

Sports

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Fazio, Panthers lament missed opportunities

By CHRIS LINDSEY
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After crushing Penn State 31-11 last year to conclude its season at 3-7-1, Pitt, with 41 letterman returning, had high expectations looking ahead to 1985.

And after beating Purdue 31-30 to open their season, the Panthers appeared to be on their way.

But then came a tough 10-7 loss at the hands of Ohio State in Columbus, a 29-22 setback to Boston College in a game they were 22-21 favorites to win, a quarter and a half late at West Virginia, games Pitt Head Coach Fazio said his team needed to win to get rolling.

"We thought we got off on the right foot against Purdue," Fazio said. "But we had an opportunity to beat Ohio State and we didn't, and we had an opportunity to beat Boston College and we didn't, and we tied West Virginia, and I think that says it in a nutshell. We need to have gotten another win or two out of these first three or four games."

Problems for the Panthers were just beginning, however, as injuries, along with an inefficient kicking game and a lack of depth at tailback all played a role in keeping them down.

The Panthers lost tailbacks A.B.

Brown and Eugene Napoleon, who quit the team in the middle of the season, and that, along with the injuries, forced Fazio to go with many inexperienced players.

"We just had one tailback [Charles Gladman] for the last two games," Fazio said. "And especially when we lost Navy, we were down to just we're a very healthy football team. We played a lot of young people, and that can explain it. The teams that stay healthy and get some momentum going to win games for you, and unfortunately for us we didn't have that."

For the players, the team's 5-4-1 record going into Saturday night's matchup with the Lions was hard to accept.

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Placekicker Pat Vancourt and Mark Bracco have struggled throughout the season, combining to make good on only 5-of-16 field goal attempts, or less than 33 per cent.

Penn State's Massimo Manca, on the other hand, has hit 20-of-25 for 80 per cent, and a host of other kickers have been having trouble hitting the ball.

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