

Lady Luck Puts Crush On Cagers

Just when things seemed to be going well for cage coach John Egli an unbelievable string of events turned what promised to be a most successful season into one nightmare after another.

And with a game with Pitt on the Panthers' home court coming up tomorrow, the situation doesn't seem to be getting any better.

After winning their first four games for the best start in more years than Egli can remember, a rash of injuries that sidelined starters Bobby Donato and Earl Hoffman and the loss of sophomore sensation Wayne Lundy took its obvious toll—six losses in the next seven games.

Egli's troubles started even before the season began when Jake Trueblood, last year's second leading rebounder, was lost for the first 11 games because of academic difficulties. But the team still started fast, scoring an upset over Maryland, beating Lehigh, and then whipping Syracuse and Colgate on successive nights in road tilts.

Thus State was 4-0 going into the Dec. 16 Rec Hall battle with West Virginia, then ranked seventh in the nation. That's when Lady Luck really applied an arm lock.

Hours before game time Lundy, who had averaged 18 points per game over the first four tilts, packed his baggage and left school.

On the surface the probability of academic probation seemed to be the sophomore's main reason for the fast departure, but there were other issues involved.

John Phillips played a good game in Lundy's absence, scoring 15 points, but State couldn't match West Virginia's depth and faded in the last quarter to lose 79-67.

State snapped back against Syracuse three days later, downing the Orange, 53-44.

The Lions didn't have a chance against Ohio State at Columbus Dec. 23, losing 92-49. Buckeye Coach Fred Taylor played his regulars for only 10 minutes, and after the game Egli told newsmen that Ohio State could have beaten his team by 100 points.

That night Egli received another blow when Donato, the peppy sophomore playmaker, twisted his ankle in the game's early minutes. He hasn't played since.

Thus State was minus two regulars going into the Quaker City Tournament in Philadelphia Dec. 26. At least Egli had one consolation—things couldn't get any worse—or could they?

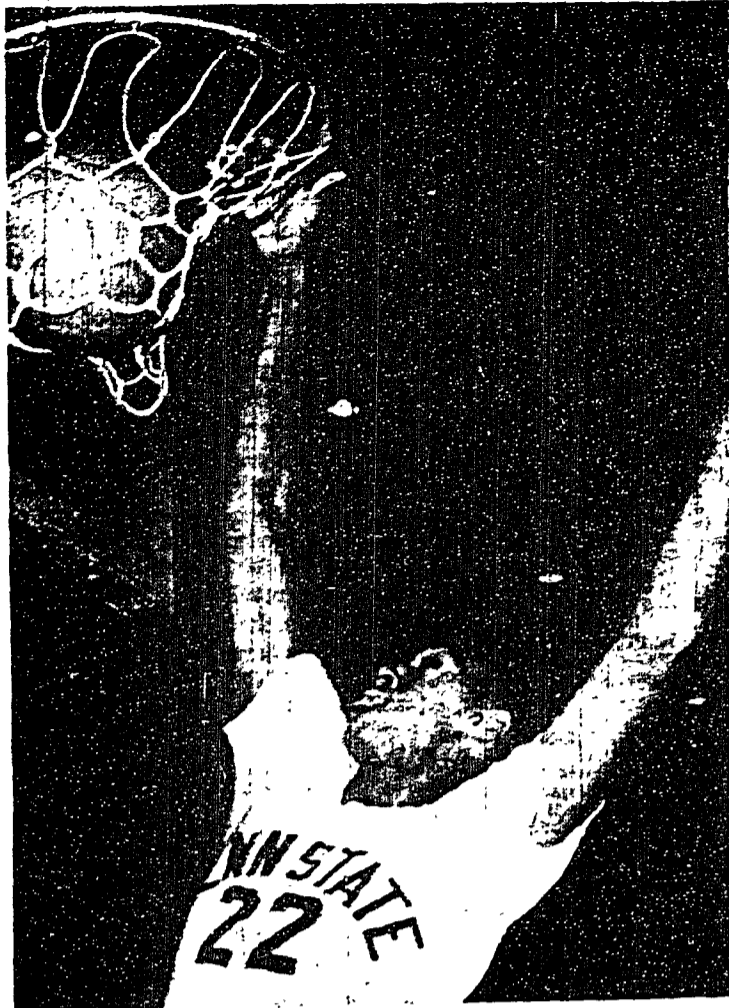
State played steady ball against Iowa in the first round, and was down by only one point at the half. But then it happened again. Earl Hoffman suffered a sprain in the first half but it didn't seem too bad. He started the second period but it soon became obvious that he couldn't continue. Afterwards it was learned that he suffered a very bad sprained ankle and he too, hasn't played since.

Iowa went on to win the game handily as did Holy Cross two nights later. But State captain Gene Harris put on a tremendous scoring display in that game, racking up 46 points to tie the Palestra record and break Jesse Arnette's all-time Lion mark of 44. That effort earned him a place on the all-tourney team.

Two nights later State battled Niagara right down to the wire in the battle for seventh place, knotting the score 58-58 at the end of regulation time. But the Lions collapsed in the overtime stanza and lost their fifth straight.

Wednesday night at Durham, N.C., it was the same story all over again as Duke wore down Egli's depleted eight-man squad for a 95-55 triumph.

Apparently Lundy won't be back—his father said that he's taking him out of school. But Hoffman and Donato may be able to play a little against Pitt and assistant trainer Ray Uliniski expects them to be able to go full speed against Bucknell Tuesday night at Rec Hall.



GENE HARRIS

Hall Set for U.S. Bowl; Teams Tour Washington

WASHINGTON (AP) — The FBI headquarters West Football squad interrupted Penn State quarterback Galen its U.S. Bowl workouts yesterday. Hall will be at the controls of the to take a White House tour. The West squad when the two teams East squad will get the same de-clash in D.C. Stadium Sunday. luxe tour this morning and both. The game will be televised nation-teams will get a special tour of ally.

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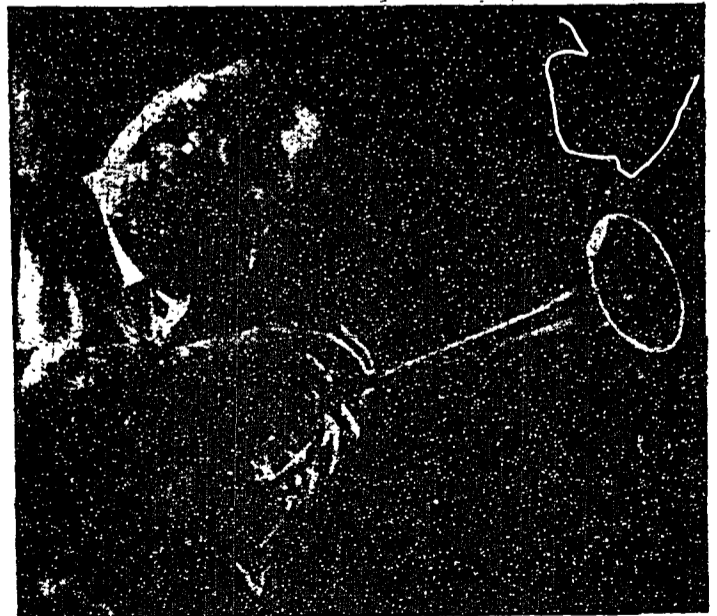
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