

Women's Lacrosse

A recap of the team's performance this season, Page 18



McCoy quietly walks campus as national champion

By Hiran Ratnayake
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Students walking past Kerry McCoy on the University Park campus might spend the next waning moments speculating on which position he plays for the Penn State football team.

His muscle-bound frame — 6 feet 3, 255 pounds and 8 percent body fat — bears a close resemblance to a fullback or a line-backer. However, this athlete isn't assigned blocking duties and he doesn't run post patterns. McCoy's sport is wrestling, and this year he's been wrestling better than anyone else in the world.

The former Nittany Lions heavyweight was a three-time All-American and a two-time national champion. McCoy now fulfills duties as a coaching assistant for the wrestling team while training for the 2000 Summer Olympics to be held in Sydney, Australia.

Last weekend, McCoy took huge strides on his quest toward an Olympic gold medal when he dethroned world champion Stephen Neal at the U.S. National Freestyle

Wrestling Championships in Las Vegas. Now McCoy only needs to win two out of three matches in the Olympic Trials, June 21-24 in Dallas, to secure his spot on the U.S. Team.

McCoy returned to State College Monday and will take two weeks off before he begins training for the Trials.

In his high school days, many of the Big Ten coaches lusted over the junior world champion. But McCoy planned to go to Penn State even before his senior year.

Former Penn State wrestling coach John Fritz, now the Penn State director of commonwealth campus athletics, spotted McCoy while he was an underclassman.

"We went to scout another wrestler and we also got a chance to see Kerry wrestle," Fritz said. "He had a natural knack for the sport even though his 171-pound body had still not matured yet."

As a freshman, the 215-pound McCoy immediately earned the heavyweight spot on the Lions varsity lineup. Wrestling against much-larger upperclassmen, McCoy made considerable strides, sporting a record of 17-15 and the acknowledgement by his peers.

However, to McCoy the record was an

indication of a year gone to waste.

"I was upset after what happened my freshman year. I was going out and losing to wrestlers I should have beaten or getting embarrassed by wrestlers who were better than me," McCoy said. "I made up my mind that I was going to win, that each match was always in my power."

McCoy's self-made vow was unleashed onto the mat in a way nobody at the time could have ever envisioned.

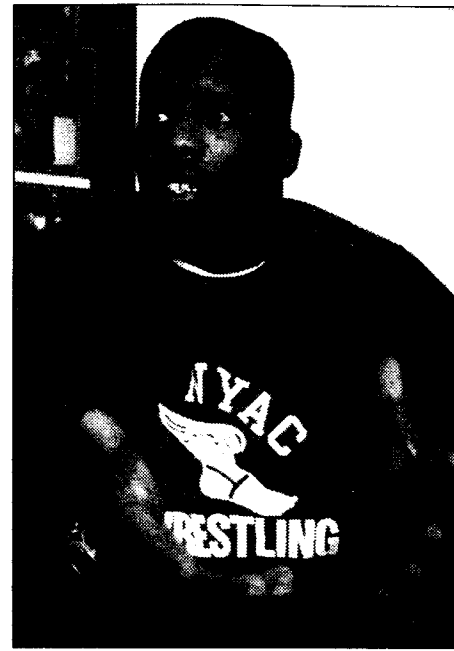
He went from 17-15 to 47-0 in a one-year span and his efforts were rewarded with the 1994 national championship. And with the triumphs came a streak the entire wrestling nation began to follow.

His 47 straight victories marked the start of a winning stretch that, if continued throughout the rest of McCoy's Penn State career, would become the longest collegiate winning streak of all time.

McCoy's supremacy resumed as he competed in his junior season.

Heading into the semifinals of the 1995 NCAA Div. I Wrestling Championships at the University of Iowa, McCoy was a dozen vic-

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Megan K. Morr/Collegian

Kerry McCoy talks last fall.

Lions able to fight off comeback of NJ Tech

After taking the first two games of the EIVA semi-final match, the Nittany Lions barely managed to seal the victory.

By Adam Gorney
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Anything can happen in the postseason. Last night in the semi-finals of the 2000 Eastern Intercollegiate Volleyball Association (EIVA) tournament, the Penn State men's volleyball team learned that lesson.

After cruising in the first two games, winning the two frames 15-8, 15-9, New Jersey Tech re-energized, and claimed their stake as a contender in the EIVA conference. The No. 4 seed Highlanders, led by outside hitter Fernando Fuentes, took game three 15-9, forcing a fourth game.

Volleyball

Penn State def. NJ Tech

15-8, 15-9, 9-15, 16-14

The fourth game of the match was a back-and-forth battle between two EIVA foes, both scratching for a chance to challenge Concordia in tomorrow night's postseason tournament final.

The winner of tomorrow night's match travels to Indiana-Purdue Fort Wayne (IPFW) to compete in the NCAA Final Four May 4-6. The No. 1 seed Nittany Lions finally finished off the Highlanders 16-14 in the fourth and final game of the match, exciting the crowd, and putting the conference in perspective for Lions setter Jose Quinones.

"Concordia is a better team than New Jersey," Quinones said. "We're going to have to play better Saturday."

Concordia defeated Rutgers-Newark in the other semi-final contest to place them in the final against Penn State tomorrow night.

Penn State men's volleyball coach Mark Pavlik said before the match New Jersey Tech is a consistently hardworking group that will never give up.

Last night in Rec Hall, the Highlanders did not disappoint.

"That's New Jersey Tech to a tee," the sixth-year coach said. "Like a little gnat that you can't get away."

Penn State played well during the first two frames, but dropped its intensity to let the Highlanders back in the match.

A motivated Eric Houston opened the match on fire, clubbing 20 of his 25 kills in the first two games. Four Nittany Lions finished the match in double-digit kills.

with senior co-captain Adam Whitescarver and freshmen Carlos Guerra and Zeljko Koljesar all combining for 51 of the Nittany Lions 89 kills.

Last night was a banner night for Whitescarver, as he set the all-time block assist record with a total of 128 in his illustrious career.

The record was held by former Penn State great Ivan Contreras who was a member of the 1994 national championship squad.

Even though New Jersey Tech's season is finished, coach Manny Del Rio couldn't be more pleased with the work ethic and determination of his Highlanders.

"Not only happy, but proud of the guys," Del Rio said. "We don't quit."

The back-and-forth match was a little too close for Houston who said that after being upset by Princeton two years ago, no team will ever be overlooked in his career, again.

"Tonight scared us," the Lititz native said. "It put a fire under our belts."

Softball team to see action over weekend

By Lauren Kocur
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

This weekend, the Penn State softball team will take on two of its last three competitors of the regular season.

The Lady Lions will travel to Iowa City, Iowa, to take on the Hawkeyes in a double-header today. Tomorrow and Sunday, the team will make the trip to Evanston, Ill., for two games against Northwestern.

Penn State recently returned from a trip to Akron, Ohio, where the team split a two-game series with the Zips.

Iowa is in first place in the Big Ten with a record of 34-10 overall and 10-2 in the conference. The Hawkeyes have been dealt their only two conference losses by Purdue and Michigan when they were shutout in both games.

Northwestern holds the fourth spot in the Big Ten and a record of 20-19 overall and 8-4 in the conference. The team has lost to Wisconsin, Purdue, Indiana and Michigan State.

Penn State is only one place above the Wildcats and its conference record has only one less loss. The Lions are 29-12 overall and 8-3 in the conference, dropping two games to Michigan and one to Minnesota. Heading into the Iowa game, Penn State softball coach Robin Petrini said she feels the team can defeat Iowa, regardless of its first-place position in the conference.

"I'm excited to play," she said. "They're in first place and we think we can overtake them."

On the mound, Penn State starter Jaci Kalp will be responsible for setting the tone of the game for Iowa's hitters, who hold a team batting average of .291. Kalp has recorded 163 strikeouts this season, while reliever Tanis Ambelang has sat down 57. Kalp and Ambelang will have the tough job of pitching against Jessica Bashor, who holds a .393 batting average along with a .684 slugging percentage. Bashor has connected for 46 hits, eight of which have been home runs. Bashor is the team leader in batting average, slugging percentage and total hits.

Iowa will also have the advantage on pitching. Iowa's starting pitcher, Kelly Zeilstra, has a 1.12 ERA throughout her 168.1 innings pitched. She has struck out 86 of the batters she's faced. Second to come to the mound is Kristi Hanks, who holds a 1.06 ERA through 139 innings pitched. Hanks, however, has struckout 173 of the batters who have faced her.

In order to defeat the Hawkeyes, Penn State's entire team will have to play the best game it possibly can.

Penn State's .298 team batting average might not be enough to pull the Lions past the Hawkeyes, forcing the Lions to turn to their defense.

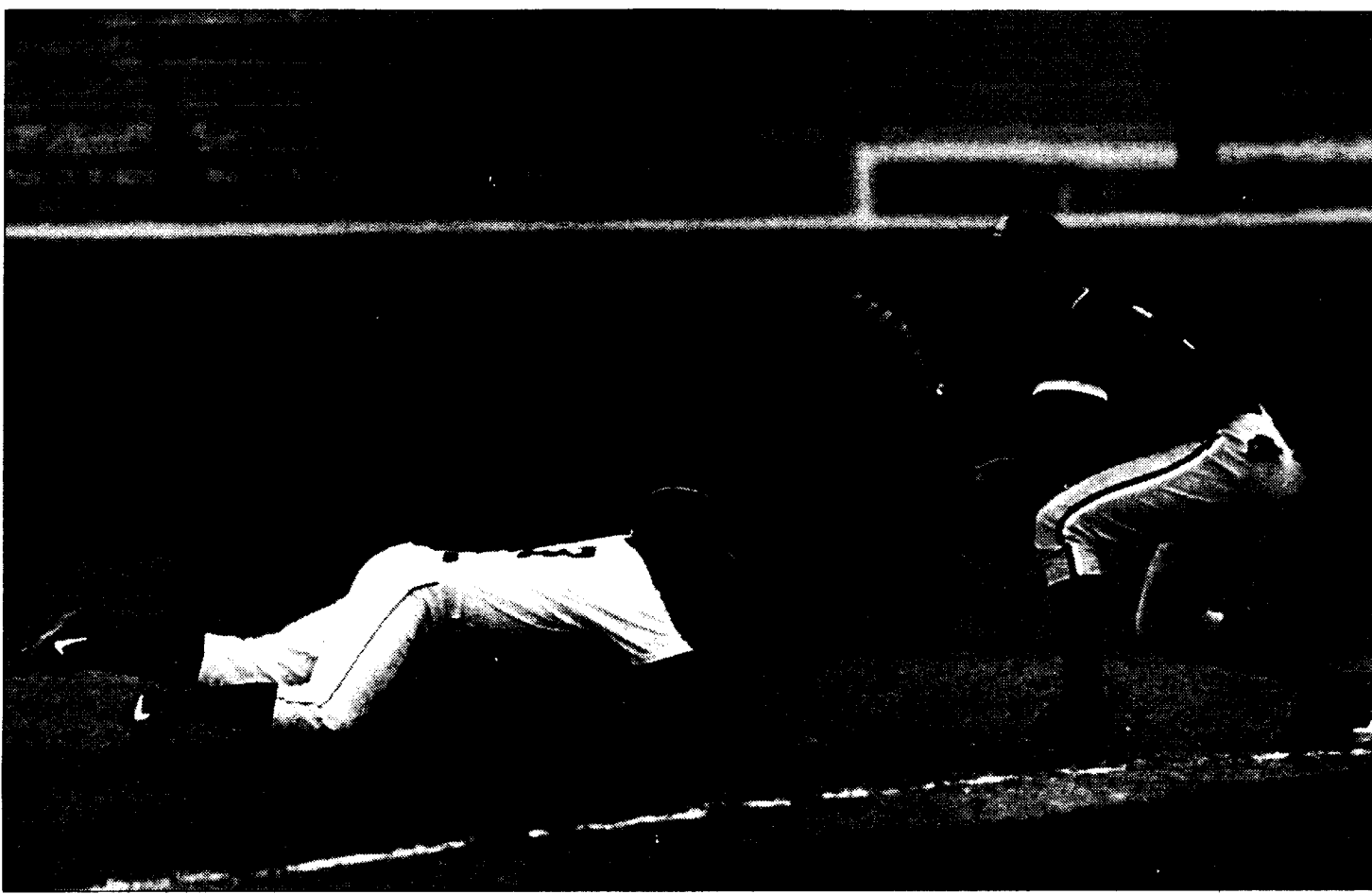
To date, the team has committed a total of 43 errors, while Iowa's defense has only 39.

Penn State will have a tough challenge when it takes on Iowa. It will also be challenged the next two days facing Northwestern.

"It's going to be a dogfight," Petrini said. "This is a huge weekend for us, the biggest this season."

Northwestern will challenge Penn State's pitchers as well. Brooke Siebel leads the Wildcats with her batting average of .395, but of the starters, Brett Nakabayashi leads the team. Nakabayashi has a batting average of .331. Wildcats starting pitcher Lauren Schwendimann carries an ERA of 1.81. Throughout her 131.1 innings pitched, Schwendimann has struckout 145 batters.

However, with Penn State's hitting potential, Northwestern will also need a strong defense.



J. Rajotte/Collegian

Penn State third baseman Shawn Fagan beats a pickoff attempt in the Lions game against St. Bonaventure.

Lions inching their way toward goals

By Gwenn Miller
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

If the predictions and words of wisdom inside fortune cookies were always true, everyone would probably be wealthy and spiritually fulfilled.

But in Joe Hindelang's case, a recent trip to a Chinese restaurant proved him to be a wise man. It seems those little slips of paper magically inserted in cookies apply to baseball, too.

"My fortune said, 'A mile is walked a step at a time,'" he said. "To me that means with baseball, that's where we are now. You go a step at a time, and that starts with Michigan."

The chance for the Nittany Lions to continue to achieve their season goals one step at a time does start with Michigan. Today at 3 p.m., Penn State faces the Wolverines at Beaver Field. The series continues with a doubleheader at 1 p.m. Saturday and Sunday at the same time.

Although Hindelang isn't looking too far ahead, the Lions (31-9, 11-4 Big Ten) have set goals.

They want to win the Big Ten regular season and make the conference playoffs. Penn State also has its sights on winning at least 40 games because that number could



J. Rajotte/Collegian

Mike Watson pitches earlier this season.

translate into an at-large bid for the NCAA playoffs.

The Lions' successful season thus far isn't surprising to Hindelang, who said relying upon his seniors for leadership has paid dividends. Penn State's defense boasts a .973 fielding percentage, which is expected from its coach. But the batting average is a different story.

"I think our team's hitting pretty high, so that's kind of surprising," Lions senior outfielder Mike Campo said. "We're hitting .353 as a team. Is the success shocking? Not really, because I know we have a lot of guys with experience. Everyone's kind of having

a good year this year and putting it together."

And Campo is a big part of that success. He leads the team with a .442 batting average and a perfect fielding percentage.

Fellow seniors such as second baseman Eric Spadt and his third base counterpart Shawn Fagan have near-flawless fielding percentages, with Fagan second on the team with a .419 batting average.

As for the pitching realm, veteran Dan Goebeler has compiled a 5-1 record with an ERA of 3.81. Senior reliever Jeff Kunkle has also allowed Hindelang to rest a bit easier with a 1.69 ERA in five innings of work.

"It's just confidence in one another," Spadt said. "Everyone out there has confidence in the guy next to him."

A few of the seniors also have another incentive to achieve their goals — they want to get back to where they once were. Although some were just redshirt freshmen at the time, they can remember the 1996 season in which Penn State played in the Big Ten Tournament and was 32-24-1 overall.

This year, Campo said he is feeling good about the chances of returning to that position.

"It's good that we are in striking range," Campo said, "and we're in a position that, if we come together, we can accomplish all those goals."

One step at a time, of course.

Always going forward, senior can't forget road behind him

By Don Stewart

Clearfield 80 miles
Words written on a billboard on I-80 East. My rapidly aging '93 Topaz must have passed them at least 100 times in the past four years on my numerous trips from Northeast Ohio to State College.



MY OPINION

Those words were easy to dismiss, being a part of a stupid hotel sign on a highway 40 miles past the state line. But to me, that sign and those words always meant something more.

They meant the end of my trip was near. Eighty more miles, and I could pull off onto 322.

From there it's only about 45 minutes into State College, depending on traffic and how many state troopers were on duty.

In my rearview mirror was Ohio, my past. Back there was high school. The remnants of my "family." Bitter memories of my hometown, mistakes and old girlfriends.

In front of me was State College. Too temporary to claim as my home. To me it meant hope.

Hope that I could get away from my past. Hope that there was something better down the road.

Eighty miles to Clearfield. Trip's almost over. Funny how fast those miles go by.

We like to try to count the miles as we go through life. But we never really know when this road trip will end.

Spring of 1990. Finishing up my second chance at sixth grade. Learned a lot that year. About myself, about resiliency, about starting over.

But my greatest lesson began with one phone call.

"Do you know Travis?" my friend Mike asked me.

"Yeah, he was the captain of my football

team last season. He's awesome.

"He's dead."

I couldn't believe it. Wouldn't believe it.

How could he be dead? He was only 13 years old. And of smoke inhalation? That's something that only happens on those corny after-school specials.

All of it was true, though. I had just seen him a month or two before. Young, tough, full of life.

A few days after that call, I saw a body that didn't resemble him in a casket. I was a 145-pound, 12-year old kid looking into that casket. That summer I would lose 30 pounds, determined to make the 120-pound weight limit for my youth football team.

Did it for my former teammate who had died.

Did it so I could come back and play for the team Travis could never play for again. But mostly I did it because his death showed me for the first time just how short life is.

If you truly want something, you have to

go for it. You never know when your trip through life might end.

Maybe I forgot that lesson. Maybe I needed to be reminded.

Summer of '98. Came home after my sophomore year of college to see my Uncle Jack, dying in a hospital bed.

Lost a grandmother during both of the two previous summers. This was different.

Jack was my great uncle, a man nearing his 80s who had smoked unfiltered Camels for more than 50 years. Still, unlike my grandmothers, we hadn't seen this coming.

He was one of the toughest guys I'd ever met. Served in Pearl Harbor. Served on submarines for about eight years. Came home and worked in a factory for 40 years. Saved every penny he'd earned. Accumulated a small fortune.

Just a couple of months before my dad had discovered him unconscious on his living room floor, Jack had given me \$4,000 to keep me from getting booted out of Penn

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