

Penn State fencers successful at meet

By Greg Garcia
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

The Penn State men's and women's fencing teams both left Harvard University with winning records during Sunday's bout against five other schools.

FENCING

The men's team finished undefeated, in part by easily defeating New York University, Sacred Heart University and Vassar College.

However, not every match was

that easy for the men's team. Coach Emmanuil Kaidanov said the bout against the Crimson was a tough battle. The Nittany Lions were able to overcome Harvard in a very close 15-12 victory.

Against Princeton University, the Lions found themselves once again in a fight to the finish. By a 14-13 score, the men's team was able to defeat the Tigers



Kaidanov

to bring their overall record to 5-0 for the day.

Kaidanov was pleased with what he saw from the men's team. "Overall the performance was very solid," he said.

Senior saber Daniel Bak and sophomore foil Miles Chamley-Watson led the men's team. Both fencers lost only one bout throughout the entire day in Boston. Last year, Bak and Chamley-Watson had a combined six losses.

"My performance was OK," said Chamley-Watson, who won 14

matches. "I would have liked to go undefeated, but it's a good start for the men's team."

The women's team was not as fortunate as the men's, but it still came away with a 4-1 record.

The Lions took care of Vassar, Sacred Heart and NYU in dominating fashion, just like the men's team.

After defeating Princeton in a very close match, their only loss on the day came to Harvard. Harvard was able to defeat the Lions 14-13 in another tough match.

"With some fencers not able to make it due to medical reasons and individual tournaments, we looked pretty good," Kaidanov said. "Harvard was very solid and it was a close match throughout the entire bout."

Junior foil captain Doris Willette was the only fencer on either team to go undefeated individually.

The women's team also had a pair of fencers who only lost one bout — sophomore saber Monika Aksamit and senior epee Anastasia Ferdman.

Outdated facility behind its peers

By Margaret McCoy
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

The Penn State swimmers, who call the McCoy Natatorium home, feel the old building has a certain mystique.

But compared to other aquatic venues across the Big Ten, McCoy's facility is a little out of date. They say it has a certain mystique, it's too small and doesn't have important equipment.

WOMEN'S SWIMMING

The McCoy Natatorium was built in 1964, making it the second-oldest swimming facility in the Big Ten. Only Michigan State's Natatorium is older, but the Spartan home facility has gone through numerous renovations to make it more up to date.

New venues like Ohio State's \$100 million McCorkle Aquatics Center have state-of-the-art scoreboards, 10 racing lanes and even a spa. In 1998, the University of Michigan installed an \$8 million filtration system in the Coe Natatorium. The Coe Natatorium also has new equipment which allows for smoother water resulting in faster swim times.

New renovations are being made across the conference to update old facilities, and Penn

State is slowly falling behind.

"We can't hold platform diving events or even compete in them," senior Michelle Myers said. "We don't have the facilities to do it."

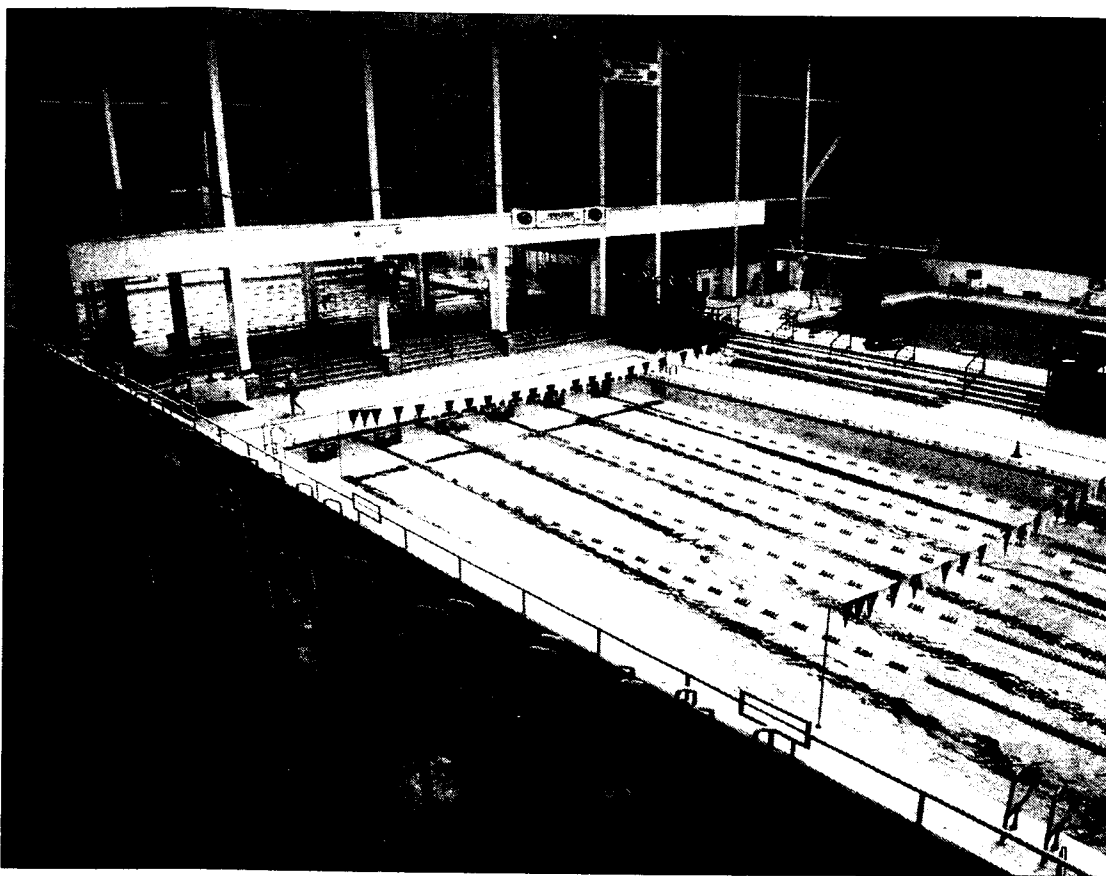
McCoy Natatorium is without a platform diving board, and the pool itself is only six lanes wide, making it too small to hold championship events. Myers, who grew up in State College, said new renovation plans and additions to the current natatorium have been passed around for years.

Expansion of the Natatorium is a priority for the university, Penn State Athletic Director Tim Curley said, but he couldn't give a time frame as to when things would happen.

Curley said the department doesn't put one need over another, and the latest addition to Penn State facilities will be a new softball complex, which is to be ready for play by Spring 2011. However, the \$10.2 million stadium project was jump-started by William and Lee Beard's \$500,000 contribution earlier this year.

Curley estimated that additions to the natatorium would be somewhere around \$35-\$45 million.

Those funds could come from a variety of places, and factors such as timing and the economy play into the equation, Curley said. Other factors are private donations and contributions, adminis-



Samantha M. Shal/Collegian

The McCoy Natatorium, one of the Big Ten's oldest swimming facilities, is falling behind its peers.

tration support and athletic department funds, Curley said.

Former coach Bill Dorenkott, now the head coach at Ohio State, said that in his time at Penn State he attempted to educate the university on the need for a new facility.

He made suggestions toward a new venue, but did not stay long enough to see feedback.

Offered what he said was a better opportunity at Ohio State, Dorenkott left Penn State in 2008. He said it's not fair to compare McCoy to McCorkle.

But the swimmers do. "It's not up to date," senior Lindsey DeForrest said. "The one we have, we make do."

Though McCoy is outdated in comparison to other Big Ten facil-

ities, some athletes feel training and practicing in the natatorium does have at least one advantage: It makes road meets seem accommodating.

"We're always able to get really excited," Myers said. "The atmosphere at away meets is so much nicer."

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Alum

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America and is now the Nittany Lions' all-time leader in aces — it became clear to Pavlik that Holt had the talent for the next level.

That next level happens to be 1,250 miles, six time zones and one mental language barrier away.

After graduating last spring, Holt signed a contract with the Italian professional team Marmi Verona, becoming the latest Penn State alum to take his talents abroad.

While the professional opportunities in Europe — the AVP Beach Volleyball tour is the closest thing to a pro league in the U.S. — about a dozen of the Lions' most prolific volleyball players have gone overseas to continue their careers.

Penn State alumni are spanning the globe, playing in highly competitive leagues in countries such as Greece, Turkey, Belgium and Russia.

For a world apart from Happy Valley, including a world of new challenges.

"At Penn, coach Pavlik is all

about helping each guy grow academically and as an individual," said Matt Proper, a 2006 graduate who had stints in Italy and Turkey before signing with his current team, Anorthosis Famagusta, in Cyprus.

Proper says professional managers have little, if any interest in their player's personal lives. Instead, they put great emphasis on the win-loss column. That's because the stakes are high — some European leagues offer contracts in the range of \$10,000 a month.

"You're not playing 'For the Glory.' You're playing for your career," Proper said. "And that's a tough thing to swallow for some people at the beginning."

Holt, however, already knew what to expect.

Throughout his collegiate career, he kept in touch with his former teammates who went on to play abroad and listened to their advice.

"It's kind of like a trailblazing effect," Pavlik said. "The older guys come and tell the younger guys what they went through. They tell them how cool it is to

cash a paycheck for playing volleyball, but also about the different responsibilities they have."

That includes the responsibility to consistently play at a top level. Luke Murray, who captained the Lions in their 2008 NCAA Championship season, said a poor performance on the court could quickly end a career. Murray is currently playing in Cyprus and said if his managers have any dissatisfaction with his play, they can easily send him back on a plane to the States.

That's just the nature of professional volleyball.

Penn State assistant coach Colin McMillan — who has six years experience playing in Portugal, Puerto Rico, France and Turkey — said some international leagues are shady operators.

"When Max Holt was starting to think about playing abroad, I mainly told him to really evaluate his options," McMillan said. "Make sure you are in a situation you want to be in."

McMillan said some teams don't pay players if the team loses or don't take care of players if they get hurt.

Yet Penn State players have yet to encounter major problems. Their biggest complaint is being far from friends and family. And that goes both ways; Angela Holt said it's hard to be away from her son for so long. He might not return home until May when his season is finished.

Of course, modern technology is a quick fix for any lingering case of homesickness.

"Skype and Facebook are my savior, for sure," Murray said.

Communicating with those back at home is easy; it's adjusting to a new culture that is problematic.

Holt's transition from big man on campus to international player is still a work in progress.

He's currently the only American on Marni Lanza Verona's roster.

"Obviously the language barrier has been tough sometimes," he said.

That isn't always a bad thing. Angela Holt remembers having a conversation with her son after Marni Lanza Verona lost a match. "He said, 'Mom, we were on a four-hour bus ride back and the

coach is yelling at us. I have no idea what he was saying. I just sat there,'" she said.

Still, it's been a love affair between Holt and Verona, the city famous as the setting for Romeo and Juliet.

"As far as the culture and way of life here, I am loving it," Holt said. "The food is amazing, and the people are very friendly."

On the court, he is picking up right where he left off. Just one month into his rookie season, Holt is getting significant playing time in the Italian Serie A Volleyball League, which Murray said is possibly the top league in the world.

Even as Holt's professional career takes off, Pavlik thinks the former Penn State star will find time for his old teammates.

"I'd imagine the current guys on the team look up to Holt and the others who play in international leagues," Pavlik said.

"And the older guys get that. They see that they're the model for what kind of opportunities are available, and they see it's their responsibility to tell the younger guys what professional volleyball is all about."

Hodge

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men's lead of the set before Michigan put together a pair of kills prompting Rose's timeout.

With Hodge at left outside hitter, Rose instructed Glass to give it to Hodge for a cross-court kill — not a tough task for Glass.

"She makes me look good," Glass said of Hodge. "There's balls where even if it's high and tight I don't worry about it. I'm like 'she's gonna go over the top of this block, and she's probably going to score.'"

Hodge scored 17 times on Saturday and also posted 11 digs as the Lions won the match 25-21, 25-13 and 25-23.

With the victory, the Lions completed their second-consecutive unbeaten regular season and increased their NCAA record to 96 wins in a row.

They also became the first team in Big Ten history to go 20-0 in conference for three consecutive seasons.

"It's hard to do because there are so many fine players in the conference and so many competitive universities and coaching staffs," Rose said. "On every team we play there's players on those teams that we recruited so we recognize just how talented they are."

But even with the rest of the ability in the Big Ten, Glass said Hodge is so talented it gets laughable.

"It's awesome," Glass said. "To play with those kinds of players that can just make you laugh — there's nothing else you can really do."

She pointed to a play in the first set where she said Hodge's kill hit the ground before the defender could even move.

Junior hitter Blair Brown said some of Hodge's swings in the last set brought a smile to her face as well. With the Lions needing a spark to get to the post-game festivities — where they received their 13th Big Ten championship trophy after clinching the conference on the road last weekend — Brown said getting the ball to Hodge was the perfect way to do so.

"It was senior night, and we wanted Megan to close out the game," Brown said. "It's just a great way for her career to come together in Rec Hall — to finish it."

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Icers

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the Stovepipe championship game riding a wave of confidence and an 11-game winning streak after beating Southern New Hampshire Saturday afternoon. After a goal at the end of the second period, Penn State was tied at two with Southern New Hampshire. The Icers scored three times in the third to pull away and secure the win.

The Icers found themselves in a similar position on Sunday. Penn State and UMass-Boston were tied at two after the first period Sunday, but it was the Beacons who scored the late-period goal to tie the game.

And instead it was UMass-Boston (4-1-1) that pulled away, scoring four times in 15 minutes. The first came from junior forward Matt Atsoff 17 seconds into the period, followed by a Jimmy Ennis's north-handed goal just under five minutes later.

Ten minutes and two goals after, the Beacons had a four-goal lead and Icers starting goaltender Teddy Hume was replaced by John Jay after he allowed six goals.

"A little more talent," O'Brien said when comparing UMass-Boston to Southern New Hampshire. "When they had scoring chances, they capitalized on some of them that Southern New Hampshire might not have."

Penn State did cut a little bit into the Beacon lead. O'Brien scored his second goal of the game at the end of the second period and Marek Polidor's third goal of the weekend got the Icers back within two with more than 15 minutes left to play.

But the lone goal Jay allowed put UMass-Boston back up by three with 11 minutes left and sent Penn State back to State College as the runner-up with a 1-1 record against NCAA competition — the same record the Icers had in their NCAA tournament last season.

With Delaware coming up next weekend, the Icers are already looking ahead and freshman forward Dominic Morrone was quick to point out that while the result was disappointing, it was not a conference game.

"I don't think it was a lack of talent by us," O'Brien said. "I just think it was a lot of us getting out of our systems."

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making the tournament. Now that the field has been announced, the players are eager to start playing.

"It's a long season, but we're ready," junior Blair Brown said. "We want to go into the tournament right now. That's what we're striving for."

The Lions are looking for an unprecedented third-straight national championship. To reach that goal, the team feels it still needs to improve in some areas.

The players and coaches have talked a lot about picking up the team energy and with the tournament less than a week away, doing so will become even more important.

This is a situation the Lions have been in before, so some of the players know how to handle the pressures. Still, they know how difficult the long road ahead will be.

"This is just the beginning of the next phase," senior setter Alisha Glass said. "So we're gonna work on things that we need to fine tune, but we're very excited to get started."

Despite being the top seed in the tournament, the Lions will lose their home-court advantage if they advance past the second round. Penn State will be playing in the Gainesville, Fla., Bracket, and with the semifinal and championship games being played in Tampa, the Lions will have to do the majority of their playing in Florida if they hope to win another championship.

To add to the travel issue, there is also the chance the Lions will face the No. 16 Florida Gators in their home gym if both teams advance to the regionals. The Gators have perhaps the easiest road of all the teams in the region as they would not have to leave the state if they advance to the championship.

In all, there are four teams in the Lions' region that are ranked in the AVCA Coaches Top-25 Poll, including No. 9 California and No. 8 UCLA.

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