

Battle finding greater scoring support

By Stephen Hennessey
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Since the start of the season, Penn State has been searching for a viable second scorer behind the Big Ten's second-leading scorer, Talor Battle.

MEN'S BASKETBALL

The Nittany Lions are still searching for their first conference win, but they may have found that consistent scoring support.

The recent scoring production by sophomore guard Chris Babb and junior forward D.J. Jackson has eased the scoring burden on Battle.

"If they can score, then of course it takes pressure off me," Battle said at practice Monday. "Those two are definitely playing well the past couple games. Hopefully they can keep that up because it's helpful for me."

In the Lions' last seven games, Jackson scored more than 10 points in six of them and scored nine points in the exception. Babb posted a career-high 18 points against Illinois on Jan. 27 and has put up 10 or more points in three of the last five games.

Coach Ed DeChellis said finding scorers was one of the team's focuses in the beginning of the season.

He said he likes the consistency Jackson and Babb are contributing thus far.

"When you have two or three scorers every night, then you're going to have some success," DeChellis said.

Recently, when Battle throws Jackson a pass, Battle said he will urge his teammate to shoot the ball by yelling at him while the pass is in flight.

In Saturday's 66-64 loss to Minnesota, Jackson notched his second-highest scoring total this season with 18 points and did not hesitate to launch open jump shots.

"He has a great shot, and whenever he shoots it, it normally goes in," Battle said. "It's just getting him to shoot it and getting him to understand that we need him to shoot it."

When Jackson is on the floor, DeChellis said the coaching staff makes a concerted effort to draw up screens for him to come off and catch the ball. His shooting and passing abilities make him a target to catch the ball in open space.

"I call for it, and I want the ball in certain situations," Jackson said. "But at the same time, I know when not to force it, and I know when to get other guys involved. The main thing is I want to stay aggressive no matter what I do, whether it be shoot or pass. I want to be in attack mode at all times."

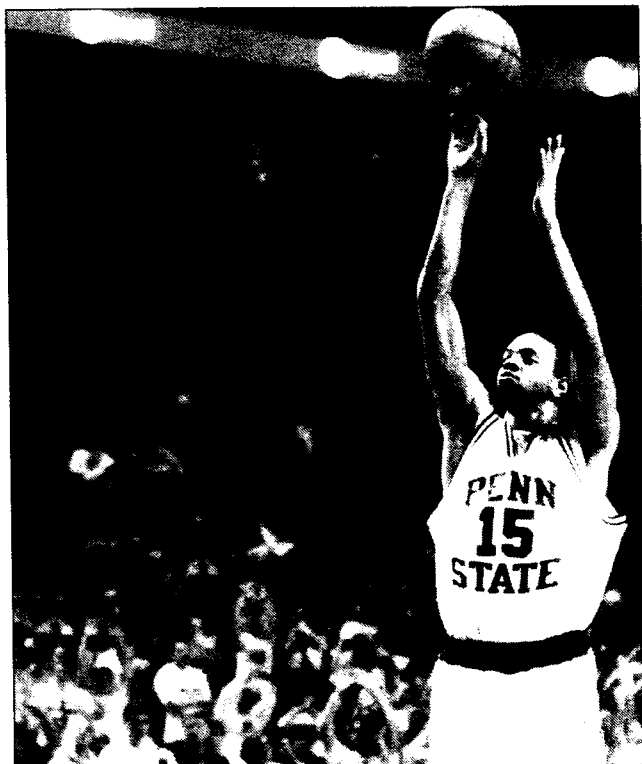
Jackson attacked the basket with regularity Saturday, earning eight foul shot attempts and converting on each of them.

Babb has also been a go-to scoring option for the Lions, hitting some clutch game-tying shots in the past five games.

But that didn't stop Battle from taking a playful jab at his teammate who is never afraid to pull the trigger.

"Chris is always gonna reach double figures. He takes enough 3s. He only needs to hit about four of them," Battle joked.

"He's been doing a good job, and D.J. is a veteran. He should be doing what he's doing the past couple games. Hopefully they continue doing well."



Peter Tesonero/Collegian

To e-mail reporter: slh5037@psu.edu David Jackson takes a foul shot after a Minnesota technical.

Lions recovering in week off

By Andrew Robinson
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Usually, three days away from competitive basketball can disrupt a team's rhythm. However, Talor Battle isn't sure his team is even in a rhythm.

"I don't know what rhythm we're in. We haven't won a game yet," Battle said. "Hopefully we can keep playing well. But at the same time we could just get over that hump and actually win a game instead of it being 'we were right there' and blowing it at the end."

With no game scheduled until Saturday, the Penn State men's basketball team is using this week to recover. With several players banged up, coach Ed DeChellis gave the team Sunday and Tuesday off and ran a light practice Monday.

Monday's practice involved a heavy dose of what DeChellis called "pass-and-catch" and shooting work.

The team emphasized that not having the players beating each other up in practice would benefit the team's recovery.

"The grind of this season really gets to you, and us having an off day now —

it's really beneficial to us," junior forward D.J. Jackson said. "We can get guys healthy and just work on us as a team and not have to worry about other teams and scouting yet. We can work on getting better."

While Battle acknowledged the importance of rest, the junior guard said he would much rather be competing midweek. After losing at the buzzer, Battle said he wants a chance for the Lions to "get that sour taste" out of their mouths.

After a stretch going back to Jan. 12 where the Lions played five of their eight games on the road, the players have a chance to get caught up on their classwork.

DeChellis said the team meets with its academic advisor on Fridays and none of the players have been saddled with too much work at this point in the semester.

"Guys are doing OK academically. They haven't had a whole lot of stuff yet," DeChellis said. "But I think in the next week to 10, days the midterms and stuff starts to hit. Then we've got two games next week on the road, so we're gearing up for that."

Jackson said he has a lot of class-

work this week, and with the team staying home, he can focus on school before worrying about Michigan State Saturday.

The forward said everyone on the team is in shape and the players are still going to be in the gym and shooting until the weekend.

Though the players understand the value of rest and recovery time, they want to be on the floor competing in front of a crowd.

However, until the game actually starts, the Lions will focus on improving and trying to win their first Big Ten game.

"The games are fun. That's when you get to showcase your talent in front of everybody," Jackson said. "Yeah you want to play, but at the same time we need to use this rest to our advantage and get rest and get better."

To e-mail reporter: adr5079@psu.edu



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Peter Tesonero/Collegian

Tim Frazier hides his face after the Lions' loss to Minnesota.

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