

Big Ten

A glance at the games this week

Ohio St. at Wisconsin

3:30 p.m. EDT (ABC)

Brent Musburger is doing the game for ABC, taking a break from ruining the coverage of the American League Championship Series to ruin the coverage of college football. At least he has some experience at that. But Brent's presence in Madison doesn't mean you shouldn't watch this one. The winner will establish itself as the front-runner in the Rose Bowl hunt. The No. 4 Buckeyes (5-0, 1-0 Big Ten) will look to exploit Wisconsin's terrible pass defense, ranked ninth among Big Ten teams. Look for Buckeye flanker Terry Glenn to put up numbers similar to or better than the ones he posted in toasting the Penn State secondary last week. The only chance the No. 21 Badgers (2-1-1, 1-0) have to win this one is if the home crowd proves a huge advantage and their physical strength can dominate.

The pick: Ohio State, 33-24

Indiana at Iowa

1 p.m. EDT (ESPN2)

The No. 23 Hawkeyes (4-0, 1-0) have cracked the Top 25 for the first time since finishing No. 10 in 1991. The offense has excelled, averaging 35.3 points and 511.3 yards per game. Sophomore quarterback Matt Sherman is seventh in the nation in passing efficiency and junior tailback Sedrick Shaw may be the best back in the Big Ten, where six of the top 14 rushers in the country reside. He is racking up 158 yards per game on the ground. Indiana's defense has been above average, allowing just 287.4 yards per game. But its inability to move the football on offense gives Hoosier opponents good field position on almost every possession. They're atrocious when they have the ball, putting up a Big Ten-worst 15.6 points per game.

The pick: Iowa, 31-3

Michigan St. at Illinois

12:20 p.m. EDT

Illinois is usually a participant in the Big Ten's Snoozer of the Week, as it will be again tomorrow. Illinois is just not much fun to watch, except to see how many sacks Simeon Rice is going to have and how many boos Lou Tepper is going to hear. The Illini (3-2, 1-1) have actually gotten better, as they have won their last three games. But in those three games, they've scored just 33 points. Scott Weaver has taken over for Johnny Johnson. Too bad their offense still sucks, but not enough to lose to the Spartans (2-2-1, 0-1-1). Just when Michigan State Coach Nick Saban figured out how to get his defense to play better, the offense went south in a 21-7 home loss to Iowa last week.

The pick: Illinois, 23-6

N'western at Minn.

7 p.m. EDT

Unbelievably, this is the other match-up of teams with perfect conference records (along with the Ohio State-Wisconsin game.) The No. 14 Wildcats (4-1, 2-0) are playing pretty good football, but might actually be a bit overrated. The primary reason they won at Michigan last week was four Wolverine turnovers, as the Wildcats were dominated statistically. But they did emerge from the Big House victorious, which can never be understated. Their defense has been pretty damn good, giving up just 14.2 points every Saturday. It will have to be, if Northwestern hopes to escape the Metrodome alive. The Golden Gophers (3-1, 1-0) are an offensive juggernaut. Ever wonder what a juggernaut really is? According to Webster's, it's a terrible, irresistible force. Is that like saying when I'm hungry I have a juggernaut pulling me toward Wendy's? Anyway, Minnesota's offense is good, with tailback Chris Darkins pounding out 144.5 yards per game and quarterback Cory Sauter completing better than 61 percent of his passes. If Minnesota avoids the turnovers — and they've only given the ball away five times through four games — they'll pull the upset.

The pick: Minnesota, 37-27

Idle: No. 11 Michigan
Picks by Brad Young

Purdue defense should be a Lion cakewalk

By MICHAEL SIGNORA
Collegian Sports Writer

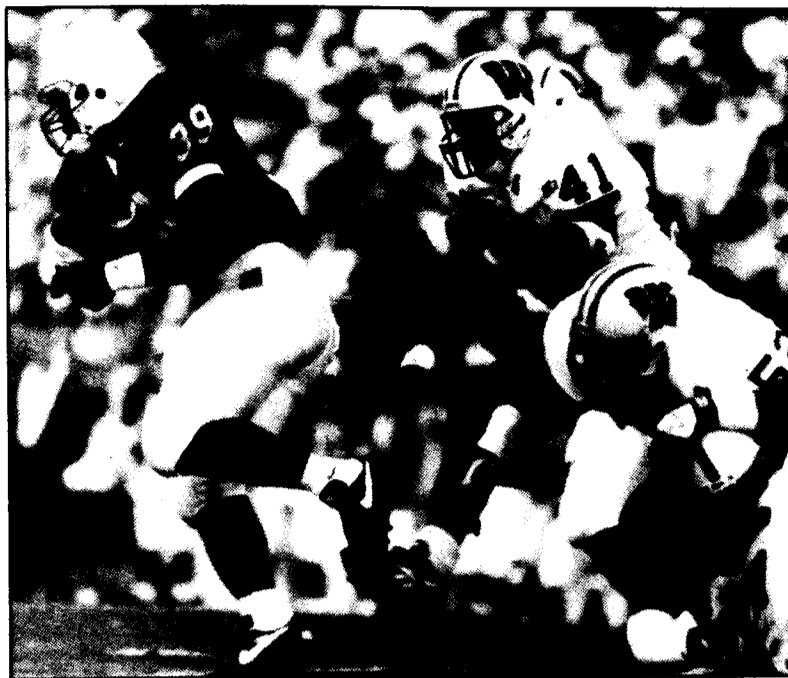
On paper, it's a mismatch of mammoth proportions. A Penn State offense averaging 37 points and 463 yards, coupled with a rushing attack ranked 15th in America, faces a Purdue defense languishing amidst the ash heap of cellar dwellers for consecutive seasons.

At 12:30 p.m. tomorrow, when the Lions invade Ross-Ade Stadium for the first time since 1951, Penn State will attempt to abuse Boilermaker defenders as Big Ten teams have done repeatedly in recent years. Regardless, the Blue and White are taking nothing for granted.

"They look very tough," senior Stephen Pitts said. "When you watch them on film, it's hard to believe they haven't won more games. You get a better sense of what they can do on film by just looking at the numbers. On film they look good."

Maybe, but on the field they look awful. Purdue hasn't stopped anybody through the air, while enemy tailbacks have run roughshod over a porous run defense surrendering 221 yards per contest.

Penn State will look to exploit this vulnerability with the back-



Curtis Enis leaves Wisconsin defenders in the dust during a kick return in their game last month. The Lions lost the game 17-9.

field tandem of Mike Archie and Curtis Enis. The freshman phenom continues to shine, gaining a career best 146 yards on 25 carries against Ohio State. The production of the running

game will depend greatly on a banged-up offensive line. With starters Keith Conlin and Marco Rivera questionable, the depth of the unit will be tested again. "We have to avoid breakdowns,

there's no doubt about that," All-American guard Jeff Hartings said. "We have to make sure to stop the little things that can come up and really hurt us."

Joining the stellar senior in the trenches will be tackle Pete Marczyk. Coach Joe Paterno is unsure how the remainder of the vacancies up front will be filled, if substitution becomes a necessity. In the battle with the Buckeyes, the line suffered crippling pass protection breakdowns. Paterno said the group was tired, and Rivera was not at peak efficiency, playing through an injury.

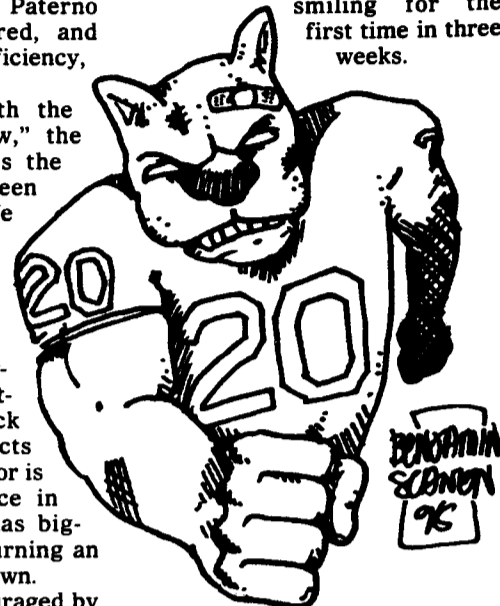
"We're struggling with the offensive line right now," the Lion leader said. "That's the biggest difference between this year and last year. We stayed healthy then and never had any problem with the offense. Hopefully we'll put it together and rise to the occasion."

Though Purdue's performance has been disappointing so far, defensive back Derrick Winston expects things to change. The junior is second in the conference in passes broken up and has big-play ability, already returning an interception for a touchdown. Winston has been encouraged by

preparation and expects the team to perform at a higher level.

"The key for us is to avoid costly mistakes," he said. "We can't make them and we have to capitalize on the mistakes they make."

Lion quarterback Wally Richardson hopes to continue his practically turnover-free campaign, allowing only one pickoff in 158 attempts. If Penn State can combine a capable aerial assault with solid running, Happy Valley will be smiling for the first time in three weeks.



Richardson playing well despite losses

By BRAD YOUNG
Collegian Sports Writer

The numbers are not that bad. He's only thrown one interception compared to eight touchdowns. And he's completed over 60 percent of his passes. But one statistic has Penn State quarterback Wally Richardson taking more heat than anybody this side of the Simpson jury. It's the number of scratches under the Nittany Lions' loss column.

But no matter how much blame Richardson takes for the fact that the Lions have been able to muster just three wins in their first five games, he is able to shoulder it. It's no more than what he already gives himself.

"I put a lot of responsibility on myself," Richardson said. "I'm in charge out there."

As a result, Richardson said he feels terrible when things don't go well, when the offense grounds itself — just like it has in each of the last two games. Against both Wisconsin and Ohio State, the Lions could not move the ball in the crucial situations, when time was dwindling and the Lions trailed. In those two games, the two-minute offense crumbled under a plague of penalties and quarterback sacks. The Lions, of course, were beaten both times.

Richardson knows he needs to engineer the late-game machine a little bit better. Last week, Penn State needed just a couple of first downs on their final possessions, but they could not get them. They could not get 10 yards in three plays. The fourth-quarter offensive struggles came to a boiling point, and Richardson felt the burden of failure.

"It's worn on me. But I've talked to my parents and they've told me to hang in there and things will work out. And that's basically all I can do."

— Wally Richardson
Lion quarterback

"It hurt a lot," the redshirt junior said. Despite what the media or fans think of Richardson's performance through the first half of the season, he, his coach and his teammates all agree that he has been doing just fine.

Richardson said his confidence level has not waned through two losses. He has not yet been driven loopy by the number of different defenses and blitzes he has seen — a number much larger than that faced by Kerry Collins last year. And his primary goal as he began this season was to not throw any crucial interceptions and make costly mistakes that would put his team in a bad spot. He has served up just one pick, a meaningless bomb swiped by Temple in their own end zone.

"He does what we need to do to win," wide receiver Bobby Engram said. "These situations that have come up in close games will help him tremendously."

Richardson also feels that playing in two tough losses will make him a stronger quarterback down the road. He has one more year at the Lion helm, and Penn State Coach Joe Paterno feels confident his field general

will continue to show the qualities of a fine quarterback.

"Wally's done well," Paterno said. "He's going to get better."

This week may prove an ideal opportunity for Richardson to show just how good he can be. The Purdue defense is ranked last in the Big Ten.

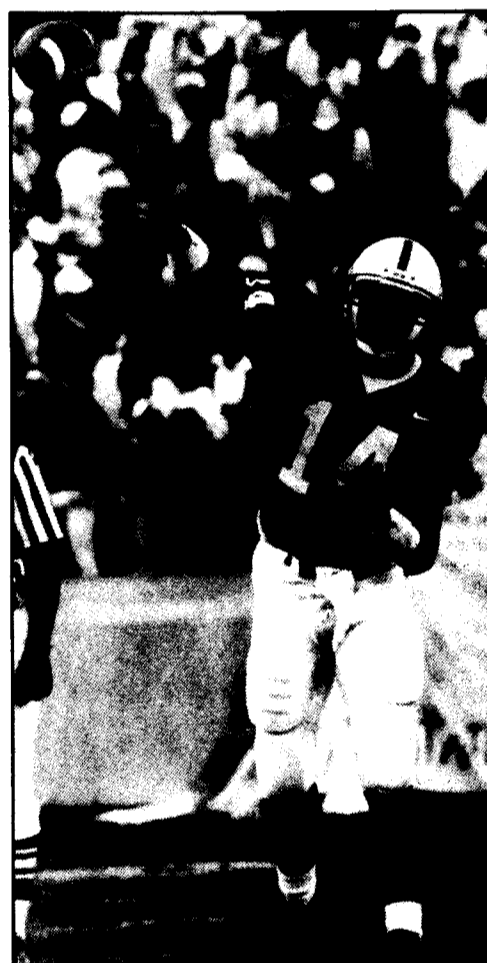
Quarterbacks are throwing for 241.6 yards per game against Purdue and they are completing 64 percent of their passes against the Boilermaker secondary.

But Purdue's Derrick Winston said he and his defensive mates have been playing well in practice this week, and are ready for him.

"Luck might not be going his way right now," the cornerback said. "The way we're playing, things won't go his way this week, either."

Don't expect those threats to get to Richardson. After what's happened to him and the Lion offense the last two weeks, he's gotten used to harsh words.

"It's worn on me," Richardson said. "But I've talked to my parents and they've told me to hang in there and things will work out. And that's basically all I can do."



Wally Richardson throws a pass against Temple. He only has one interception.

Alstott provides lone offensive threat for Boilermakers

By MICHAEL SIGNORA
Collegian Sports Writer

There's no precision passing, a la Wisconsin's Darrell Bevell. The aerial acrobatics of Ohio State's Terry Glenn will be nowhere near West Lafayette, Ind.

Purdue's primary offensive threat would rather ram the football down Penn State's throat than resort to trickery. And to accomplish that objective, fullback Mike Alstott is the nation's best.

When the Lions take the field at 12:30 p.m. tomorrow, Ross-Ade Stadium will be rocking in support of its 1995 Heisman trophy candidate. Though a fullback winning the coveted award is at best highly unlikely, the senior is the core of an explosive Boilermaker attack.

"His personality in terms of work ethic is phenomenal," Coach Jim Colletto said. "In the four years he's been here, I've never seen him loaf one day. He never wants to leave a drill. We have to find ways to rest him, because he won't do it."

Racking up 620 yards in five games, Alstott provides a solid running game — by himself.

With Purdue averaging 32 points and 456.8 yards, the

"(Alstott's) personality in terms of work ethic is phenomenal... I've never seen him loaf one day."

— Jim Colletto
Purdue football coach

supervision major spearheads the vaunted attack and is a perplexing problem Penn State must face.

Lion defenders have seen film on the fiery fullback, and to insure that the movies don't turn into a real-life horror show, No. 40 must be contained.

"He's a talented back," linebacker Gerald Filardi said. "You have to hit him and make sure you take him down, because he can break a lot of tackles. He's a tough-nosed player."

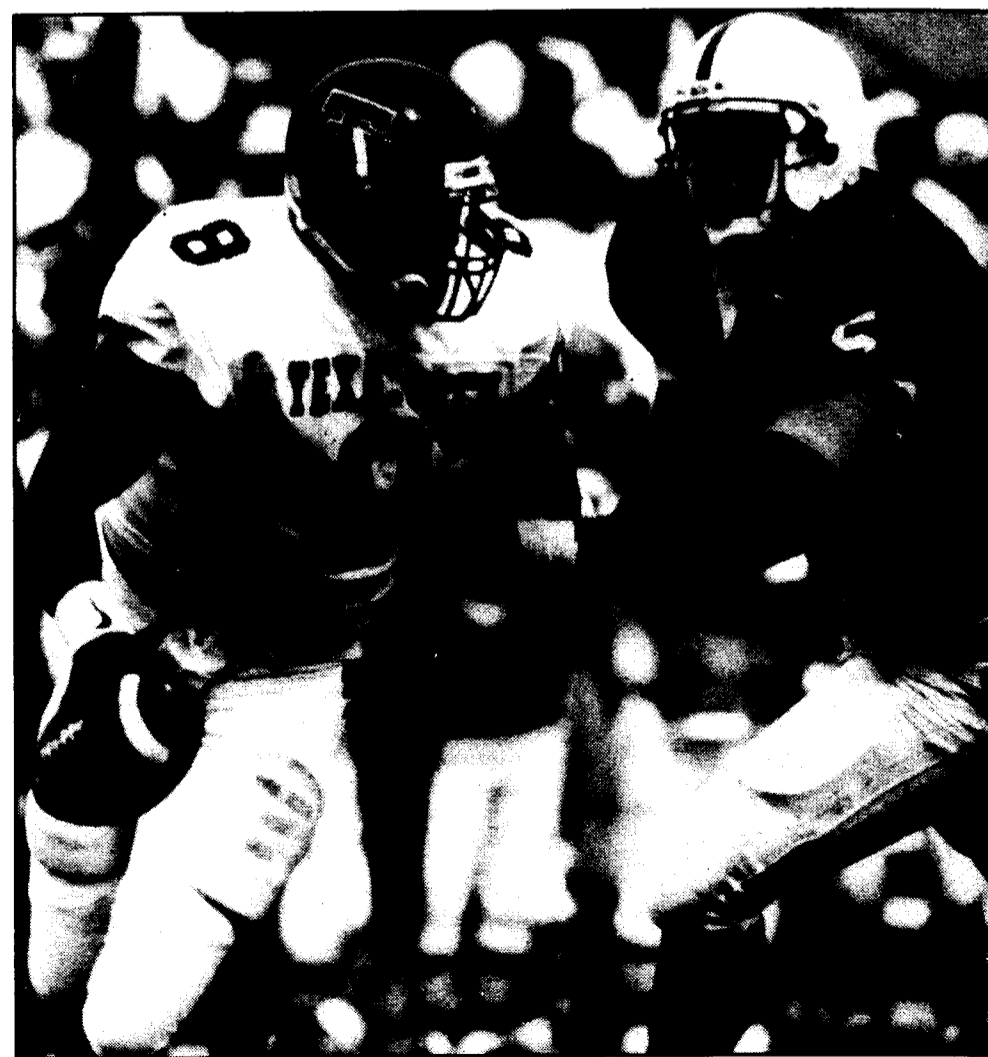
Although the ground game is capable of eating up territory in huge chunks, the Lions will not neglect the capable passing game sparked by quarterback

Rick Trefzger and wide receiver Brian Alford.

"We're not exactly just keying on any certain thing," defensive end Terry Killens said. "Because we know we did that against Ohio State, and the pass burned us."

Purdue's powerful pass-catch combination has the capability to inflict significant damage as well. Alford is the Big Ten's sixth-leading receiver, with 23 receptions for 471 yards and five touchdowns.

Probably the best player the majority of the population has never heard of, the junior has stats comparable to Penn State's



Penn State's Brad Sciolli tries to bring down Texas Tech quarterback Zebbie Lethridge during their game last month. The Lion defense will try and contain Purdue tomorrow.

Bobby Engram, notching five fewer grabs, 10 more yards and one more touchdown.

Despite the Penn State secondary's recent difficulties, the wide receiver is in no way underestimating the talent in the defensive backfield.

"Some of the teams they've played against have had real good secondaries," Alford

said. "I definitely don't think they have a subpar secondary or anything like that."

Stopping the entire Purdue attack will be a difficult task.

By slowing down Alstott and keeping a dangerous passing offense at bay, Penn State hopes to put the stop on a two-game slide.

