

THE LINEUP

NHL
Washington at N.Y. Rangers
7 p.m., TCN

NBA
Miami at Cleveland
8 p.m., TNT
San Antonio at Portland
10:30 p.m., TNT

NCAA Basketball
Purdue at Indiana
7 p.m., ESPN
Georgia Tech at Duke
7 p.m., ESPN2
Cincinnati at Notre Dame
9 p.m., ESPN
Tennessee at LSU
9 p.m., ESPN2

GUIDE

League could face long-term problems

Baltimore Ravens owner Steve Bisciotti said Wednesday that several NFL owners are facing a financial shortfall that could create "long-term problems for the league" and ultimately result in a lockout.

As the Ravens prepare for a 2010 season without a salary cap, Bisciotti hinted the NFL could shut down in March 2011 if concessions aren't made by the players union in negotiations for a new collective bargaining agreement.

Speaking at a news conference in which team officials looked back at last season and ahead to 2010, Bisciotti insisted many of the 32 NFL teams are struggling to finish in the black.

"I've got partners out there right now whose teams are making less money than their linebackers. I think we've got an acute problem here with the general profitability of the teams," Bisciotti said.

Verlander, Detroit make five-year deal

Justin Verlander and the Detroit Tigers have agreed to an \$80 million, five-year contract, a person familiar with the negotiations told The Associated Press.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity Wednesday night because the deal had not been announced. The person said the contract could be completed as soon as Thursday.

Verlander won a career-high 19 games with a career-best 3.45 ERA last season.

The sides agreed to bypass salary arbitration. When figures were exchanged last month, Verlander asked for \$9.5 million for next season. The team offered \$6.9 million. Verlander made \$3,675,000 last season.

OUR THOUGHTS

MAJOR LEAGUE Kiffin-Meyer rivalry ready to take off

The rivalry that never was just got bigger.

Lane Kiffin was not shy in challenging Florida coach Urban Meyer when Kiffin coached Tennessee. It was laughable. But by next season, the chances of Kiffin laughing are much better. According to Rivals.com, Kiffin's new school, USC, finalized the nation's No. 2 recruiting class Wednesday. No. 1? The Gators.

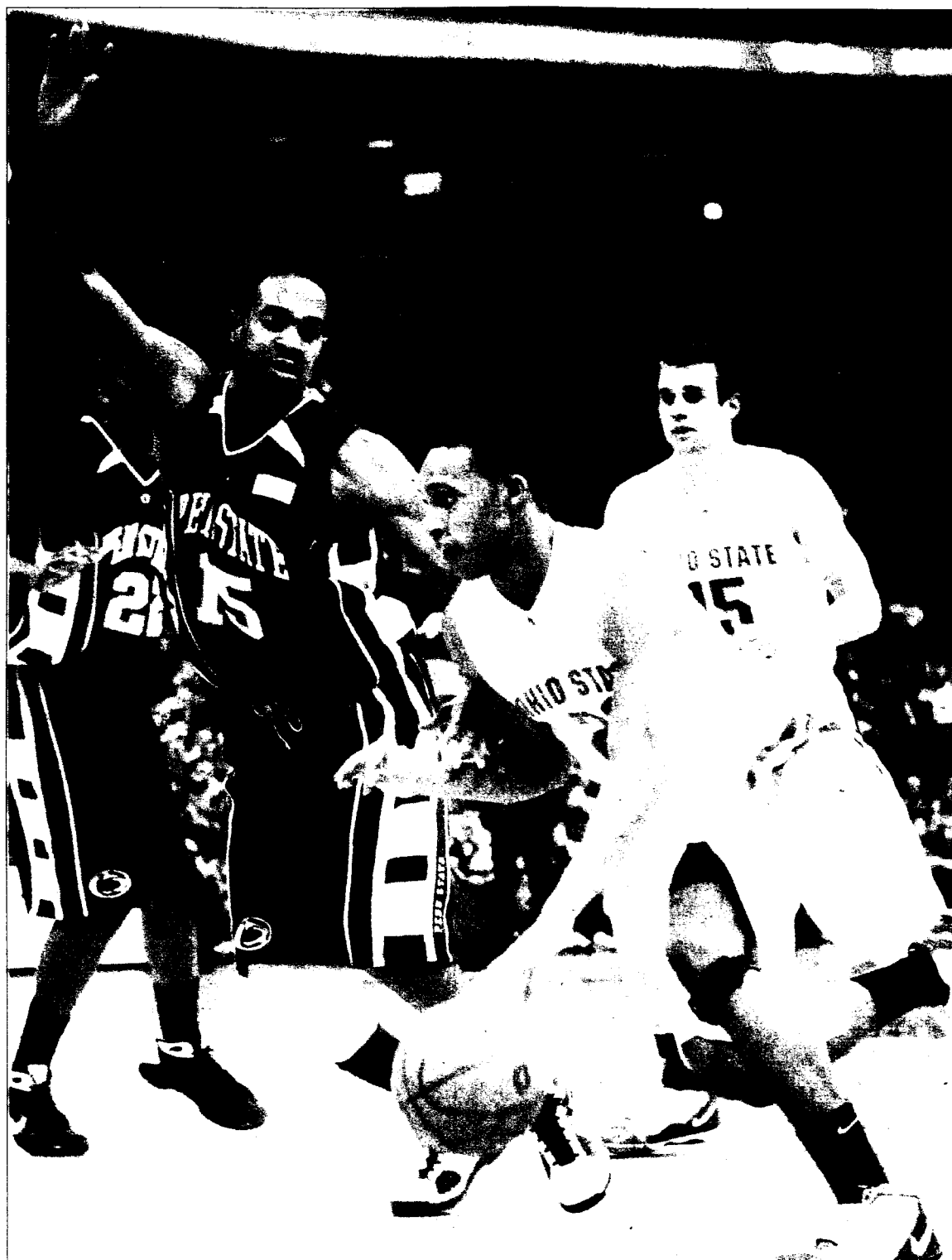
At least this time a potential matchup on the field — in a big-time bowl game — may be interesting.

TRIVIA

NCAA FOOTBALL

Q: Who was the last State College Area High School football player to sign with Penn State, not including this year's signees?

Wednesday's answer: Joe Montana has won more Super Bowl MVP awards (three) than anyone else.



Ohio State guard Evan Turner (21) drives past Penn State's D.J. Jackson (15) in Wednesday night's 75-62 win against the Nittany Lions. Turner scored a game-high 27 points and added 10 rebounds and seven assists. It was the Lions' 10th-straight loss, tying a Penn State record for consecutive losses to start a Big Ten season.

Lions stifled again

By Stephen Hennessey
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Every time Penn State made a brief run Wednesday night, No. 13 Ohio State had an answer.

Two D.J. Jackson free throws cut the Buckeye lead to three points with 1:52 to go, but the Buckeyes' Jon Diebler, who had missed all six shots he had taken up to that moment, hit a 3-pointer to extend the lead to six.

It was a dagger into the heart of the Nittany Lions, who haven't caught a break all season long. Penn State's Talor Battle turned the ball over on the next possession, and the Buckeyes scored 10 unanswered points to close the game.

"I told the kids, it's the same broken record," coach Ed DeChellis told the Penn State Radio Network after the game. "We get to within striking distance, within three with two to go, and we make some crucial mistakes at crucial times."

Ohio State handed the Lions (8-14, 0-10 Big Ten) their 10th straight defeat, 75-62, Wednesday night at Value City Arena in Columbus, Ohio. It was the Lions' 12th-straight loss to its rival and

See LOSS, Page 13.

MEN'S BASKETBALL

75
Ohio State
62
Penn State

Tough week awaits

By Alex Angert
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Despite losing their last two games, the Lady Lions still have a chance to win the Big Ten.

The only problem is they also still have a chance to finish in last place.

With at least eight games left in the season, Penn State (15-6, 7-4 Big Ten) sits two games behind first place Ohio State but only three games ahead of last-place teams Northwestern and Illinois.

The BIG Ten

When the Lady Lions take on Michigan State and Ohio State this week, they will be going up against two of the best centers in college basketball. As for Penn State, freshman Nikki Greene has the potential to join the ranks of the elite. Here's what coach Coquese Washington had to say about the three players she considers the anchors of all three teams:

"When you look at Greene, I think you see potential. She's clearly not in the same class in terms of consistency as Allyssa DeHaan and Jantel Lavender are, but her potential is off the charts. She might be the best pure athlete of the three."



When you talk about DeHaan and her blocks, she makes an impact on what you can run offensively because she is going to be there standing there. You have to game plan for her.



I think you have to game plan for Jantel Lavender from her offensively. She runs the floor better than any big kid in the country and possibly the conference outside the Stanford post and UConn. She's right up there with them in terms of getting up and down the floor at her speed and quickness.

Junlin Chen/Colegian

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

However, coach Coquese Washington remains upbeat about her team's position within the conference and doesn't see any need to "bounce back."

"If you look at what happened on Sunday, everybody lost," she said. "All the top teams lost...Nothing has changed except everybody has another loss or two. There's no reason to overanalyze things."

We just have to keep working."

This week will be one of the toughest for Penn State. The team travels to Michigan State to take on the Spartans on the road tonight at 7 tonight and then follows that up at home Sunday against Ohio State.

Nevertheless, win or lose, Washington knows this week doesn't define the entire season.

"I'm a pretty even-keeled person, and I have a big picture outlook," she said. "We won some close games and the ball bounced

See SCHEDULE, Page 13.



Catch the latest Lady Lions news on the Collegian's women's basketball Twitter: twitter.com/Washingtonpost



Penn State manager Chris Birch (right) chats with men's volleyball coach Mark Pavlik at practice Feb. 2 at Rec Hall.

Manager does it all for Penn State players

By Emily Kaplan
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

He comes to practice two hours early and stays until everybody leaves. He travels to every away game and comes to every early morning training session. He spends more than 30 hours a week analyzing game tape, producing scouting reports and running stats through the computer.

Chris Birch does everything for the Penn State men's volleyball

team — except play on the court. Birch, a senior, has been Penn State's manager for the past four years. And the No. 6 Nittany Lions don't know what they'd do without him.

"Chris does a remarkable job for us," coach Mark Pavlik said. "We're lucky to have a guy like him. He is one of the most valuable assets to our team."

While Birch is a virtual team-mate, joking with players before

See BIRCH, Page 13.

Sophomore Ryan Wolf quietly gets the job done. | SPORTS, Page 10.

Erwin recovering from rough start

By Brendan Monahan
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

The two losses were enough for assistant coach Casey Cunningham to step onto the scene.

He saw senior Dave Erwin, noted as a leader by coach Cael Sanderson, drop his first two matchups.

Cunningham experiences Erwin's great work ethic firsthand at practice and knows Erwin is the fighter, coming off right shoulder surgery at the season's beginning.

So it's no wonder Cunningham expected better of Erwin.

"He said he was still there for me," Erwin said. "He's not giving up on me."

Cunningham's words, and a move from 174 to 184 pounds, led to the senior winning 14 of his next 15 bouts, and the 184-pounder now finds himself a premier NCAA contender at his weight.

Over this past weekend, Erwin's two wins over then-No. 7

Phil Keddy and No. 16 Travis Rutt were the result of Cunningham tutoring the 184-pounder Erwin thinks he has progressed most in bottom wrestling — a result, Erwin said, of Cunningham's bear-like top riding at practice.

"He's one of the toughest guys I've ever wrestled with," Erwin said. "Having him there every day for guidance and to beat me up every now and then is one of the greatest things that has happened in my career."

Steadman said Cunningham, one of the best wrestlers at practice, beat up on Erwin earlier in the year. Steadman said now Erwin doesn't just wrestle better from the bottom but from every position — a direct result of wrestling Cunningham frequently.

Steadman, along with teammates, call Erwin "Uncle Dave" because of the senior's leadership status. The 197-pounder wrestled Erwin at practice Tuesday.

It was the first time in a long time — and Steadman saw a different Erwin.

"His confidence," Steadman said, "you can see it out on the mat."

Cunningham, who wrestles See ERWIN, Page 13.



Erwin