

Captain

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after joining the Lions as a walk-on during her sophomore year. After leading the Penn State club basketball team to an 18-1 record as a freshman, Arcidiacono found out the Lions would be hosting an open tryout for new members. The senior remembered being called into Washington's office after further evaluation and being asked by the assistant coaches for her shoe size and class schedule. Washington proceeded to call

her into the gym to tell her she thought she would be a good addition to the team. "She asked me to play and asked me to think about it," Arcidiacono said. "And I was like, 'Wait, seriously, I really don't need to think it over.'" Arcidiacono said she has not once second-guessed her decision to join the team. Not when she's sitting on the end of the bench during games. Not when she is putting in hours of hard work in the gym. Not even when she was playing without a scholarship sophomore year and wasn't even allowed to

eat at the team's training table. "Absolutely not. No way," Arcidiacono said about having any possible regrets. "If I had to do it all over again, I would do it in a heartbeat. There is no question about it." While she now receives an athletic scholarship after going without one for her first year, the amount of work Arcidiacono puts in hasn't changed. "She puts as much time [as anyone] in her own individual development, knowing that she's probably not going to get a lot of playing time," Washington said. "But she's in the gym outside of practice

working on her game, and that kind of leadership rubs off on the rest of the team." That is why Washington thinks Arcidiacono is so important to the team. Her intelligence, positive voice in the locker room and knowledge of the Lions' system are all things the senior brings to the table that Washington said are invaluable. Those reasons, on top of being like a "Team Mom," are why Washington named Arcidiacono a team captain this season, along with seniors Meggan Quinn and Meredith Monroe. Arcidiacono played in seven

games as a sophomore and four games as a junior. So far this season she has played only 20 minutes while taking a total of four shots. But she doesn't mind. "I don't think my role is any less important on the Lady Lions," Arcidiacono said. "I feel like I'm very much a vocal leader. I like to be on the side of the bench, and I'm always slamming on the floor and cheering. Roles always change and you adapt. I think I still have a big presence... just not on the floor."

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Edwards

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For Edwards, the season has had its share of ups and downs, with a few freshman mistakes thrown in. After the Nittany Lions' loss to Temple in Philadelphia in December, Edwards left his knee brace on the team bus, and at the following week's press conference, Penn State coach Ed DeChellis simply offered "freshman" as his explanation. Having recovered from a knee injury that kept him out of the Lions' first four games, Edwards has proven himself to be one of the team's steadiest players. After starting the last four games, Edwards posted his best game at Penn State Sunday with 10 points and 13 rebounds against Purdue. Given his distaste for the brace and the Temple fiasco, Edwards has switched to a lighter sleeve on his knee during games. The freshman said he had to adjust the brace constantly during a game and the sleeve doesn't carry the same issues. Aside from protecting his knee, the coaches have stressed protecting the ball as Edward's minutes have increased. In his first two games as a starter, Edwards committed 10 turnovers but had zero in a home

loss to Illinois Wednesday and three against Purdue, all when the game was already decided late in the game. Junior forward D.J. Jackson said the other players haven't said anything specific to Edwards about reducing his turnovers, and it's a matter of letting the freshman be confident on the floor. "Coaches or us as players are never going to limit a person's aggressiveness," Jackson said. "So we're just going to tell him to go out there and make the plays he thinks are right, because he has a very high basketball IQ. We just tell him to stay aggressive." While some players get overexcited before a game in their hometown, guard Talor Battle said he hasn't noticed anything like that in Edwards yet. However, the junior guard did say he and the rest of the team would make sure Edwards doesn't get too hyped up going into the Ohio State game. Edwards is dealing with a jammed index finger on his right hand and a broken pinky on his left hand, his shooting hand. On top of the other injuries he dealt with this season, Edwards said the feel of college basketball came slowly for him, but he feels more at home on the court now.

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V. Ball

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describe the opening stretch of a season when a team is still figuring out how to play with one another while shaking any off-season rust. "Pav's way of saying it's still early in the season," senior Will Price said. Now, the Lions must find a way to transition away from the inconsistencies that plagued them in January and were magnified during the upset loss in Chicago. The Lions bookended three-straight 3-0 sweeps in January with losses. Similarly, this past weekend Penn State dropped the first and fifth sets but won the second and third handily. "We don't want to play phenomenal volleyball for 10 points," Price said. "We just want to play consistent, good volleyball for an entire match." Though the team failed to find its consistency this past weekend, the Lions took the loss as an opportunity for growth. "To lose, just to have that bitter taste in your mouth afterwards," Price said. "I

think that'll light a fire and give that make-sure-it-never-happens-again attitude." Luckily, Pavlik suggested Penn State's upcoming schedule lends itself to the prospect of making up ground very quickly. Penn State will be playing its matches in Rec Hall for the next three weeks. The Lions will use the extra time usually spent on a bus traveling to opposing gyms as a chance to practice, working out the kinks and rust that typically follow "January volleyball." "That's when you see some things really start to occur," Pavlik said. "Each player is taking stock of his own play and saying, 'Here's what we've got to get better at.'" As the season wears on, those gaps in team play and any mental aspects of the game will work themselves out, and the team feels confident it will find an identity. But when the Lions will finally shake all of the rust of January remains to be seen. "We'll find out in February," Pavlik said. "but we're moving along."

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Inconsistent

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people are still trying to figure it out. We got half a Big Ten season left. I'm sure ... coach has been searching for guys to kind of step up and be consistent. Junior forward D.J. Jackson has been one of the Lions' most reliable scorers this season. In each of the last five games, he has scored between nine and 13 points, and he's been held under five points just once in Big Ten play. "It's consistency that helps you in winning games," Jackson said. "You have to have a couple of different guys being consistent every game to be successful in this league." DeChellis said he would prefer steady 10-point performances like Jackson's instead of two points in one game and 18 in the next. Jackson, however, was quick to point out stability isn't solely limited to scoring, saying

players can still contribute on an off night. "You aren't gonna play your best game every night," Jackson said. "But we do need a little sense of consistency and clicking and playing a whole 40-minute game. When we do that, we're a good team, but when we go through our lapses in any part of the game, we struggle." Right now Jackson is the team's second-leading scorer, averaging 8.6 points per game. Babb, who sits in third, agreed with Jackson, saying his shooting shouldn't dictate how he plays the rest of the game. When he isn't shooting the ball well, he said, the goal is to not let it affect the rest of his performance. "I just had an off game — I wasn't making shots," Babb said. "But I can still affect the game with my defense. When I'm not knocking down shots, I can still be effective guarding my man."

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Column

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this season was to win the conference. And I, as I'm sure many people were two months ago, was skeptical of the third-year coach's optimism. But after seeing the Big Ten schedule play out for last month or so, the Lions have established themselves as one of the premier teams in the conference. And as we've seen so far in the Big Ten, anything can happen. With just seven games remaining, the Lions control their own destiny. The Lions have the benefit of having four of those games on their home floor. Penn State has shown it has the talent, but for the first time this season, the team is going to have to show it has the resiliency to bounce back

from the two-straight losses and regain its composure heading down the stretch. That won't be easy, but doing so could mean the difference between playing in the first round of the Big Ten tournament or securing a bye. It could also have further, NCAA tournament-related implications. Only in the Big Ten is it possible for a team to go 7-0 just as easily as it could 0-7. But for Penn State, that is very much a possibility. The key for the Lions is to find that swagger they had in the beginning of conference play to make sure the latter doesn't come to fruition. Bill Landis is a junior majoring in English and journalism and is a Collegian lead Lions reporter. His e-mail address is wml5005@psu.edu.

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