

Loss

From Page 9.

Ohio State's 16th-straight win on its home court.

Wednesday's loss matches the Lions' worst losing streak to open conference play since they dropped 10 games in the 2002-03 season. The Lions dropped 13 consecutive games in 2006-07, but they already had a conference win under their belts.

Buckeyes' star point guard Evan Turner scored 22 second-half points, finishing with a game-high 27. The 6-foot-7 guard and Battle exchanged points with each other, both showing why they're two of the best guards in college basketball.

But whenever Battle and the Lions made a run, Turner answered. The Lions cut the Buckeye lead to seven on four separate occasions in the second half, but the Buckeye guard was too much. He shot 9-for-15 and finished with 10 rebounds and seven assists.

Battle looked equally impressive, finishing with 24 points, nine rebounds and seven assists.

Sophomore guard Chris Babb hit a crucial 3-pointer with 3:18 left to trim the lead to 65-60 and Jackson followed with two free throws.

Battle called Diebler one of the conference's best shooters and said the Lions did not communicate on the crucial 3-point shot he hit with 1:37 to go. DeChellis said he called for Jeff Brooks to foul Buckeye center Dallas Lauderdale to force the 44 percent foul shooter to the line. Instead, Brooks and Sasa Borovnjak both jumped to Lauderdale, who fed Diebler for the 3-pointer.

"It's the little things and the attention to detail that's haunted us all season long," said Battle, who has now scored 20 points in five out of the last six games.

Junior forward Andrew Ott did not play after aggravating a shoulder injury, and Bill Edwards sprained his ankle in first half, forcing him out the rest of the game.

"I would've loved to win on the road, but for our first win, I want it to be in front of our own fans, at home," Battle said. "Hopefully we can do that Saturday."

To e-mail reporter: slh5037@psu.edu

Schedule

From Page 9.

our way. We lost some close ones where the ball didn't bounce our way. There's things we need to tighten up but no big overhaul is necessary."

As for the players, they're mad. However, it's not a "bad mad" said senior Tyra Grant, putting an emphasis on the word bad.

"No one really likes to lose," she said. "We were on a six-game winning streak but you always have a few bumps down the road. You just have to get past it and work on those little fine details and fine-tuning. It's good to be mad."

Washington also said she likes to see her players fired up with this added edge.

But although the team was frustrated after the Michigan and Purdue losses last week, the mood in the locker room remains high.

"We're not down on ourselves or down on what happened," Grant said. "I feel like Michigan is a great team and Purdue is a great team as well, but I feel the things we need to fix are within our locker room and within ourselves. Once we get that and critique the details we'll be just fine."

That is the overall feeling among the Lady Lions — fix the little things.

Improved defense and not allowing opponents to shoot easy shots are areas of focus this week for Washington as she remains positive her team can stay atop the conference.

"I think we have to remember who we are and stay confident," Washington said. "It's not as if there has been a total collapse with our team. We didn't get a couple stops here and there that we had gotten in the past, so there's no reason to start second-guessing ourselves and think there is a big problem because there is not."

To e-mail reporter: ada147@psu.edu

Erwin

From Page 9.

Erwin twice a week, said the 184-pounder has no problem asking the best, including Cunningham to wrestle at practice. Cunningham thought Erwin's confidence in asking the best to grapple allows the senior to progress — perhaps even to the point of beating Cunningham himself.

"We can't go that far," Cunningham said.

Though Erwin may have a long distance to go before beating Cunningham, the Urbana, Ohio native has come a long way since his losses at season's start.

Cunningham said Erwin's two bouts at 174 pounds didn't add up to how he had performed at practice.

The assistant thought it was the weight class causing problems. With Erwin now a 184-pounder, the emphasis isn't on weight control but progress. But after Erwin's Lehigh bout, Cunningham felt something needed to be said.

Erwin may have felt down on his abilities, but Cunningham didn't.

"He never lost faith in me," Erwin said. "He was always behind me to support me and push me forward."

To e-mail reporter: bjm5146@psu.edu

Birch

From Page 9.

practice and hanging out with them on weekends, he never envisioned being so immersed in the program. But volleyball has long been his passion, dating from his high school days in Reading, where he was an all-star setter and libero for Exeter High School.

Upon graduation, Birch — whose 6-foot-2 stature is small by volleyball standards — realized he could not play at a Division I powerhouse like Penn State, winner of 11 straight EIVA titles. But he wanted to stay involved with volleyball and asked Pavlik if he could help out in any capacity.

"Looking back, I had no idea what to expect," Birch said.

"I thought I was going to be on the sidelines just scrounging for balls or something."

It didn't take long for the Lions to realize that Birch was more than just a ball boy.

He immediately impressed the coaching staff with his attention to detail and love of the game. So Pavlik asked him to become acquainted with DataVolley — the sport's premier video analysis software — and Birch soon found his niche.

"Growing up in the computer age, he learned the technology and just ran with it," assistant coach Jay Hosack said. "And he has totally mastered it. Chris is able to dissect each specific piece of the game and

show it to us in compact form. So he brings quickness in terms of scouting and coaching."

At every practice, Birch eagerly stands on the court alongside the coaches and helps out with drills. And at every game, Birch is on the sideline feverishly computing stats into his laptop.

Birch has become so proficient as the Lions' statistician and manager that he garnered national recognition. In July, Birch was on staff of the U.S. Men's National A-2 team — which featured former Lions Max Holt and Nate Meerstein — for their gold-medal run at the Pan Am Games in Chiapas, Mexico. Later in the summer, USA Volleyball flew Birch to northern Italy to work with the U.S. Boys' National Team in the FIVB Boys' Youth (Under-19) World Championships.

"Chris is one of the absolute best at his position," said UC Santa Barbara coach Rick McLaughlin, who coached the A-2 team this summer. "He does everything with great precision."

McLaughlin liked Birch so much that he offered the Penn State senior a \$20,000 salary to work with the Guachos full time this year.

"Man, that would be nice," Birch said with a laugh. "But I have to graduate first."

Next on the docket for Birch is grad school. He is looking for universities with strong sports management programs.

To e-mail reporter: exk5049@psu.edu



Nittany Lion BASKETBALL

at the BJC

vs. Minnesota
Sat., Feb. 6 @ 2 pm

Lady Lion BASKETBALL

at the BJC

vs. Ohio State
Sun., Feb. 7 @ 1 pm



Be a part of the excitement!



SPRING SPORTS PLANNER

Men's VOLLEYBALL

South Gym - Rec Hall

vs. Rutgers-Newark
Fri, Feb. 5 @ 7 pm

vs. Springfield
Sat, Feb. 6 @ 4 pm

WRESTLING

Main Gym - Rec Hall

vs. Northwestern
Fri, Feb. 5 @ 7 pm

vs. Michigan
Sun, Feb. 7 @ 1 pm

Women's LACROSSE

Holuba Hall

vs. LaSalle
Sun, Feb. 7, @ 1 pm

Women's LACROSSE

vs. Hobart
Sat, Feb. 6, @ 1 pm

SWIMMING

Natatorium - Check time

vs. Lehigh
Sat, Feb. 6, @ 11:30 am

Women's GYMNASTICS

Main Gym - Rec Hall

vs. Illinois
Sat, Feb. 6 @ 7 pm



Men's TENNIS

Indoor Tennis Complex

vs. Maryland
Sun, Feb. 7 @ 12 pm

vs. Buffalo
Sun, Feb. 7 @ 5 pm

FOR UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION ON ALL PENN STATE SPORTS VISIT: GoPSUsports.com