



Flanker Jimmy Cefalo, warding off blockers in this spring's Blue-White game, could provide some of the answers Penn State coach Joe Paterno is looking for before his team returns to action in the fall. Photo by Richard Hoffman

Blazer's team strategy potent fuel in snuffing Philadelphia's opening spark

Philosophies of team basketball advocates, rather than those of individual superstar fanatics, looked most impressive Sunday when the Portland Trail Blazers whipped the star-studded Philadelphia 76ers to capture the best-of-seven National Basketball Association championship series, four games to two.



Neil Rudel

When the 76ers signed Julius Erving at the beginning of this season, most basketball experts figured them to be a shoe-in for the league title. In combining the offensive wizardry of Doctor J with all-star power forward George McGinnis and backcourt sensation Doug Collins, many felt Philadelphia would wait to its first NBA crown in ten years.

But the underdog Blazers, led by coach Jack Ramsay, used their team conceptualized strategies — precise play execution, steady offensive movement, unselfishness and a tough defense

— to upend the frustrated Sixers, whose offensive one-on-one antics appeared as futile as their fast break did devastating. While the 76ers relied on their big three to carry the bulk of the scoring, Portland posted five and six men in double figures consistently. McGinnis found himself in the worst slump of his career. Collins started the final series shooting extremely well but tailed off considerably during games five and six. This left a lot of pressure on Erving, who responded to the challenge game after game with superhuman efforts. However, his 40 point outburst in game six wasn't enough to force a seventh game back in Philadelphia, to give some indication of the Sixers' lack of balance.

The magnificent play of ex-UCLA All-American Bill Walton keyed Portland. The mountain man controlled the boards, triggered the Blazer's blazing fast break and more than assumed his role as team captain. In the playoff clincher, Walton scored 20 points, grabbed 23 rebounds, blocked eight shots and handed out seven assists. CBS commentator Brent Mussberger called it vegetable power (since Walton is a vegetarian).

Walton, the series MVP, had a better supporting cast than Erving. Most of the Blazers came into the series underrated, even unheard of. But after six games of the national television exposure, they'll now be household names among NBA fans: silky smooth shooters Bob Gross and Lionel Hollins; ferocious forward Maurice Lucas, who in game two, squared off with the Sixers' Baby Gorilla, 6'11", 250 pound Darryl

Summer skull session begins

Paterno staff tackles puzzles

By JOYCE TOMANA
Collegian Sports Editor

It's chalk time for the Nittany Lions.

The players are off to enjoy the summer sun before the drudgery of August football camp, the grass is left to replenish itself before cleats rip it apart again in the fall, and fans are left to scramble for season tickets and tuck them away with their flasks until the party uncorks again in the grandstand.

But the biggest task is left to coach Joe Paterno and his staff. They are scrawling on their chalkboards to find the most successful geometric design of X's and O's, running and rerunning every inch of film on Penn State and its opponents that they can get their hands on, and shuffling the talent to get the best man in the best slot when the competition begins in September.

The puzzle is far from solved after 20 days on the gridiron this spring. Injuries took a high toll on the Lions.

"We had hoped to develop an offensive line, but four of the five players we considered as possible starters were injured and didn't get the work they needed," Paterno said. "We had the same injury problem in the defensive secondary, losing three people we wanted to see back there."

Those three players are Bill Crummy, Brian Kistler, and Rich Milot, who all underwent surgery this spring. Their injuries put a big question mark in the development of any kind of depth in the defensive secondary.

On the five-man interior offensive line, center Keith Dorney is the only returning starter of last year's 7-5 Lion squad. He was switched to tackle this spring and had a good showing in that spot. But the other four positions are up for grabs.

"Chuck Correa, Tony Williot, Eric Cunningham and Paul Renaud are all possible starters on the offensive line," Paterno notes, "but they were all injured and didn't get the work they needed this spring."

The search is also on for a running game.

"We have to find a running game," he says. "That means developing an offensive line and having the backs to carry the ball. We have a lot of good backs, but we need one of them to put it all together to be great."

Good spring performances were put in by fullbacks Bob Torrey and Matt Suhey, who was the leading rusher in the Blue-White game with 65 yards in 11 carries.

Injuries, however, hampered the performance of tailbacks Steve Geise, Mike Guman, Ed Guthrie and Duane Taylor.

The passing game showed more strength this spring. Chuck Fusina will be joined by two sophomores, Tony Capozzoli and Dayle Tate, in the quarterback slot.

Defensively, Penn State experimented with a five-man line most of the spring, but may return to its familiar 4-4-3 alignment in the fall.

"I don't know what we are going

to do yet," Paterno said. "We had a number of people we wanted to get a look at playing the down position and the five-two gave us a chance to play people where we could get the best look at them."

Nine of the 11 defensive starters are expected to return in September. Joe Lally could join Bill Banks as defensive ends. Randy Sidler and Tony Petruccio return at defensive tackle, but Sidler missed all of spring practice with the baseball team and Petruccio was injured. Converted linebackers Bruce Clark and Matt Millen showed promise at defensive tackle this spring.

Tom DePaso, Joe Diange, Rick Donaldson, Ron Hostetter and Paul Suhey are experienced linebackers; and Crummy, Neil Hutton and Gary Petrucuskie will return to the secondary.

The kicking tasks will be handled by place-kickers Capozzoli and Matt Bahr and punters Capozzoli and Pete Harris.

A lot of questions remain unanswered before Penn State opens the season Sept. 2 against Rutgers.

"We just didn't get as much accomplished as we had hoped. We are a young team that will have to make quick progress in the fall," Paterno said. "Last year, I didn't think we were strong enough physically. We should be stronger this year. Our big problem is experience."

"We have potential, but that's all I have seen — potential," he said. "I want to see some production."

Dawkins, and Speedy Johnny Davis and gutsy Dave Twardzick. All they played significant roles in Portland's first title after seven years of losing seasons.

Ramsay, who came from the Buffalo Braves, was perhaps the biggest factor. When the Sixers exploded to victories in the first two games, he regrouped his club and instilled a confidence so strong that the Blazers bounced back to become the only team in league history to win four straight after dropping the opening pair.

He kneeled at courtside on one knee constantly — motioning defenses, instructing plays, calling signals — while virtually coaching his counterpart, Gene Shue, right under the press table.

The Portland crowd also had its part in the victory. It was frantic. When the Blazers won the pivotal fifth game in Philadelphia, the initial road win of the series for either team,

they returned home at 4:30 a.m., the same night, and were welcomed by 4,500 raging fans who brought "Blazermania" to the Northwest.

The stunning Portland upset resembles the Boston Celtics days when they had Bill Russell and time and again would use their team oriented tradition to best the Wilt Chamberlain-led teams for the league title. But I doubt if Portland is in the midst of building a Boston-like dynasty. The NBA is too balanced and strong to permit a team to dominate like the Celtics did in past years.

In this, the first season following the long awaited merger with the former American Basketball Association, all the talent is now under one roof. The NBA is a league that is here to stay and can only get more competitive. But after seeing this year's playoffs, one has to wonder how much more intense the action can become.

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