



Lynn McGowan/Collegian

Jason Yeisley (left) balances to kick the ball away from the Wisconsin defense in Penn State's 2-1 win over its Big Ten foe earlier this season.

## Lack of definite No. 1 to benefit Penn State

By Ben Skalina  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Even more than the November weather, signs were everywhere Tuesday that the postseason has finally arrived for the Penn State men's soccer team.

Assistant coach Ryan Defibaugh pounded shots at goalkeeper Warren Gross for almost 30 minutes.

Players passed the ball around in groups, working their footskills.

With the Nittany Lions (10-6-2) set to board a bus today and head to Bloomington, Ind., for the Big Ten tournament and a first-round date Thursday with seventh-seeded Michigan, coach Barry Gorman encouraged his team to make the most of the last few hours on the practice field.

"Have a little enthusiasm," he called to his charges after they broke their pre-practice huddle and headed to stretch.

While it's likely Penn State has already compiled a strong enough resume for selection to the NCAA tournament, there's still plenty to play for this weekend at Indiana. Multiple quality wins, a Big Ten championship and an automatic berth to the NCAAs are the prizes for a three-game winning streak at the conference championship.

And even though the Lions are seeded second, there are no favorites at this year's tournament.

Top-seed Ohio State was 4-2 in conference play, while Michigan and Michigan State found themselves at the bottom of the league with 2-4 records. No team was able to distinguish itself from the rest. Penn State and Northwestern both coughed up a loss in the final two weeks, losses that opened a door for the Buckeyes.

"It's absolutely wide open," midfielder Drew Cost said.

"The difference between the one and

seven seed is very slight. The seven seed could have been the one seed and vice versa. I think all the teams are pretty even and we're going to have to bring our best games to win it."

Even more telling was the incredibly tight nature of the 21 games played in conference. Just one, Michigan's win over Wisconsin, was decided by three or more goals. Three others had two-goal margins, and the 17 remaining games were all either ties or were decided by one goal.

When asked how any one team will be able to distinguish itself from the pack over the weekend, Gorman said whichever team is most successful at playing their own style of soccer will have the advantage.

The veteran coach also mentioned set pieces as critical in the traditionally tight Big Ten action. Penn State allowed goals on set pieces in its last two outings, as Wisconsin scored on a free kick, and Indiana managed a goal from a corner.

Gross, who had seven shutouts in the regular season, could tie or break the program record of 10 with a strong late-season push in net. The team's last shutout came Oct. 14 against Lafayette. He noted the conference title could come down to just a few plays.

"Tournament play, really just one big play makes a huge difference, so I feel like every team in the tournament is capable of doing that and has the players that are able to do that," Gross said, breathing heavily after the lengthy practice session with Defibaugh.

Despite the team's already-solid accomplishments, with double-digit wins and an RPI rating of 13th in the country, Cost wouldn't mind seeing his team prove itself in front of the rest of the conference.

"We're definitely going out there with one purpose in mind, and that's to win," he said, "so hopefully we can bring back the hardware."

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## Human voters at fault for questionable ranking

By Matt Brown

We hate the BCS. We hate the lack of a playoff. We hate six computers helping decide college football's national champion.

Computer formulas deciding who gets to play in multi-million-dollar bowl game? Unbelievable.

Well, at least computer formulas have memories spanning more than three days.

I have been a half-hearted defender of the BCS since it's inception — yes, I realize I was 10 years old when Tennessee and Florida State faced off for the first BCS title. I'm anti-playoff in the sense that the regular season's importance shouldn't be sacrificed to let a bunch of two- and three-loss teams get a shot to play for the national title in a bracket of eight or 16 teams.

But no, there's no way to defend the BCS formula anymore. I've had it.

One-third is computer formulas. Like the RPI for basketball, they have no business doing anything but serving as rough guides for postseason selection.

The other two-thirds are comprised of human voters, many of which clearly have no real perspective of the national scene.

I've written before that the transitive property can't be used as the only tool in voting. But in cases like that of Oregon and Southern California, it's the only way to measure teams.

Eleven days ago, Oregon welcomed the Trojans to Autzen Stadium and walked all over them. The 47-20 beatdown served as the largest margin of defeat in Pete Carroll's USC tenure.



MY OPINION

Then, Saturday, the Ducks fell into a trap and lost to Stanford.

The next day, now at No. 13 in the BCS, they were staring back up at now-No. 9 USC in the rankings despite owning a better conference record, losing to a Stanford team that's better than USC's loss to Washington and, you know, trouncing the Trojans by 27 a week earlier.

Anyone who voted USC over Oregon should have his or her voting privileges revoked immediately.

When the only voting method appears to be sliding teams up and down solely based on the current week's results, the method of determining a champion clearly needs a major overhaul.

How so many voters can't look more than a few days into the past and see the big picture is incredible.

I don't know the solution. Perhaps it's a smaller selection committee — like for March Madness — made up of people who are able to look at the big picture and take into account all evidence. Perhaps it's a plus-one system. Perhaps it's a combination of both.

But, at this point, I might have more faith in SEC referees voting responsibly.

The sad thing is, the BCS is almost sure to get it right this year should an undefeated Florida or Alabama be left to face an undefeated Texas team (sorry, Cincinnati and TCU).

Then again, that 10-year-old version of myself could get that right.

Could probably get voting Oregon over USC, too.

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More coverage on the Nittany Lions football team. | **SPORTS**, Page 10.

## Captain sprains ankle

By Eric Book  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Will Price went up as part of a trio attempting a block, and he came crashing down awkwardly on his right ankle — shouting loudly in pain.

The senior co-captain for the Penn State men's volleyball team sprained his right ankle at practice Tuesday morning at Rec Hall's South Gym, coach Mark Pavlik said.

After a few minutes of lying on the floor, Price hopped on his left foot over to the trainer's table, where his right ankle was visibly swollen and promptly covered with ice.

Fellow All-American and senior co-captain Max Lipsitz was in on the play with Price.

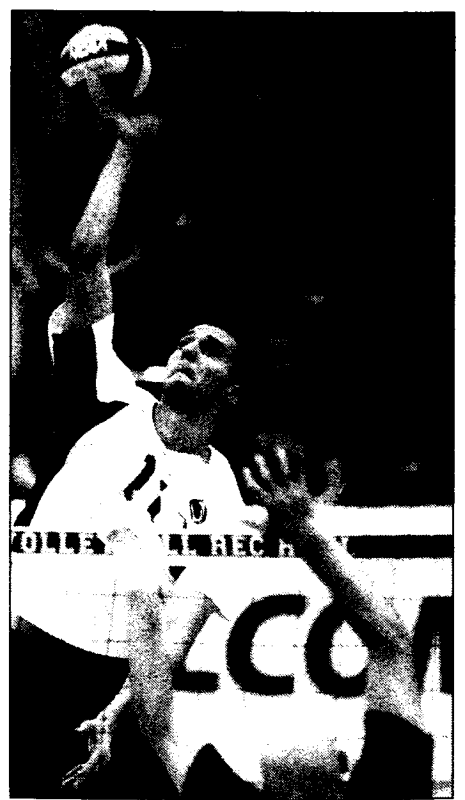
"We watched a lot of film yesterday, Will, Edgardo [Goas] and I," Lipsitz said. "We were working on triple-blocking, so Will was trying to focus a lot on that, and I think we just obviously need to work on a little more. It's something we're not comfortable with. I think he just kind of landed weird."

Price wanted to watch his teammates practice, so he yelled for a ball to be thrown his way. After an impressive grab from the trainer's table, he used the ball as a pillow to elevate his head so he could see his teammates.

A few minutes of watching practice was all he could handle, as he accepted the trainer's offer to go to the training room. On crutches, he hopped out of the gym.

The length of time Price will be sidelined is unknown, but Pavlik said the backups are here because they are talented volleyball players and the expectations don't change with one of their leaders out of action.

Pavlik said he will take his time getting Price back on the court with it still being preseason.



Abby Drey/Collegian file photo

Will Price spikes the ball during last season's win over George Mason. Price sprained his ankle Tuesday during practice.

"You preach and tell everybody you're one play away from being on the court," Pavlik said. "The guys that take the message to heart from day one usually prepare themselves very well for being one play away. The guys that say, 'Yeah right, it's never gonna happen,' all of a sudden say, 'Oh my goodness.'"

Lipsitz and assistant coach Jay Hosack said there is a positive to Price going down so early in the preseason. The Nittany Lions don't open up play until Jan. 7 in Hawaii.

Lipsitz said he's excited for the opportunity for the younger players to train with the first team, an opportunity they most likely wouldn't have got until next year.

"Obviously we don't want anybody to be injured, but I think it might actually be a good thing," Hosack said. "Some of the younger kids now get a chance to step up. We have a tendency when Will is swinging to kind of relax on things because he's so terminal. This might actually make them wake up."

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