

Upset

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program history. For the rest of the EIVA — a conference in which Penn State has captured the last 11 championships — it was an encouraging sign anything is possible.

"There's no question Penn State is still the team to beat," Springfield coach Charlie Sullivan said.

"But it just shows that any given team on any given day can hit well, play well and win. And I think a lot of teams will take notice."

Sullivan said the Lions are still the favorite to win the EIVA tournament in May.

On Friday night, just 24 hours before the shocking upset, Penn State easily swept Princeton at Rec Hall.

The match, which took just an hour and a half, secured a first-place finish in the regular season and clinched a quarterfinal bye and home-court advantage throughout the tournament for the Lions.

"I don't think anyone in the EIVA or around the country expected them to go down to Rutgers and have any problems," Juniata coach Jeremy Price said. "And I don't think this loss means

anything for them. Coach [Mark] Pavlik will use it as a motivational tool. But psychologically, everyone else sees that it can be done."

Penn State — which BYU coach Shawn Patchell calls "the Beasts of the East" — has dominated the EIVA since its inception.

The Lions have won 21 EIVA Championships, including a 228-12 record against conference opponents since 1985, when official statistics were first kept.

And until a Feb. 6 match against Springfield, they had a streak of 23 consecutive victories over EIVA opponents without losing a set.

But Saturday's match showed the Lions are vulnerable.

Gone, perhaps, is their mystique, the air of invincibility in the conference.

Rutgers-Newark coach Karl France has been receiving calls, texts and e-mails from coaches around the league offering congratulations.

He said no one asked for specific scouting tips, but he uploaded the match video to the EIVA's database and saw it has been watched several times since Saturday night.

"Yes, Penn State is still the best team in the league," France said. "But we played well. Very, very well. So it just shows what can happen."

But the Lions are hoping it doesn't happen again.

Setter Edgardo Goas said he knows EIVA teams have developed a different perception of Penn State.

"They will definitely think we're beatable now," he said. "Every team that would come on to the court would think there's no way for them to beat us. But now that Rutgers-Newark did it."

Rumbaugh, who calls Penn State "the cream of the crop," said he doesn't know when another EIVA team will pull out a victory. But he said, if anything, the upset shows the league is improving.

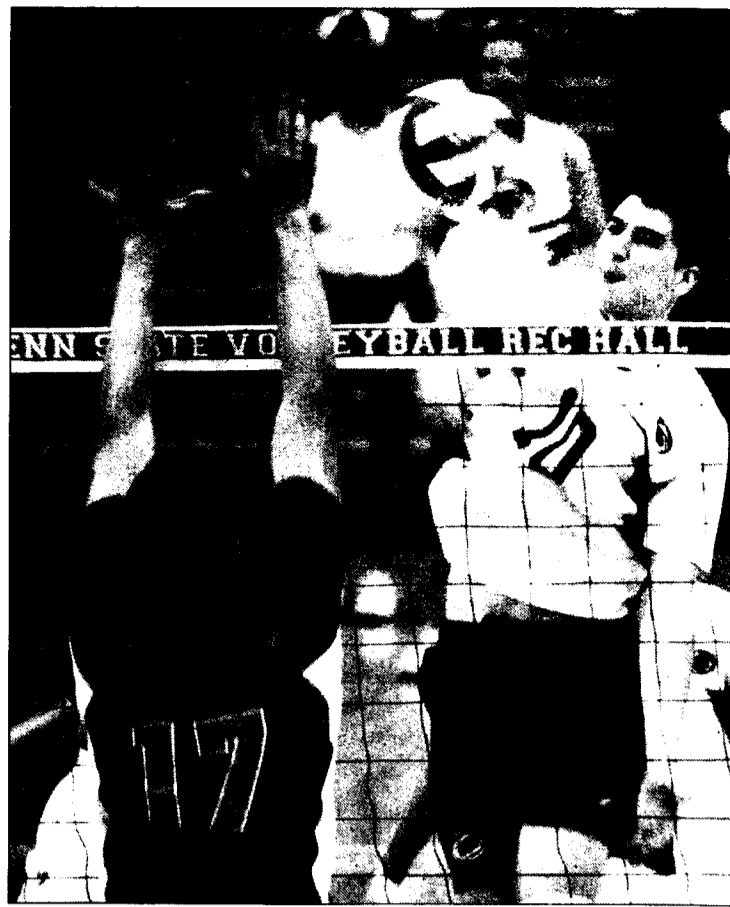
Pavlik agreed, saying the league's setup — where each year the top team in the Hay Division moves up and the bottom team of the Tait Division moves down — allows programs to "develop and get better."

Some Penn State players don't think the achievement gap is closing. Senior co-captain Will Price said the Lions should be fine.

"I honestly can't comment on how the rest of the teams in the EIVA think about us," Price said.

"We had a bad loss. I don't think that changes a lot with our team. We're still going to win the EIVA's. That's not really an issue."

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Middle hitter Nick Turko (10) attacks the volleyball against Princeton in Rec Hall. The loss to Rutgers-Newark on Saturday shocked the EIVA.

Chloe Elmer/Collegian

Coleman

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bittersweet opportunity for coach Coleman, we're obviously on the sweet end of it. But it was very difficult for coach Coleman to leave her mentor."

In Coleman's first season with Penn State, the Lady Lions went 13-18 and finished toward the bottom of the Big Ten conference. This past season, the Lions ended the season 17-14, including a trip back to the postseason for the first time in five years.

Coleman's ability to develop players like Tyra Grant, Brianna O'Rourke and Alex Bentley was a major factor in Penn State's gradual progress.

This past season, she played a key role in bringing nationally ranked Maggie Lucas to Penn State, and in two years she helped the Lions get two top-20 recruiting classes, according to ESPN's HOOPGurlz.

Kennedy-Dixon said Coleman being the recruiting coordinator was a very important piece of experience to have before becoming a head coach and her recruiting skills made her an attractive candidate for the job.

"She is just an all-around great person that I know will come back to her alma mater and take this program to a level where it is respected within the conference as well as the national level," Kennedy-Dixon said. "Again, we are just very excited to have coach Coleman and we certainly thank Coach Washington for her mentoring and her developing Coach Coleman into one of the fine, up-and-coming coaches that we know she will be."

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Regionals

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Ohio State in the regular season but then beat them Saturday at the Big Ten championships. The Lions defeated Maryland in a quad-meet March 7.

Penn State qualified for nationals last year for the first time since 2005 after it placed second in its regional competition in Raleigh, N.C. The Lions think this year's home crowd gives them an advantage and will help them advance to nationals. The last time regionals was held at Rec

Hall was in 2008, when Penn State missed qualifying by a mere .075.

Shepherd said if the meet sees a big turnout, it would mean a lot for the gymnasts, and the vocal support would help the Lions.

Senior co-captain Rosie Smith agreed with her coach.

"It'd be huge," Smith said.

"Being No. 3, I'm sure there are people who are doubting and stuff. ... I think the crowd will go crazy when we do do well, and place second and make it to nationals. It's going to be really exciting."

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Tuneup

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three games of the weekend

With this week's final tune-up before conference play, the team is trying to carry over its success against the Pride.

"Everyone's got their confidence back," outfielder Sean Deegan said. "Now we go into these midweek games and keep that momentum and keep that

same flow. Be aggressive and play our game, and that should bring us right into Big Tens."

And while the team is feeling much more confident, senior infielder Louie Picconi said the key has been putting things together to capitalize on its opponents' miscues. Picconi said the team needs to continue sharpening its skills while staying relaxed against Kent State this week.

"You don't want to panic too early, especially heading into Big

Tens," he said. "When everyone stays calm and keeps their confidence on the field and off the field, then we'll see the results."

The first game on Tuesday will be played at Kent State while the second will be played at Medlar Field at Lubrano Park Wednesday night, marking the third and fourth times the Lions and Golden Flash will play this season.

Penn State split the two games earlier this season at the Coca-

Cola Classic — losing the second — making the upcoming two games a little bit different because the two teams know what each other will bring.

"I think it will be a little more strategic but I think it will be a good tune-up," Deegan said. "They are a good team, but I definitely think we can beat them. I think it would be good to get two wins before we go into Illinois."

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Penn State infielder Louie Picconi (left) and the Nittany Lion baseball team have one more series before opening Big Ten play.

Meghan Russell/Collegian

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- Selecting top management of Collegian Inc.
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Patricia Hartranft
Collegian Inc., James Building
123 S. Burrowes St.
State College, PA 16801-3882

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1. Reasons for seeking a directorship.
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The Daily
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