

# Five keys for success in the women's tourney

By Justin Kunkel

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There is not a single factor that one can pinpoint when trying to decide what college basketball teams, men's or women's, will have success in the NCAA tournament, but there is nothing wrong with giving it the old college try.

The coaches of the Big XII Conference, who represent seven of the 64 teams in The Big Dance, gave their input, and if their responses pan out on the basketball court Penn State has a chance to be dancing deep into the night.

According to the coaches, one of the key components to tournament success is a concept that has become almost cliché during the lion-esque phase of March and that is:

## Guard play

"In tournament play particularly, it's all about the guards and half-court execution," Oklahoma coach Sherri Coale said.

College basketball in general, and particularly the women's game, has been dominated by guards for most of the last decade, and this year should be no different. Connecticut's recent dynasty was built around guards Sue Bird and Diana Taurasi. This year's No. 1 seed, LSU, is paced by Wooden Award favorite Seimone Augustus. If strong guard play does in fact correlate closely to tournament success, then Penn State should be sitting pretty since the Lady Lions' backcourt of Jess Strom and Tanisha Wright is one of the best in the country.

## Depth

"I think [success comes easier] when you can have a bench and you can have more players that can contribute," Baylor coach Kim Mulkey-Robinson said. "Depth is so important throughout the NCAA tournament. You have to have depth."

If in fact Mulkey-Robinson, whose Bears beat Penn State 91-70 on Dec. 11, is correct, and a deep bench is a prereq-

uisite for tournament success, then the Lady Lions could find themselves in deep trouble.

Coach Rene Portland's January decision to move sophomore Jen Harris to the bench has improved the scoring from the second unit — but after Strom and Wright the offense drop off is a steep one.

Freshman Amber Bland is an excellent defender but has not contributed much at the offensive end during her freshman campaign, and Hazel Joseph is a non-factor.

## Experience

"If I had to pick one single thing, I would say experience. I would say teams that have been there and done that are the teams that usually have success," Texas Tech coach Marsha Sharp said.

This is another factor that Penn State has going in its favor. The Lady Lions have valuable postseason experience after three straight trips to the Sweet 16 and last year's foray into the Elite Eight.

"If I had to pick one single thing, I would say experience."

Marsha Sharp

Texas Tech women's basketball coach, on keys to winning in the postseason

## Good fortune

"You have to be concerned with injuries, and you have to hope that nobody gets in foul trouble," Texas coach Jody Conradt said.

Keeping players out of foul trouble is not completely a matter of luck, but there is nothing a team like Kansas State can do when it loses a player as important as Megan Mahoney on the eve of the tournament. Penn State has not had a serious injury all season, but the Lions have battled foul trouble from time to time.

The lack of depth in the post has often gotten forward Amanda Brown in foul trouble early, and as the long season and massive amount of playing time have taken their toll on Wright she has

occasionally picked up some avoidable fouls. When she does, Penn State struggles.

## A stud scorer

"I believe that a great leader and a great player on the perimeter is a particularly vital element," Kansas State coach Deb Patterson said. Sharp agreed, saying: "Teams that have a clear-cut, go-to, I'm-gonna-make-plays-for-you presence have an advantage."

Wright has developed into one of the best pure scorers in the country and is more than willing to take the big shot with the game on the line.

This could prove to be a distinct advantage against teams that may be deeper but lack the presence of a true star at the offensive end.

## WOMEN'S TRACK

# Penn State preparing to compete outdoors

By Andrew Staub

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T-minus 58 days to the Big Ten Women's Track and Field Championship held at Ohio State University.

Even though the Penn State women's track and field team has just started practicing for the outdoor season, Penn State coach Beth Alford-Sullivan already has set her team's sights on the conference meet. After finishing an unexpected fourth at the Big Ten Women's Indoor Track and Field Championship, Alford-Sullivan is confident that her team will be an improved version heading into the outdoor Big Ten meet.

She said that the improvement will be the result of the added events in the outdoor season, such as the discus, javelin, 4x100-meter relay, 400-meter hurdles and 10,000-meter run.

"The events that we add, we have some strength and depth in," Alford-Sullivan said. "We're excited about it. It makes our team much stronger."

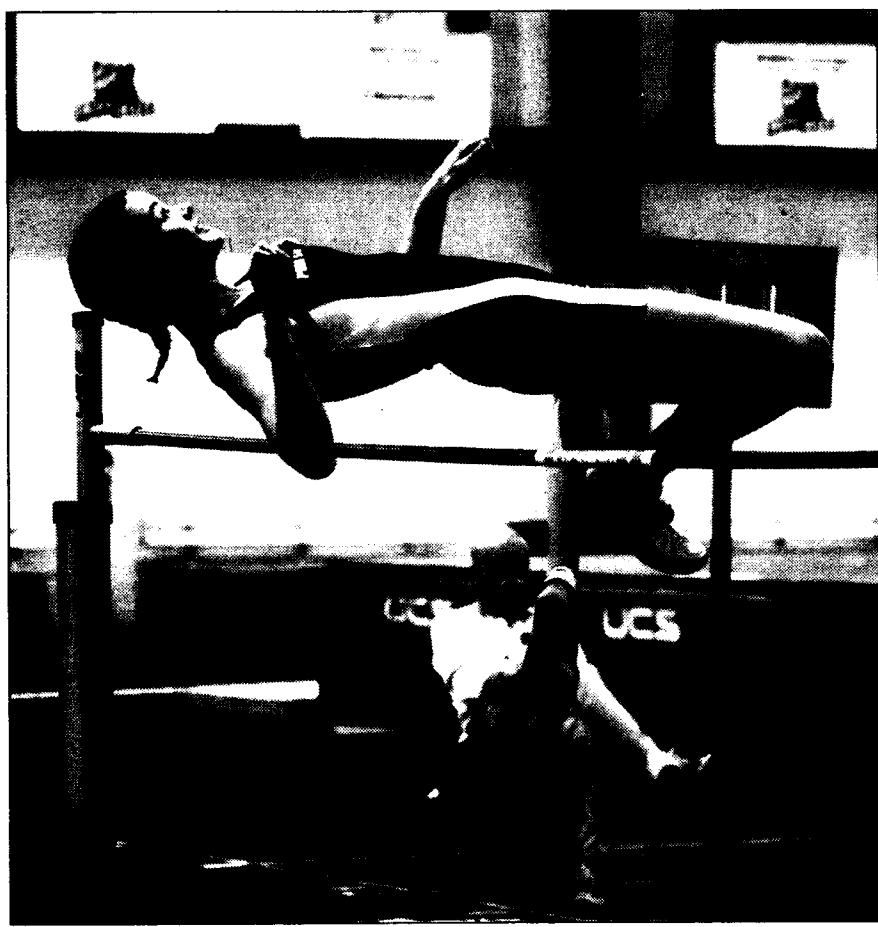
Specifically, the return of senior distance runner Molly Landreth, who red-shirted during the indoor season, will provide a much-needed boost to an area in which the Nittany Lions struggled mightily.

At the Big Ten meet held last month, Penn State failed to score any points in the distance events. Landreth is in an NCAA qualifier in the 10,000-meter run and a 2003 All-American in the steeplechase.

Having Landreth back on the track will add some veteran leadership as well as take some pressure off of junior Tracey Brauksieck.

"Molly's been a big factor in our program," Alford-Sullivan said. "We're looking to line her back up. It'll be great."

Looking at the throws, Penn State's



Jim Creighton/Colegian

Megan Burke and the women's track team are ready for the outdoor season.

already solid group of throwers will be bolstered by the addition of senior Ashley Colley in the javelin, an event in which she earned 2003 All-America honors. The Lions also are looking to see some significant points from junior Christen Clemson in the discus. Last year, Clemson placed second in the event at the Big Ten meet.

Senior throws captain Kate Johnston and junior Jennifer Leatherman, both indoor NCAA qualifiers, will again provide strong leadership in the throws as both are expected to have outstanding outdoor seasons in the hammer throw.

Not all of Penn State's main contributors will be upperclassmen, though. During the indoor season, freshmen Dominique Blake, Gayle Hunter and Shana Cox, and sophomore Kamilah Salaam paced Penn State's sprints corps.

Alford-Sullivan said that she expects her young athletes to continue to impact the team during the outdoor season.

"Our freshmen have been a key fac-

tor in the quality of this team and the quality of the program," Alford-Sullivan said. "We recruited them with that premise that they would come in here and make a big difference, and to see them pulling that off is really exciting."

Even after Cox and Hunter had an off day at the NCAA meet, Alford-Sullivan said she was impressed with how well the two handled themselves and believes that they will be just fine in the outdoor season.

While the freshmen should provide an interesting future, the team will presently rely heavily on the veteran leadership of Johnston and sprints captain Brooke Robinson, both seniors. Each will look to have an outstanding final run with the Nittany Lions.

"They stepped up and had an indoor season that was their best on their record," Alford-Sullivan said. "That momentum will carry over to the outdoor [season]."

And Penn State needs all the momentum it can get right now. After all, the countdown has already started.

# Armstrong acknowledges being behind on training

By Jerome Pugmire  
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

PARIS — Lance Armstrong acknowledged yesterday he is behind schedule in his preparation for a seventh straight Tour de France title and he may have made a mistake by competing in the recent weather-affected Paris-Nice cycle race. Armstrong, in Paris to collect a Sports Academy Trophy at the foreign ministry in recognition of his sixth straight Tour win last summer, said he hopes to recover his form in time for July's Tour.

"I'm going to try and get in shape. I have to admit I'm a little bit behind, more than I would normally be," Armstrong said. "I picked Paris-Nice for a lot of reasons that were decided before. Perhaps I shouldn't have started with a race like Paris-Nice."

"It was a very hard, fast, intense race with bad weather."

Some stages at the Paris-Nice were shortened severely due to heavy snowfall, meaning Armstrong — who eventually pulled out with a sore throat — had little chance to accumulate distance on his bike, a crucial part of his preparation.

"The body quickly wore down and got worse. Then I got sick. Next thing you know I go home," Armstrong said. "When you consider race conditions, the thing you can't emulate in training is the speed. When you shorten the stages by two-thirds the speed goes up and the time goes down. I was not ready for that."

However, nothing will stop him from trying to win his seventh Tour "other than injury or illness or some other external problem."

"I don't know that I'll win but I'll be on the start line," he said.

Upon receiving the Trophée de l'Académie des Sports, awarded to the athlete with the best achievement the previous year, Armstrong said he was humbled.

"I have to say it is an honor to be here," Armstrong said. "I don't normally get too choked up about things like this normally but this is special. Winning six Tours is something beyond my comprehension."

The American, accompanied by rock



Jerome Delay/Associated Press

Lance Armstrong feels he is behind on his preparation for the Tour de France.

star girlfriend Sheryl Crow, also commented on the 2012 Olympic bid, reaffirming his love for New York — and also his fondness for Paris.

"As an American my heart has to be with New York City, and I have to support the bid for New York City," he said. "But you also have to be fair and say Paris has a good bid. Are they deserving cities for the Olympic Games? Absolutely. They're great cities, legendary cities, historical cities."

"Perhaps I wasn't strong enough when I said my vote was for New York City. Since it wasn't strong enough they said 'He's a traitor. He's a weasel.'"

Armstrong said he was upset by the media outcry and took a swipe at some of the publications that rose against him.

"It's the first time I've ever been called un-American. So, I tried to resolve it. I spoke to the city, to the [New York 2012] organizing committee," Armstrong said. "I sent messages to the mayor. It was amazing how a one-minute interview became world-wide news."

"Some of the tabloid papers, they let it rip. They took the gloves off. But c'est la vie, as they say."

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