

Lions play well on tough road trip

By Emily Kaplan
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

It was nothing less than a daunting road trip.

The Penn State men's volleyball team spent most of Tuesday traveling — more than 10 hours waiting at airports and sitting on airplanes

MEN'S VOLLEYBALL

and buses. On Wednesday, it played defending national champion UC Irvine in front of a hostile crowd at the Anteaters' home gym. And on Friday and Saturday, it played two matches against two top-10 teams.

But by the end of it, the Nittany Lions returned home satisfied.

No. 9 Penn State edged No. 11 Irvine, fell to No. 4 BYU and upset No. 6 Long Beach State in the span of four days. But it wasn't so much the win-loss record as it was the effort that had the Lions feeling good about their tough West Coast swing.

"You know I'm happy about

going 2-1 on this trip, but I feel even better about the way we played," coach Mark Pavlik said. "I'm real pleased with our effort and the way our guys responded to some really good teams."

The Lions defeated the Anteaters in a five-set thriller, and Pavlik said they "played exceptionally hard" in a 3-1 loss to BYU. But it was the 3-0 (30-28, 30-28, 30-27) sweep of the 49ers in front of 879 at Long Beach State's Walter Pyramid that capped off what red-shirt sophomore Joe Sunder called "a highly successful weekend."

Sunder tallied 12 kills while Max Lipsitz recorded 15 and Will Price had 21. Junior Thomas Pereira, in his first career start, picked up nine digs, and the team had just 16 errors in the match that lasted only one hour and 32 minutes.

"I think we were all just happy that everything clicked," setter Edgardo Goas said. "And I think that we all come back with everyone just excited about volleyball right now."

Pavlik said it was the first time in his tenure his team swept Long Beach, let alone at the 49ers' home court. But it had the feel of a home game for the Lions.

Walter Pyramid — with a large contingent of local Penn State fans who Pavlik said were "vocal and energetic" — echoed with "We Are ..." chants for much of the night. And when Price aced match point, those fans erupted.

Sunder said the road trip, specifically the Long Beach win, will give the Lions momentum moving forward. He said the team played a high level of volleyball and proved it can make a splash at the NCAA championships this May.

"I went into this week expecting to play good competition and expecting to hang with them," Sunder said. "But I think we exceeded all of those expectations, and I think this is going to motivate us to get better. I'm excited for what's next."



Lynn McGowan/Collegian

To e-mail reporter: exk5049@psu.edu Edgardo Goas (7) and Max Lipsitz (9) defend the net Feb. against IPFW.

First Blue Sapphire Classic raises money

By Brandt Gelman
FOR THE COLLEGIAN



Chloe Elmer/Collegian

Blue Sapphire PJ Maierhofer (right) watches her student, Allison Gasperich, 15, Boalsburg, practice for competition Sunday in Rec Hall.

In 1978, Lori Uhazie became the first Blue Sapphire in Penn State history, but her family struggled financially with her twirling expenses and her tuition.

"There were other schools that gave out scholarships to their twirlers," Uhazie said. "But I didn't want to go anywhere else."

Uhazie does not want to see other twirlers continue to struggle financially, so with the help of friends and family and her own money, Uhazie started the David and Lori Uhazie Feature Twirler Scholarship Fund.

On Sunday, current Blue Sapphire PJ Maierhofer hosted the first-ever Blue Sapphire Baton Twirling Classic with proceeds of the competition going to Uhazie's scholarship.

There has likely never been as much hairspray and glitter in Rec Hall, as young baton

twirlers from Pennsylvania, Virginia, New York, Maryland and other states competed.

Uhazie was proud of how the event came together.

"Rec Hall is a great facility for the event," Uhazie said. "I know that they are already talking about having the event next year."

Heather Bean, the Majorette coach, said the Blue Band had been working on this event since the fall.

"This was a lot of hard work because this is the first competition of its kind in central Pennsylvania," Bean said.

Bean was proud of Maierhofer, who was the first recipient of the scholarship, and said she was glad to see the Blue Sapphire's vision come together.

"Sometimes you have a dream, and you never know whether it will happen," said Maierhofer, who has received the scholarship for five years. "It is nice to look around and see that your dream is coming true."

Maierhofer said she had been in Rec Hall often and always thought it would be the perfect venue for a baton twirling competition.

Maierhofer said getting this competition together is one way for her to give back to Penn State.

"Penn State has always been so supportive of me," Maierhofer said. "I wanted the twirling world to see that there are schools out there that look at their twirler and are impressed."

Maierhofer said the scholarship is beneficial, but it still does not cover a lot of tuition.

She said the purpose of the event is to increase the scholarship from the majorettes' end, especially because they have won eight championships and are supposed to be the best.

"As I look back on my five years at Penn State," Maierhofer said, "if I can give back by making this event happen, than it is just fun for me."

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