## Struggles

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cm, he said, is the are trust hatred of losdays late in games. and second-half t two of their confers. Three times already were unable to he final minute | Crean said. - nave won the a estended it.

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' capped what t the biggest a sarom history more home Red arena with Timplications is: in Penn State anough, he'll

mer good." Battle . th the Illini.

Illinois or anybody else, our same goal would be just to go out and get a win.'

## Then To Now

A weak nonconference schedule and two late-season losses after that Illinois game cost the Lions an NCAA tournament spot last year. They made the most of was at the situation. In their NIT bid, knocking off Florida. Notre Dame and Baylor — all tournament-caliber teams this

season -- on their way to the title. But when the tournament ended, so too did the careers of seniors Jamelle Cornley, Stanley Pringle and Danny Morrissey. Along with losing a combined 32.5 points per game, the Lions also lost an immeasurable amount of leadership, Indiana coach Tom

Perhaps no one in the Big Ten knows about losing experienced players more than Crean. In his first season coaching Indiana, Crean was forced to deal with a of somy for yourself depleted roster because of transters following an NCAA investigawere said, tion of former coach Kelvin

That may explain why, when Language who has Crean's Hoosiers came into Penn State and knocked off the Lions on Thursday, the first thing he did was relate the two squads.

"I know what we went through a rear ago in the sense of what we tell through lost when the program fell apart and you have no experience. Crean said. "I think it's very important that people remember how much experience they lost.

During last season's Illinois game. DeChellis said, his group of players did not play a great game until the final few minutes. Instead, in a sport where des like last own luck." he said the Lions were "fortunate" to win.

figuring out. In the final five minutes and overtime of conference outscored 91-67.

## The Best 0-7 Team

With time winding down in Sunday's overtime loss, DeChellis News' national men's basketball met Wisconsin coach Bo Ryan at half court of a frenzied Kohl Center.

Following a loss that typified the Lions' season, one in which the Lions blew an eight-point lead in the final two minutes, DeChellis received a few words of encouragement from Rvan.

'You're the best 0-7 team I've seen," DeChellis said Ryan told

"Oh boy, that's comforting," the Penn State coach joked a day later at his Monday press conference.

Whether Ryan is correct or not, however, DeChellis' Lions still sit at the bottom of the conference they nearly finished second in just a season ago.

Battle has been the lone bright spot this season, leading the Lions in points, rebounds, assists and steals. He is the only player on a BCS conference team to lead his team in those four statistical cate-

Behind Battle, the Lions' No. 2 scoring option is only averaging 8.2 points per game.

Two key pieces of last year's NIT run, Drew Jones and Jeff Brooks, have been reduced to minimal minutes on the bench. Brooks is averaging 7.2 points, and Jones just 5.5 in 23 minutes per game apiece. Since conference play started, neither has had a double-digit scoring performance.

The youth DeChellis has put on the floor in place of some struggling veterans has had problems This year the Lions have no controlling the ball in big situahis point we seniors, and DeChellis, who tions. That was never more evi-

points.

"Somehow this is supposed to games, the Lions have been build character," DeChellis said. Somehow this is supposed to figure out who you are and what you're all about.

Mike DeCourcey, The Sporting writer, agreed with DeChellis, saying Penn State hasn't built on its success from last season.

"[The NIT] was a nice step forward for a program that hadn't had much to brag about for a long time," DeCourcey said. "But I don't think you're worried about diminishing what happened last year. You're worried about making progress. At this point, I'd have to say you're not."

## **Getting Back**

In terms of reaching the postseason, the Lions have been all but eliminated from an at-large NCAA tournament berth. But the players aren't focusing on that.

All Battle wants is a return to the credibility gained last season.

"I'm not sure how to do that," Battle said. "We haven't done it thus far this year, and that's the problem. We're right there most of the time, and we continue to lose. It's just gonna take us one time to get over the hump and see how good it feels to win.

DeChellis echoed Battle's sentiment, saying to regain last season's confidence, the Lions will have to start winning. The only problem, he said, is that in order to win, his team needs to have that confidence.

He called the team's current losing streak a "chicken-or-theegg" situation.

DeCourcey pointed to the bigger picture, noting the effect the losses have had on the program.

With the Lions on the geographical outskirts of the Big Ten.

want to win some games. If it was signed a three-year extension in dent than in Wisconsin, when the DeCourcey said, it is a struggle to the offseason, said finding a way to Lions committed 18 turnovers compete for talent in a state with win is still something his team is that resulted in 33 Wisconsin traditional powers Pitt, Villanova and Temple.

But he wasn't quite ready to give up on the program.

"There are lost causes, but I think Ed is too good of a coach to let that happen." DeCourcey said. They just have to get more good players in there, and I think they have to get better class balance, so they don't wind up where they're in a situation where they're devoid of senior leader-

He pointed to incoming recruit Taran Buie. Battle's half-brother. and the Lions' ability to hang with Wisconsin in Madison as reasons behind a possible return to Big Ten relevance next season.

Jackson, however, pointed out that the Lions are not too far from relevance this season.

"We were right there with them at their place," Jackson said. referring to Penn State's onepoint loss at Illinois Jan. 12. Everybody knows Assembly Hall is a tough place to play, but coming in here the crowd will give us that extra energy. We'll make that one play to get the win.

But until tipoff tonight, the Lions are stuck in the basement of the conference.

With trips to No. 10 Purdue and No. 20 Ohio State looming next week, Jackson and the Lions may be looking at equaling the 2002-03 team's 0-10 start to conference play with a loss tonight to the reeling Illini.

There aren't easy things in life, and you've got to keep going, DeChellis said. "You've got to keep fighting all the way, and somewhere along the way athletics is supposed to teach you that. Teach you a little toughness, teach you a little perseverance, test your manhood, test your character."

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ther weestlers in the conference.

- probably seeing similar situations it's probably the toughest confer-

ven State's Palmer had a few calls and have gone his way, the sophoand any excuses. He said it's up to him to setterm well and make sure the match hands of the referees

a handling this challenging string of and ho'll attack each match the same The apponent is ranked No. 1 or No. 50. the 149-nounder admitted to looking formalenge he faces this weekend.

and appearantly this weekend against No. 1 any are said. "It doesn't get any better than

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Win

From Page 8.

Price's prophecy proved to be true as Penn State (5-1, 3-0 EIVA) polished

off EIVA-foe Juniata (1-2, 0-1) Tuesday night 3-0 (30-19, 30-27, 30-18) for its third-straight conference win and third-straight sweep. The Lions — whose victory over

Springfield last weekend was a performance coach Mark Pavlik called "sloppy" — gave a total team effort in Tuesday's win over the Eagles. Three players — the veteran trio of Will Price. Max Lipsitz and Joe Sunder finished with double-digit kills, and the squad finished with 11 total team blocks.

But the team's success was also found in the performance from some of the lesser-known Lions.

Freshman Ian Hendries was dominant in the middle, posting six kills on

.750 hitting.

"We don't know if we're going to start calling you Ian 'Skywalker' Hendries right now." Pavlik told his rookie in the postgame press confer-

"The last time we saw you up in the air like that was in your recruiting

It wasn't just the hitters with highperformances light film-worthy Tuesday night.

The reigning EIVA player of the week, setter Edgardo Goas, shelled out 40 assists, while Dennis Del Valle had 10 digs, including a diving somersault in the middle of the first set that had the 472 fans at Rec Hall cheering on their feet.

Juniata was never really given a chance to find its rhythm. Penn State.

which owns a perfect 35-0 record alltime against the Eagles, started the game on a 9-1 run. And despite a relatively sluggish second set — where the Eagles fought hard to pull within one near the Lions' set point — Penn State was on cruise control for most of the night.

It took Juniata just about 45 minutes to drive northeast on Route 26 for Tuesday night's match. And it took just double that — one hour, 24 minutes, to be exact — for the Lions' total team effort to send the Eagles back on the highway with their second loss of the season.

"I thought tonight was a great indicator of where we've come in the past three or four weeks," Pavlik said. "I think it's something that we build on and keep on moving from here.

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