a few minor aches is in excellent condition for the tough 17-game schedule on this year's agenda. The card will open this Saturday at Pittsburgh (there's that name again) and close March 5.

Now in his 13th year at the helm of the Blue and White, Lawther gave a Pagliacci-like laugh and said, "We hope differently, but we'll be lucky if we do as well this year as we did in '47 when we won nine and lost ten."

HEIGHT

The major handicap that the Lawthermen will be striving to overcome is lack of height. Outside of two or three big men, the Lions will be forced to harness spirit and speed to buoy up their backcourt defense.

Lawther wept a few bitter tears over the loss of such stalwart performers as John Kulp, Irvin Batinick and Captain Jack Biery, all-state nominee who has been forced to drop the sport because of a stiff academic schedule.

The genial mentor lauded the trio as being three of the best sharpshooters in this area last year. Together the threesome accounted for 428 points.

"If" number one, and the most pressing situation facing Lawther, concerns Milt Simon, brilliant senior forward, whose loss to the team because of a severe "charley-horse" has struck a body blow at the State hopes.

SECOND

One of the key men on last year's Lion squad, Simon placed second in scoring with 143 points. It is believed that the blond bombardier will not be in tip-top shape before January.

Lawther was hopeful of building his attack about Simon, but the injury necessitated a change of plans.

"If" number two is junior Martin Costa, a basketball oddity, who has apparently nailed down the center slot. Costa, who reaches 6 feet 6 inches, had never played the cage game before his sophomore year at Penn State. The tall lamplighter made the squad last year, and is now beginning to show the effects of Lawther's work with him. Costa is being counted on heavily as a backboard guardian.

Two reasons for optimism are the return of senior guards Carl Nordblom and Terry Ruhlman. Also returning for another campaign is veteran forward Willard Parkhill, a senior, who ranked fifth among scorers last year with 74 counters.

TOCCI

A newcomer to the Lion court scene who is attracting much attention is Joe Tocci, junior guard, from Mohawk Junior College. The midget courtster stands only 5 feet 5 inches off the boards but

Lawther has gone all out in labeling him a comer. Tocci will probably share front court duties with Parkhill until Simon returns to action.

Closely watched reserves, who with a little more experience may step into regular roles, are Lee Schisler, 6-foot 3½-inch all-around utility man; Ken Weiss, scrappy sophomore mite; Syl "Stretch" Bozinski, senior, who saw action last year, and Robert McKown, who fits into Lawther's plans as a defensive measure.

Lawther plans to use several variations of a single pivot, stressing a lot of running, plus a five-man weave, for his offense, while using a mixed defense.

CHANGES

Several important rule changes have been made, chief of which gives the O.K. to coaches giving instructions from the sideline during the game. All jumps, no matter where committed, will be delegated to the closest of the three circles on the floor. If within the final two minutes of play the ball is declared dead, time will be out without any official notification.

Elmer Gross, who captained Penn State's '42 cage outfit in the nationals, is acting as assistant to Lawther.

The schedule follows:

Dec. 4—Pittsburgh	away
14—American U.	away
15—Georgetown	away
18—Wash. & Jeff.	home
Jan. 8—Colgate	home
15—Carnegie Tech.	home
19—Navy	away
Feb. 2—West Virginia	away
5—Syracuse	home
9—West Virginia	home
12—Temple	away
19—Pittsburgh	home
23—American U.	home
25—Colgate	away
28—Syracuse	away
Mar. 2—Temple	home
5—Georgetown	home

Between the Lions

By Tom Morgan
SPORTS EDITOR

Opportunity Knocked

What was dubbed a "fly-by-night bowl scheme" by some Penn State officials was quickly gobbled up by Villanova yesterday when that college accepted a bid to play Nevada in the Harbor Bowl in San Diego, Cal., New Year's Day. Penn State had refused the bid earlier because it "lacked the well-established, reputable qualities of other bowls."

It is true that the Harbor Bowl is not well established—it was dreamed up by the National Broadcasting Company this year when that firm found itself without a New Year's Day game to broadcast.

But we think NBC certainly must be what one can call a "reputable backer," and the reported \$50,000 guaranteed to Penn State if it accepted should not have been spurned, we think, when the College needs a more adequate athletic plant to keep pace with over-all expansion.

What do the players think? When the news broke—via the grapevine, not through official channels—late last week that College officials had turned down the Bowl offer, the Nittanymen were disappointed. They showed it in practice sessions before the Washington State tussle.

Although we could not reach Coach Bob Higgins for comment, a survey of team members conducted Monday indicated that the majority wanted to play in the post-holiday encounter.

Only three said "no." Even Lion players who are now being wooed by the annual East-West and North-South games indicated that they would give up all-star invitations "if the team and coaches wanted to go to San Diego."

That was when NBC was still hunting an opponent for Nevada. When Villanova accepted the bid yesterday, an impromptu student committee formed to seek reconsideration on the part of Penn State was disbanded.

We believe a "good deal" was by-passed by Penn State in not accepting the bowl bid. It would not, in our opinion, have diminished the school's reputation—athletically or otherwise.

Phi Sigs Capture 25-24 Win In IM Cage Competition

Phi Sigma Kappa, rallying from a 10-7 halftime deficiency, swept to a 25-24 edge over Theta Kappa Phi in the tightest of nine IM basketball games at Recreation Hall Monday night. Led by Pasquale Astore who chalked up nine points, the Phi Sigs pounded into the lead with moments to spare.

But big-point-man of the night was Paul Norton of the independent Berletics who dropped in 18 markers to lead his abbreviated squad to an astounding 41-12 victory over the Gazelles.

Other scores were: Kappa Sigma over Theta Xi, 28-14; Beta Sigma Rho over Lambda Chi Alpha, 34-15; Delta Tau Delta over Beta Theta Pi, 19-17; Phi Sigma Delta over Pi Kappa Alpha, 19-14. Alpha Epsilon Pi over Phi

Gamma Delta, 19-18; Phi Kappa Psi over Phi Kappa, 20-11; Kappa Delta Rho over Triangle, 20-12.

SCHEDULE

Tonight's schedule follows: 8:45 p.m.—Dorm 33 vs. Dorm 43, court one; Dorm 37 vs. Dorm 41, court two; Whiz Kids vs. X.M. Boys, court three.

9:25 p.m.—Dorm 39 vs. Dorm 40, court one; Omega Phi Psi vs. Delta Sigma Phi, court two; Alpha Phi Delta vs. Theta Chi, court three.

10:05 p.m.—Alpha Zeta vs. Sigma Alpha Epsilon, court one; Tau Kappa Epsilon vs. Phi Epsilon Pi, court two; Penn State Club vs. Nittany Co-op, court three.

Rogel, Kelly Make NEA All-America

All-American honors were awarded two Nittany Lion grid-ders this week when Fran Rogel, hard-plunging fullback and Paul Kelly, standout guard, were named to the National Editorial Association's All-American second and third teams, respectively. Picked by sports writer Harry Grayson, the two football players were named to the teams for their combined offensive and defensive play.

And how many times in the future will the Nittany Lions be extended a post-season bowl bid after the current crop of football talent is gone? Prospects were never greater than now.

The argument can be advanced that we are not on the top of the heap, footballistically, as last year when we were undefeated, and should therefore not accept a bowl bid. This is absurd when one considers that only two major unbeaten, untied teams—California and Clemson—will play in major bowls come New Year's.

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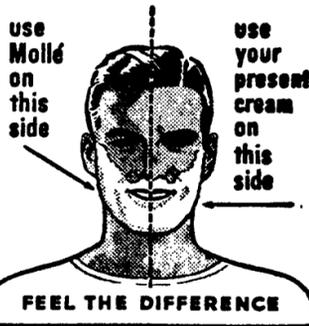
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