

Lions primed to continue conference dominance

By Emily Kaplan
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

At the outset of each season, members of the St. Francis (Pa.) University men's volleyball team create a "goal sheet" of things they want to accomplish.

MEN'S VOLLEYBALL

"Have a good attitude in practice, work hard all season, beat Penn State," coach Mike Runbaugh said.

The Red Flash are hardly alone with such hopes. As the 2010 season approaches, it seems every team in the Eastern Intercollegiate Volleyball Association (EIVA) has placed a bull's-eye on the Nittany Lions' back — which seems to grow larger with every bout of Penn State success.

And there's plenty of that — just look at the foyer of the men's volleyball office in Rec Hall, which is cluttered with trophies the team has accumulated. The Lions have

won 21 EIVA Championships, including the last 11.

"PSU is what all other teams in the league aspire to be," said Juniata coach Jeremy Price, whose 2009 Eagles were swept three times by Penn State, including the EIVA Championship title game last May. "They're also the team that everyone in this league aspires to beat."

Of course, few EIVA teams actually do. Since 1985, when the league began to officially record statistics, the Lions have posted a 218-11 record against conference opponents, including a perfect 12-0 2009 season where they didn't lose a single set to an EIVA foe.

Penn State's dominance in the EIVA has led to national success. Collegiate men's volleyball has a unique landscape; there are only 22 Division I programs nationwide, and Ohio State is the only other Big Ten school with a men's team.

Because there are so few programs, the NCAA Championships lack divisional structure. There

are three major conferences, and the champion of each league is given an automatic berth to the NCAA semifinals.

Penn State leads the EIVA with 24 NCAA appearances. The next closest school is Rutgers-Newark, with four appearances — three of which were before 1980.

"Everyone in this league knows that to get to the EIVA Championship, you have to go through Happy Valley," said Charlie Sullivan, coach of Springfield College.

Yet that can be an unhappy task for EIVA schools — one-third of which are Division II or Division III programs. As a Big Ten institution, the Lions have the premier resources that other schools in the EIVA lack.

"We're just a small, D-III school with no scholarships," Sullivan said. "And they're Penn State."

Yet the brand-name recognition can also serve as a burden. Mark Pavlik, Penn State's head coach for the last 15 seasons, says sometimes the matches that his team is

heavily favored in are actually the hardest to win.

"No matter the opponent's record, or any perceived advantage," Pavlik said, "we have to go in every game and play hard."

Runbaugh says that Penn State's history of success is the product of good coaching, but the school's prestige also helps the team acquire the best talent.

"Every kid in the East Coast dreams of playing for them," Runbaugh said.

Since 2001, nine Penn State players have been named American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) first-team All-Americans. In that span, there have been only two players from all other EIVA schools given the award.

Yet despite all of the Lions' achievements, there is little resentment toward them from the rest of the league. Most EIVA schools appreciate Penn State's success, saying it helps with recruiting and sets a strong reputation for East Coast volleyball.

Killed it

The Penn State men's volleyball team outscored its EIVA opponents in every category in 12 conference games during the 2009 season.

2009 season	PSU	EIVA opponents
Service aces	85	26
Total blocks	112	69
Digs	352	229
Kills	594	388
Hitting percentage	.435	.131
Attack errors	152	250

Source: www.gopsports.com
Justine King/Collegian

"Obviously when we play them we want to beat them," Princeton coach Sam Shweisky said. "But whenever Penn State is out there gaining national recognition, we're rooting for them. When they do well it, the EIVA does well."

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By Jacqueline Bigar

HAPPY BIRTHDAY for Wednesday,
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This year, you often feel like you need to take charge. Be aware of what is going on right now. Much might appear to happen out of the blue. If you observe more carefully, you will see the signposts and be less startled. Know that there isn't a right or wrong way. You will ultimately do a juggling act, honoring your feelings and responsibilities. If you are single, you draw many people toward you, though they might not always be suitable. Your love life, no matter what your status, takes a wild turn around June or July 2010. You won't be able to complain about boredom. If you are attached, you find that your sweetie is also an excellent friend. LIBRA is your friend.

The Stars Show the Kind of Day You'll Have:
5-Dynamic; 4-Positive;
3-Average; 2-So-so; 1-Difficult

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
*** You are looking at a mixed balance sheet. The commotion between pulling a situation apart and eliminating it could dominate your plans. Certainly you would prefer that someone else deal with it. The issue remains: Will you be that lucky? Tonight: In the middle of living.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
*** Keep reaching out to a friend. A meeting could take a perverse turn or two. By late afternoon, you could use some downtime to look over a new piece of work or something very different. Tonight: Trust yourself.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
*** Getting going happens naturally. News heads in your direction and might

have you levitating. Just land and then act. Your creativity pitches in, making nearly anything a possibility. Don't get involved in the blame game. Rather, assume responsibility. Tonight: Deep into an issue.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
*** What you hear could have you shaking your head for a substantial period. You might wonder how and why when dealing with another person. Investigate. You'll come up with a new type of approach. Tonight: Yipping up a storm.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
*** Your ability to move on is colored by sudden developments. You might ask yourself if you want to keep hammering on the same issue. Giving the issue space might help resolve the problem. Tonight: With favorite people you can relax with.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
*** You can fuss and fume all you want, but finding an answer will take time and talent. Understand your limitations and ask for another person's expertise. Your ability to move to another level opens doors. Tonight: Doing some holiday shopping.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
*** Assume a quiet profile and understand what needs to happen. If you want to talk through a problem, stop. Wait awhile, as you are likely to see more information float in. Focus on the job at hand and getting it done. Tonight: In the whirlwind of living.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
*** Are your goals in sync with what is happening? You might want to reconsider what is happening more openly. Consider a change, and question if

you should continue on that same path. Tonight: How about getting some extra sleep?

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
*** Assume your place in the limelight. No matter what goes on, you need to be present. Your mind could be on getting out of work or the situation. Hang in there. Consistency brings good results. Tonight: Where the gang is.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
*** Your understanding grows when dealing with someone at a distance. You want to try another style or do something differently. Creativity floats up when you eliminate rigid thinking. You make nearly anything possible. Tonight: A must-show.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
*** Investigate opportunities openly. Listen to what someone shares. You know much more than you realize. Be clear about the present dynamics. Know that others really do understand you well. Tonight: Think big.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
*** Defer to others and listen to their opinions. You are on top of your game, but others still want to lead. The smart fish will allow this to happen, as you cannot beat the present trend. Tonight: Togetherness is the theme.

BORN TODAY
Singer Donny Osmond (1957), actor Kirk Douglas (1916), actor Beau Bridges (1941)

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Today's
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