



Abby Drey/Collegian

Junior thrower Joe Kovacs readies the shot put in the Penn State Northeast Challenge on Jan. 18 at the Multi-Sport Facility. Kovacs and fellow shot putter Blake Eaton posted NCAA-qualifying throws.

Pair of Lion shot putters aiming for All-America

By Anthony Barton
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Early in the season, Penn State track and field throws coach T.J. Crater told juniors Blake Eaton and Joe Kovacs he expected them to compete well at the Big Ten level.

Anything else would just be "icing on the cake," he said.

But after posting NCAA provisional qualifying throws in their first attempts of the season, both athletes have much higher aspirations.

"I think we can both be All-Americans and go one-two in the Big Ten," Kovacs said. "We have the potential to do it. We just have to show up that day."

The day Kovacs refers to is Feb. 27, when the Big Ten championships will take place at Minnesota.

As highly touted freshmen recruits two years ago, Eaton and Kovacs came to the Nittany Lions with lofty expectations of what they could accomplish at Penn State. After two years of breaking in, they feel it's time to live up to those expectations.

"I think junior year is going to be our breakout year for the throws," Eaton said.

Eaton (59 feet, 6.75 inches) sits second, and Kovacs (58 feet, 10 inches) sits fourth in the Big Ten in the shot put. Though Kovacs is happy with where the throws have started this season, he believes their personal marks will be raised from where they currently stand.

"We'll be training pretty hard these next cou-

"There's a Penn State record I've been waiting to break."

Joe Kovacs
junior thrower

ple weeks," Kovacs said. "As the meets get bigger, I think we are going to look for big throws, big [personal records] and big points for the team."

Kovacs also has his own personal goal for the season.

"There's a Penn State record I've been waiting to break," Kovacs said.

C.J. Hunter, a former United States Olympian, currently holds the record Kovacs alluded to. Hunter's throw of 65 feet, 7 inches has stood for the last twenty years.

Head coach Beth Alford-Sullivan is pleased with the effort she has seen from the two throwers. She said she liked how they are really stepping it up and taking the challenge on to open the season.

"Blake and Joe really put on a show," Alford-Sullivan said.

Overall, Kovacs said he believes the men's team has been within striking distance the last couple of years and thinks this is the year they can really make an impact in the Big Ten and nationally.

"The past couple years, the throwers really haven't done much," Kovacs said. "And I think this year we're going to be a huge factor."

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PSU grad hired as WNBA COO

By Audrey Snyder
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

When Christine Godleski sat in her accounting classes 24 years ago, she never dreamed her career would lead her down this path.

The 1986 Penn State graduate said she always gravitated toward her passion, but on Monday afternoon Godleski began a new chapter in her career.

The WNBA introduced the Penn State alumna as its new Chief Operating Officer, which manages the day-to-day operations of the league.

While Godleski brings nearly 25 years of experience with her, ranging from jobs with ESPN The Magazine and the Walt Disney Company to ESPN Outdoors and Viacom, she's optimistic she can help continue building a following for women's sports.

"Certainly women's sports are popular and 50 percent of the country is roughly women," Godleski said.

"I think that appealing to our audience and continuing to serve them with a great product will be an important part."

The WNBA is entering its 14th season, and despite coming off a year in which Godleski said the organization saw an increase in viewership and in attendance, she realizes the league has plenty of room to grow.

While she's new on the job and she said she's still trying to find her way around the office, Godleski and WNBA president Donna Orender are focused on raising the bar for the league.

"Her experience in finance and strategic planning will help us capitalize on opportunities while continuing to improve the efficiency of our business operations," Orender said in a press release.

For the new COO, trying to paral-

"Penn State's certainly recognizable on a resume. Who doesn't like JoePa, right?"

Christine Godleski
COO of WNBA



Godleski

lel the NBA's success will be a good starting point.

Godleski said the NBA established a great deal of success since it was created in 1946 and if the WNBA can build a long-lasting league, she doesn't see herself getting a new job any time soon.

As far as her familiarity with the league, Godleski said her time working with ESPN made her knowledgeable about various sports.

While she spent time covering avid hunters and fishermen when she worked for ESPN Outdoors, Godleski said she's looking forward to learning more about the daily business operations that occur in the WNBA.

"Like everything, I'm sure I can learn a lot more and there are a lot of smart people," Godleski said.

"Certainly Donna [Orender], the president of the WNBA, comes with professional basketball experience and tremendous basketball knowledge, so I'm sure she'll teach me all the things I need to learn on that side."

While Godleski continues to climb up the ranks with her accounting degree, she credited her time spent at Penn State as one of the main reasons why she's been able to hold such prestigious jobs.

"I certainly had great professors and they helped me launch my career into accounting and really established a good, solid, business background," she said.

"And Penn State's certainly recognizable on a resume. Who doesn't like JoePa, right?"

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Ryan Ulsch/Collegian

Penn State junior diver Ilana Zeises twists during a practice dive Jan. 21. Zeises, from Huntingdon Valley, has been diving competitively since she was 12.

Zeises brings drive to dive team

By Margaret McAvo
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Some complain about it. Others find ways around it.

For most divers, the back two-and-a-half is the toughest dive for women at the college level.

But for Penn State junior Ilana Zeises, the back two-and-a-half is her favorite.

Zeises said she wasn't born with the talent to do the dive, but she definitely isn't fearless.

She said there are times when her body is still shaking when she hits the water.

As one of the leaders on the diving team, Zeises finds motivation in every move she makes.

She believes in practicing until perfection and says it's her determination that makes her better than the rest.

Zeises knows that she is a part of something that very few people even attempt — being three meters above, looking down at the water below.

That's where Zeises finds her thrill.

"There are so many dives for so many reasons you can't describe that are a little scary," Zeises said.

"But it is all about the thrill of overcoming the fear."

Zeises has been working on perfecting her diving skills since she started diving competitively at age 12.

She is the youngest of three girls, and she picked up diving from her older sis-

ter, who also was a competitive diver.

That's how she found Penn State.

In the winter of 1997, Zeises and her family were forced to stay in State College when her older sister was competing at the Pennsylvania State diving championships at the McCoy Natatorium.

Zeises was only eight years old then, but she was able to see the entire Penn State campus, and she said that is when she fell in love with the university.

Before coming to Penn State, she was a four-year standout at Lower Moreland High School in Huntingdon Valley. Her high school coach Tarra Bolot provided motivation and confidence to compete at the next level, and it was Bolot's husband Todd Michael who taught Zeises to love the sport.

Michael served as Zeises traveling diving coach and described her as a workhorse and someone who is desperate to learn.

But he said the main thing that made Zeises stand out was her work ethic.

"What I did with Ilana, I wanted her to see the way diving is," Micheal said.

"I wanted to make sure she always had fun."

Michael was also the one that required Zeises to do a back two-and-a-half every day in her high school years.

When Zeises looks back on her time spent with Michael, she can't wrap words around how much of an impact he had on her.

"I can't tell you how great he was. He taught me so many things," Zeises said.



The Penn State swim team is benefiting from some unique forms of massage: psucollegian.com

"He made me so much better."

Now that Zeises is in college, her coach Craig Brown says her motivation in the pool carries over to the classroom. While Zeises, a bioengineering major who plans to attend medical school, asked that her GPA not be published, she said it's higher than 3.5.

"She is an outstanding student with an extremely tough major," Brown said. "She works hard in the school and works hard in the pool."

And her leadership qualities separate Zeises from the rest of the pack.

Zeises said she is the one who always makes sure the younger girls have a mentor to look up to and she is the one who organizes the extra cardio workouts after practices.

Now, Zeises is less than a month away from a chance to qualify in the Big Ten Diving Championships.

Her junior season has been one with ups and downs, but she isn't looking back.

Zeises knows the Big Ten brings solid talent to the diving boards.

But she said she has always wanted to be the best, and this time is no exception.

"It's just a matter of doing what I know and going out with the confidence," Zeises said.

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