



Former Icers player Bill Downey (8) bounces a shot off Niagara goalie John Kalzynski (31) during a game in 2003.

Downey adjusts to new role

By Paul Casella

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Four years ago he was leading the Penn State ACHA Division I Icers to their fourth straight national championship appearance as a team captain and playmaker.

Now, Bill Downey is trying to get that same team back to the big game, but he's traded in his jersey and skates for a suit and whistle.

Although Downey is only eight games into his first season as an assistant coach for the Icers, he's already had some coaching experience with the ECHL Reading Royals and a youth hockey program in New Jersey.

"Players aren't going to always see the game the way you saw it," he said. "So the quicker you can understand that, the quicker transition you can have into being a good coach. I'm not sure if I'm at that point yet, but as time goes on I'll learn how to coach all the different players individually."

There is no question Downey brings a wealth of experience to a team trying to return to the ACHA national championship after failing to get there last year for the first time since the 1996-97 season.

As a player Downey played in 134 games, scoring 57 goals and recording 102 assists from 2000-04. The Icers

were ACHA national champions in each of his first three years as a player and runners-up his senior season, but his playing days aren't necessarily what the current players appreciate most.

"Experience is a big thing, but obviously a coach can't play the game for us," senior Luke DeLorenzo said. "So his experience is great, but just the passion that he brings to the rink each and every day is definitely contagious to the whole team."

Head coach Scott Balboni, who was an assistant coach during Downey's playing days, said it's been "fantastic" having Downey back as part of the organization.

"The guys really respect him and that's the key," Balboni said. "Billy wants to win extremely bad, he wants to be a national champion as a coach really bad, but at the same time he also understands the academic side and that the graduating boys to young men type of role are the more important things in this program."

Downey, a former forward himself, has spent time this season working with the team's current forwards, but he has also offered input on the defensive side as well. Downey said his main goal as a coach is just to make sure he gets the most out of his players while getting the younger guys "up to speed" with the veterans.

As every Icers' practice winds down it's not uncommon to see Downey playing one-on-one with a player, chasing the puck into the corner and handing out a playful poke-check here and there.

Although he said he certainly doesn't miss the everyday grind of playing, there are still times when it's difficult to be behind the bench like earlier this year during the Icers' only loss — a sloppy 9-5 defeat at the hands of University of Michigan-Dearborn on Oct. 12.

"It can be frustrating at times. Obviously when you're coaching on the bench you can't go on the ice and make things happen," he said. "But you've got to just give the wisdom you've learned over the years to the guys and hope they use it. Some days they do and some they don't, but more often than not the guys are responding real well."

Downey admitted the thought of winning another national championship is just part of what drives him as a coach, but Balboni said the real motivation comes from that same passion that drove him as a player all those years.

"He's not out here coaching just because it's a job," Balboni said. "He truly cares about the guys and about the program, and he just wants to see it keep getting better."

Lee's recovery progressing

By Travis Johnson

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Sean Lee hustled off the Beaver Stadium grass after No. 3 Penn State's last home game against Michigan two weeks ago. A long smile stretched over his face in the wake of his teammates' pummeling of the Wolverines.

The injured linebacker's limp was less noticeable as he ran and as he jumped excitedly on the Penn State sideline during the game — evidence of Lee's quick recovery from the ACL tear he sustained in April.

In a telephone interview Tuesday night, Lee's doctor and Penn State team physician Wayne Sebastianelli said an ACL tear like Lee's usually takes an athlete "six to seven months" before he can start training normally to play, plus two to three more before one can "participate as far as football goes in a full capacity."

Sebastianelli counted off the months since Lee was injured — May to October is six — plus all of November and December makes eight. Sebastianelli concluded Lee could return no earlier than January when the only games remaining are BCS bowls and the national title game.

The undefeated Lions have a good shot at playing in any of those games.

Could Lee be ready?

"Theoretically, it's possible," Sebastianelli said.

The doctor said Lee has been running full speed and has regained some agility. Craig Lee, Sean's father, said his son has been doing squats and has been working on building strength in his legs.

But Lee himself has said a return is unlikely.

After the win over Michigan, Lee slapped high fives with teammates, Blue Band members and even reporters. When it came time to answer questions about himself, the usually open Lee was hesitant and guarded.

Would he pull off his redshirt — burning up his last year of playing eligibility — and be ready to play in a

bowl game in early January?

"No. No," Lee said. "I won't be."

Penn State sports information officials have said on numerous occasions Lee wants the spotlight to be on his teammates rather than himself and his injury. Lee's father said he thought even if team doctors cleared his son to play in a BCS bowl, he wouldn't.

Instead, Craig Lee said, his son would stick to coaching his teammates, who he said, in Sean's opinion, have earned their spots.

"I don't think Sean would really want to come back and just play one game," Craig Lee said. "Even though it is the national championship game, and impose himself where he thinks Josh [Hull] is doing a tremendous job. So is Navarro [Bowman] and so is Tyrell [Sales] and all the other guys, too."

"Who is he to think that he can come in and say, 'I'm healthy now. I get my starting job back.' Forget it. That's just not the way he works. He feels that their linebackers are playing really well."

Although not a member of the active roster, Lee still walks out of the tunnel with his teammates, but instead of wearing a helmet, he straps on a headset. Joe Paterno said at his Tuesday press conference that Lee — who counts against Penn State's allotted 70-man travel roster — has been an "inspiration I think to some of the younger linebackers."

"Sean's a leader all around," red-shirt sophomore linebacker Navarro Bowman said Tuesday. "He helps me in every aspect of the game. Whenever I have a question or just not to sure about an assignment, I can always go to Sean and he'll have the answer."



Sean Lee coaches on the sideline during the Lions' win over Coastal Carolina.

Reporter's dream Game 5 scenario doesn't go as planned

By Matt Brown

IT SEEMED TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE.

Two weeks ago, hours before the Philadelphia Phillies sealed a spot in the World Series, my friend called and delivered unthinkable news — he scored three tickets to Game 5 of the World Series. And I was invited.

For two weeks, I played out the ideal scenario in my head. The Phillies pull out to a 3-1 lead in the series, and I'm in the crowd as Cole Hamels takes the mound in Game 5 to clinch the Phillies' first title since



MY OPINION

1980 and the city of Philadelphia's first championship since 1983.

As Ryan Howard, Jayson Werth and even Joe Blanton blasted home runs in Game 4 Sunday night at Citizens Bank Park to put the Phillies up 3-1, things were playing out exactly that way.

But, of course, things couldn't be that easy. This is Philadelphia we're talking about.

In a World Series filled with missed calls by umpire, runs scored on groundouts, errors and infield hits, things were about to become even stranger.

By the time Game 5 started at about 8:30 p.m. Monday, the light rain that fell during batting practice had eased and we had a great spot in the upper deck behind home plate with our standing-room-only tickets.

When Shane Victorino got the Phillies on the board with a two-run

single in the bottom of the first inning, the stadium buzzed in anticipation of a celebration on Broad Street. Things were still going exactly as planned.

Then the rain and wind started up again.

Soon we were engulfed in the worst weather I have ever experienced at a sporting event. Not only was it cold, but the rain fell hard and frequently blew directly into us.

But the Phillies still held a 2-1 advantage midway through the game and were inching closer to clinching a championship. Sure, conditions weren't ideal for the players, fans or game of baseball in general, but who would care as long as the Phillies pulled through?

As the sixth inning began and the rain continued to intensify, I overheard a nearby fan quoting Bill Murray's "Caddyshack" character Carl Spackler, saying, "I'd keep play-

ing. I don't think the heavy stuff's gonna come down for quite a while."

Minutes later, a previously hitless Carlos Pena collected his second consecutive hit to score B.J. Upton and tie the game.

A few more minutes later, I found myself standing in the bathroom trying to keep warm as the grounds crew pulled the tarp over the field and play stopped.

Not quite the Hollywood ending I expected.

After a period of speculation amongst the fans, we finally received word that Major League Baseball had suspended the game in the middle of the sixth inning.

If the game is continued tonight as Major League Baseball is hoping, I'll be unable to put my ticket to use.

Instead, I'll be in a warm, dry apartment watching the final three-and-a-half innings as the Phillies try to

clinch the World Series. If I want to recreate the experience of being there Monday, maybe I'll buy a high-powered fan, crank up the air conditioner and activate a fire sprinkler.

Even though the weather ruined Monday night, what seemed to be lost in the disappointment is the Phillies are still in good position to win.

Game 5 is tied, and they have three-and-a-half innings left to work with. If that fails, there are two more games left with a magic number of one.

The dream scenario of seeing the title clinched in person may be a lost cause, but despite the frustration, seeing a championship will be well worth the wait — no matter where it's taken in.

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Penn State's Claire Percival (left) runs during a home meet last season.

Coach announces 9 Big Ten championship runners

By Brendan Monahan

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Penn State cross country coach Beth Alford-Sullivan announced the nine runners who will participate at the Big Ten championships this Sunday.

It will be the first time this season the women will be limited to nine competitors. Bridget Franek, Cheryl Spring and Leah Rosenfeld were virtual locks for Big Tens and topped the list of runners. Since the Harry Groves Spiked Shoe Invitational in September, all three have placed first among Penn State runners at least once.

Seniors Claire Percival, Janelle Young, Meghan Noecker, and Kathryn Fitzgerald joined the top three runners in what will mark their last conference championship match.

Rounding out the last two spots were freshmen Kara Millhouse and Caitlin Lane. Millhouse has placed in the top 40 in all her races, while Lane has not finished outside of the top 50.

"Everybody in the top nine is the best nine we can take to this meet right now," assistant coach John Gondak said.

Left out of the lineup was junior Jessica Babcock, who Alford-Sullivan said got in a bike accident the week leading up to the Spiked Shoe

Invitational where she finished 11th out of 12 on the team.

Babcock sat out the following two meets, but ran in the Nittany Lions' most recent race, the Penn State National, where she placed 10th out of Penn State's 13 runners.

"The two in front of [Babcock], Kathryn Fitzgerald, Meghan Noecker, are both seniors and earned the spot," Alford-Sullivan said. "[They] had a good regular season, had a good campaign all season."

Alford-Sullivan sees the improvement from this season's nine runners to last year's Big Ten competitors. Penn State was ranked No. 26 in the nation heading into last year's cham-

ampionship. It placed seventh and failed to beat a ranked opponent.

This year the women expect to place third at Big Tens, which would set them up to knock off four ranked teams.

Rosenfeld said the depth of this year's team makes it better compared to last year. The newcomers, Lane and Millhouse, are the key additions to the added depth. With a roster as deep as the Lions', the nine runners were anything but predetermined.

"I was just going to be excited if I was or if I wasn't," Lane said referring to whether she was expecting to run. "As it gets closer, I get more and more excited every day."