

Clark, Cousins ready for battle of top passers

By Wayne Staats
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

If there's one thing Darryll Clark learned from mostly watching on the sidelines two years ago, it's that the point spread doesn't matter until the final snap.

Two seasons ago, Penn State traveled to Michigan State and grabbed a 17-point third-quarter lead before a collapse led to a stunning defeat.

"They had their thing going on offense, and we just weren't able to put on any more points and they ended up just taking over the football game all together. I just feel like if we would've finished it, we definitely would've won that football game," Clark said during his Wednesday conference call.

"They fight till the last whistle. And that's what they showed in 2007."

Clark went 0-for-1 passing and ran for negative-2 yards in the game while his counterpart under center this weekend for the Spartans, Kirk Cousins, was red-shirted that season and watched from the sidelines.

This time, the two signal callers rank Nos. 1 and 2 in the Big Ten in



Bryan Wade Heritage/Collegian

Penn State quarterback Darryll Clark (17) throws a pass during the Lions' 28-7 victory over Syracuse Sept. 12 at Beaver Stadium.

passing efficiency, with Clark's 19 touchdown passes pacing the league and Cousins tossing just five interceptions.

Penn State head coach Joe Paterno has repeatedly said Clark hasn't gotten the recognition he believes the quarterback

deserves, but the coach took this notion one step further regarding other players in the Big Ten like Cousins.

"I don't think some of the kids in our league have gotten the credit they should get, either the wideouts or the quarterbacks,"

Paterno said during his weekly press conference.

Both quarterbacks may be in the running for conference honors, but Clark is more intent on helping the offense put together a complete performance.

In its last two victories, Penn State has scored 20 total first-half points as it trailed Northwestern and was tied with Indiana at the half before scoring a combined 45 points in the second half to pull away in both contests.

Clark said one reason for the slow starts is the correct guessing by the defenses.

When this happens, it comes down to making adjustments throughout the game before coming out of the locker room for the second half with basically a new game plan.

"The main thing is not to panic," Clark said.

"Just make sure whenever you get the chance to execute when there's a gap or when there's an opportunity to put some points on, make sure you get that done. Because on the road at a tough place like out there in East Lansing, the opportunity may not come as much."

The senior reasoned the inconsistency is natural considering a primarily new cast at the line and with the wideouts this season. Of course, now that it's the final game of the regular season, those new guys have basically a full season under their belts.

Ironically, the slow starts that have hindered the Nittany Lions in recent weeks weren't present in the two losses this season, as, instead, the Lions were shut out in the second half against both the Hawkeyes and the Buckeyes.

But this weekend, Clark hinted that playing just one half of solid football would end more like the Iowa and Ohio State games than the Northwestern and Indiana games.

"When you're playing against a quarterback such as (Cousins), he'll definitely make some things happen and definitely put us in a big hole," Clark said.

"I'm sure our defense has been working hard on their side of the field this week and we've been doing the same thing on ours because they have a good defense."

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Even with win at MSU, Lions wouldn't deserve BCS bid

By Wayne Staats

THE race for the at-large spots in the BCS is like a beauty contest, and Penn State needs all the 10s it can get.

But in some ways this is beside the point. The Nittany Lions, who have lost to the only ranked foes they've faced this season, deserve to be no closer to a BCS bid than suddenly embattled Kansas coach Mark Mangino should be to an all-you-can-eat buffet.

Of course, Penn State comes



MY OPINION

into this weekend at No. 14 in the BCS rankings, thus putting it in the final spot to be eligible for an at-large selection.

Much of that comes from the lofty top-10 preseason ranking, the well-known Penn State brand name and the living legend that is Joe Paterno.

Yes, the Lions will bus in or fly in thousands of fans to the Fiesta Bowl or Orange Bowl if picked and bring in top television ratings.

But the fact is the Lions don't deserve a bid — win or lose this weekend — if Iowa wins its finale against Minnesota this weekend and if chaos doesn't ensue around the nation.

Even center Stefan Wisniewski hinted at the problem of a Penn State-Iowa showdown for the final

slot. The only problem is, such a showdown already happened on the field when the Hawkeyes won by 11 in Beaver Stadium.

For argument's sake, let's say Iowa loses. But even then, that should still make no difference. Penn State has beaten three bowl-eligible teams this season, and not many probably envisioned an 8-2 Temple being one of the more impressive resume boosters. When it comes to their defeats, the Lions have lost by a combined 28 points at home to the only ranked foes they've played.

The BCS has four at-large spots. The SEC Championship Game loser will get one and TCU another barring an extremely unlikely collapse. So that leaves two more slots out of a pool

including by Iowa, Wisconsin, Boise State, Oklahoma State, Penn State and possibly the Cincinnati-Pittsburgh loser if both win the game prior.

Iowa, with wins against Arizona and Wisconsin, should be a shoo-in based on common sense even if Penn State hopefuls look past the head-to-head victory.

An undefeated Boise State team could be another as its win against Oregon is more impressive than anything Penn State's done.

But then again, no one would be surprised if an unbeaten Broncos team from the WAC gets passed up in favor of a two-loss Big Ten team for the second straight time, like Ohio State last season.

When it comes down to it, the Lions have one final chance to

put up an impressive performance and then sit and hope for teams ahead of them to fall during the long layoff before bowls.

If Penn State gets the breaks it needs and takes care of business against the Spartans, it should thank its lucky stars for the shoddy performances taking a backseat to its big name in the eyes of the human voters who make up two-thirds of the BCS formula.

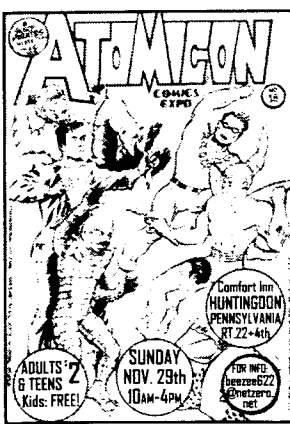
Then again, the Lions' opponent may be thanking those same stars for matching itself up against a team that has failed to get passing grades in this beauty contest that is the regular season.

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THE GRID

		TIME	PLACE	TV	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
Football	at Michigan State	3:30 p.m. Saturday	East Lansing, Mich.	ABC/ESPN	With a potential BCS berth at stake, the Lions will look to top the Spartans and keep the Land Grant Trophy.
Men's Basketball	Charleston Classic	Friday and Sunday	Charleston, S.C.	ESPN U	The Nittany Lions face their first true test of the season with two nonconference games at neutral sites.
Lady Lions	at South Carolina	3 p.m. Sunday	Columbia, S.C.		PSU hopes to win the battle of freshmen centers as the Lions' Nikki Greene takes on the Gamecocks' Kelsey Bone.
Women's Volleyball	at Purdue, Indiana	7 p.m. Friday and Saturday	West Lafayette, Ind., Bloomington, Ind.		With one win the Lions can clinch their seventh-consecutive Big Ten Championship and their 13th overall.
Wrestling	vs. Rutgers, Harvard and No. 15 Edinboro	Sunday	Binghamton, N.Y.		The No. 19 grapplers seek their first road win and first victory against a ranked opponent.
Men's Soccer	vs. Maryland or Loyola (Md.)	1 p.m. Sunday	Jeffrey Field		The Lions look to carry their undefeated regular season home record into the NCAA Tournament on Sunday.
Icers	vs. Navy	9 p.m. Fri., 3:30 p.m. Sat.	Greenberg Ice Pavilion		A two-game sweep of the Midshipmen would give the Icers a 10-game winning streak going into the break.
Women's Cross County	NCAA National Championships	noon Monday	Terre Haute, Ind.		The women are aiming for a top 10 finish, while entering the race ranked No. 11.
Men's Fencing	Garret Penn State Open	8:30 a.m. Sat. and Sun.	White Building		Sophomores Aleksander Ochocki and Miles Chamley-Watson look to continue their success from last season.
Women's Fencing	Garret Penn State Open	8:30 a.m. Sat. and Sun.	White Building		Junior foil captain Doris Willette officially begins her quest to become a three-time national champion.
Men's Swimming	vs. Virginia	6 p.m. Fri., 11 a.m. Sat.	McCoy Natatorium		The Nittany Lions get back in action after a three week-long hiatus.
Women's Swimming	vs. Virginia	6 p.m. Fri., 11 a.m. Sat.	McCoy Natatorium		The Lions return to competition against another strong ACC opponent after three weeks off.
Ice Lions	Rowan University	10:15 p.m. Sat.	Greenberg Ice Pavillion		The Ice Lions look to rise above .500 for the first time since the first game of the season.

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