

Is this *really* the year?

For Penn State basketball, this has to be the year

Of course, that's what's been said for the past few seasons around Rec Hall. And each time, the local cagers have come down with something resembling late-season amnesia. In essence, they've forgotten their poise and confidence, shooting and defense abilities, and, most importantly, how to win.

And each time, the team's end-of-the-year choke has cost it a berth in the National Invitation Tourney, the second most prestigious bit of post-season action in the country.

But this time, as has been suggested, things really might be different.

For one thing, there is experience. Five of the team's six starters (one of the forward spots was shared) have returned, which should make crisis situations a little easier to bear.

And there is also talent. Ron Brown, who masqueraded as Willard Building last year, was ECAC Sophomore of the Year two seasons ago. And Randy Mesiter undoubtedly would have been high on the list had that award still been offered last year.

Additionally, there are the likelihoods that one of last year's starters will not be one this year, and that this past spring could have netted a pair of Penn State's finest basketball players ever.

But, of those who return, Brown seems most likely to key any improvement the team makes over its 17-8 and 15-8 records of the past two years. The 6-4 senior guard-forward returned at 211 pounds this year after checking in at 250 last time around.

"Ron represents the totally unselfish player who can make the team move," coach John Bach says. Bach, who stepped down from his post on the U.S. Olympic Committee because of "frustration" there a week ago, goes on: "He can run, penetrate, keep the whole team alert with his passing and play good defense. He is a basketball player at any weight and when he's in condition he can play at any level."

So it would seem to be for Meister, the 6-9 center who was the team's MVP last year with averages of 14.7 for point and 11.0 for rebounds. He also keyed the defense, which ranked eighth nationally by allowing only 61.2 points a game.

The other returning starters are 6-5 forward Jon Marshall, a defensive terror

who belted people around underneath the basket. 6-3 guard Kevin Burke, whose 10.7 scoring average was surpassed only by Meister and Brown (13.0), and 6-4 guard Keenan Preston.

Last year, Brown handled one forward spot while Marshall and graduated captain Ed Chubb shared the other. This season, Brown likely will move to one backcourt position while either Burke or Preston will take the other.

Sophomore Dave Angstadt, a 6-7 forward who also runs track, probably will man the position opposite Marshall's.

As for reserves, the Lions have a number of them, particularly in the backcourt. One of the best, sophomore Tom Doaty, is expected to miss at least another week with mononucleosis. Other candidates include senior John McDermott, junior Jim Ouder Kirk and Kevin Cadle, a freshman Bach as said is "equal to Brown as a passer."

Brown, incidentally, holds both the season (120) and career (230) records for assists at Penn State.

Cadle and Chris Erichsen, a 6-5 freshman forward Bach labels "the best ballplayer to come here since Brown," give the Penn State coach much of his enthusiasm for the future. Bach, who has had some lean years before the past two, is 68-48 in five years here.

"We've had two good seasons back to back," Bach says, "but the door is only half open. We must keep the momentum going and reach some of our goals this year."

For the Penn State basketball team, which opens at Bucknell Dec. 1, that finally would be the fulfilling of an oft-repeated vow.

—Ray McAllister



Photo by Bob Kochman

Guard Ron Brown

Grapplers back; intact and ready

Penn State wrestling coach Bill Koll won't say he is optimistic about this season, but it appears as though he could afford to be.

Nine returning lettermen could indicate another good season for the grapplers (11-1 last year and first in the Easterns), who began tryouts this week in Rec Hall.

"I've been through too many seasons of coaching to be optimistic in November," Koll said. He also said there are a lot of boys out for the team and he'll pick his starters on the results of the pre-season eliminations.

In any case, here are the people returning to practice with letters in their hands:

118—Tom Teagarden, runnerup in last year's Easterns, will actually have to start the season at 126. "We hope to get him down to 118, because we feel he'll be more effective," Koll said. Wayne Packer did get some experience last year as a freshman.

While Teagarden tries to get his weight down, Rob Corl, a soph could fill in.

126—John Fritz, a junior, was tops in the East and third in the NCAA tournament last year.

134—Bob Medina, a 5-9 senior, was 9-2-1 last year and Eastern runnerup.

142—Last year's co-captain Barry

Snyder is gone. No lettermen at this position. Returning junior Bob Welch along with Denny Sciabica and Joel McQuier will fight for this spot.

150—Mike Mousetis, another senior, racked up an 8-2-1 mark and a fourth place Eastern finish.

158—Add Chris Koll to the list of seniors. Koll was 4-1 and fourth in the East.

167—Jerry Villecco had an outstanding season (7-1-1, first in the Easterns) last year as a freshman.

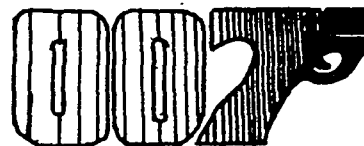
177—Junior Dan Brenneman rolled to a 10-1-1 log and first in the Easterns.

190—Ted Kinden, a senior, was the only Lion unable to place in the Easterns last season. His season record was 2-1.

Hwt.—When he finishes making holes for John Cappelletti, Charlie Getty (5-0, third in east, fifth nationally) will return for his final season.

However, it will take Getty some time to get in shape after having played football all fall term. Add Scott Lefke as a possible starter. He's a 6-4 280 lb. senior who sparred with Getty last year.

"I really don't know if we have as much depth as we'd like," Koll managed in regards to the coming season. He'll begin to get some kind of idea on Dec. 1 when the grapplers visit Kent State for the opening match of the season. —Jeff Young




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