

## Young athletes get wiser for PSU

By Jon Blau  
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While climbing the mountain that is the indoor track and field season, the Penn State women's team was young and inexperienced. Now almost as if they have completed a rite of passage, the Nittany Lions have descended the mountain wise beyond their years.

"The future looks great," Penn State coach Beth Alford-Sullivan said. "We've been working hard and learning a lot."

The Lions have a variety of experiences from which to draw knowledge. There are the peaks of the season, at which the squad dominated home meets such as the Penn State National Open and the Sykes-Sabock Challenge Cup.

At these two meets, freshmen Shana Cox and Gayle Hunter were at their pinnacles for the year. During the Penn State Open, Cox broke the Multi-Sports Facility record in the 400-meter dash with a time of 52.75 seconds. At the Sykes-Sabock Challenge, Hunter broke a 20-year-old record in the pentathlon with a total of 4,059 points. Hunter led the Big Ten in the pentathlon for the rest of the year.

Also, junior Jennifer Leatherman, a transfer from the U.S. Naval Academy, was a breakout star in the 20-pound weight throw and the shotput, breaking a Penn State record in the weight throw with a mark of 69 foot 11 inches. Leatherman led the conference in both events and earned All-America honors in both at the NCAA championships.

"We had an excellent year and we did some outstanding things with some good goals for the future," Alford-Sullivan said.

Coming into the Big Ten Championships, it seemed as though the summit — another title — was fast approaching. Though the team was young, the Lions had seemed to be the favorites going into Big Tens.

But then Big Tens turned into a huge valley with a loss, failing to win back-to-back conference championships.

Penn State lost the championship because of several unfortunate circumstances. Both Cox and freshman Dominique Blake were disqualified in the 400-meter run at the championships for lane violations.

If Cox and Blake had finished first and second like many believed they could, then they would have gotten the Lions 18 points that could have amounted to a victory. Penn State appealed the decision, but fell short of a unanimous overturn by one vote.

Also in the Big Tens, Penn State learned what it is like to lose a key points scorer to injury. Hunter re-injured her left knee, an injury that had been bothering her since the New Balance Collegiate Invitational on Feb. 5. She ended up finishing all the events in the pentathlon, but her gutsy performance placed her in ninth, one place below scoring for the meet.

"We had some challenges," Alford-Sullivan said. "Some we could control and some we couldn't."

But this is all in hindsight now, as there is no off-season in track and field. What was indoor season now turns into outdoor season. The mountain that has been traveled now looks like an anthill in the rear view mirror.

"We're looking forward to [the outdoor season]," Alford-Sullivan said. "We should have a better team outdoors so we're real excited."

### MEN'S LACROSSE

## Lions tackle tough opponents

By Sirage Yassin  
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Glenn Thiel wasted little time trying to discover how his Penn State men's lacrosse team would stack up against the elite teams on the schedule.

The Nittany Lions' (2-2, 1-0 ECAC) first four games of the season were against teams ranked in the top 20. And the Lions played two of those games over the break.

They hosted No. 16 Loyola on March 5, and with the game tied 14-14 late in

the fourth quarter, the Lions scored two goals in the final two minutes to come away with a 16-14 victory.

The star of the game was attackman John Eremus, who finished with five goals. For his efforts, Eremus was named the ECAC offensive player of the week for the first time.

In 2003, the Lions made an appearance in the NCAA tournament, and Thiel said he has the talent to

get back there if everyone contributes equally.

"We can beat anyone on our schedule and lose to anyone [as well], our problem is consistency," Thiel said.

It was no truer statement when the Lions played their first road game of the season three days later at No. 4 Duke. The Blue Devils held the Lions to two second-half goals en route to a 12-2 victory. The two-goal output by Penn State is its lowest since a 17-2 loss at the hands of Army back in 1983.

"Duke physically pressured us. They

inched away from us, and we backed down. They're very good," Thiel said.

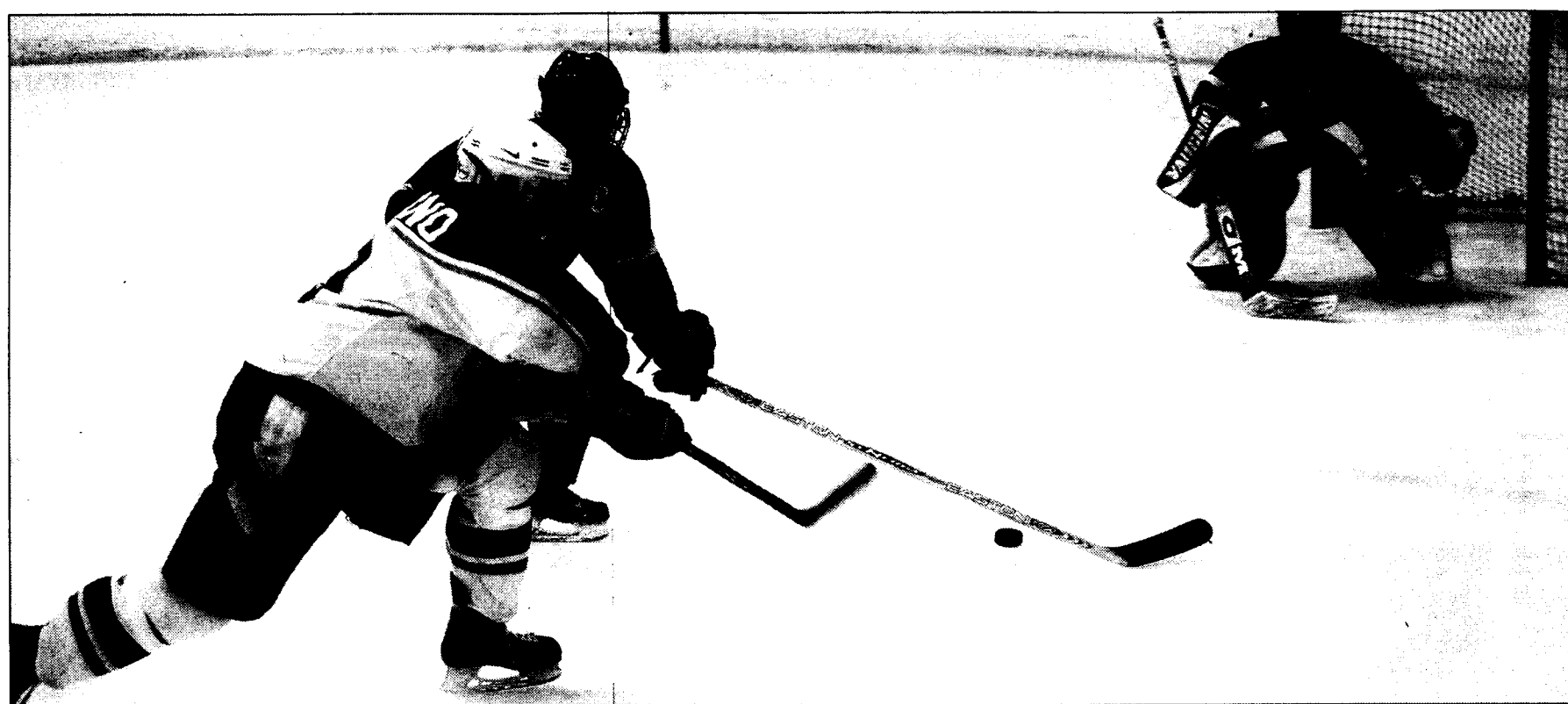
On a day when there were few bright spots for the Lions, their leading scorer and attackman Nate Whitaker scored a goal, extending his individual scoring streak to 31 games.

This Saturday, the Lions will be in action against Stony Brook. Thiel hopes his team will respond after such a lackluster performance.

"The idea is to get to the tournament, but guys have to respond when everyone isn't at their best," he said.

**12**  
Duke  
**2**  
Penn State

### ACHA HOCKEY



Ben Snyder/Collegian

Icers senior forward Mike Carrano, front, fights for a loose puck against Washington & Jefferson. The Icers fell just short of a national title during spring break.

## Gritty play leads to empty tank

By Sirage Yassin  
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It's hard to ask a team to win four games in as many days. But that, indeed, is what Penn State ACHA Division I Icers coach Joe Battista asked of his team two weekends ago in Illinois.

The closest the team had come to playing that many games on consecutive days was a three-game, three-day stretch back in October, during the first weekend of the regular season.

Legit champions hate the term "runner-up." Sure, second-place means a team's done better than everyone else but one team, but when a club loses by a goal in a championship game two years in a row, it doesn't feel that way.

Let Icers assistant coach Chris Schmale tell you.

It's been three years now that he's lost in some sort of championship game by a goal. He just finished his second year as an assistant with the Icers but before that, as an assistant at Morrisville Junior College, he also lost their championship game by a digit.

Eight straight years and counting. That's how many years in a row the Icers have been in the final game of the ACHA season. That isn't a mistake.

Before the tournament started Battista said all the pressure was on other teams. He said it was on Illinois for as the No. 1 seed. He then said it was on Ohio University — the Icers' rival — for being the defending champion.

Truth be told, teams gear up for the Icers. When the schedule comes out, they circle blue and white like it's a wedding date.

Chris Tasic is a hockey player for Robert Morris College, the host school for the tournament. The Icers played Robert Morris in the second round and Tasic's assignment was to "shadow" the Icers' all-time leading goal scorer, Kevin Jaeger.

The shadowing turned into more of a brutal stalking, as Jaeger was beat up the entire game. It got so bad that, during the third period, when the Icers had the game in hand, Battista sat Jaeger on the bench for fear of him getting injured any further.

As the teams shook hands afterwards, Tasic approached Jaeger in the line and said "Sorry man, but it was part of the job description."

Who's the favorite?

In the semifinal game the Icers took on rival Ohio. Under his white button-up

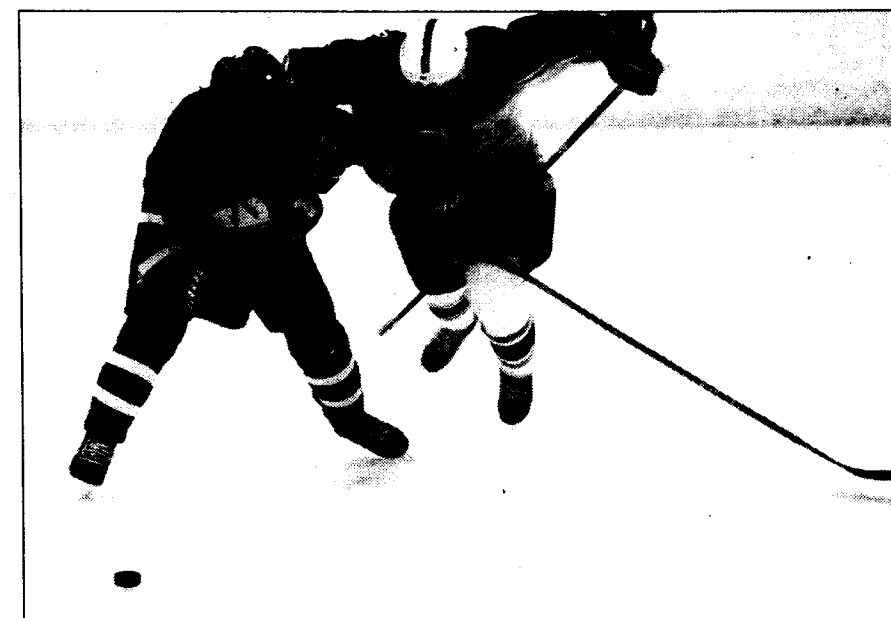
shirt Battista wore a T-shirt with the phrase "WE OU" emblazoned on it. In late October the Icers' marketing staff organized a whiteout passing out those shirts at a home game against the Bobcats.

It's an understatement to say that PSU versus OU is big. But maybe playing a big-time rival the day before a championship game isn't the most suitable scenario.

"Ohio's a tough team to beat so I think that took so much out of us that playing [Illinois] we didn't have full energy," Jaeger said.

In fact, Illinois is the first school other than Penn State or Ohio to win a national championship in 10 years.

"I'm disappointed we didn't win it, but Illinois played really well," Jaeger said. "It's just the way the puck went."



Ben Snyder/Collegian

Freshman forward Jesse Weinzimmer, right, attempts to jump over the stick of Washington & Jefferson defenseman David Bean.

## Young players show heart, exceed expectations for Icers

By Josh Moyer  
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BENSENVILLE, Ill. — It was supposed to be a rebuilding year.

Last September, a whopping 12 players skated onto the ice as rookies — replacing a dozen veterans who were lost during the off-season.

It wasn't easy. But, somehow, those rookies helped the Icers skate off last weekend as national runners-up.

"They played like veterans, they really did," Battista said. "It was a great pleasure watching them develop."

In the beginning, it was believed the freshmen would only hamper the Penn State ACHA Division I Icers. In the end, though, it was one of the reasons Penn State made it so far.

The rookies accounted for seven of the Icers' 16 goals during the four-day tournament — including a game-winner from forward Dave Arcobello.

Arcobello's goal was one of the tournament's turning points. With 75 seconds remaining in the semifinal, Arcobello went top shelf against Ohio to break an emotional 1-1 tie and advance Penn State to the national championship game.

Battista even embraced assistant coach Mo Stroemel after the alarm sounded.

"He's been so snakebit all season because he hasn't been able to score," Battista said. "And I said, 'Davey, you're gonna score 'em when we need you most.'"

See ICERS, Page 10.

## Freshman pair dominating Penn State doubles

A team too young is usually a team in trouble. Not so for the men's tennis duo of Michael James and Chris Sherman.

By Dan Winklobleck  
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"Anytime, as a coach, you're reluctant to put two freshmen together," Penn State men's tennis coach Jan Bortner said.

But for Bortner's No. 67 Nittany Lions, the decision to pair two first-year players together at the No. 3 doubles slot has been a huge plus for the team.

The duo of Michael James and Chris Sherman has been one of the most solid and dependable spots on the team, going 7-2 together this spring.

At the start of the season, Bortner said the team had been stressing the

doubles play, devoting about 50 percent of the time in practice toward doubles. It would seem like all that work for just one of seven points in a match would hardly be worth it. But time and time again, a close match, especially in the Big Ten, can come down to that first doubles point.

It seems like the Lions have really bought into the philosophy as well, winning the doubles point in every victory this spring. Even in their first loss, against No. 3 Illinois earlier this season, the Lions played some of their best doubles. James and Sherman even managed to win their match, 8-4, against an Illinois squad that is known as one of

the best in the nation at doubles.

"We're playing real well — we're not at the top of our game yet, but we'll get there," James said after the Illinois match. "We served well today and returned well today."

Their success with service and return games has helped the two freshmen put together their streak of wins at doubles, which is dominated by the service game. Their aggressive play, in getting to the net and putting away opponents as quickly as possible, has shown their coach that it was a good idea to put them together.

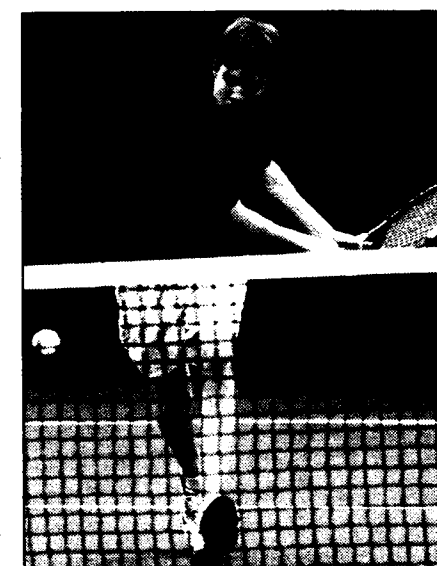
"I like the chemistry, I like the way their games complement each other," Bortner said. "They're at third doubles, so there's not as much pressure as second or first, and they seem to be handling this well."

This chemistry is especially evident in serves and returns, the strength of the pair.

"MJ is a really good returner; he's been making almost every return, and I've been returning well too, but just not quite as good as him," Sherman said. "But I've been serving really well — I think we complement each other with our serves and returns. One of us is always doing well so we've been able to hold our serves and get breaks."

The duo also seems to know where the other player will be all over the court, which could be one of the hardest parts of doubles. If their success is any gauge of their on-court communication, it is safe to say that the duo is getting close to having that down cold.

"We're also moving well, we know See TENNIS, Page 10.



Carolina Villanueva/Collegian

Michael James returns a ground stroke in doubles match alongside his freshman partner Chris Sherman.