

# Lions' schedule offers motivation

By Eddie Gentile  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Forget the No. 6 ranking, the 11 wins in the last 12 matches and the two victories over ranked opponents last weekend.

## MEN'S VOLLEYBALL

The Penn State men's volleyball team still feels it needs to improve to justify the "farm school" in the East being mentioned in the same breath as powerhouses out West.

"When you're in a school that's not located in the hotbed [out West], there should be a little bit of chip on your shoulder to show the rest of the country you belong where the top teams are," assistant coach Jay Hosack said.

The Nittany Lions realize in order to shake said chip, they cannot falter in a single match against undervalued East Coast teams like tonight's match at St. Francis.

The Lions were possible victims of a West Coast bias in the latest AVCA polls. All of the top-10 teams, save Penn State, are located no farther east than BYU in Utah.

All of the teams ranked above Penn State have more losses than the Lions' three.

That "farm school" reputation seems to follow the team as well.

While playing at Long Beach State last weekend, fans dressed up in stereotypical, overall-enforced farmer's outfits, coach Mark Pavlik said.

"We have a chip on our shoulder from being stuck out in the East," senior captain Will Price said. "When we do get the opportunity to play a team like that it's a huge treat for us."

But Price and the Lions use the disrespect as a motivation to improve for the next time they play a "hotbed" team.

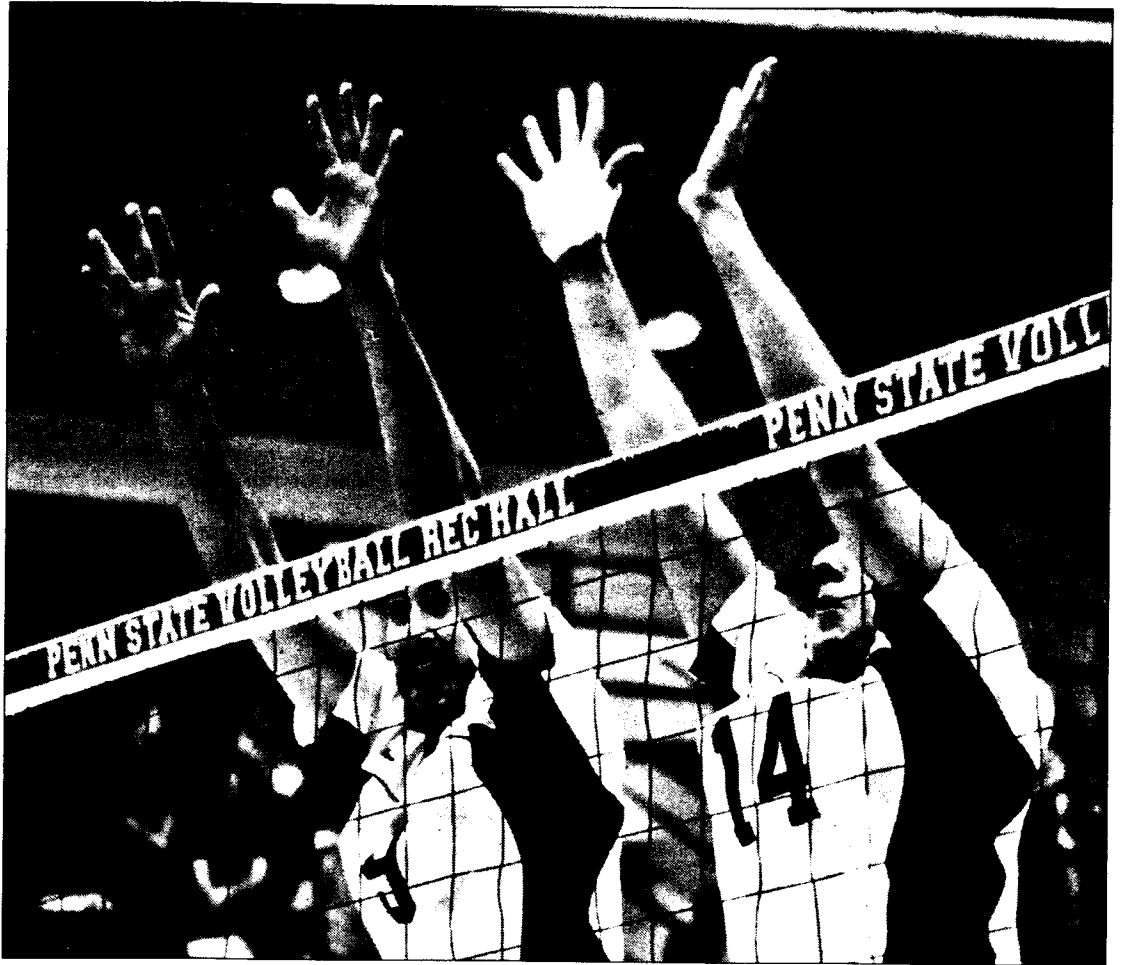
Everyday, the team packs into the multimedia room and breaks down film with the coaches. Each practice, the team practices ball control on its own side of the net in hopes of making both passes and kills squeaky-clean. And in each match when the Lions are favored to dominate, the team looks forward to unleashing its freshly honed skills.

"You go into a match against Long Beach, UC-Irvine, BYU, and there's an intensity in the match. Going against a St. Francis, it has to come from us to just take care of our side of the net," Price said.

"It's not, 'Oh, we get to play St. Francis tonight.'

"It's, 'Oh, we get a chance to be crisp, play clean.'"

The goal, setter Edgardo Goas



Senior Max Lipsitz (9) and sophomore Ryan Wolf leap for a block attempt against Laval on Feb. 13.

Andrew Beam/Collegian

said, is to eventually separate Penn State from the teams who have more losses yet remain ranked higher.

Goas and his teammates don't worry about letdowns against

lesser foes either, as Pavlik tells his players the most amount of respect they can give any team is to go out and beat them.

The Lions will have a chance to prove they are no ordinary East

Coast team this weekend. The team travels to St. Francis tonight before hosting No. 14 Ohio State Sunday.

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# Eramo brings experience from junior college ranks

By Stephen Hennessey  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

As a junior college player in the heart of Big 12 country, Mario Eramo wore Big Ten shirts.

While Eramo's teammates always wore Texas or Oklahoma shirts, the Houston native wore Iowa T-shirts. His Ohio-based family also bleeds scarlet for the Buckeyes.

It was Penn State, though, that gave Eramo the opportunity to fulfill his dream to play Division I baseball at a big-time school.

Through 11 games for the Nittany Lions this season, Eramo started eight. He's played outfield, catcher and designated hitter for the Lions (4-8). He has produced too — Eramo is tied for second on the team in walks, tied for fourth on the team in RBIs and is batting .267.

It's not surprising in the least Eramo has impacted the team already, said Eramo's coach at Blinn Junior College, Harvey McIntyre.

"He always gave 110 percent effort in everything we asked him to do," McIntyre said. "He was going to give everything he had in what we asked him to do. Obviously, it panned out for him. He's at a great place,

"The opportunity I have, I want to take full advantage of it."

Mario Eramo  
junior utility player

## BASEBALL



Eramo

and I know he really enjoys it."

Eramo caught the attention of Penn State assistant coach Jason Bell as a sophomore playing at the Texas Junior College All-Star Game in 2008. Bell called Eramo the next day and gave him the chance to sign a scholarship at a Big Ten school.

"It was something as a little kid growing up I wanted to do," Eramo said. "The opportunity I have, I want to take full advantage of it. It's a great experience, and I'm having a great time."

Sam Houston State aggressively recruited the junior to stay in Texas, but Penn State provided everything Eramo hoped for — a big school with student camaraderie, a good education and an opportunity to make an impact on a baseball squad.

As Eramo rounded the bases after his first home run against Dallas Baptist last week, he felt as if "a monkey jumped off" his back.

Still, head coach Robbie Wine thinks Eramo can improve, and the utility player agrees.

Eramo said he tried to do too much at the

plate during the team's last road trip in Texas.

"Baseball is a game of adjustments. You're going to fail," Eramo said. "But at the same time, you gotta know that when you are failing, just relax and get back to work the next day."

McIntyre said Eramo worked to improve every day.

It was hard for him to pinpoint an example of Eramo's work ethic because it was consistent every day.

It was that approach that caught Bell's eye, too.

Bell, who traveled down to Waco, Texas, to watch the all-star game, said Eramo didn't play well that day.

Bell could still sense Eramo was a player who could contribute consistent effort for the Lions.

"He didn't try to overdo stuff. He was just himself out there," Bell said of Eramo. "He's a guy that will do anything for the team. He'll go to any position. He just wants to be in the lineup."

Upon arriving at Penn State, Eramo made it clear he was a team-first player, Bell said.

Junior outfielder Heath Johnson, also a junior college transfer, said Eramo's personality is great for the team.

Eramo has a short memory. If the Lions lose, the junior college transfer carries himself with the same light-hearted persona, Johnson said.



ONLINE

Penn State has gone back to basics this week after dropping seven-straight games: [psucollegian.com](http://psucollegian.com)

"Mario is the guy that everybody goes to when you need a laugh," Johnson said. "You're only as good as your next at-bat so that's his approach."

"We'll walk into the room, and we'll instantly turn on our iPod and start dancing."

"He's the funny guy. He gets everyone going in a good mood."

At practice Tuesday, junior pitcher Calvin Grumley threw a bullpen session to Eramo. Grumley struggled to spot his breaking ball effectively. As the coaches instructed Grumley, Eramo gave a thumbs-up or shouted encouragement after an effective pitch.

"Whatever you did there, do that again," Eramo shouted out.

That experience is Eramo's biggest asset to the team.

"I've grown into that. I didn't really say [when I started catching]," Eramo said. "But I've become more mature and wiser behind the plate."

"That's definitely helped me to grow as a better catcher and help pitchers get better too."

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