

# Lions looking for boost

By Brendan Monahan  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

An upward climb may be an understatement in describing what faces the men's lacrosse team at this point in the season.

## MEN'S LACROSSE

The Nittany Lions find themselves with a 0-5 record, and things don't get easier anytime soon. This weekend, the Lions face No. 8 Duke in Durham, N.C., and the Lions are 0-8 against the storied Blue Devil program. The easygoing, tight-knit bunch can't pinpoint a reason for its unsuccessful start but know if anything can give it the boost it needs, it's a win against the recognized Blue Devils.

"They're not untouchable," midfielder Colton Vosburgh said. "It's not going to make our season if we beat Duke. It's a start."

Penn State's 0-5 hole puts the Lions out of position for one of the nine at-large bids for the NCAA tournament. So, most

likely, in order to make the tournament, they must win the Colonial Athletic Association.

The conference has a four team tournament at the end of the season to decide its automatic qualifier, and CAA play doesn't begin until an April 3 home game with Massachusetts. In short, the Lions still have plenty of time to turn things around.

And they started doing so with a good week of practice. Vosburgh said the Lions are communicating with each other better and letting one another know when a player isn't playing to his potential.

Attacker Matt Mackrides felt the losses were the result of the team as a whole and didn't blame either the defense or the offense. With the Lions' confidence down, the sophomore knows what a win against the Blue Devils would do for him and his teammates.

"This could be really really big for our team," Mackrides said. "If we came out and played well and got a win against them, it would definitely turn it

"This could be really, really big for our team."

Matt Mackrides  
sophomore attacker

around for us as far as attitude."

Team tri-captain Joe Britt sees the Duke game as a chance to get that elusive first win and doesn't want to focus on its implications of possibly turning the season around.

Though not turning the ball over and cherishing possessions have been emphasized points of improvement, Britt also felt the rough start was the result of a team-wide problem. The Lions need to play a full four quarters instead of having nonperformance periods.

"We know we can play," Britt said. "We haven't showed it, but in each and every one of our games there's been glimpses of us playing awesome."



Amanda August/Collegian

Captain Joe Britt passes during Penn State's season-opening loss to Robert Morris on Feb. 20. The Lions travel to play Duke, hoping to avoid going 0-6.

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# PSU hopes to correct missed routines

By Kevin Kline  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Nik Virbitsky knows his team's best event: the floor exercise.

Unfortunately, the senior all-arounder has been the best two events at Oklahoma.

## MEN'S GYMNASTICS

Penn State is ranked fifth and ninth in the country on floor and vault, while the Sooners are ranked first on floor and vault and are no worse than fourth in any of the four other events.

The Nittany Lions host Oklahoma at 7 p.m. Saturday in the regular season finale and will need a clean performance to upset the Sooners with postseason play looming.

"You can't just look at that vault and floor and judge of their good events and our score of ours, too," Virbitsky said. "It doesn't really matter."

"It's the total score at the end that matters. You just gotta look at it from event to event."

While contributing on floor exercise,

vault and high bar. Virbitsky will be competing against redshirt junior Ian Jackson, his former high school classmate at Central Dauphin High School in Harrisburg.

The duo competed together on the club level with Artistic Sports Academy Plus in Harrisburg.

Jackson competes on rings, too, and is eighth in the country on the event. Oklahoma also boasts the defending NCAA all-around champion in junior Steven Legendre, as well as freshman Jake Dalton, who is ranked second in the country on both the floor exercise and vault.

"They put some big scores up and have got some great personnel," coach Randy Jepson said. "We expect them to be very solid and tough, but our game is usual is ourselves. And I wanna see our team go out and have a better hit percentage."

The hit percentage has haunted the Lions all season. After each meet, Jepson calculates the number of routines that are "hit" or "missed." A miss means the gymnast suffers a fall or commits a major error during the performance.

The team has not hit above 75 percent of its routines all season, Jepson said.

And with about 36 routines each meet, that means there are around 10 or 11 routines that are missed each time, he said.

"It's just not good enough," Jepson said.

"You can't miss that many routines and expect to be in the hunt."

Against the Sooners, Penn State will have one final opportunity to correct the mistakes and eliminate the missed routines before the Big Ten championships begin on April 2.

But it doesn't matter how good the team is across the floor, sophomore Miguel Pineda said. The Lions need to focus on themselves and take advantage of the adrenaline from their final home meet of the season, a double dual with the Penn State women taking on Nebraska.

"We need to put a full lineup of hits together on each event all the way through the meet and carry the momentum through and not let it die out," Pineda said.

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Andrea D'Amico/Collegian

Penn State freshman Parker Raque competes in the floor exercise Feb. 20 against Illinois. The Lions host No. 2 Oklahoma at 7 p.m. Saturday.

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