

# 1973:

## Last unbeaten team felt cheated by No. 5 ranking

By DOUG FRANK  
Collegian Sports Writer

It's the end of the college football season, the bowl games are all a matter of record, and you are on a committee that must rank the top twenty teams in the nation.

You are looking at the credentials of a team that finished the season at 12-0, winning those 12 games by an average margin of 20 points — four touchdowns — over the likes of Stanford, Iowa, Air Force, Army, Syracuse, West Virginia, Maryland, and Pitt.

About a month ago, the tailback on that team won college football's highest honor — the Heisman Trophy — and will soon be selected in the first round of the National Football League draft. You don't know it at the time, but 16 other lettermen from that team will go on to play in the NFL, and four of them will still be playing 12 years later.

What do you rank this team? No. 1, No. 2 if it's a competitive year?

**'Personally, I think they blew it. We all felt that it (the No. 5 ranking) was unjustified.'**

— Walt Addie, reserve tailback

If you're working for the AP or the UPI, and the team you are considering is the 1973 Penn State squad, you put them at No. 5.

When the final polls were issued during the first week of 1974, that was indeed the spot in which the undefeated Nittany Lions — the last undefeated team in Penn State's history — found themselves.

Ahead of Penn State in the final standings were four other undefeated teams — Notre Dame, Ohio State, Oklahoma, and Alabama. The Associated Press ranked them one through four in that order, while the UPI coaches' poll reversed that order for its top four. Either way, Penn State still came out fifth.

How could a team be slighted so badly? A team that held a highly-touted Stanford team scoreless until the reserves gave up a touchdown in the final three minutes of the game.

A team that rushed for more yards against Army (44) than any other opponent in the Cadets' history while chalking up a 54-3 victory.

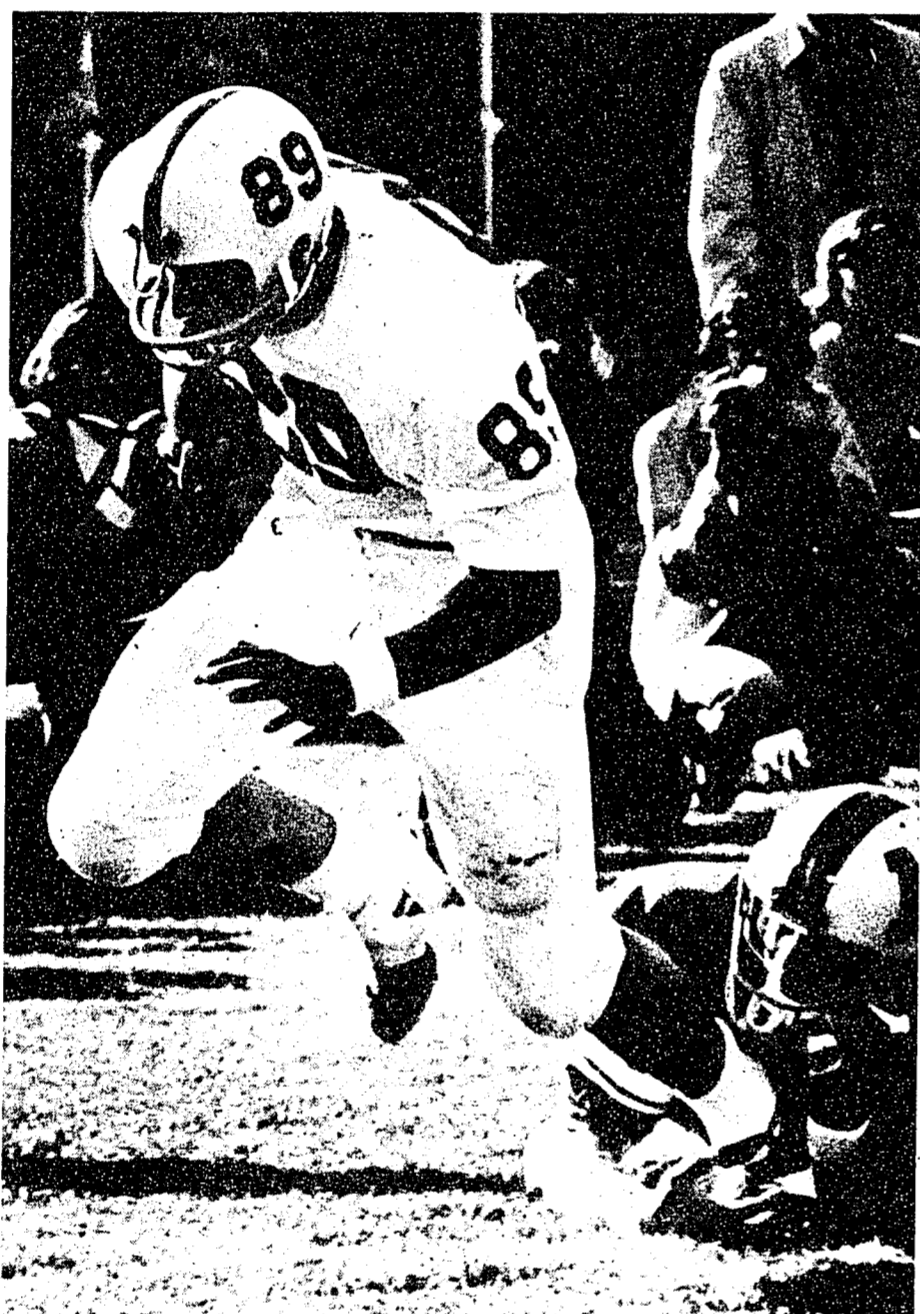
A team that, in a 62-14 thrashing of West Virginia, had the Mountaineers so frustrated that they punted on third down to avoid losing any more yardage.

Perhaps the pollsters were still celebrating the new year when they cast their ballots.

"Personally, I think they blew it," said Walt Addie, one of the tailbacks on the 1973 team. "We all felt that it (the No. 5 ranking) was unjustified."

The Lions had an opportunity to finish higher than fifth, but fate was decidedly against them.

When the bowl games made their invitations, Penn State committed to play in the Orange Bowl against then undefeated LSU, who had yet to face Alabama and Tulane. Had LSU won both of those games, they probably would have been



Tight end Dan Natale (89) was a key member of Penn State's last unbeaten team in 1973. In addition to passing catches, he also took pride in his blocking, but his and the rest of the team's achievements during that 12-0 year earned them no higher than fifth place in the polls by season's end.

ranked No. 1 or No. 2, setting the stage for a possible title assault by the Lions.

As it turned out, LSU lost not only to highly-ranked Alabama, but to the weaker Tulane Green Wave as well, dropping them in the polls and making for a somewhat anticlimactic 16-9 Penn State victory in the Orange Bowl.

"It was something we couldn't really control," said Dan Natale, tight end for the 1973 Lions. "We depended on LSU, and it fell through."

What rationale could the powers behind the college rankings have for putting an unbeaten team in the lowly fifth position? One has to suspect that if the Lions had tied someone, they would have found themselves down around 15th, and if they had lost one of those 12 games, they would have been lucky to crack the Top Twenty.

Sounds like the classic Rodney Dangerfield syndrome — no respect.

"At the time, people didn't respect Eastern football," said Jack Baiornos, who played on the offensive line in 1973. "We knew we were as good as or better than any of those other teams. It was just a kind of prejudice."

Defensive Coordinator Jerry Sandusky,

proper circumstances.

In the summer of 1973, while circumstance was drawing together green recruits in the jungles of Vietnam, bonds were also being forged among recruits on the practice fields of Penn State.

"The pre-season was really hell for us, it was really hot that year," Baiornos said. "It was probably the hardest and most grueling of my three years there. I can remember when the alarm went off in the morning, you almost needed a foghorn to get yourself up."

"I even wrote notes to myself, reminding me what it was like, because I knew I would never be able to remember how grueling an experience that actually was."

"But I think that actually helped develop a unity and closeness on the team, because we worked so hard and went through so much together that we weren't going to give anything up easily and let anybody take away what we worked for."

Team unity was not the only magical aspect of that 1973 Lion squad, however. That year was made even more special by

**'At the time, people didn't respect Eastern football. We knew we were as good as or better than any of those other teams. It was just a kind of prejudice.'**

— Jack Baiornos, offensive lineman

John Cappelletti's 1,522-yard chase for the Heisman which included three consecutive 200-yard performances, then an National Collegiate Athletic Association record.

Sandusky said that the extra attention Cappelletti received because of the Heisman race created no strife on the team. In fact, he said the way in which the other players enjoyed Cappelletti's success and related to it was a significant factor in the compilation of a 12-0 season.

"John was a real class guy, so there was no conflict there," Natale said. "I enjoyed throwing a block for John as much as I did going out to catch a pass."

"It was an honor for us on the offensive line to have a back from our backfield get the Heisman," Baiornos said. "It was an incentive for us to do well."

Even the running backs who sat on the bench while Cappelletti amassed yardage on the field admired the man from Upper Darby, Pa.

"I roomed with Cappy on the away games, so we got to be pretty close friends," said Addie, who played behind Cappelletti at tailback. "I got to see the other side of what happened to him as a result of those 40 and 35 carries a game. It's just amazing. He took all that punishment and never said a word, never complained. He was in ice bags all week from the last week's game, took off the ice bags and went out and carried the ball 40 more times."

"That was one thing that stands out in my mind — the things he went through, plus the situation with his brother (Joey, who suffered from leukemia). The punishment see UNBEATEN, Page 17.

## Unbeaten

Continued from Page 16.

ment he took and the games he played and the performance he had, week after week, despite all those bruises and injuries, just amazed me."

The running of Cappelletti and the attention it drew was one of the few individual aspects of a team that, on the whole, played and won as a unit.

One brief flash of individuality, however, was provided by Addie in an uncharacteristic move for the self-professed 'low-key' player. Addie tells the story:

"We were about halfway through the season, and I was the second team tailback, and Army didn't have one of their better teams that year. We really punished them, so the second team got to play quite a bit."

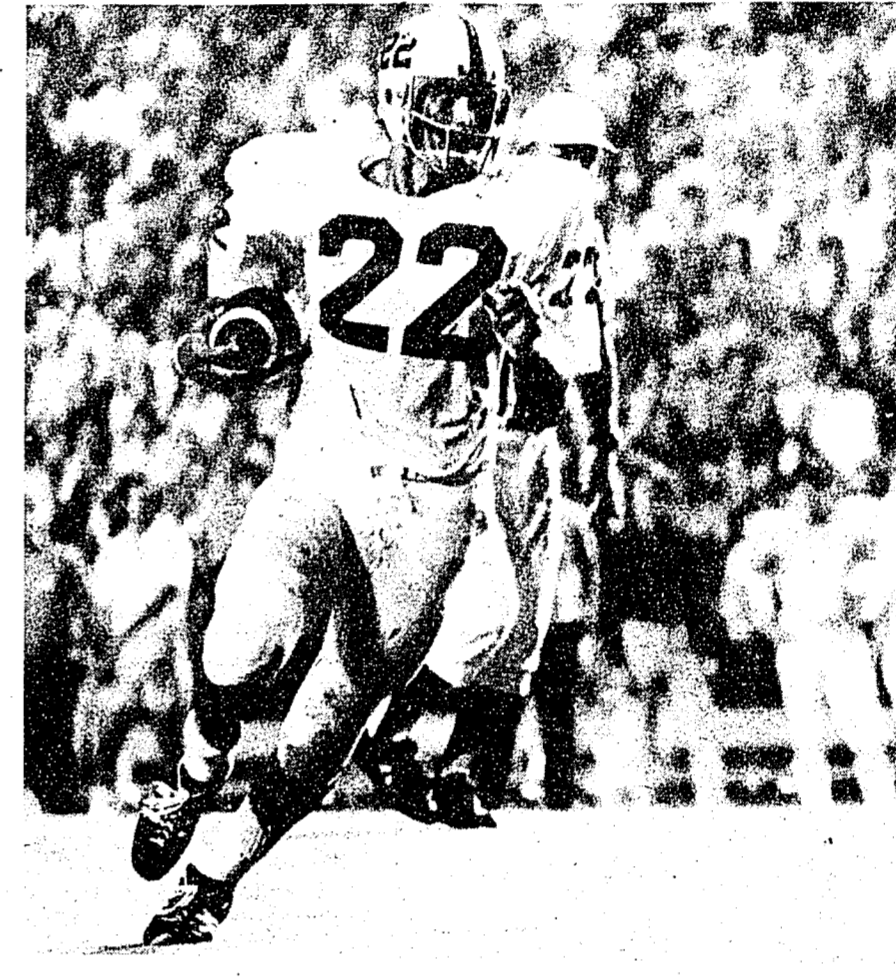
**'John was a real class guy, so there was no conflict there. I enjoyed throwing a block for John as much as I did going out to catch a pass.'**

— Dan Natale, tight end

On our first series we ran a simple sweep, and the offensive line, everybody knocked everybody (on the defense) down. There was nobody there, I just had to run straight up the field.

"So I scored on a long run, and I was so happy, I just threw the ball straight up in the air, because I hadn't been playing that much. I was so happy that we had scored — it was a perfect play."

"And it wasn't until after I released the ball that I realized, 'Uh-oh, this ain't going to look too good.' So, obviously, when I got back to the sidelines, Joe was kind of



Heisman Trophy winner John Cappelletti was the big star on the 1973 team, but he was just one of 17 members on the squad who went on to play pro football.

upset, and understandably, because it did look like a hotdog kind of thing."

"It was very uncharacteristic of me to do something like that. It was just a situation where everything had gone so well and I was so happy that we had scored and so happy that I got a chance to play, it was just a spontaneous kind of thing. Unfortunately, it was the wrong

thing to do."

For his sins, Addie was penalized 15 yards by the officials and benched for the duration of the game by Paterno.

"That was just a rule of Joe's," Sandusky said. "We didn't do that (celebrate an individual play); that was just a general rule of Penn State football. The feeling is that we wanted to share it with all the

teammates, and it wasn't an individual matter, that we shouldn't display that sort of thing."

"He wasn't showboating or anything, I think he was just elated. But Joe was just trying to get a point across to everybody to keep their wins and successes in perspective."

**'It was an honor for us on the offensive line to have a back from our backfield get the Heisman. It was an incentive for us to do well.'**

— Jack Baiornos, offensive lineman

Keeping things in perspective is Addie's prescription for the 1985 Lions if they are to duplicate the feat of their 1973 counterparts.

"I'm happier for this team than I think I've ever been for a Penn State team, because they weren't picked to do much," Addie said. "They didn't have a bunch of superstars, yet they've beaten people that they weren't supposed to beat."

"They've played the kind of football I think Joe always liked. He liked the kind of game where you didn't have the hot-shots or the heroes to pull it out for you, but you had the regular athletes who played their guts out, played everything right, didn't make mistakes."

"The team seems to have that kind of characteristic that it would always do the thing it needed to win, and I hope they go all the way. I think they've got a good shot to take them all, if they keep their mind on what they're supposed to do and don't read the press clippings."

## Nutritionists play role in Lions' success

By CHRIS RAYMOND  
Collegian Sports Writer

When Stephen Davis first arrived on the University Park campus fresh out of high school, he settled into a routine he had faithfully followed for nearly half his life.

In tune with the rigors of life as a football player, the junior offensive lineman from Wenonah, N.J., spent most of his time sleeping, going to classes and working on the practice fields at the Indoor Sports Complex.

Unlike his playing days at Deptford Township High School, however, Davis now had to contend with a new problem — one which added a new dimension to the game of football he had been accustomed to. He now had to cope with the problem of weight control.

Davis had graduated from high school as a sleek 260-pound tackle with All-South Jersey and second-team All-America honors, but somewhere between graduation day and his first day of practice at Penn State, he added 30 pounds to his 6-foot frame.

His new coaches told him he would have to lose at least half that extra weight if he wanted to meet up to Lion standards for offensive linemen.

Fortunately for Davis, the Penn State Athletic Department had already seen to it that players could get counseling from registered nutritionists to deal with diet problems without having to leave the campus.

In the winter of his freshman year, Davis set up an appointment with the athletic program's nutritionist, Lee Alekel. Alekel tested Davis' body fat, monitored his cholesterol count and recorded his blood pressure, and then came up with a nutrition history.

"You obtain a nutrition history to figure out what

(players) have been doing and then what their concerns are," Alekel said, "whether they need to gain weight, lose weight or maintain their weight. Then their caloric requirements are assessed and I figure out what their caloric requirements are."

In Davis' case, she just suggested cutting down on red meat, fatty foods and between-meal snacks.

"(After the appointment), you know exactly what (weight) you have to get down to, exactly what food groups you have to cut down on and exactly what you're limits are on eating," Davis said. "She teaches you how to modify your eating habits."

Shortly after meeting with Alekel, Davis' weight dropped 18 pounds to a solid 272, and it has remained within the 270-277-pound range ever since.

Alekel said she has met with many of the Penn State players to discuss diet plans.

Oftentimes, they come just for advice on how to improve their diets, she said.

Guidelines vary from player to player and position to position, Alekel said.

"(With) the ones that need to lose weight, we need to set up a little bit stricter guidelines," she said. "I give them an idea of how many calories they should be consuming and what that looks like in terms of food."

Most players, however, are free to choose exactly which foods they prefer to eat.

"They have a lot of choice, which is good," Alekel said. "The recommendations that I usually make go along the lines of 'you need to increase your carbohydrates, you need to increase your vegetables or you need to watch the fats in your diet,' which are recommendations that we make for the general public as well."

Still, athletes' caloric requirements are different from

those of the general public because they consume roughly double the number of calories of a normal college student in their everyday routines.

"Some of those guys are consuming six to eight thousand calories a day, which is much more than the typical student on this campus," Alekel said. "Portion sizes of everything (at the players' training table) tend to be larger."

In order to distribute the players' caloric intake more evenly each day coaches have made breakfast mandatory this year for every player on the team.

Contrary to popular belief, the food at the training table is not much better than that in the student cafeterias, Alekel said.

"They have certain things that are offered more frequently and maybe a little bit wider choice of desserts just in terms of calories," she said.

"(The food is) not that bad, but it's not as good as some people think," Davis said.

"On my recruiting visits (to other colleges), I went and ate at other players' training tables and it was nothing like this at all," he added. "Their food was a whole lot better."

Most players don't complain about the food, Davis said.

Alekel said she can't always promise noticeable results from her diet plans, but what players get out of those plans depend on what they put in.

"I think the bottom line is if the (football) players, just like other athletes, really believe that this is going to improve or affect their performance, that's the key. Then they're going to be willing to make some changes," she said. "Sometimes, the recommendations that I make might very well affect their performance, whereas at other times it's just going to be basically to improve their nutrition."