

Consistent Forney struggles against OSU

By JOHN GIBLIN
Collegian Staff Writer

Placekicker Travis Forney found out Saturday that nobody, especially a kicker, is perfect.

Coming into Saturday's game against Ohio State, Forney was a near-perfect eight of nine on field goal attempts, and flawless in 28 extra-point tries. But two blocked field goals by the Buckeyes — a 39-yard attempt in the first quarter and a 21-yard attempt in the third quarter, left the Nittany Lions bewildered after the game.

"I couldn't see where the rush was coming from," quarterback and holder Matt Senneca said. "When I put the ball down, I just look at the ball. I couldn't see where it was coming from."

While Penn State coach Joe Paterno had no answer for the blocks after the game, he was visibly upset with the play of the special teams.

"There's absolutely no reason for that," he said. "That could've cost us the football game."

Although the two botched kicks caused some trepidation among players and coaches, the special teams did have some highlights.

On another field goal attempt early in the second quarter, Senneca sprinted 10 yards up the middle of the field for a first down.

The play, Senneca said, wasn't designed to be a fake.

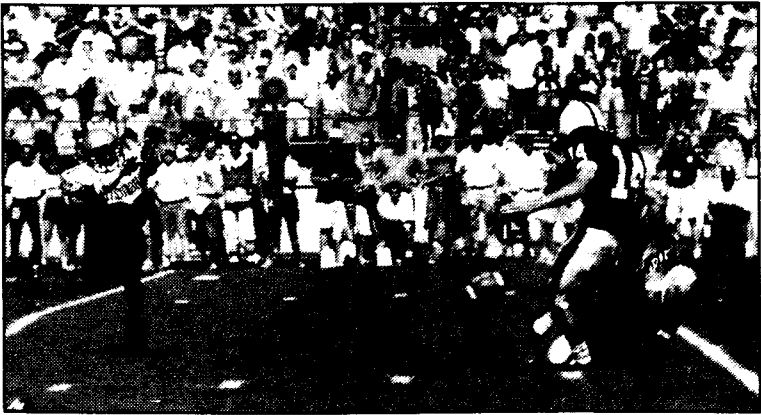
On fourth down, the field goal unit was sent out, but it didn't have enough time to run the play. After a timeout, the same unit returned to the field for an apparent field goal try, but the coaching staff had other plans.

"We didn't have enough time to get it off so we had to call the timeout," Senneca said. "Then coach (Fran) Ganter started thinking about it. We always had the option to kick it if they didn't give

us a front we wanted, so he's like, 'Just choose it,' and it worked."

Even Forney, when he could avoid the Ohio State rush, was able to salvage his offensive statistics. He made field goals from 28, 38 and 39 yards and added two extra points. With the 11 points for the day, Forney moved to No. 5 on the Penn State career-scoring list with 214 points and No. 6 in field goals with 37. And the other half of the Penn State kicking game was also solid. Punter Pat Pidgeon averaged 39 yards on his four punts, placing two inside the 20-yard line. One of those kicks — a 45-yard boot right before the half — was downed by safety James Boyd at the 1-yard line, eliminating the Buckeyes' threat.

"We blocked a couple of field goals and gave ourself a chance, made a big play on defense and gave ourself a chance," Cooper said. "We were playing hard — it's not a matter of effort."



Collegian Photo Jim Rajotte

Lions place kicker Travis Forney boots home the winning kick in Penn State's win against the Panthers. Forney became the Lions' seventh all-time leading scorer, but had two field goals blocked against Ohio State Saturday. For more football coverage, please see Page 12.

Making statements

'Dogfight' ends in Lions' win

By RYAN HOCKENSMITH
Collegian Staff Writer

Penn State doesn't mind playing a little smash-mouth football.

But even the Nittany Lions acknowledged the physicality of their 23-10 win Saturday against Ohio State.

"Thinking back right now without a clear head about it, I'd say it was the most physical game so far," Kurpeikis said. "But you expect that. They're brutes. They're tough guys."

A limping parade of wounded players from both teams made their way on and off the Beaver Stadium nuclear turf throughout the contest.

"It was a very physical game," said Lions tailback Eric McCoo, who rumbled for 211 yards. "We expected this. This was a dogfight in our backyard, and we don't let anybody beat us in our backyard."

Five Lions starters were helped off the field, including starting quarterback Kevin Thompson. Ohio State linebacker Na'il Diggs clubbed Thompson on a rush midway through the second quarter, causing a fumble. Buckeyes safety Gary Berry recovered for Ohio State's only touchdown.

Thompson, who has started the last 19 Penn State games, suffered a slight shoulder separation and might miss this week's clash with No. 16 Purdue.

Cover Story



Tomorrow's Cover Story:

A midseason report card on the Penn State football team

"It's a little sore," Thompson said. "They say it's a slight separation. It's just a painful thing. It felt like a pop. I probably held onto the ball too long during the play."

Defensive end Justin Kurpeikis took a third-quarter shot from Ohio State fullback Jamar Martin. Kurpeikis said the hit jarred the ball in his right shoulder loose, which forced him to the sidelines.

"Their gargantuan fullback came at me and I had the wrong arm to take him on inside," Kurpeikis candidly assessed after the game.

The junior defensive end was on the ground for a few seconds before trainers helped him off the field. Kurpeikis wasn't about to let the Buckeyes see him down for much longer than a second or two, however.

Please see ARRINGTON, Page 16.



Collegian Photo Megan K. Morr

Nittany Lions linebacker LaVar Arrington rattles Ohio State quarterback Steve Bellasari Saturday during No. 2 Penn State's 23-10 win. The game was a physical war, with each side suffering from battle wounds after the contest.

er. Arrington introduced himself to fellow Butkus Award candidate Na'il Diggs during a punt return. While running downfield, Arrington made contact with the Buckeyes All-Big Ten linebacker and knocked him to the ground.

The two made contact again seconds later — facemask to facemask.

"I knocked him over. I made sure that I got him once before the game was over," Arrington said. "It was good talk though, it wasn't trash. It was good talk, it wasn't anything negative."

The talk didn't stop after his friendly encounter with Diggs.

Late in the fourth quarter, Arrington was in hot pursuit of Bellasari as he scrambled toward the Ohio State sideline.

Just as Bellasari unleashed his pass, Arrington hauled him down by the neck and slammed him to the ground.

Cooper got in the face of the official and Arrington, pleading for a personal foul to be called. Unlike his confrontation with Diggs, Arrington slowly strutted back to the huddle as Cooper's

voice continued to rise. Arrington distanced himself enough so that the sideline screams could no longer be heard as he returned to the huddle and continued his intimidating play.

It would be the last time Cooper would mention Arrington's name all day.

"LaVar is a very emotional guy. His game is based on emotion," Penn State cornerback Anthony King said. "He can get frustrated sometimes if he is not making plays. In the past, some teams have tried to run away from him."

LaVar's play speaks volumes

By WILLIAM KALEC
Collegian Staff Writer

The mere mentioning of his name forced Ohio State coach John Cooper to bolt out of the visitors media room and end his postgame press conference.

When a question was asked about Penn State's sack leader of the day, Buckeyes linebacker Na'il Diggs quickly found his way out of a pack of reporters and into the showers.

For 60 minutes, LaVar Arrington chased Buckeyes across the field.

And after the game, his name was chasing them away from interviews.

But despite the lack of postgame comments emanating from the Ohio State locker room, Arrington's play was still the talk of the game.

"LaVar has really come on," Penn State linebacker Brandon Short said. "I guess teams, they have been making adjustments for him but he has found a way to beat them."

Against Ohio State, Arrington found several ways to beat the Buckeyes — one occurring in an untraditional fashion.

During the Buckeyes first possession of the second half, Arrington was sent on a blitz, and Ohio State fullback Jonathan Wells was supposed to block him. With a collision in the backfield certain, Wells dipped his shoulder and got low. Arrington went high, really high. He jumped over Wells and sacked Buckeyes quarterback Steve Bellasari for a 7-yard loss.

"That wasn't a leap," Arrington said. "That was just beating the block. I got a tendency for what they were going to do early. I feel once I can get in the groove of blitzing, then I will be successful in getting the backfield."

On three occasions, Arrington was successful at getting in the backfield and registering a tackle for loss. His sack total against Ohio State tripled his previous season output.

Those impressive numbers still fail to show Arrington's intimidating impact on Ohio State, howev-

Five years after Dunn takes reins, men's hoops not among top teams

Two years ago as a freshman, I woke up at 7:30 in the morning.

It was a rare event to rise from the comfort of my bed so early on a cold State College morning. But I had somewhere important to be at 8 a.m.; thus getting up was not such an arduous task.

I left my Snyder Hall room and walked the short trip to The Bryce Jordan Center.

My mission: obtain premier seating for all of the Nittany Lions basketball team's games.

I had expected a line that would wrap around the Jordan Center, perhaps extend toward Beaver Stadium. I knew college basketball was big, and I did not want to be left out in the cold.

After all, I had heard about people camping out for days with the hopes of catching a glimpse of Duke-North Carolina.

But as I soon found out, Happy Valley is more than a stone's throw away from Tobacco Road.

My opinion



Chris Antonacci

When I arrived at the ticket office, to my chagrin (or rather, my benefit) there was only one other person waiting in line.

And that confirmed something I had thought all along — Penn State is a football school.

Duh. Penn State is and never will be a basketball school. Not, at least, based on the way this team has performed throughout its history.

Coach Jerry Dunn is not Mike Krzyzewski. Nor is he on the same

level as football coach Joe Paterno. The Jordan Center — although it is a step up from Rec Hall — is not The Dean Dome. And Joe Crispin is not MATEEN CLEAVES.

There is no LaVar Arrington on this squad — someone who graces the cover of Sports Illustrated as the featured star in the sport. Someone who made "SportsCenter" every week. Someone who other people travel thousands of miles to see. What this team has is a bunch of good basketball players, good role players and good people who should not go unnoticed. How many programs, after all, can say they have a 100-percent graduation rate?

Still, in this modern-day era of win at all costs, the squad has failed to live up to the successes other programs have achieved at Penn State.

The football team's reputation speaks for itself. The women's volleyball team is No. 1, and has made it to the last game of the

"It has been five years since Dunn took over the program in midstream. Now, the program has undoubtedly become his to lead to the next level during the next millennium."

year for the past two seasons. The men's soccer team was, at one point, No. 1. The women's soccer team, in its sixth season of existence, has won the Big Ten title and is very much in the hunt to win it all. Heck, the fencing team has won five straight national titles. But the basketball team still has a long way to go.

Sure, Calvin Booth made it to the pros. Sure, the team has been to the National Invitation Tournament final four twice in the last three seasons.

But there are still shortcomings. One person has transferred from the Lions basketball squad each year for the past four seasons.

This team has not reached the NCAA Tournament since 1996, when it was ousted in the first round.

Attendance at the Jordan Center is usually sparse. And few games are broadcast on national television.

"The addition of players is the key. But the bottom line is that we are not where we want to be," Dunn said. "I think we are headed in the right direction."

With most of recruiting taken care of for the upcoming season and a mostly young squad to build around, Dunn must continue to develop the program, and make a commitment to become one of the

W. Soccer defensive press adds to scoring

The Lady Lions' defense played with precision this weekend, which enabled Penn State to capitalize in the offensive end.

By JOSH DAECHÉ
Collegian Staff Writer

A good defense leads to a great offense, and that is what happened this weekend in both of the Penn State women's soccer games.

Led by a slew of Lady Lions' defenders that included co-captain Luanne Strom, Megan Mills, Kris Phillips and Gillian Samuel, Penn State's defense tormented Michigan State and Northwestern this past weekend.

"Kris Phillips was amazing and all over the place," Lions co-captain Courtney Lawson said. "We were saying after Friday's game how awesome they played. They were so up and that it really makes a huge impact when they're contributing to the offense."

"It makes everything easier for the whole team. When they're playing well it just shows how offensive minded our defense is. It's a mark of a very good committed bunch of defenders."

Lions defenders assisted on five of Penn State's seven goals this weekend.

Penn State's defense played its typical aggressive style all weekend. But Sunday, the Lions' defense spent most of its afternoon in the other end of the Michigan State defensive zone.

Penn State's defense controlled the ball much of the game and limited Northwestern and Michigan State to a combined eight shots on net. The Lions, on the other hand, rattled off 11 shots against the Wildcats and 21 shots against the Spartans. All season, Penn State's defenders have had no trouble taking chances. Phillips has scored a pair of game-winning goals this season and leads the defense with seven points.

A lot of the reason for Penn State's solid defensive play is because the Lions have Emily Oleksiuk in goal. The netminder is averaging just under one goal per game. Penn State women's soccer coach Pat Farmer has said earlier season that if the opposing team gets by the Lions defense, they still have to put it by Oleksiuk and that's hard to do.

A lot of the way Penn State has taken opposing teams out of the

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top programs in the country.

It has been five years since Dunn took over the program in midstream. Now, the program undoubtedly has become his to lead to the next level during the next millennium.

Like in Fields of Dreams, if Dunn builds it, they will come.

They will flock to Happy Valley to see a top program claw its way to the elite.

They will come to see electrifying players zip the ball up the court, and slam home a dunk in exciting basketball fashion.

Certainly, the basketball team's faithful never will be as big as Paterno's, but it can be better. And it can be near the top.

It is just a matter of getting there. And that's the problem.

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