

Scheduling

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five-hour radius because it cuts down on travel costs.

This also allows opposing teams to build a stronger fanbase at Beaver Stadium.

The geographically close teams are ideal to Penn State because the expenses incurred total less than that of a school farther away. That in turn means Penn State has the potential to hand out a smaller paycheck to the visiting school.

"The proximity for us is a really good fit," Wistrick said of Akron. "It's a good place to play and it allows our fans to make the trip."

Along with these benefits, the monetary compensation goes a long way in these various athletic programs.

Trevor Parks, the sports information director of football at Youngstown State, said the money provided by Penn State as well as other BCS schools can go toward improving facilities, scholarships and enhancing training tools.

Strollo added one of his primary focuses since becoming athletic director in 2001 has been to improve the facilities on Youngstown State's campus. Guarantee games help him accomplish that goal.

As is the case with Penn State being a self-supporting university, schools like Youngstown State and Akron rely on the football programs' guarantee games to provide for the rest of the athletic programs and budget.

Currently, Akron's guarantee games help provide the funding of 19 varsity athletic teams. Youngstown State's provide for 16.

"When it comes to our budget, every dollar from football goes into our general funds," Wistrick said.

For these schools, they have to draw a line dividing where guarantee games can help them and hurt them.

Spoo said his team would have to play a nearly perfect game to even contend with the Lions, and Wolford said the cards are stacked against Youngstown State but understands one game doesn't define its season.

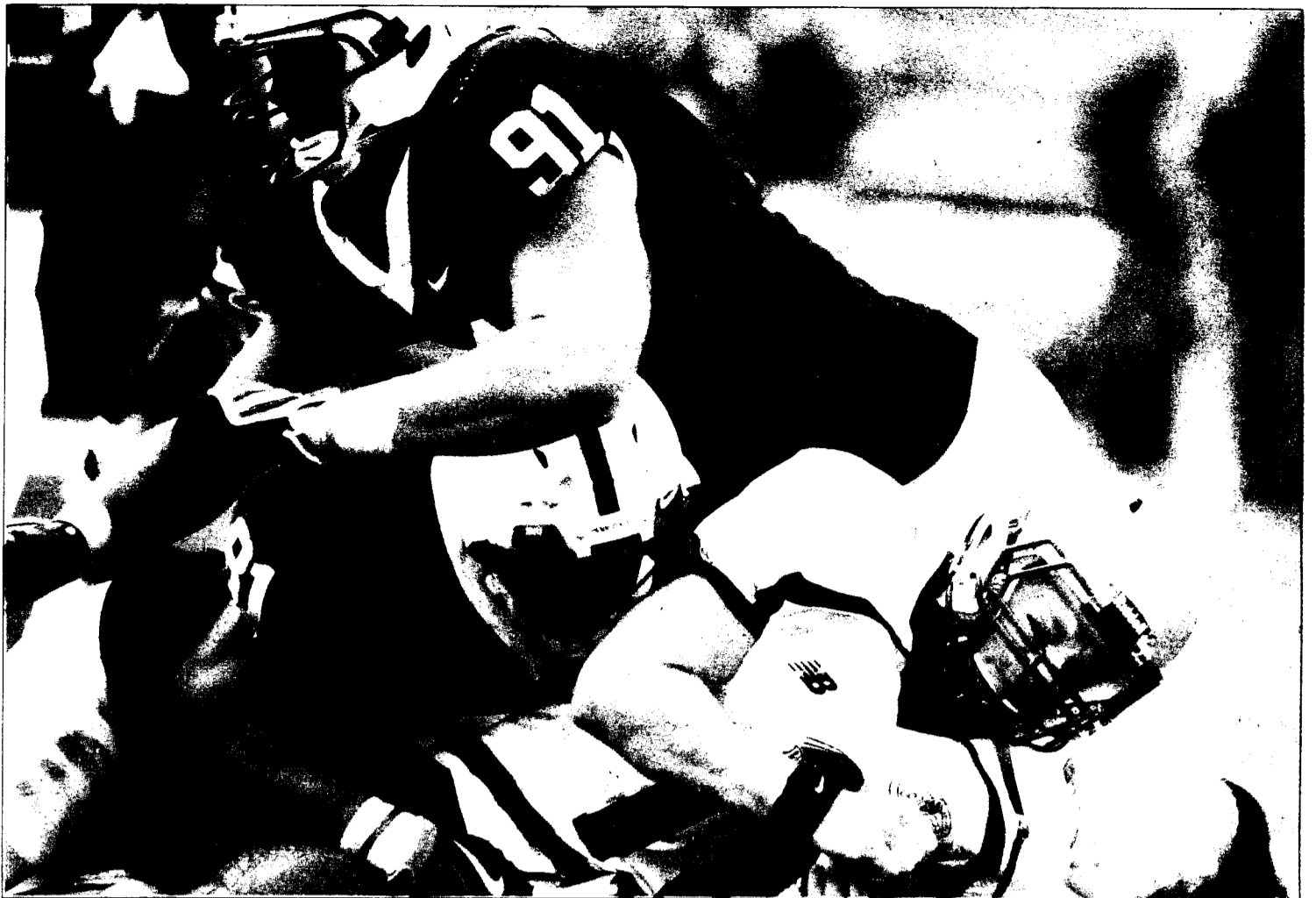
When it comes to scheduling, many of these schools said their teams understand it is both a money and competition factor that needs to be taken into consideration.

"We have to be careful with our scheduling," Strollo said. "We don't want to hurt ourselves, but we have to pay the bills."

A business of the future?

Even though the 2010 football season is six months away, Ganter is already filling spots as far in advance as the 2018 season for Penn State.

While planning a schedule eight years ahead may sound excessive,



Former defensive tackle Jared Odrick and then-sophomore defensive end Jack Crawford combine to sack former Eastern Illinois quarterback Jake Christensen in the Lions' 52-3 Oct. 10 at Beaver Stadium. The Panthers were the third FCS foe on the Lions' schedule in the last four years.

that is what Ganter's job has come to.

Having to find spots for both guarantee and marquee games — games that will be the highlight for the nonconference season — can prove to be a challenging task.

This upcoming season, Penn State's marquee nonconference game will feature Alabama, the defending national champion.

However, the Lions' marquee nonconference game in 2009 was against Syracuse. When scheduled six or seven years ago, the Orange were a top-notch team, but over time its stature dwindled.

"There is a danger in scheduling so far in advance," Ganter said. "There's a fine line in the competition."

On the other side of the spectrum, guarantee games can take months to finalize, with aspects such as television contracts and bartering between various teams.

Most recently, Ganter has been dealing with the Miami Hurricanes for the past four months, trying to negotiate compensation for the re-airing of a potential game.

While Miami may be a worthy opponent now, it is always a worry for Ganter and Curley that it, like many other opponents, won't be as competitive if and when the game is played.

"The BCS side has added an interesting dynamic," Curley said.

"FCS schools are attractive from a scheduling standpoint, but then you have strength of schedule as well. It's a juggling act."

Another point of frustration for Ganter that sometimes leaves him on the phone for hours a day is the back-and-forth talks between Penn State and other schools in deciding guaranteed contracts.

Ganter said an FCS school will call Penn State to receive its offering price. The school will then call other prospects and see if they would be willing to pay more. The process can be repeated multiple times before a resolution is met.

But Ganter can find some comfort in Akron because Wistrick was an athletic administrator at Minnesota and Wisconsin for eight years.

Wistrick and Curley keep in close contact and have had conversations about the Zips coming to Happy Valley every few seasons.

Acron's scheduling ties with Penn State remind Prato of a time nearly 50 years ago when teams would only schedule two or three years in advance.

"It's always been a business. It's just bigger now," Prato said. "I'm sure Joe Paterno would've never thought it would get this far and would now be this cutthroat. It's really built up to an arms race."

Forming a competitive schedule proved an even tougher feat for

Penn State before it began competing in the Big Ten Conference in 1993.

Curley, who had Ganter's job of scheduling while the Lions were an independent, said it became challenging to put together a schedule for the eight weeks of the season when other conference-affiliated teams were playing.

"As independent it becomes challenging to stay that way, which is one reason why we ended up with a conference affiliation," Curley said.

"We could see that it was going to be hard to put a football schedule together."

However, no matter the conference or division a team is in, the business aspect of college football is prevalent.

Guarantee games are not unique just to the BCS schools. FCS teams such as Youngstown State will pay even smaller schools to compete in their stadium, Strollo said. These schools have included Austin Peay, Butler and Valparaiso.

These games, along with guarantee games for Youngstown State and the schools it plays, create revenue for athletic programs and help the economy of local communities, Wolford said.

He sees these guarantee games for Penn State as a way to take advantage of an influx of people during football weekends, when a

profit for the community can occur.

"We need the money to help pay bills, and it really helps all the schools we pay," Wolford said. "A negative thought about these guarantee games would be crazy."

With all of these aspects considered, Akron believes in one main goal when deciding future games.

"It is very much a business, and you don't really know where it will end," Wistrick said. "We have to remember that there is a difference in professional football and college football."

"We still have to be focused most on our student athletes."

With both the benefits and downfalls at hand, it has been a question as to how long this practice can continue.

Prato, a Penn State football historian, said he has no idea what the future holds for Penn State and its guarantee games.

Others believe that it is a byproduct of the economy and market at the time.

When it comes to how much teams are willing to pay, it will go as far as the market lets it go and what it will then be worth for a home game," Strollo said. "It is all about supply and demand, leverage and realizing things in time cost more."

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Gordon Wood, the Alva O. Way University Professor and Professor of History Emeritus at Brown University is the author of *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (1992), for which he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for History. His latest book is entitled *Empires of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic 1789-1815* (2009) has just been awarded the American History Book Prize by the New-York Historical Society

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Lecture is free and open to the public

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If available, free tickets will be offered to the General Public beginning Friday, March 19.

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