

EAR REMEMBER

A LOOK AT 2009-10 IN PENN STATE SPORTS AND THE MOMENTS THAT DEFINED IT

BY JOCELYN SYRSTAD COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER



Megan Hodge is no stranger to recognition.

The senior on the Penn State women's volleyball team was named AVCA National Player of the Year, the top women's volleyball athlete and Female Athlete of the Year this past season alone.

In her four-year career at Penn State, Hodge recorded 2,142 kills and had a hitting percentage of .371 in her senior season.

The outside hitter was the face of Nittany Lion volleyball, and her accomplishments are undeniable.

"I think she had an exceptional year and career, and that obviously didn't go unnoticed," Penn State coach Russ Rose said. "It was about as good of a year as anyone could possibly have. Yet, she's managed to keep her head on straight through all of it."

After the team's third straight national championship, Hodge was offered a hefty salary to go play in California for the U.S. National Team. However, the senior elected to remain in school for her final semester so she could earn her degree.

While Rose said he will remain an "interested fan" while Hodge continues her career, he and the rest of the team realize they are losing a key contributor. "Megan is a huge impact to this team," junior defensive specialist Cathy Quilico said. "She's a really good athlete and an even greater friend. She just makes you better at everything you do because she sets such high standards for herself and for this team. It's gonna be different without her."



NO. 2 ALISHA GLASS

PLAYING PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT POSITION IN VOLLEYBALL, ALISHA GLASS HAS BEEN STEADY FOR THE LIONS OVER THE PAST FOUR SEASONS. HAVING ONLY MISSED ONE START IN HER CAREER AT PENN STATE, GLASS HAS SOLIDIFIED HERSELF AS ONE OF THE BEST PLAYERS IN THE PROGRAM'S HISTORY. GLASS FINISHED THIS SEASON SEVENTH IN THE NATION WITH 11.9 ASSISTS PER SET. COACH RUSS ROSE HAD THIS TO SAY ABOUT GLASS AFTER A MATCH AGAINST TEMPLE EARLIER THIS SEASON: "SHE WAS OUR BEST BLOCKER TONIGHT, AND SHE'S HAD A COUPLE OF MATCHES WHERE SHE'S BEEN OUR BEST DEFENSIVE PLAYER. THERE AREN'T A LOT OF SETTERS THAT DO THAT."



NO. 3 JARED ODRICK

THE HIGHLIGHT FOR JARED ODRICK CAME THURSDAY NIGHT, WHEN THE MIAMI DOLPHINS SELECTED THE FORMER PENN STATE DEFENSIVE TACKLE WITH THE NO. 28 PICK IN THE NFL DRAFT. BUT ODRICK HAS BEEN IN THE SPOTLIGHT ALL SEASON LONG — NOT EXACTLY COMMON FOR AN INTERIOR LINEMAN. DESPITE BEING DOUBLE-TEAMED ALL YEAR, ODRICK RECORDED SEVEN SACKS AND 11 TACKLES FOR LOSS, EARNING HIM THE COACHES' SELECTION AS THE BIG TEN'S DEFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR. THE HONOR WAS THE FIRST FOR AN INTERIOR LINEMEN SINCE 1993.

The closer it gets to graduation, the more Hodge and her teammates realize what is going to be lost. Quilico joked that she isn't going to have any more nicknames, such as "The Widget," since Hodge was the one who created all of them.

Hodge added that while she feels she has "tapped out" her college life and is excited to start a new part of her career, she is sad to leave her Penn State family behind.

"It gets harder and harder just because I notice more that I will be leaving soon," Hodge said. "I haven't gotten a chance to see the girls as much as I'd like to, and I miss them so much already. I'm leaving 14 sisters behind, so it's definitely sad."

The senior will move to California after graduation with teammate Alisha Glass, who was also selected to play for the national team and to whom Hodge contributes a lot of her collegiate success.

Rose said it will be hard for next year's team to step up to the efforts of Hodge and the rest of the seniors and added that the

outside hitter will be missed in every way possible.

"She's a great talent," Rose said. "She improved while she was at Penn State. I take great pride in the person she is and don't take credit for who she became while she was here. She was willing to do all the necessary things and knew it wasn't always about her but about the team."

Hodge points to the team's 2009-10 national championship as the most meaningful award of her career. However, while Quilico said her teammate deserves every individual award that is handed to her, Hodge wouldn't be fazed either way.

"I don't play for stuff like that," Hodge said. "At the end of the day it's about this team, I'm not trying to take away from that. I wouldn't have gotten any of these awards without them. These awards are about me, but really they're about everyone who got me to where I am today."

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TO BE CONTINUED...

A LOOK AT 2009-10 PENN STATE SPORTS TEAMS STILL IN COMPETITION THROUGH THE REMAINDER OF THE YEAR

MEN'S LACROSSE WOMEN'S LACROSSE MEN'S TENNIS WOMEN'S TENNIS

With just two wins all season, it's hard to believe Glenn Thiel's squad is still alive. But with one game left on its schedule against Delaware on Friday night, the Penn State men's lacrosse team is in contention for the Colonial Athletic Association postseason tournament and controls its own destiny.

The 2010 season has seen an inconsistent Penn State team that has struggled to put together back-to-back solid performances. The Lions have one remaining game on Saturday against Temple before the ALC Tournament in Columbus. Penn State looks to play well enough to earn an elusive bid to the NCAA tournament.

The Penn State men's tennis team will compete in the Big Ten tennis tournament this weekend. The Lions (15-10, 3-7) likely need to win the conference tournament to make the NCAA tournament. Penn State finished eighth in the Big Ten and play top seed Ohio State, who is No. 2 in the nation on Friday if they win Thursday.

The women's tennis team will look to earn their first Big Ten win of the season Thursday in the opening round of the Big Ten Championship. The 11th-seeded Nittany Lions square off against No. 6 seed Purdue, who beat the Lions 5-2 this year. The Lions have lost 10 straight matches and have only two wins since Jan. 29.

SOFTBALL BASEBALL TRACK MEN'S VOLLEYBALL

The Penn State softball team's 7-7 Big Ten record puts them at the middle of the pack. With six games left in the regular season after Wednesday's doubleheader, the 28-18 Nittany Lions look to ride the strong pitching of Jackie Hill and Lisa Akamine to finish out the season strong and qualify for postseason play.

It's been an up-and-down season for the Penn State baseball team (17-22, 4-8 Big Ten). The team is coming off a series win at Ohio State and eyeing a .500 record. Though currently at the bottom of the conference standings, they are just three games back and have an opportunity to gain ground in the final month of the season.

The men's track team moves towards the Big Ten Championship with hopes of improving its seventh-place finish indoors. Bridget Franek and the women will look to finish a strong campaign at the Big Ten Outdoor Championships before both teams advance to the NCAA Regional and Outdoor Championships.

The No. 12 Nittany Lions host the EIVA semifinals Thursday night when they take on Springfield at 8. Should they get past Springfield, the Lions will play for the conference's championship and automatic berth to the NCAA tournament on Saturday night. The Lions seek the program's third national championship.