Baseball team plays pair of doubleheaders

By CHRISTINE BORN
Collegian Sports Writer

Inconsistency.

It's a word coaches, players and fans alike hate to use. But in light of the baseball team's recent performances, it's an appropriate word.

Tomorrow, Penn State will be looking to erase that tag as the Lions travel to West Chester for a doubleheader before returning to Beaver Field at noon on Sunday for a twinbill with Rider.

After 28 games, the Lions' record stands at 18-10 but that does not tell the whole story.

At the start of the season, Penn State was attempting to improve on the school record of 32 wins which it recorded last season. And for a time, the Lions appeared to be on their way to surpassing that mark.

Upon returning from a 5-3 stint during a Spring Break tournament in Texas, Penn State continued its winning ways taking a doubleheader from Norfolk State and a single game from William & Mary, boosting its record to 8-3.

The Lions were also outhitting their opponents .325 to .257. They seemed to be on their way to a consistent performance, at least, until they ran into Navy.

At Annapolis, Penn State dropped a doubleheader, losing both games by one run. The Lions bounced back the following day, pounding Towson State 6-2 and 21-10, however, the next two weeks saw them waver back and forth as they split a doubleheader with Lafayette and dropped a twinbill to Rutgers two days later.

The following week, Penn State won its first three games but closed with a losing effort in a doubleheader with Atlantic 10 Conference foe George Washington.

Head Coach Shorty Stoner praised both of the Lions' weekend opponents, especially West Chester, which has moved up to Division I this season.

"They are now in Division I and that is why we are playing them in a doubleheader this year," he said. "But they are always tough and are playing good ball right now."

West Chester is 10-6-1 and will be looking to avenge last year's 16-1 loss to Penn State.

Some Golden Rams to watch are third baseman Mark Digiacomo who is pounding the ball at a sizzling .364 pace. Batting a close second is second baseman Louis Rios who is sporting a .362 average.

Senior Gary McIlmoyle leads West Chester in homeruns with three.

The Lions are hoping to counteract West Chester's hitting attack with some hot bats of their own. Center fielder Mike Karstetter leads the team with a .392 clip through 26 games. Catcher Wes Olsen is carrying a .358 average and first baseman C.J. Sichler is close behind at .355.

Sichler said Penn State is looking forward to the weekend trip.

"We are on the right track now," the senior said. "The two big wins on Tuesday (6-0 and 6-4 over Mansfield) helped and hopefully we can get on a roll and get a winning streak going before we go to Atlantic 10s."

Stoner agreed with Sichler's evaluation of Tuesday's games.

"I saw some nice things yesterday (Tuesday)," he said. "We are hoping that things are falling our way."

While the Lions are hitting collectively at a .310 pace, the pitching is holding up its end as well. Penn State pitchers are sporting a 3.78 ERA and Sichler said they have been keeping the Lions in ball games.

Softball team hosts invitational

By MARK FURRY
Collegian Sports Writer

Up to this point, the softball team's season has been a roller coaster ride and this past week was no different. The Lady Lions dropped two games to Rhode Island on Sunday, dropped a two-game decision to Lock Haven on Tuesday and picked up a twinbill against Bucknell on Wednesday.

Now, the Lady Lions hope the roller coaster ride will turn into a steady trip to the land of consistency.

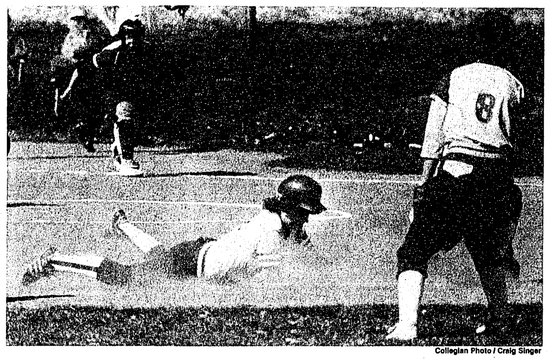
Consistency will be the key for the Lady Lions this weekend as they host the annual Lady Lion Invitational, which includes teams from all over the United States. The competition is expected to be tough and the guest list reads like a who's who of softball.

Joining defending Atlantic 10 champion Penn State (14-13) will be Division II power Eastern Illinois, Adelphi, Northeast region champions last year and ranked No. 2 in that division this year, and Cental Michigan. Connecticut, the Northeast region's No. 3 team, Ohio State, Rhode Island and Virginia will also compete in the tournament.

The Lady Lions face Eastern Illinois at 10 a.m. today followed by Rhode Island at 11:30 a.m. and Central Michigan at 1 p.m.

The tournament consists of two pools. Penn State's pool includes its Friday opponents, while the other consists of Adelphi, Ohio State, Virginia and Connecticut.

The top two finishers in each pool will face off against each other on Saturday in a double-elimination tournament beginning at 10:30 a.m. at Lady Lion Field.



Collegian Photo / Craig Singer

Penn State's Julie Reed, left, attempts to steal second base in a game vs. West Chester earlier this season at Lady Lion Field. The softball team will host six teams in the Lady Lion Invitational this weekend at Lady Lion Field.

The Lady Lions will face Connecticut in a regular season double header at noon on Sunday at Lady Lion Field.

With that kind of schedule, Penn State will have to play solid, all-around softball to stay in contention for the tournament title.

"You can't give breaks to the kind of teams that are at this tournament, or they'll run all over us," Head Coach Sue Rankin said. "Lock Haven did a pretty good job on us (on Tuesday), but they're (the tournament competitors) going to do even more on us."

The good news for the Lady Lions is that in their latest outing against Bucknell, they put together two consistent games. In the first game, the team rapped out 10 hits, while pitcher Beth Devlin (7-5 on the year) pitched a shutout. The second game saw every Lady Lion starter get at least one hit, as the squad won, 7-1.

Outfielder-catcher Julie Reed feels the team is ready for the tournament, especially after the Bucknell sweep.

"We're excited and I hope the wins over Bucknell will carry over to Friday's (today's) games," Reed said. "We're 14-13 now, so we can really boost our record if we win some games this weekend. I'd like to see us get over .500."

"Right now, our defense is sound and our hitting is sound," Rankin added. "So I'm looking forward to this weekend."

Penn State has already had the chance to see two of the teams in the tournament this year — Virginia and Rhode Island. The Lady Lions defeated Virginia twice and were beaten twice by Rhode Island.

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For those who want to go to the PSDA meeting in Scranton, fill out a form in the SDA office (224 H. Dev.) **before 3:00 today.**

We will be leaving on Thurs., April 24 at 3:30 pm and returning on Fri., April 25 around 8:30 pm

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