

Familiar targets for McQueary

Editor's Note: This is the second story in an eight-part series previewing Penn State's football team. This story previews the wide receivers.

By **ANDREW KREBS**
Collegian Sports Writer

The starting point has changed but the targets are expected to remain largely the same.

Gone is Penn State's starting quarterback for the last two seasons, Wally Richardson, and his 378 career completions. In his place, Mike McQueary — a fifth-year senior who spent most of the last two seasons on the side line with a clipboard in his hands.

While McQueary, the starting point, never started a college football game, he will be passing to a pair of wide receivers, the targets, who do have their share of big-game experience.

Senior split end Joe Jurevicius was the most prolific Penn State receiver last season with 41 receptions for 869 yards and four touchdowns. His 21.2 yards per catch average was also second-best among the nation's top 50 receivers.

In a season filled with impressive games, Jurevicius' most impressive came against Indiana on Oct. 26. With Penn State trailing by a touchdown, Nittany Lion coach Joe Paterno benched Richardson and replaced him with McQueary. On his first drive, McQueary and Jurevicius connected for a 57-yard touchdown pass.

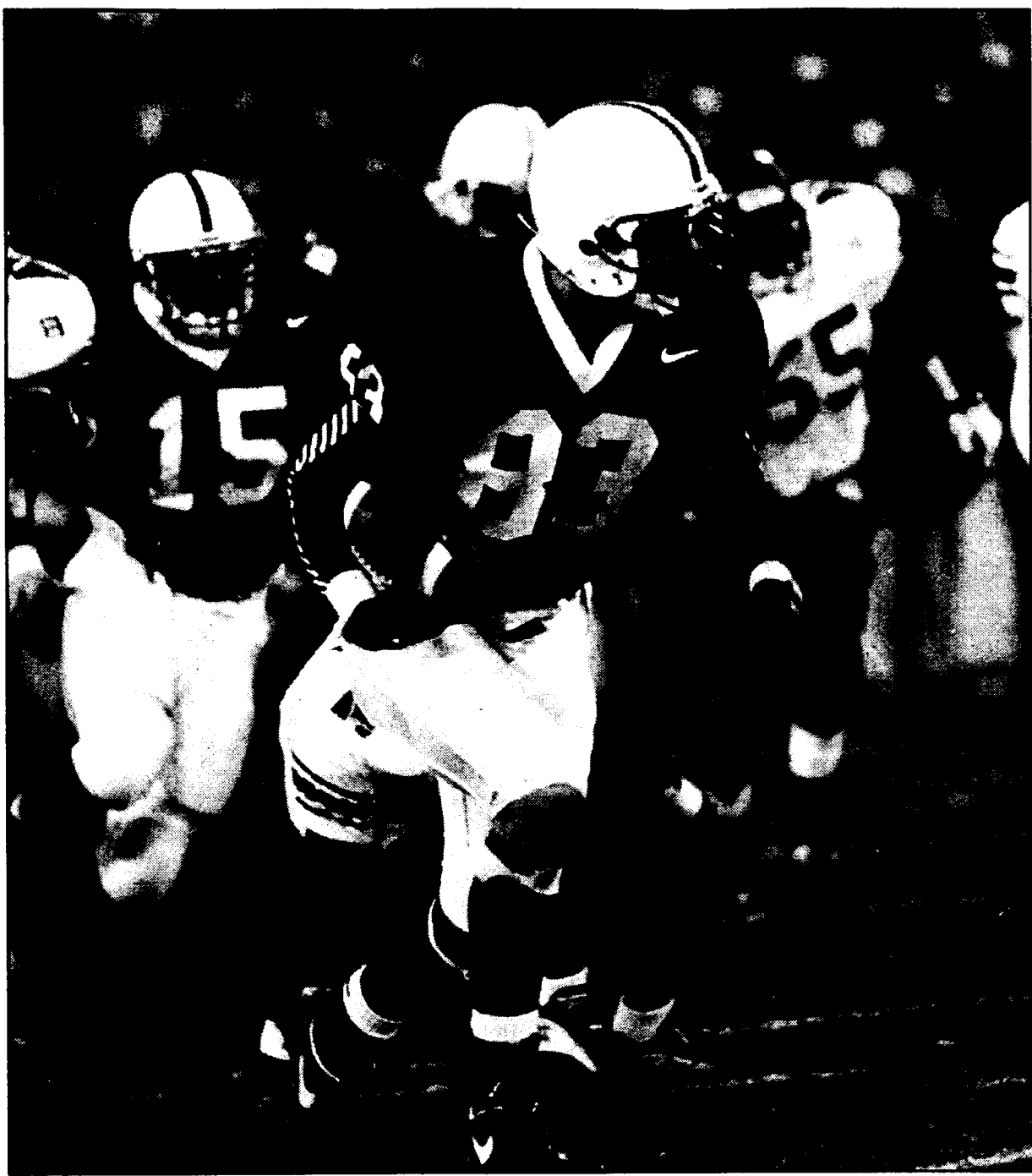
Jurevicius caught three more of McQueary's passes on the day for 41, 27 and 31 yards, and Penn State eventually won 48-26.

The 6-foot-5, 226-pound Jurevicius said he is very comfortable with McQueary as his quarterback.

"I've been with Mike now for four years," Jurevicius said. "It's going on our fifth. Mike has the talent. I feel I have the talent, as well as other guys on the team having talent. If I can't get the job done, I'm sure Mike can go right to one of the other guys and use him as a weapon."

One of the other weapons will be redshirt junior Joe Nastasi, another receiver with big-game experience.

Last season, the 5-foot-11, 189-pound Nastasi started eight games at flanker. He caught 21 passes for



Collegian File Photo

Joe Jurevicius outruns Northwestern defenders in last year's victory over the Wildcats. Seniors Jurevicius and Joe Nastasi lead an experienced corps of receivers to catch quarterback Mike McQueary's passes.

234 yards and two touchdowns.

Nastasi's first touchdown reception of the season, and his career, came on Nov. 2 against No. 11 Northwestern. The stunning foot-dragging catch in the corner of the end zone in the third quarter helped propel Penn State to a convincing 34-9 win.

With redshirt sophomore Corey Jones academically ineligible, Nastasi will likely shoulder even more of the burden this season.

One target that will change is the tight end.

Keith Olsommer, who caught 16 passes for 163 yards in 1996 is gone, but his replacement may

prove to be even more productive.

Cuncho Brown, a 6-foot-4, 270-pound junior ended the 1996 season with a commanding three-catch, 32 yard performance in Penn State's Fiesta Bowl win against Texas.

Brown will be supported at tight end by 6-foot-3, 265-pound redshirt junior Brad Scioli. As a defensive tackle, Scioli tore the anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee during spring practice and missed the entire 1996 season.

His football reincarnation in 1997 will likely be on the offensive side of the ball.

"Coach (Joe) Paterno and I talked about my options, and we felt tight end was the best for me and the team," Scioli said.

"It was either defensive end, tight end or defensive tackle and I really didn't want to play defensive tackle."

Paterno, though, said Scioli could also see some time at his original defensive end position.

The supporting cast in the receiving corps is deep on talent but shallow on experience. Six-foot-one, 197-pound Chafie Fields, once a tailback, now a split end, is listed as No. 2 on the depth chart.

He will likely compete with Titus Pettigrew for the backup split end position. Both could also see time at flanker. Pettigrew, a 6-foot-2, 208-pound sophomore, played in nine games as a freshman without a reception.

In the Blue-White game, though, Pettigrew reeled in seven receptions for 70 yards and a touchdown.

"Both Fields and Pettigrew will make Nastasi and Jurevicius hustle," Paterno said.

"Somebody asked me why people think we're going to be pretty good. We have a lot of quality football players. A lot of them are young. A lot of them are eager, and they're going to make the older guys really hustle."

Jurevicius looking to find a lid for his box

By **ANDREW KREBS**
Collegian Sports Writer

Penn State wide receiver Joe Jurevicius spends his life in a box.

Like an ant farm in the corner of a little Billy's bedroom, the box is under constant scrutiny. Everyone wants to know what's going on in there.

The Jurevicius box stretches to the football field. Every Saturday in the fall, thousands of people watch the senior from Chardon, Ohio, run and jump and catch the football.

When he performs well, everyone applauds at what goes on in the box.

Last season, they had a lot to applaud about. Jurevicius played in 11 games with 10 starts at split end.

He broke his career-high for game receptions and yardage three times.

He logged 869 receiving yards, sixth-best in Penn State history for a season.

His 41 catches tied him for ninth-best in a Penn State season.

This year, Jurevicius said he's hoping for more.

"I look to improve in every facet of the game, whether it be running, catching the ball, blocking, being a better team leader," Jurevicius said. "Those are the goals I have."

If his box only stretched to the football field, life would be infinitely easier.

Jurevicius, however, spends his entire life in a box, and the box stretches to the classroom, too.

The receiver missed two starts last season. He didn't start against Wisconsin for tactical reasons — the Nittany Lions used two tight ends instead of two wide receivers on the opening offensive series of the game.

Nonetheless, Jurevicius eventually made his way into the contest and scorched the Badgers with five receptions for 135 yards.

Two weeks later, against Purdue, Jurevicius missed his second start of the season. This time, he was benched for academic reasons and never made it into the game.

"Jurevicius cut classes and I told him after this summer that every time he cut class, the first time he was going to get suspended for one game, the next time it will be two games and the next time he will be out for the season," said Penn State coach Joe Paterno after the game against Purdue. "Joe's got to learn that he's here to get an education first."

And that's the burning question on the minds of everyone hovering over the Jurevicius box.

Has he learned?

"He's OK now," Paterno said at the football Media Day. "Joe can graduate in January and that should be his No. 1 goal. Obviously, we hope he can tie that in with having a great year on the football field. If he starts horsing around in the classroom, he won't have the year he's capable of having and it will hurt our team."

Few college students face this problem. They can miss classes with regularity and relative privacy.

No one cares if Student X decides to skip that 8 a.m. Spanish class in exchange for some extra sleep.

But this is not Student X. This is football player Joe Jurevicius, and he knows Big Brother Paterno is watching.

He knows the media is watching.

He knows Penn State fans across the country are watching and judging him.

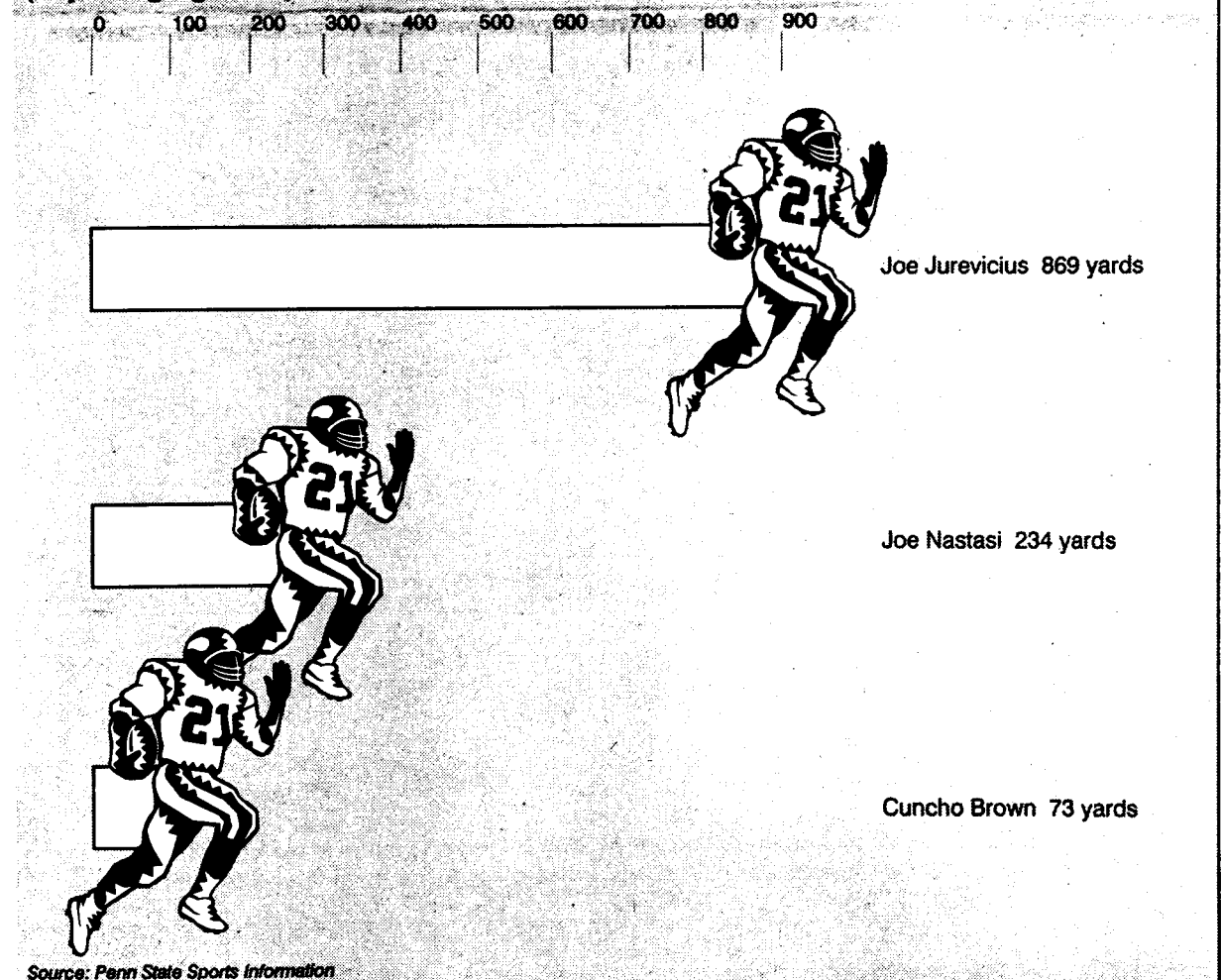
Jurevicius knows he can't avoid it.

"It's part of the water," he said. "The most important thing is I'm ready to play. Last year was last year. The past is behind me, and I have nothing but the future to worry about."

If all goes well, maybe his box of the future will have a lid.

Top three returning receivers

(in yardage gained)



Source: Penn State Sports Information

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