

# Hull to bring intensity

By Andrew J. Cassavell  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Mike Hull didn't need his high school wrestling coach to ask. Nor did the highly touted linebacker recruit need his wrestling teammates to even turn and look down the bench for him in the season's biggest moment.

**FOOTBALL**

With the WPIAL Class AAA team title coming down to one heavyweight match, Hull knew he would have to wrestle — even with a separated left shoulder and a 57-pound weight disadvantage — to lead Canon-McMillan High School to the title. Despite warnings from his father and coach, Hull wrestled what he called a "smart match" and won, securing the title.

Hull's wrestling coach, Chris Mary, said gritty, team-oriented performances like that will likely define Hull's football career at Penn State, which begins this August.

"His mat awareness is the same as being on the football field — he's just one of the best all-around athletes that ever came through Canon-McMillan," Mary said. "Mike was a warrior, and he knew that he wasn't gonna let his teammates down."

A five-star recruit from Canonsburg, Hull was ranked the best middle linebacker recruit by Scout.com and the 26th overall prospect in the nation.

But Hull's football coach, Guy Montecalvo, said his talents shouldn't be pinpointed to rankings and specific accomplishments, instead pointing to moments like the wrestling title.

## 3 BLUE WHITE

"That's the kind of selfless individual he is," Montecalvo said. "He is so team oriented. He is so humble."

Montecalvo played alongside Hull's father, Tom Hull, at Penn State in the early '70s, and Hull had the opportunity to see the Penn State tradition firsthand. He attended games since he was 4 years old, and said since then, the tradition of Linebacker U never escaped him.

But because Hull chose to attend summer football workouts instead of taking community college classes for high school credit last summer, he was unable to enroll early for spring practice and play in this Saturday's Blue-White game, which kicks off at 2 p.m.

Instead, for one last time before he takes on the task of helping to replace Sean Lee, Josh Hull and Navorro Bowman, Mike Hull will take a seat on the Beaver Stadium bleachers. That didn't stop him from looking forward.

"It'll be really exciting," Mike Hull said of being on the other side of the stadium partition this fall. "I've dreamed for a long time to wear a Penn State uniform. To finally get the opportunity..." He then hesitated and sighed anxiously before speaking again. "It'll be great. I just want to get up there."

But had Hull graduated in the winter, he



Courtesy of The Observer Reporter

Incoming Penn State freshman Mike Hull (49) breaks a tackle in a high school game.

wouldn't have played the role he did in winning the wrestling crown. Now, Hull is running track — switching from baseball after earning letters in his first three years because Montecalvo advised him to do so as training for football. After track season, the two will continue their workouts, Hull said.

Montecalvo supports high school football players staying in high school for the full four years, noting the translation of calisthenics from sport to sport. For Hull, that spanned four sports in high school and even

a middle school basketball career that impressed the high school's athletic department before he made the switch to wrestling.

It is that type of athleticism mixed with intensity and smarts that Mary says typifies his game.

"If he played tennis he'd probably be a tennis state champion, too," Mary said. "He's just that well rounded of an athlete. There's nothing he couldn't do."

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Nigel Graham/Colegian

Brandi Personett (right) practices a full twisting double layout Friday.

# Senior to try unique skill at nationals

By Jake Kaplan  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Brandi Personett has a weapon, and she is going to unleash it at nationals.

As part of her floor exercise, the senior on the Penn State women's gymnastics team performs a full twisting double layout that only a handful of gymnasts have ever competed. Personett is one of two Nittany Lions who qualified for the NCAA championships as an individual, and she has been preparing to perform the skill at the competition, which begins Thursday in Gainesville, Fla.

The full twisting double layout is more difficult than Personett's normal floor routine, which she performed in each of the 13 meets leading up to nationals. Personett finished the season No. 2 in the nation in the event.

Personett said she first practiced the skill as an Elite gymnast in high school but never competed it before her sophomore year at Penn State. Her experience freshman year as the lone Penn State individual to qualify for nationals was an eye opener for the gymnast.

"If I'm going by myself, I'm going to have to do something impressive."

Brandi Personett  
senior gymnast

"I went to nationals freshman year by myself and basically got screwed over by the judges because I was there by myself so they assumed I was bad. I think," Personett said.

"So I realized sophomore year if I'm going by myself I'm going to have to do something impressive."

Before nationals her sophomore year, again as the lone Lion to qualify, Personett said she trained the full twisting double layout about a week before the competition.

"I told them I was going to do it, and [Penn State coach Steve Shephard] like freaked out and made me take all the mats out of the pit," Personett said. "And then when I did it he was like, 'Oh, you can do it, huh?' And I was like, 'Yeah, that's what I was trying to explain to you.'"

However, in the actual competi-

tion, Personett fell performing the skill in the preliminary stage, failing to qualify for the finals.

The next year, when the entire Penn State team advanced to nationals, the rarity of the skill made it the talk of the 2009 national meet.

The then-junior gymnast made the crowd wait, however, as she decided to do her regular routine in the preliminary round and save the full twisting double layout for the final stage. She landed the skill but faltered on her last pass, scoring her a 9.8875, good enough for fourth in the meet.

"My parents said that when I landed it, no time during the entire meet did the audience get that loud," Personett said. "Just because people were waiting for that one skill all night."

Sophomore All-American Whitney Benesko said it was cool to see the skill in competition.

"She joked it would be harder for Benesko to pull off the skill with her 5 foot 6 frame than it is for Personett, who is just 4-foot-11."

Shephard could only reel off the names of a couple of women gymnasts he knew who have performed the skill, one of whom was former UCLA gymnast



To see Brandi Personett practice the full twisting double layout:  
[psu.collegian.com](http://psu.collegian.com)

Kristen Maloney, a member of the United States team in the 2000 Sydney Olympics. However, Personett said no one else currently in collegiate gymnastics performs it.

"She doesn't do an archetypical one," said assistant coach Jessica Bastardi, who spots Personett in the floor exercise. "She does it better than an archetypical one because most people do it in a rounded body shape, and she does it really opened and arched, which is a lot prettier."

As for whether her full twisting double layout, along with the rest of her routine, can help earn her first-ever perfect 10 in the event, Personett said she knows it will be difficult.

The score in event finals is made up of the average score of four judges.

"I have to get four 10s, which is kind of difficult," she joked. "I doubt it will be a 10, but I'm hoping for a national championship."

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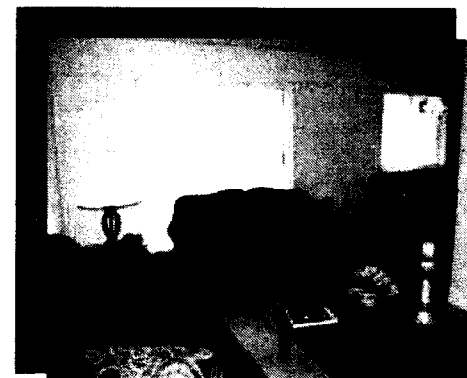
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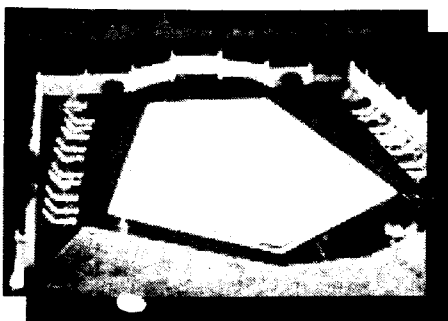
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