

Track improves players

By Andrew Robinson
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

From time to time, Maddy Evans finds herself running around the track at Rec Hall, not to train but just for the love of running.

WOMEN'S SOCCER

While soccer has taken over as her main sport, the freshman midfielder can't let go of the countless hours she spent running track in high school.

But these days, Evans needs music to keep going.

"It was a love-hate relationship [with track]," said Evans, an all-state finisher in the 800-meters her senior year.

"I dreaded every day of practice, but at the end of it I would love it. It would feel so great, and I'd be ready for the next day. And it has paid off fitness-wise."

Evans' track background is a common trait among her teammates on the women's soccer team, and it brings a unique element to its game.

The ex-track runners have found the grind of running has given them an edge in fitness on the field.

One thing the ex-runners said is there is a difference between

track fitness and soccer fitness, and senior Maura Ryan said it's physical as well as mental.

"Track is such a hard sport because it's individual. It's pretty much you against the clock," Ryan said.

"In soccer, you're running the entire game but you're changing your speed so many more times. In track you see the other girls in front of you, and you think, 'I have to catch up to this girl just to win' and you translate that onto the field."

Sophomore Carly Niness, who holds nine track records at Conestoga High School in Berwyn, said the track experience helps her get back into fitness easier.

"Getting back into shape takes a lot less out of you. Just through all of the terrible workouts, I think it's been a lot easier to get through," Niness said.

"On the field, it helps out with endurance. Even if you're a sprinter, you have that endurance from doing the workouts."

Playing the wing involves the most up-and-down-the-field running of any position, and Evans said the wings call it a "track meet."

Evans said she ran in high school to keep her speed up solely to help her when soccer began.

Starting in the fall, running encompassed a yearlong way for Evans to prepare for soccer.

"I did cross country to get my base, then I would do indoor track," Evans said.

"That was all speed so by spring I was ready to go. My fitness was at the highest it would be all season, then throughout the season I would try to keep track workouts going."

Ryan starred on the track at Gwynedd Mercy Academy, winning a gold medal in 4x800- and 4x400-meter races at the 2005 Penn Relays before deciding she wanted to pursue soccer in college.

Playing centre back in her junior year, Ryan said she felt her fitness slipping and moved to the outside this fall, even playing two games as a winger.

"I felt so restrained, and I even told coach, 'I don't feel like I'm beneficial in here, but if I can run, I can run all game if you want me to,'" Ryan said.

"Being the middle you're so restrained where you can run, but being on the outside you have the whole sideline to be free and make as many runs as you want."

With soccer being a hybrid of speed and fitness, coach Erica Walsh said she looks for players with multi-sport backgrounds



Collegian file photo
Maddy Evans (19) and some of her teammates ran track in high school and spend time in the offseason running track to train. PSU coach Erica Walsh scouts players with multi-sport backgrounds like track and field because soccer is a hybrid of speed and fitness.

when scouting, especially track athletes.

But if a prospect plays other sports like basketball or softball, it makes them more appealing as a recruit.

"You look at a Mo Ryan, Carly [Niness], Megan Monroig and they're naturally fit," Walsh said.

"That doesn't mean that they can do nothing and be fine, but they really keep themselves fit. It's a way of life, and you can test them in early spring when everybody else is relatively unfit, and they're still off the charts."

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Collegian
PSU's Ryan Wolf (left) tries to block a Springfield hitter Feb 6 in the South Gym at Rec Hall. The Lions are focused after a California road trip.

Lions focused after Calif. trip

By Eric Book
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

The automatic lights in the Penn State men's volleyball offices coincidentally turned off.

It happened as coach Mark Pavlik was in the process of explaining his team can't get content with its recent success and think it can simply "flip a switch" and play well.

The Nittany Lions just returned home from going 2-1 on a spring break trip to California, where they faced three ranked opponents. Riding that momentum, the Lions feel they are playing the best volleyball of the season.

Gauging the Lions' level of play can be difficult against over-matched EIVA teams, against which the Lions dropped just one set the last two seasons. So Pavlik went into the road trip looking to use the games as a measuring stick.

The Lions play in California resulted in a promising feeling looking forward.

"California volleyball is completely different than EIVA volleyball."

Ryan Wolf
sophomore outside hitter

MEN'S VOLLEYBALL

In the first match, the Lions grinded out a five-set victory over defending national champion UC Irvine in a match the Lions weren't playing as well as they wanted.

In the second match of the trip, they didn't give up when solid play against No. 4 BYU wasn't resulting in leads on the scoreboard.

Pavlik said the Lions had everything going against them against No. 6 Long Beach State — their third match in four days — in the final match of the Active Ankle Classic. And, the 49ers rested their starters against St. Francis the night before facing the Lions.

But Penn State didn't let the surrounding on-paper negatives get in the way. The Lions swept the 49ers on their court in a competitive match where saw each set come within three points.

Pavlik said the Lions gained

knowledge of playing well for a long period of time from their 2,500-mile trip to Irvine and Long Beach.

The Lions knew they could out-play teams in less competitive matches, but now they know they can win big points in big matches.

"California volleyball is completely different than EIVA volleyball," sophomore Ryan Wolf said. "It's more physical, and now we know we can compete with some of the best teams out there."

Now, Pavlik's concern is his confident team will fall into the trap of knowing it doesn't take its best effort to defeat some of its conference opponents.

Wolf said the Lions have momentum and are ready to compete against whoever is on the other side of the net.

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