

Beaumont

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Beaumont also has a .21 goals against average and 95.7 save percentage in conference play.

Her stats so far in the 2008 Big Ten season are second-best all time in save percentage and goals allowed per game.

"It just shows how much leadership she brings to the team," Scola said.

"Her coming back has just made a huge impact on our team because our goalies right now are young, so for her to be in there is very comforting because you know she can make any save in the world."

Scola said Beaumont is an unselfish player who doesn't take credit for the multitude of contribu-

tions she makes to the team.

At halftime Sunday, Morett acknowledged the goalkeeper's outstanding play, and Scola said Beaumont reacted by saying, "Well, I didn't score any goals."

Beaumont said her awards, and other honors her teammates win, are a big statement for the entire team.

She said the weekly honor was a team effort and is a statement to the hard work her teammates have put in this season.

"It's always good to be honored for your efforts, but I think it just shows how strong defensively our team has been playing overall," Beaumont said.

"So for me to get honored, again, it's great, but I can't do it without my team. They're backing everything I do."

Penn State's department of Crime, Law and Justice.

After graduating last May, Butler spent three weeks this summer as an intern with the Philadelphia Police Department's Crime Scene Unit.

The experience was pretty graphic, Butler said. He saw in person what most people only see on television. And for Butler, the red stuff wasn't ketchup.

"This was a real-deal internship. From the first scene on you see a body, you see the blood," Butler said. "But I didn't get sick."

"You have to separate yourself from your emotions if you want to do your job. If you get caught up in every case, it'd tear your guts apart."

Butler also said the internship made him take a look at his own life and his living situation at Penn State. He also said it allowed him to see just how lucky he is to be in college.

"We get so caught up in State College, in our little bubble here, we don't really see what happens in the outside world," Butler said. "A lot of these kids at the scenes were my age and younger. Just seeing the stuff that they were doing, drugs and guns and killing each other, was definitely a humbling experience."

Of course Butler can still find ways to equate his off-field passion with his experiences on the gridiron. He said solving a case is kind of like making a game-winning play in football.

But he also points out that the big play relates to a game while solving a case can help someone's life or help families cope.

"This is no game, it's real life," Butler said.

"You have a chance to make a difference and put the bad guys away and bring closure to grieving families. I can't imagine many things that could be more important than that."

Topping the ranks

Sometime during the next four games, Butler will find a seam in the secondary, make a cut, turn toward the line of scrimmage and haul in a pass.

It'll be just like the other 164 catches he's made at Penn State, but it'll have much more historical significance. That's because Butler is only four catches away from breaking Bobby Engram's 13-year-old school record for career catches.

Butler currently sits in second place on the list and has already passed such former NFL players like O.J. McDuffie, Bryant Johnson, Kenny Jackson and Joe Jurevicius.

"Just to be in the same sentence with those guys is definitely a blessing. So to be on top of that list is definitely something special, something I can look back on when I leave here," Butler said.

Considering he's hauled in an average of 3.5 passes per game, it's almost a certainty, barring injury or misfortune, that Butler will break the record sometime between now and the end of the year.

He will also finish his career ranked in the top five in receiving yards and receiving touchdowns. Butler also set the school record for receiving yards in a game with 216 against Northwestern in 2006.

When he breaks the record and leaves Penn State, he said he's sure one of the first things mentioned will be that he came to Happy Valley as a walk-on.

But Butler said he doesn't mind.

He's not ashamed of being a former walk-on, in fact he said he's actually proud of the fact that he's earned a scholarship. But he doesn't want his tale as a Lion to simply begin with walk-on and end with a slew of records.

He dreams of a much more satisfying ending to his Penn State biography.

"Obviously they'll write that because that's how it started and it's a fact and it definitely makes the story sound a lot better; a kid that came from really not having a scholarship to being able to accomplish the things I have," Butler said.

"But that's just a fact of the story so you can't get mad that they write that in the story."

"But I think I'd much rather be remembered as a guy that was part of an undefeated team that played in the national championship instead of just individual effort,"



Michael Feleiter/Collegian

Head coach Barry Gorman watches practice from the sidelines of the soccer team's newly completed practice field.

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fect record intact and their national title hopes alive.

Proving his worth

Butler's impact on the Penn State program, or at least the offense, was relatively unexpected when he first set foot on campus.

As a 5-foot-10, 150-pound senior at C.D. Hylton High School in Woodbridge, Va., Butler was considered too small by most major colleges.

In fact, only FCS schools William & Mary, Coastal Carolina and Hampton offered Butler scholarships, and they wanted him to play defense.

Butler's mother, Valerie, said she didn't want money to be an issue when it came time for Deon to make a college decision.

"I told him not to worry about money," Valerie Butler said.

"We would find a way to make sure he could go wherever he wanted."

If the only thing holding him back was the lack of height, Butler was undaunted.

It had always been an issue thrown at him and Butler said he was used to it.

He said he used it as motivation because he wanted to prove he could cut it at the Division I level.

"I've always been confident in myself and my abilities, but I've always been questioned because I'm small," Butler said. "People act like [I] just turned out to be small. [I've] always been small [my] whole life so I know how to handle [myself] in situations like that."

The first-team All State defensive back and second-team receiver said he was convinced he had the skills to make a roster if given the opportunity. And since Penn State coaches had told him they were close to offering him one of their final scholarships, Butler felt he had a pretty good shot of finding a roster spot.

But perhaps the most motivating and encouraging advice came from his mother.

"I told him to reach for the moon and if he'd miss he'd still be a star," Valerie Butler said.

So he followed her advice and decided to follow his dream of playing major college football.

Five years later, Butler's on the verge of having his name placed ahead of some of the best receivers to come through Penn State.

Leaving his scholarship offers behind, Butler walked-on at Penn State in 2004.

He spent most of that season as a scout team defensive back and took a redshirt. But a need for receivers moved Butler to the other side of the ball.

His work ethic and willingness to make a position change impressed the coaching staff enough that Butler was offered a scholarship before his redshirt freshman year.

But Butler didn't stop there. He flourished at his new position, leading the team in catches, receiving yards and touchdowns.

The Lions finished 11-1 that year, including a win in the Orange Bowl.

Butler said that even though he's become a four-year starter, he still remembers his time taking shots on the practice squad. But he doesn't get too caught up in the memories, he has bigger goals now.

"I never forget it. That's how I came here and every time I see another walk-on guy on our team and he's kind of struggling I think 'I used to be there,'" Butler said. "I don't really use it now as motivation because I don't think I'll be held to walk-on standards anymore so I really can't use that."

"You feel a sense of pride just from the fact that I earned a scholarship, to the fact that I've been able to start since my redshirt freshman year," Butler said. "It's something that people doubted me and said I wouldn't be able to do, so you just get a sense of pride that you're able to go out there and prove people wrong and I was able to help my team."

Outside his comfort zone

Butler has always been intrigued by the television show 'Crime Scene Investigation.'

During high school he took a test designed to determine what career path he should follow.

The results led Butler to enroll in

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excitement as it bikes past its old facilities every day.

And as the players make their way to their new workplace, they leave behind a series of problems the new-look terrain has been built to solve.

The Surface

From the outside looking in, it's difficult to notice the changes between the team's old practice field and its new one.

It's still nestled in the shadows of the Bryce Jordan Center and Beaver Stadium, and the grass remains visibly green on each side of Jeffrey Field.

But don't tell that to the players.

Rough, uneven and hard are just some of the terms they'll throw out when describing their old field.

And according to Mark Bodenschatz, associate athletic director of facilities and operations, they would be right.

He said through an e-mail that although both fields are natural grass, the new fields now have irrigation and drainage systems.

"This will allow for proper watering of the fields and yet will hope to avoid wet or swampy fields," Bodenschatz said.

And while there is also perimeter netting and improved lighting surrounding the field, there is no questioning the big difference.

"We had been practicing on fields that have had underlaying surfaces," coach Barry Gorman said. "Now you're playing on a flat surface. You're playing on a surface that's not baked hard."

Frank Costigliola feels playing on that "baked" surface in previous years was not for the best, as he said it took its toll on his and his teammates' legs.

Likewise, he's been thrilled with the new field.

"It really beats down on you," Costigliola said of the old fields. "But having proper fields is huge, especially to get the right touch and get the practices going well."

Gorman believes that should help translate to game days, when the players would feel less of a difference on their legs following a week of practice.

They agreed, saying the difference between the fields they practice on and those their opponents visit is minimal.

"This one is like an exact replica of Jeffrey," Badaracco said. "It helps us get ready — same dimensions, facing the same way. It kind of gets you more comfortable, so when you step out on Jeffrey it's not any shock of what you're going to feel."

"It's perfect. Just like I was saying, there's no real transition that you need to make going into game day. If you're out here every day you're getting used to it, you get used to the feel and the size of it."

That feeling transcends from the mind to the body, leaving those on the sideline eager to get back out on the field the chance to experience the "first-class" accommodation they had long been waiting for.

Preventing injuries

Over the past few years, the men's soccer program has suffered devastating injury after devastating injury.

In 2006, Jacobo Vera, Barkley Miller and Jason Yeisley saw their campaigns cut short. Vera and Yeisley suffered knee injuries, and Miller was bothered by a nagging hip.

In the following offseason, Badaracco went down with a knee injury, forcing him to redshirt and miss all of last year.

And just shortly thereafter, on Oct. 13, Yeisley went down again, tearing his anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) in the Lions' loss to Boston University. He found himself with company on the sideline, as Andy Parr became victim to the same injury just weeks earlier against Penn.

So far this season, the team has suffered only a few minor setbacks, which can only bring one question to mind: Were the old fields the cause of so many injuries year in and year out?

Gorman has not shied away from the speculation.

"I'm convinced that a lot of our injuries in the past have been the result of practicing on a poor surface," he said.

With the team now practicing on its new field, Costigliola believes high schoolers will be intrigued by what they see of the facility when they visit Penn State.

"Oh yeah, definitely," he said of the new field's potential to attract more recruits. "It's a big aspect of it, you know. We have, like I said, one of the best facilities in the country. Hopefully we'll get better players to come here and we'll build a better team. Any recruit that comes here would be pretty impressed with it."

"If you saw and you knew soccer and you just knew college sports in general, you'd be pretty impressed with it," he said.

"The trainers have backed us up on that."

"It's also that, if kids are coming in and they're on their feet and they're playing a lot and they're playing on concrete-type grass facilities, it's not good for things like blisters even."

After spending the past 16 years as a trainer for the Lady Lions basketball team, Andra Thomas came over to train the men's soccer team this season.

Because it's her first year working with the soccer program, she said it is tough to determine whether the team's injuries in years past have been a result of facilities, although she did point to their importance over the length of a season.

"The surface is a huge factor in any sport. The surface can play a huge factor over the course of time," Thomas said.

"Practicing on a more hard surface will increase joint issues. We haven't seen the kind of injuries [like those suffered in the past few years]."

"What's that due to? It's kind of really hard to say. I don't have the years of experience with seeing what they did in the past. I know what they're doing this year, so I just know that the surfaces, everyone of them have commented on how outstanding, they just feel a lot better, they're recovering quicker. What's it attributed to? I can't 100 percent tell you."

Bodenschatz said the drainage system within the new field is likely a big factor.

He said the old one didn't drain as well, as it held water and made it more difficult for players to gain proper traction on the surface.

"While I am not a sports medicine professional, my understanding is that the new fields are safer, primarily due to drainage system," he said.

As Yeisley and Parr continue to rehab while redshirting this season, they remain eager to get back into game action with their teammates as the two experience the hype around the new practice field in non-contact drills.

"It's great. I mean, I've never seen fields like these before. It's amazing," Yeisley said. "Our old practice fields, you know, they used to be a little uneven, a little rough, and these are just perfect, just like our game field that we play on, so we really get to practice on the same conditions that we're playing in."

And Gorman sees that as a major reason why the team has avoided the blows it has become all too familiar with.

He says the aches, pains and blisters that usually develop as the season wears on have all gone down, and he can only hope that continues. He can now show the future of the Penn State program what he had previously promised them finally "come to fruition."

Locking up recruits

When Costigliola was being recruited by colleges three years ago, he fell in love with the Penn State coaching staff, his future teammates and the attention the athletic teams received from the university.

Still, the junior midfielder never imagined his team receiving this kind of help from the school.

"That was always a bonus," he said. "I think it's great to see."