

# Early deficit too much for Penn State

By Ryan Loy  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

The Nittany Lion pitchers struggled early to throw strikes, while the Lion hitters couldn't avoid them in Tuesday's 9-8 loss at Kent State.

**BASEBALL**

The Golden Flashes took advantage of two walks and a hit batter in the bottom of the first, when David Lyon hit a two-run double to left field to give the Flashes the early lead. The next inning, Jared Humphreys hit an RBI double and later scored on an error to give Kent State a 4-1 advantage.

Penn State's Mario Eramo was the lone Lion to have early suc-

cess against Kent State starter Kyle Hallock, who struck out seven of the first 11 batters he faced.

"He did a good job of locating in and out and had good speeds," Eramo said of Hallock. "When you have someone like that, offensively you just have to fight him, and we did that."

Eramo connected on a pitch up in the zone and hit a solo home run for the Lions' first run.

The Lions (9-13) took a brief lead after a five-run fourth inning that caused the Flashes to go to

their bullpen. Michael Glantz had a double with the bases loaded that scored two runs. Elliot Searer followed with a two-RBI triple and later scored on a wild pitch to give the Lions a 6-4 lead.

While Searer was on deck, he knew he'd get a chance to bat with runners on base — an area he said he'd struggled with in past situations. When he stepped to the plate, Searer used an observation to his advantage.

"With runners on second and third, I knew he'd be hesitant to throw off-speed stuff," Searer said.

"I got ahead in the count, 2-0, and looked for a fastball."

The lead didn't last long, as three walks powered a Kent State rally in the bottom of the fourth inning that resulted in a 7-6 Flashes lead. They added two runs against Mike Pierce in the fifth before being held scoreless in its final three at-bats. Pierce and Steven Hill combined for 4.2 strong innings of relief. After the Lions allowed eight walks in the first 3.1 innings, Pierce and Hill didn't surrender any free passes.

Glantz said command was the key to Pierce and Hill's success.

"They threw strikes. That's all you have to do," he said. "They made the batters put the ball in play and get themselves out."

The Lions drew within one run in the sixth when Glantz and Searer crossed the plate to make it 9-8, but that's how the game would remain.

Penn State's six through nine hitters combined for six runs and six RBIs.

Searer said hitters near the bottom of the order are trying to get on base and use their speed to make things happen.

Despite the narrow loss, Searer believes each player battled to get back in the game.

"Early deficits are going to happen," Searer said. "You need to be a baseball player and go out and battle."

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Wine

# Ettl handles pressures on uneven bars

By Jared Shanker  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

There was a myriad of thoughts running through Natalie Ettl's head.

The anchor on the uneven bars for the No. 14 Penn State women's gym-

**WOMEN'S GYMNASTICS**

nastics team, Ettl was the last Nittany Lion to perform Saturday at the Big Ten championships. Caught in a close battle with Michigan, Ettl wondered if her routine could be the deciding factor between Penn State's first-ever Big Ten title or Michigan's fourth straight.

She recalled all the trials and tribulations throughout her career, including enduring multiple knee surgeries. And to top it all off, Ettl knew the Olympic gymnast who made one of her bar skills famous was not only in the house but was critiquing her in front of a live TV audience.

The sophomore handled the pressure from all directions, and Ettl saved the best for last as the final bar routine performed at the

Big Ten championships was the winning one. Ettl scored a 9.925 to secure Big Ten uneven bars gold and help the Lions take second place for the first time since 2005.

"Natalie did a great job," said Lions coach Steve Shephard.

"She handled [the pressure]. She was awesome and deserved to win."

It didn't look as if Ettl would find herself on the medal stand a few hours earlier during warm-ups. Having trouble with the landing mats, calling them "dead," Ettl struggled with her dismount. She didn't land one dismount. To protect her surgically repaired right knee, she doesn't practice her dismount during the touch warm-ups before bar routines start. That didn't matter though, as Ettl landed the only dismount that counted.

As she stood waiting to hear the results, Ettl couldn't help but reflect on how easily this moment could have been taken from her just a few years earlier. In high school, Ettl tore the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) in her right knee twice and also suffered a torn meniscus. She never thought she would be competing at Big

Tens following the procedures and stumbling blocks and was taken aback when Ettl found out she had not only placed, but won.

"It was amazing to go from all of my previous setbacks to overcome all of that and actually win a Big Ten bars title," Ettl said. "I didn't think I'd ever be able to do that, let alone be here doing gymnastics for Penn State. My parents said when they saw me up on that awards ceremony, 'You've persevered through all those setbacks and to say you won a Big Ten bar title, that's pretty cool.'"

Ettl's winning routine, which Shephard has referred to as "world-class" multiple times, consists of a release move originated by 2000 Olympian gymnast Elise Ray. In 2004, Ray, a former Michigan Wolverine, won the Big Ten bars title with a perfect 10.

Saturday, Ray was on the floor commenting for the Big Ten Network and got a first-hand look at Ettl's personal touch on her extremely difficult skill.

"To actually see it in competition and done so well, it was so sweet," Ray told [Gymnastike.org](http://Gymnastike.org) following Penn State's tri-meet with



Asit Mishra/Collegian

Natalie Ettl performs her routine on the bars March 7.

Alabama and Minnesota on Jan. 30, which she also called for the Big Ten Network. "It was so nicely done, so I was very proud of it."

Michigan coach Beverly Plocki, who coached Ray, caught Ettl's performance during the Big Ten championships. Plocki called Ettl's routine "beautiful" and was impressed with Ettl's rendition of

her former gymnast's move.

"She does that skill extremely well — as well as Elise ever did it," Plocki said. "There aren't many athletes in the country that do that skill. It's very pretty when it's done well, and she does it extremely well."

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# Lions begin tough road stretch against Kent State

By Tom Kinslow  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Cassidy Bell's schedule isn't exactly wide open.

The freshman has two exams Thursday, including one at 8 a.m., but before that, Bell has some other business to attend to.

**SOFTBALL**

The outfielder and her teammates are taking on Kent State tonight as the Penn State softball team continues its nonconference schedule. Despite having all that on her plate, the freshman isn't worried about handling it all.

"It's going to be tough," Bell said of the time crunch. "But it's just, stay focused and get done what you have to get done."

With the warning about her exams, Bell's plan to juggle everything is simple.

"Study a lot beforehand," the outfielder said with a laugh.

Adding to the stress on the team is the extra travel the team has to go through this year.

The team has been busing to and from adjacent airports — adding hours onto road trips — and following two doubleheaders this past week, the Nittany Lions know the trip will be taxing.

"I just hope that we can get rest on the bus and when we can," catcher Danea Collett said. "It's all about mindset. If you go in thinking that it's going to be hard, then it will be."

Though the team had two twin bills in the last week, coach Robin Petrini made the decision to hold practice Monday in preparation for the Golden Flashes.

This series with Kent State is just the first leg of what looks to be

Penn State's toughest road stretch of the season. The Lions take on the Golden Flashes tonight, returning to Happy Valley after the contests, only to head to Purdue this weekend as Penn State continues conference play.

Thinking about it, Collett could only let out a sigh. "It doesn't sound fun to me right now," Collett said. "I'm not looking forward to it."

As the Lions hit the road after a quick stint at home, they do so trying to maintain a consistency they're just starting to find. Penn State struggled to produce runs in the first half of its two doubleheaders

this past week, scoring five runs in two losses, only to rebound with 16 in the second contests, both victories. With another double dip in store for the Lions, they know they can take a huge step forward in their progress as a team with two solid efforts at the plate tonight.

"Everything's about peaking," Bell said. "I feel like we're slowing up right now. You want to peak at the right time. I think that right now, we're working up to that peak. I think that once you get the consistency going, you keep building."

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