

Kinlaw

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group of about eight other football players from Slippery Rock and Susquehanna University would occasionally meet this summer at Blackshear's house near the Penn State campus.

They'd get together, eat burgers and chicken and talk. They'd study the Bible in two-hour increments. They'd talk about astrology and different, more abstract concepts relating to spirituality.

"Sometimes you see something and you take it for what it's worth and someone comes and explains something and you see it differently," Golden

says. "It gives you a different outlook on life. I think it put everything into perspective. We're just trying to seize the moment."

Seizing the moment, for Kinlaw, means capitalizing on his final year at Penn State. He's a fifth-year senior who has largely been relegated to backup duty thus far in his career. So far this season, he's traded rotations with fellow fifth-year senior Austin Scott.

Both had their share of injuries — Kinlaw tore his right ACL as a freshman — and both said they considered transferring.

"But it was more because I was so far away from home," Kinlaw says. "And coming off an injury, I didn't have the family support. That was the only

thing that made me contemplate transferring."

Kinlaw has since built a support group on and off the field. He grew closer to teammates and found a mentor in Blackshear.

"You can practice and lift all the weight you want but if you don't get it between the ears, you can make mental errors," Blackshear says. "And anxiety is the disrupter of performance."

In Blackshear's mind, he can see the difference in Kinlaw. He doesn't take credit for the success, but he's proud.

As he watched Saturday's game from an alumni suite, Blackshear couldn't help but get excited.

"Come on, Kinlaw," he shouted. "This is your shot."

Connor

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Guiding the defense in a timely fashion, processing signals from the sideline and passing them on before the ball is snapped has been most difficult.

It's further complicated during a game like the Lions' win two Saturdays ago against Notre Dame, when Connor couldn't hear himself yelling to defensive linemen as Beaver Stadium fans were intent on disrupting the Irish offense with a cacophony of noise.

"Mentally, it's definitely a jump

from where I've been before," Connor said. "But as soon as the ball is snapped, you're pretty much out there reading and reacting. That's the part I appreciate. Just mentally, it's a difficult position."

But right now, as Connor said repeatedly in the offseason, being a leader and being in the middle is where he wants to be. He's wanted to play middle linebacker since arriving as a freshman.

"I feel most comfortable at middle. That's where I feel like I can make the most plays," Connor said. "As far the future, I'll do anything, but I feel I'm best in the middle."

W. Volleyball

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has been no Big Ten team putting out a better product than Penn State. The Lions enter conference play Friday with four straight outright conference titles, a Big Ten record.

While the Lions may enter as the highest ranked team in the Big Ten, that just makes their title defense even more difficult.

The added pressure could prove to be beneficial for the team once the

NCAA tournament rolls around if the team can handle every team's best effort.

"We always have a pretty big bulls-eye on our back and that's good and bad," Rose said. "If the players are mature enough to understand that they're always going to be taking everybody's best effort, then it forces the team to be a little more mentally tough and hopefully have a little more mature attitude about what they are doing."

The lack of mental toughness is part of the reason why Rose is still

shuffling his lineup nearly a month into the season.

Lion faithful will continue to see changes in the lineup until Rose feels that some players have proven that they deserve to play every game of every match.

"There are still some things that I need to see and there will be changes that take place," he said. "One of the changes that probably has to take place is that I'm a little more competitive than my team. That's a problem because I don't play. Either I have to make them a little more competitive,

or it's not a good idea for them to make me less competitive."

Unless the Lions come with intensity every match, they could be primed for an upset. Rose believes that the talent level between each team is not severely slanted because many of the players Penn State has recruited are currently personnel for other teams.

And playing two road games on a weekend at two different universities always poses challenges for any road team.

"The travel is demanding," Rose said. "The fact is that you're playing

in gyms on football weekends with big crowds. And in some places there are some very hostile environments where the people are a little more fired up than you would expect from your preseason schedules."

As the 2005 Lions proved going undefeated in the Big Ten is not impossible.

And while this year's edition of the Lions would love to go undefeated in conference action like the 2005 Lions, they also would like for history not to repeat itself in the NCAA Tournament.

Struggles

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headline the Monday after this game.

For the second straight year, Michigan upset Penn State in dominating fashion. The No. 22 Wolverines jumped to an early lead, and Tom Brady's efficient passing day was more than enough to secure the win.

The Wolverines' defense limited the No. 9 Lions to less than 200 total yards and PSU quarterback Kevin Thompson was 8 of 31 with two interceptions and a fumble. The Lions were shut out for the first time since 1987.

Michigan and Penn State finished 9-3. All three games the Lions lost were on the road.

Nov. 13, 1999

Beaver Stadium
UM 31, PSU 27

The Lions had the ball, leading by three points with 3:21 to go. All they needed to do was hold onto the ball and let the clock wind down.

It didn't work out that way — after three futile plays, the Lions were forced to punt.

Brady made the most of the opportunity, hitting wide receiver Marcus Knight for a touchdown that gave the Wolverines a 31-27 lead that they would not relinquish.

Penn State had one more chance to take the lead, but its hopes were dashed when quarterback Kevin Thompson lost a fumble.

The loss was one of three to end Penn State's regular season.

Nov. 11, 2000

Michigan Stadium
UM 33, PSU 11

This was a game of missed opportunities for the Lions in a difficult 5-7 campaign. Penn State converted on

third down only two times in 14 attempts. The Lions made it down to Michigan's 35-yard-line seven times, but their offense couldn't get anything going, and senior kicker Ryan Primanti missed four field goals.

Oct. 6, 2001

Beaver Stadium
UM 20, PSU 0

Just another stop in a forgettable season for the Lions. This game made the 2001 Lions the first to begin a season 0-4. The big problem for Penn State was its offense. It could only muster 25 yards on the ground on 26 carries. The Lions punted the ball 10 times.

Penn State finished the season 5-6.

Oct. 12, 2002

Michigan Stadium
UM 27, PSU 24 (OT)

Running back Chris Perry's 3-yard touchdown run sealed the upset for

No. 15 Michigan in overtime against the No. 13 Lions.

But this was a meeting tinged with controversy. On third-and-5 in the final minute of the fourth quarter, Penn State quarterback Zack Mills hit Tony Johnson for an apparent first down on the Michigan 23. Officials, however, ruled the pass incomplete because Johnson fell out of bounds.

Asked to assess the Michigan game, Paterno simply said, "It was a close game."

Oct. 15, 2005

Michigan Stadium
UM 27, PSU 25

This one will live in infamy. And it will forever be remembered for one second. The one second when Michigan wide receiver Mario Manningham cut through the back of the end zone as time expired. The one second when Michigan quarterback Chad Henne dropped then made his throw.

It was the one second that ruined Penn State's perfect season. Henne connected with Manningham for a last-second touchdown, giving Michigan the upset victory. The Lions finished 11-1 and won the Orange Bowl. But even then, they couldn't get over the Wolverines.

Oct. 14, 2006

Beaver Stadium
UM 17, PSU 10

The final score made this game seem much closer than it really was. Michigan's defense stymied the Lions offense, holding it to just 186 total yards. Penn State was held to minus-14 rushing yards. Making matters worse, Michigan sacked Penn State quarterbacks seven times, knocking Anthony Morelli and Daryll Clark out of the game.

Mike Hart rushed for 116 yards and a touchdown on 26 carries for Michigan.