

## Dozier shaping up for stretch drive

By MARK ASHENFELTER  
Collegian Sports Writer

The good news for Boston College is that D.J. Dozier said he has yet to regain his top form after tearing a hamstring against Temple in the season's second game.

The bad news for the Eagles' defense is that a less than healthy Dozier still managed to rush for 125 yards as the Lions defeated West Virginia 27-0 last weekend.

On Wednesday, Dozier admitted that he is getting stronger with each practice — a thought that will do nothing to brighten the spirit's of a BC squad that carries a 3-6 mark into Beaver Stadium for this afternoon's contest.

"I think there are times I feel I am (100 percent), but my hamstring's still a little tight," he said. "But I do feel I can run my fastest. I guess it goes up and down."

It is hard to imagine that Dozier still has "down" times based on his performance against the Mountaineers. Late in the first half he broke a 52-yard run that featured a 360 degree spin when it appeared he was going to be dropped for a loss.

Dozier, however, said that if he were in top form that run could have gone for a touchdown — instead he was pulled down at the Mountaineer 16.

"I kind of felt it coming," he said of the stop by defensive back Andrew Jones. "I was kind of concentrating on him more than the goal line and at the same time I didn't think I was moving as fast as I could. . . . I don't know why. But I had a feeling I was going to get caught."

Dozier, however, said he was not looking to break a long run.

"My goal is to get four or five yards each play I'm running," he said. "I want to try and get the first downs so I'm not really thinking about the long runs. Like Joe (Paterno) says, you keep pounding and keep pounding and it's just going to happen."

Paterno, however, said that it was just a typical run by Dozier. He gave Dozier all the credit for the run and said it is a sign that Dozier is regaining his form.

"He's going to get a big one for you most every game you give him the football when he's well," Paterno said. "He got a big run just about on his own today."

Although the junior tailback from Virginia Beach, Va., may not have reeled off many long runs this year, he has made his presence felt in other ways.

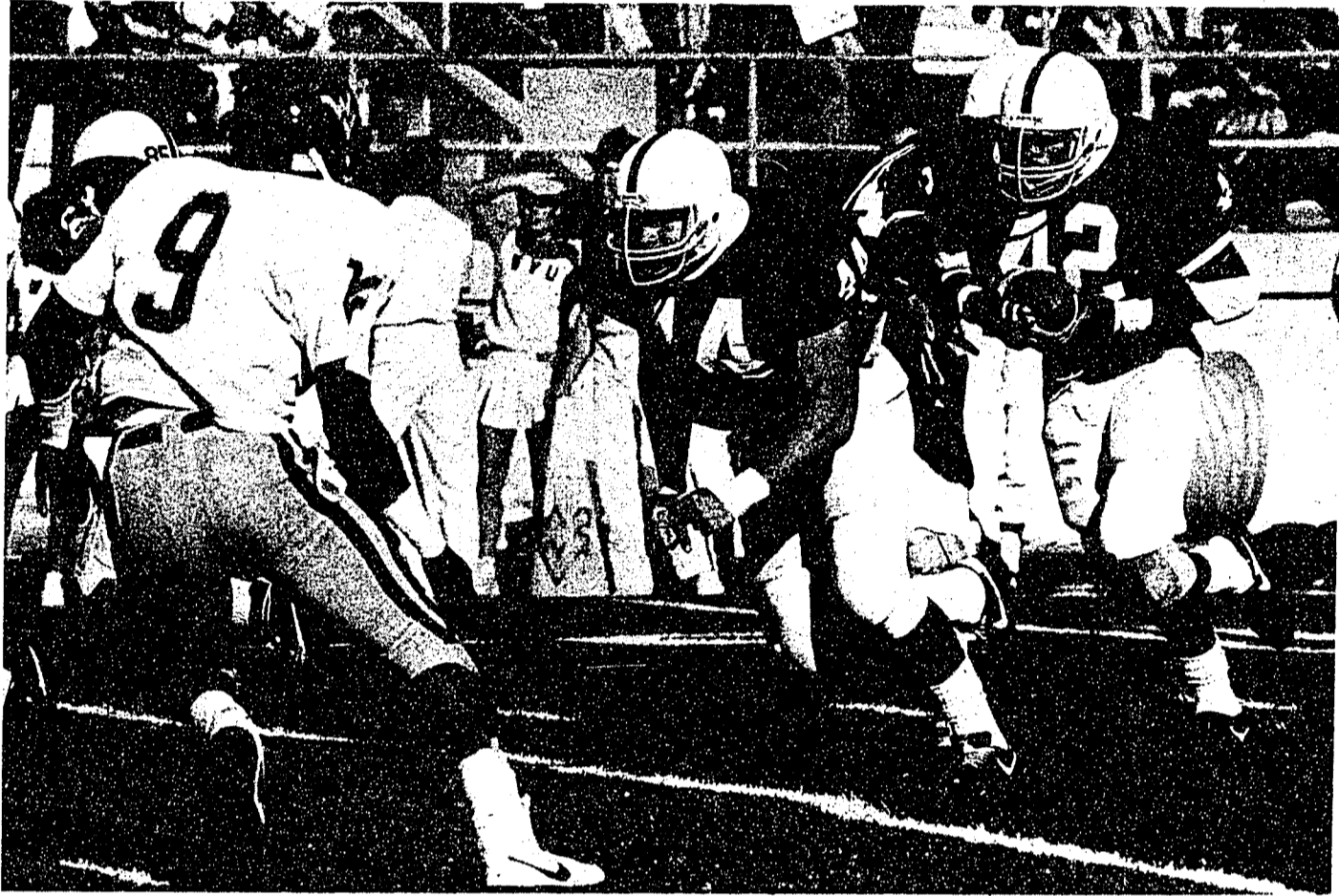
Entering today's game, Dozier leads the team in both carries (83) and yards gained with 388. Those totals may not dazzle those who remember his four consecutive 100 yard games in 1983, but Dozier has compiled this season's numbers in just 4½ games.

Dozier has also caught eight passes for 48 yards, and quarterback John Shaffer said Dozier's presence in the lineup bolsters the entire offense.

"It's not to put the spotlight on D.J., but when you have a kid like D.J. Dozier in there you have to use him," Shaffer said. "He's the type of kid that can run the ball as well as he can catch it. He's an asset to not only our running game but our passing game."

"If (the coaches) call on him to run a pass play he'll be open. If they ask him to run the ball and gain three or four yards, then he'll do that. He's just that type of individual."

Dozier, however, is not the type of individual that can tolerate watching the action from the sidelines. Back-up quarterback and roommate Matt Knizner said it was easy to tell that Dozier was not



Lion tailback D.J. Dozier (42) had to watch other Penn State backs, including fullback Tim Manoa (44) do more running than he would have liked due to injuries. But after a solid 125-yard performance against West Virginia last Saturday, he appears to be rounding into top form just as the Lions' drive for a bowl game intensifies.

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— D.J. Dozier, Lion tailback

himself while he was injured.

"It's true with any player — when you're sitting out, you're not going to be as alert," Knizner said. "You're not going to be as enthusiastic about it because you wish you're in there."

Dozier's enthusiasm may have suffered somewhat, but Knizner said he tried not to let his teammates know he was troubled.

"D.J.'s not the type of kid that's going to get down, he knows he has to contribute some way and his way, when he was injured, was to keep everybody up. He wanted to keep everyone going and working hard."

At various times injuries have caused Dozier to find the going tough — he missed two games last year with a groin pull and underwent knee surgery last January — and each injury has tested his patience.

"It is frustrating, but what can you do," he said. "It's part of life, and there's a reason for everything, so that's the way I had to look at it. I tore a hamstring — what could you do?"

The only thing Dozier could do was stand and watch, so he decided to become an extra coach on the sidelines. Dozier watched David Clark and Kevin Woods and offered them advice when they came off the field.

Although he is able to help his teammates, Dozier said he has problems preparing for Saturday's when he knows he is going to be on the sidelines. His only consolation is that he is able to learn more about the opposing defense when he is on the bench.

"The first thing that runs through my mind on game day is a depressing feeling because you know no matter what, you can't go in the game, and I like to be in the game at all times," he said. "I like to be in there, and thinking about the fact that whatever happens, you can do nothing except maybe pump up the guys on the sidelines."

Dozier, however, is off the sidelines now and said he hopes to continue improving each game. Although he rushed for 125 yards and went over the 2,000-yard mark for his career, Dozier was not overly impressed with his performance against West Virginia.

"I don't want to say I wasn't in top condition, but I still feel I could have done better and it wasn't the best game I've played," he said. "But then again, you've got to look at the offensive line — they did a fantastic job. You could see it in their eyes and on the field that they wanted to get the job done and they got it done."

Offensive lineman Todd Moulas said that the line enjoys blocking for all of the Lion backs, but admitted that the addition of Dozier helps motivate the line to try to do an even better job. He said Dozier's work ethic rubs off and makes the entire offense play harder.

"He definitely gives us a lift," the senior tri-captain said. "He's just such an intense player and he can light up an offense so quick. Everybody knows how hard he works and he's an exciting player."

Dozier knows he can become even more

exciting as the season progresses, he just hopes to be in top shape by the end of the season as the 7-0 Lions drive toward a bowl bid.

In last week's game he passed Franco Harris to become the ninth all-time leading rusher in Penn State history, but he paid no attention to the milestone. The only number Dozier is concerned with is eight — the number of wins he hopes the Lions have after today's game.

Although they are undefeated, Dozier knows the Lions have yet to play their best football. He just hopes the team continues to jell and that he can help the offense show the productivity it had last week.

"I think we showed we can be a good offensive team," Dozier said after defeating West Virginia. "We made another step as far as how good as we are — I think we can be good."

For clutch players like Dozier, this is the time of year when they usually turn their level of play up that final notch. Dozier hopes his teammates will do the same, and he has a feeling that they will.

Dozier said the Lions have learned a lot from the losses against Notre Dame and Pitt that brought the final curtain down on a disappointing 6-5 season.

"We don't look at records. We know every team that we play's going to play good against us," Dozier said. "I think a lot of that has to do with last year."

A 7-0 record and a No. 3 ranking have helped many people forget about last year, but Dozier said the team now knows what it must do to avoid another disastrous finish.

"Each week we have to worry about that game, that week, those practices, and I think that's another thing that helped us come together."

And news that the Lions are coming together is the last thing Boston College needs to hear at a time like this.

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