

Stickwomen win fourth straight Big Ten tournament

By DAN GIGLER
Collegian Staff Writer

Yesterday, the Penn State field hockey team won the Big Ten Tournament championship. Again. It's rumored that the Big Ten will rename its tournament the "Who's Penn State gonna whoop up on this year?" Tournament, because for the fourth time in as many years, the No. 6 Lady Lions (17-4, 10-2 Big Ten) captured the conference postseason title. A 3-1 victory over No. 10 Michigan (15-6,

8-4) yesterday at Spartan Stadium in East Lansing, Mich. secured the four-peat for Penn State, and an automatic bid to the NCAA Championships.

"These kids really wanted this," Big Ten Coach of the Year Char Morett said. "It really meant a lot to them."

This was the third time the Lions met Michigan this season, but it was no charm for the Wolverines as Penn State ran its 1998 record against Michigan to 3-0. The Lions controlled the game from the start,

determined to keep the Big Ten crown atop their noggins. Traci Anselmo put the Lions ahead on a penalty corner, and Big Ten Offensive Player of the Year Dawn Lamme slapped home a penalty stroke attempt with less than a minute remaining in the first half to expand the Lions' lead to 2-0.

Morett said Michigan played well but that the Lions "took advantage of early opportunities and had the stroke."

Michigan added a goal with 9:56 remaining, but it was too little too

late as Anselmo, the Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year and tournament MVP, iced the 3-1 Lion victory with her second goal of the game with less than two minutes to play.

"Traci scored those goals and she played very well on defense," Morett said of her star sweeper.

Morett said the key to the Lions' victory was nothing more than an unsatisfied appetite for success.

"In the end, we just wanted it more," she said.

However, the road to glory had

some potholes. Penn State lost All-Big Ten honoree Maegan Galie in the first half of its second round game with Iowa. Galie, who suffered a broken collarbone, was replaced by freshman Meredith Shulzitski, whose theme song might be Metallica's "Hero of the Day."

After the Lions and Hawkeyes battled to a 2-2 tie in a slugfest Morett said was "like the World Wrestling Federation," Shulzitski put the Lions ahead for good, scoring off of All-Big Ten midfielder

Tracey Larson's feed with 16 minutes left.

The Lions' victory in the tournament assures them a bid to the NCAA Tournament. They also have an outside chance at a first round bye, if they finish among the top four ranked teams in the country. If Penn State does play in the first round this weekend, its opponent will be announced Wednesday. The Final Four will be held Nov. 20-22 at the University of Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia, the hometown of many Lions.

Lady booters' Pickett fights back from injuries

By WILLIAM KALEC
Collegian Staff Writer

Penn State forward Shari Pickett's soccer career has been filled with goals.

Some have been flashy, some magnificent, and some just made you sit there and shake your head at the talent Pickett possesses.

But perhaps one of the easiest goals Pickett ever scored serves as the most significant in her career.

A tired group of Lady Lions took to the field in Charlottesville, Va., Sept. 8 for the second of two overtime sessions. They had fought and scrapped their way to a 1-1 tie with the heavily favored No. 6 Virginia Cavaliers. Many would have understood if the underdog Lions simply gave up — but that wasn't the case.

In the 11th minute of play, forward Kelly Convey was able to cross the ball past the arms of Cavalier goalkeeper Megan Boehm onto the waiting foot of Pickett who redirected the ball into the net, and guided the Lions to the biggest win in their program's history.

And although she was starting her third year as a member of the Penn State women's soccer team, Shari Pickett finally had arrived.

"That Virginia goal did so much for my confidence, because really I didn't know what kind of a role I would be playing with this team," Pickett said. "I really felt comfortable after that goal. I started to feel like I was finally part of this team."

That goal was the springboard into what Pickett thought would be her dream season at Penn State — the season everyone expected when she came to Penn State after leading Erie McDowell to a No. 1 national ranking as a senior in high school. The Virginia goal earned her recognition throughout collegiate soccer as Pickett was named to the Soccer America Team of the Week.

Heading into Penn State's Sept. 22 contest with Cornell, Pickett was tied with freshman Bonnie Young as the Lions' leading goal scorer. No longer could opponents overlook Pickett, as she became a familiar name in the opposition's scouting reports. Pickett was invincible.

Or so she thought.

Nearly halfway through Penn State's 2-0 victory against Cornell, Pickett's good fortune took a turn for the worse. While battling for position near the midfield Pickett stepped in front of a Cornell defender's clearing attempt. When the ball struck Pickett it shattered both her arm and her spirit.

"It seemed whenever I get to the top something always comes around to knock me off, and I don't know why," Pickett said.

But if there is anyone who knows



Tomorrow's Cover Story: A look at the NCAA field hockey tournament



how to cope with adversity, it is Pickett. After a mediocre freshman season in which she played in 19 contests and tallied two goals and an assist, 1997 was supposed to be Pickett's breakout season. The level of maturity and development between her freshman campaign and the beginning of her sophomore campaign was evident to both her and her coaches. Everything was finally perfect for Pickett.

Then the injury bug turned its ugly head in the direction of Pickett as she tore her anterior cruciate ligament and was forced to miss her entire sophomore season.

The months following the injury were especially tough for Pickett as she was forced to live without soccer for the first time in her life. She often questioned why she was dealt this hand and what she did to deserve this misfortune. With every Penn State game Pickett felt more and more distant from her teammates.

"For a long while I was angry and even jealous of my teammates because I wanted to be in there so bad," Pickett said. "It was very depressing every time I would see one of them, basically I was really upset."

Fortunately for Pickett, this season's affliction was not season ending. Following surgery, Pickett was forced to miss about three weeks of the season. More importantly she was able to stay in a positive frame of mind because she knew she would get a second chance, she knew her season wasn't over.

Pickett became tough, and after surgery she had the scar to prove it.

During her first games back, Pickett was forced to watch from the sidelines and played sparingly. Although losing her starting position was frustrating after the success she enjoyed earlier, Pickett kept reassuring herself that her day would come again.

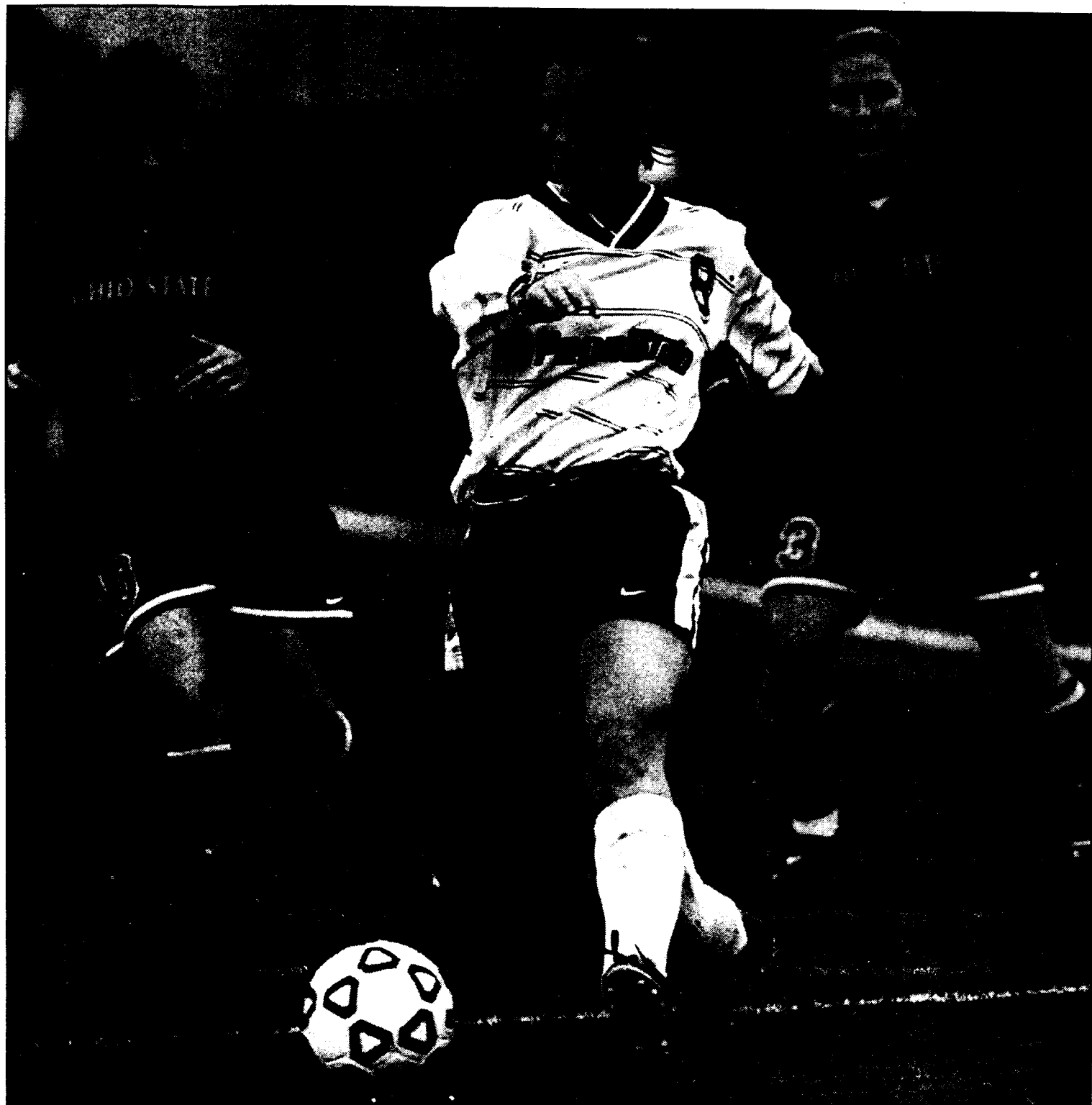
That day happened during Penn State's 2-0 victory over Ohio State in yesterday's Big Ten Tournament Championship game. Pickett led the Lions' charge in the second half as the offense kept Buckeye goalkeeper Amber Barnes on her toes all game long. Pickett had that same spark she had earlier in the season, and a smile on her face that had been missing for quite some time.

And even though she did not score, Pickett once again had notched another goal.

"I think Shari is almost back to where she was at the beginning of the year," Penn State coach Pat Farmer said. "Today was the best she has played since she came

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Double Trouble



Collegian Photo/Shawn Knapp

Courtney Lawson drives downfield on the way to a Lady Lion win against Ohio State yesterday in the Big Ten Women's Soccer Tournament

Forwards Pickett and Lawson key to tournament victory

By JOHN GIBLIN
Collegian Staff Writer

In what has been commonplace all season, Penn State forwards Kelly Convey and Courtney Lawson led the way in the Lady Lion's march towards the Big Ten Women's Soccer Tournament title.

Against No. 5-seed Michigan Saturday, a 3-1 victory in the semifinals, Convey tallied the first two goals of the game for Penn State. Her first, only 10:21 into the match, put the Lions up by a 1-0 margin. Her second wouldn't come until the second half, when the midfielder knocked in a deflected save from a Wolverine defender.

"Kelly Convey is just unbelievable taking people on, and Courtney (Lawson) has great composure," said forward Carole Dutchka.

Lawson's goals may have been the most exciting of the tournament for the Lions. Against No. 7-seed Ohio State yesterday, the midfielder tallied both of Penn State's goals in a 2-0 rout.

Her first, off a penalty kick, put the Lions ahead 1-0 in the championship game. Lawson is a perfect 4 of 4 this season on penalty

kicks, and is the only Lion to score off a penalty kick.

Her second was even more spectacular. Only 5:33 into the second half, Lawson struck again — this time off a corner kick from Shari Pickett. Lawson fired a rocket towards the net, which ricocheted off the cross bar and off Ohio State goalkeeper Amber Barnes' back. The score put the Lions ahead for good, 2-0.

"That's a shot we always practice in practice, and every once in a while it will hit exactly how you want it," Lawson said. "Today was one of those days it just came to me, and it was luck. I was just happy it went in — I was thrilled."

The goal was the final nail in the Buckeyes' coffin. From that point on, Penn State played with the most spirit they've shown all season, something they hope will carry into the NCAA Tournament.

"That was huge. We can say we're in front of all these fans and family, but that adds pressure, too," Dutchka said. "To score right then — off Kelly, going at someone — that's what took a lot out of (Ohio State). That's what started it all."

A man who needs a lot to be impressed, Penn State coach Pat Farmer was pleased with the performance of his dynamic duo during the tournament.

The pair has helped propel Penn State in games all season, but none were more important than these.

"I told Courtney that's the best game I've seen her play for us, and certainly the best first half," Farmer said. "Considering the problems with her feet — to be able to do that on the third day — I thought we'd only get 30-40 minutes out of her. She was good, and that's the Courtney Lawson that's supposed to be playing here all the time."

Despite their individual accomplishments, this weekend's success wasn't limited to the play of Convey and Lawson. The Lions only allowed one goal in three games, and outshot their opponents 45-23. In addition, Penn State's defensive unit played superb, and goalkeeper Emily Oleksiuk had 17 saves for the tournament.

"I wanted everyone to score," Lawson said. "I just wanted everyone to be involved and be a part of it — I wanted everyone to feel like it was a great group effort."

Future unclear for grapplers

By RYAN HOCKENSMITH
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The murky preseason was supposed to clear up Saturday for Penn State wrestling coach Troy Sunderland at varsity wrestle-offs in Rec Hall.

With injuries, suspensions and unknown talent plaguing Sunderland's first year as head coach, the wrestle-offs were supposed to answer some of these suspect areas.

But the waters remain cloudy, even after the event.

Entering the day, the 165-pound weight class was one of those question marks. But Virginia transfer Alex Leykikh swept three bouts to reach the final round, which will be completed this week in practice between Leykikh and Dana Weber. Leykikh won a solid 8-3 decision against Weber in the second round. Now Weber must

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Undefeated lady spikers continue Big Ten dominance

By CARLA MOTKO
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Wisconsin women's volleyball coach John Cook's face seeped with disgust. He could only look on from the sidelines as his team's 15-game home winning streak was snapped. Neither he or his No. 8 Badgers had a good night Friday.

The Lady Lions, however, had the time of their lives.

In front of 7,001 fans and a nationally televised audience at the Wisconsin Field House, the No. 2 Penn State women's volleyball

team (24-0, 14-0 Big Ten) again proved itself to be one of the nation's top teams as it overstepped Wisconsin 3-0 (15-5, 15-12, 15-10) Friday then pelted Iowa in three games (15-13, 15-2, 15-3) Saturday.

"I think the best way to stifle a big crowd is by performance," Penn State coach Russ Rose said. "The players have a first-hand experience at a loss in Wisconsin and that's not something they wanted to experience again."

The Lions hadn't forgotten last year's loss, but maybe the Badgers

did, as they came out flat in the first game, allowing the Lion offense to cruise to a 15-5 win. The opening game took most of the life out of the Badger fans — something the Lions thought was key.

It appeared a new Wisconsin team stepped on the court for the second game. The Badgers' power hitters began siding out and the blockers greatly slowed the Lions' attack. However, much to Cook's dismay, the Badgers couldn't stop it.

Penn State jetted to a 13-4 lead before Wisconsin began fighting

back. The hard hands of Kelly Kennedy and Sherisa Livingston were a factor in the back of the Lions' minds as they looked for ways around Wisconsin's blockers. This, however, only resulted in several Penn State hitting errors, and stalled Wisconsin's comeback at 13-8.

Penn State's errors continued to damage its lead as it lost four attempts at game point, and allowed Wisconsin to continue to close the gap. Penn State's determination and experience finally

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