

“Maybe we’re down. Maybe we’re up. Maybe we’re in the middle. That’s why you guys get paid to make those perfect predictions.”

Joe Paterno
Nittany Lions head coach on the Big Ten

be down this season following some less than stellar non-conference close victories by a number of teams. No. 10 Penn State is in as good a position to take this year’s conference title.

by Lions might just win it by process of elimination.

ainly can’t promise “perfect predictions,” but here’s a look at how the conference breaks down.

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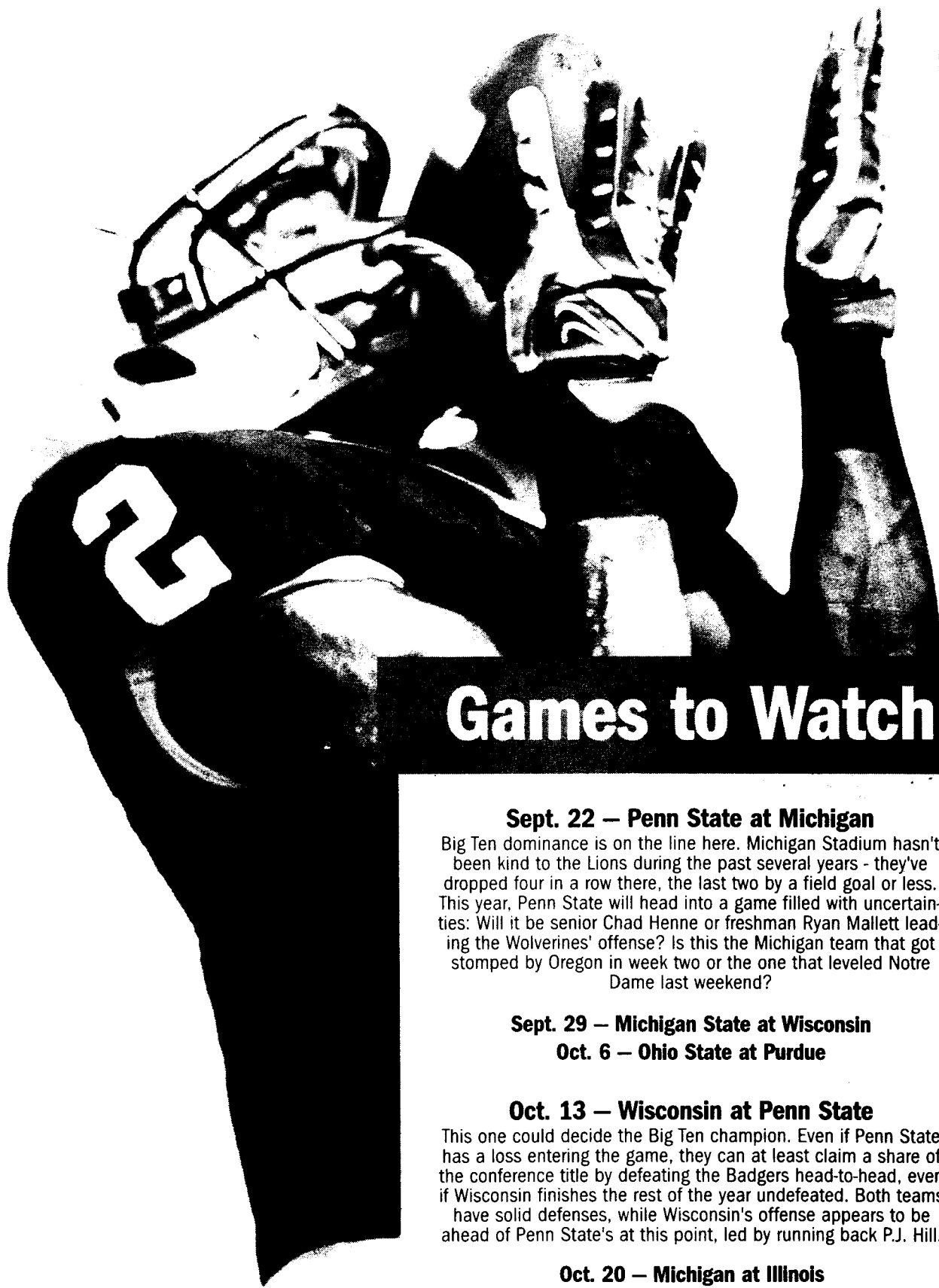
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Games to Watch

Sept. 22 — Penn State at Michigan

Big Ten dominance is on the line here. Michigan Stadium hasn't been kind to the Lions during the past several years - they've dropped four in a row there, the last two by a field goal or less. This year, Penn State will head into a game filled with uncertainties: Will it be senior Chad Henne or freshman Ryan Mallett leading the Wolverines' offense? Is this the Michigan team that got stomped by Oregon in week two or the one that leveled Notre Dame last weekend?

Sept. 29 — Michigan State at Wisconsin

Oct. 6 — Ohio State at Purdue

Oct. 13 — Wisconsin at Penn State

This one could decide the Big Ten champion. Even if Penn State has a loss entering the game, they can at least claim a share of the conference title by defeating the Badgers head-to-head, even if Wisconsin finishes the rest of the year undefeated. Both teams have solid defenses, while Wisconsin's offense appears to be ahead of Penn State's at this point, led by running back P.J. Hill.

Oct. 20 — Michigan at Illinois

Oct. 27 — Ohio State at Penn State

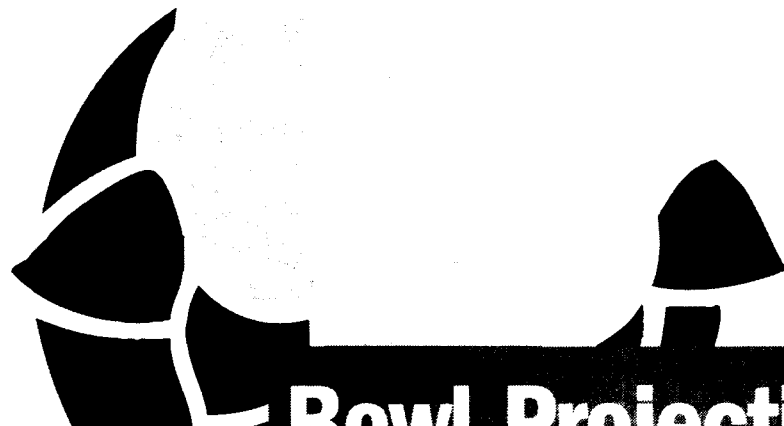
Two years ago, the Nittany Lions made a national statement with a nighttime upset of Ohio State before a whited-out crowd. The two teams will meet once again under the lights this season. This game is the front end of a potential stumbling block for Penn State, which will face Purdue the following week. A win here would go a long way toward vaulting the Lions to a major bowl.

Nov. 3 — Wisconsin at Ohio State

Nov. 10 — Michigan at Wisconsin

Nov. 17 — Ohio State at Michigan

Dan Collins Collegian
Derrick Williams will look to use his playmaking abilities to help Penn State win its second Big Ten title in the three seasons that he has been on campus.



Bowl Projections

Rose — Penn State vs. Pac-10

Capital One — Wisconsin vs. SEC No. 2

Outback — Ohio State vs. SEC No. 3/4

Champs Sports — Purdue vs. ACC No. 4

Alamo — Michigan vs. Big 12 No. 4/5

Insight — Indiana vs. Big 12 No. 6

Motor City — Illinois vs. MAC No. 1/2

First-team Offense

QB — Curtis Painter, Purdue, Jr.

RB — Mike Hart, Michigan, Sr.

RB — P.J. Hill, Wisconsin, Sr.

WR — Dorien Bryant, Purdue, Sr.

WR — Mario Manningham, Michigan, Sr.

WR — Brian Robiskie, Ohio State, Jr.

TE — Travis Beckham, Wisconsin, Jr.

OT — Jake Long, Michigan, Sr.

OG — Jordan Grimes, Purdue, Sr.

C — Tony Brinkhaus, Minnesota, Sr.

OG — Adam Kraus, Michigan, Sr.

OT — Kirk Barton, Ohio State, Sr.

K — Austin Starr, Indiana, Jr.

KR — Marcus Thigpen, Indiana, Jr.

First-team Defense

DE — Vernon Gholston, Ohio State, Jr.

DT — Mitch King, Iowa, Jr.

DT — Chris Norwell, Illinois, Sr.

DE — Matt Shaughnessy, Wisconsin, Jr.

LB — James Laurinatis, Ohio State, Jr.

LB — Dan Connor, Penn State, Sr.

LB — J. Leman, Illinois, Sr.

CB — Justin King, Penn State, Jr.

CB — Malcolm Jenkins, Ohio State, Jr.

FS — Otis Wiley, Michigan State, Jr.

SS — Jamar Adams, Michigan, Sr.

P — Zolton Mesko, Michigan, So.

PR — Derrick Williams, Penn State, Jr.