

Penn State Gymnastics

Gymwomen await road trip to Oregon

By CAMERON McGAUGHY
Collegian Sports Writer

The bad news is the women's gymnastics team is about to face its toughest competition of the regular season.

The good news is it is not at the NCAA championships.

If it was, the Lady Lions would be in trouble. Sophomore Joanna Knox will be in a cast for four to six weeks, recovering from a broken foot, while freshman Missy Leopoldus is tending to a sore Achilles' tendon.

But Penn State will do its best to topple the competition at the Shanoico Inn-Vitational at 7 p.m. today in Corvallis, Ore.

The Lady Lions (7-4) will be up against No. 3 Michigan (10-3), No. 13 Minnesota (7-7), No. 16 Ohio State (7-5), Division II Seattle Pacific (2-9) and host Oregon State (7-4), the No. 4 team in the nation.

"It's going to be a very high-caliber meet," Penn State coach Steve Shephard said. "It's going to be like Big Tens."

Shephard said Leopoldus will be fine.

He wasn't going to use her last Sunday in the Lady Lions' disappointing loss at New Hampshire, but she had to compete two events when Knox went down.

Already taking the spare spots were Lauren Cutshaw on bars, Janae Whittaker on beam and Bea Selz on floor and beam.

Vaulting is where the team will be hurt most. Shephard is hoping

junior Leigh Cappello will enter the lineup.

"We were disappointed at New Hampshire," Shephard said. "We had to count a few falls."

That won't help against the likes of Michigan and Oregon State, which just lost to a Pac-10 team at home for the first time in school history.

The Beavers, coming off a loss, aren't expecting to lose again.

"That's the first time since I've been here that we've lost three in a row," said Oregon State coach Jim Turpin, currently in his 11th season. "But I don't feel bad because they were all to teams in the top 10."

The Beavers sport a diverse squad that uses 13 competitors a meet. Their four seniors compete in just one event each, and they have seven returning All-Americans.

"We're a very different team than almost any other team in the country," Turpin said. "We have a lot of no-name gymnasts, but put them all together and we have a better team."

If the Beavers do enter an all-around competitor — an occurrence Turpin calls rare — it will be sophomore Amy Slack.

For Penn State, Whittaker was outstanding in her all-around debut at New Hampshire, earning a 38.2 as Leopoldus rested.

"I feel like we have the three best teams in the Big Ten coming here this weekend," Turpin said. "Michigan and Penn State are obvi-



Collegian Photo/Tracy Senycz

Lady Lion gymnast Bea Selz demonstrates her flexibility and balance on the beam last month. The Lady Lions face tough competition this weekend in Oregon.

ously right up there, they're national caliber right now. Michigan State and Minnesota are a hair away. We have a good relationship with the Big Ten."

The Lady Lions have been to the Inn-Vitational one time before, and

they finished second in 1994.

Penn State has already defeated Minnesota and Ohio State this season. To end the Spring Break stretch, the Lady Lions face defending national champ Utah at 7 p.m. on March 8 in Salt Lake City.

Gymmen set to spring west into competition

By CRAIG YETSKO
Collegian Sports Writer

After the Ohio State meet, the Penn State men's gymnastics team was weathering injuries and attempting to change and improve its routines. Two weeks later, the Lions are refreshed and ready to roll into the West next week.

The Lions will be competing against BYU next Thursday and travel to New Mexico on the following Saturday. Both meets will start at 7 p.m.

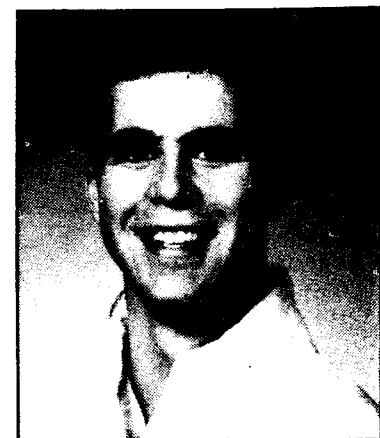
Lion coach Randy Jepson said the two-week layoff has been helpful for some of his ailing gymnasts and a time to work on improving routines. "We've been able to work on new things," he said.

Junior J.M. Michel said the team has been performing very well in the gym and worked on little details on each event. Michel said he has been concentrating on cleaning up his mistakes on parallel bars and rings. After trying a new routine on rings during the Ohio State meet, Michel has been focusing the routine. "I've been able to get that routine done and it feels comfortable," he said.

After missing the last few meets, junior Tom Ellefson will make the trip next week and has a pretty good chance to perform in the two meets. Jepson said Ellefson may compete in one or two meets.

He added that Ellefson has to compete in order to get back on track before the Big Ten Championships and NCAA Regionals.

Freshman Tim Lashua said he



Courtesy of Penn State

Tom Ellefson
junior gymnast

feels well rested and believes the team will do well against their Western opponents. "We definitely feel that we can beat them," he said. Jepson said BYU is fairly strong and has the very solid all-around gymnast Darren Elg, who is in the top three in the nation in all-around. He is also highly ranked in the parallel bars and horizontal bar. New Mexico may give the Lions the most trouble. Jepson said they are a formidable opponent and an outstanding team. They did not lose anybody to graduation last year. New Mexico did not qualify for Nationals last year which will give them added incentive, according to Jepson.

"I'm sure they're going to push for a good effort," he said. "They have a monkey on their back."

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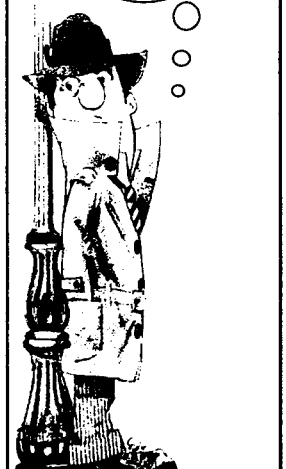
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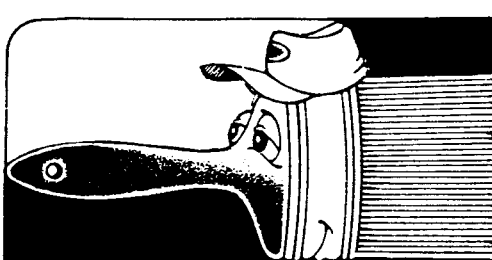
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