

PSU, Delaware to meet with playoffs on line



Midfielder Chris Hogan (19) scoops up a ground ball against Hofstra on April 18 at Jeffrey Field. Hogan and the Lions face Delaware today for a chance to play in the CAA tournament.

By Tom Copain
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

This is what Glenn Thiel likes about the Colonial Athletic Association.

This is what the Penn State men's lacrosse coach was optimistic about when his team joined the CAA: Despite the regular-season record, an NCAA tournament bid was still within reach.

All the team would have to do is make the conference tournament to have a chance.

Such is the situation the Nittany Lions find themselves in tonight, needing a win in their regular season-finale — on Senior Night — to give the team a chance at finishing fourth in the conference and extending the season to Wednesday.

There's already so much riding on this game for the Lions, so it would only figure that last game would come against the team cur-

rently holding the last tournament spot — Delaware.

"The guys are very excited," senior midfielder Chris Hogan said. "Excited that we still have a chance to get to the CAA tournament."

Right now, Towson has already clinched the tournament's top seed and the regular-season title. After that, Massachusetts, Drexel and Delaware are all tied at 2-2 in the conference, with Penn State and Hofstra tied at 1-3. The Lions need a win tonight plus a Hofstra win at Towson to seal the final spot.

If it clinches the spot, Penn State books a trip back to Towson as the No. 4 seed and a rematch with the Tigers.

All the speculation and scenarios, however, are all moot with a loss.

"It's the start of the playoffs for us," Thiel said.

Delaware is playing for something as well. The Fighting Blue Hens will clinch the No. 2 seed in the conference with a win, regardless of what happens in the other

conference game between Drexel and UMass.

"We're still going for confidence the way we play in the showdown, and we're still going for an upset win of Hofstra," Thiel said.

Defender Matt Bernier who has been ruled out for tonight's game with a knee injury, said the team had confidence heading into last week's game that it hadn't had in a while.

There is precedent for Penn State playing well at the end of the year as well, noticed by last year's strong finish and the season-ending win at Georgetown. That game didn't mean anything, but this one does.

And despite not playing, Bernier has confidence in his teammates.

"If we play the way we know we can, we can beat anybody," Bernier said.

"That in-game confidence is really gonna help us out next game because it is a playoff game."

To email reporter: tec5026@psu.edu

Class set for Senior Day

By Greg Garcia
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

At 3 p.m. Saturday, seven members of the Penn State women's lacrosse team will be hours away from walking off the field after playing their last home game at Jeffrey Field and Penn State.

Seniors Stephanie Ellis, Erica Mihm, Mary LeNoir, Margo Josephs, Maria Valderas, Theresa Bucci and Marisa Lozano will all suit up one last time in front of the home crowd against Temple.

The seniors, who coach Suzanne Isidor calls a special class, have all taken different paths to get to where they are today. Some will be on the field Saturday trying to give the Nittany Lions their ninth win of the season, while some will serve a different role on the bench supporting their teammates.

Regardless of which road they have taken, and how they got there, these seniors have left their mark on Penn State women's lacrosse.

Coming into the season, the Lions knew they would be without possibly their best offensive and defensive players in Lozano and Josephs. Lozano, who started all 17 games and led the team in assists (24) and points (44) last season, tore her anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) in her left knee with two days remaining in fall practice

Josephs, who led the American Lacrosse Conference in turnovers caused per game (1.7) last season, also suffered an ACL tear and was forced to watch from the sidelines this season.

Both players have adjusted to different roles for Isidor. One can find Lozano, also known as "Reese," and Josephs on the sidelines next to their coach directing their teammates on both sides of the ball. Despite sitting out, both players were named captains this year signifying their importance and leadership.

"It's a class that has been through a lot on and off the field," Isidor said. "Just to see how they're finishing their senior year as some of the best leaders that we've had in a while."

On the field, the team will rely on the seniors to try and end their season on a high note heading into the ALC tournament May 6. Ellis, who has started every game the past two seasons, will be in the crucial spot between the pipes. Another constant on defense will be Valderas, who has started every game of her Penn State career.

Bucci and Mihm will lead the attack against the Owls. Both players have combined for 49 goals and 55 points this season.

Ellis admitted how tight of a group these seven seniors are.

"I think my senior class has been able to bring a lot in terms of skill and the ability on

WOMEN'S
LACROSSE



Senior Erica Mihm (18) passes the ball against Northwestern on April 11.

the field," Ellis said. "But we also have a very significant impact skill-wise off-the-field."

Penn State will look to rebound after losing two of its last three games. Isidor said one of the challenges will be controlling its emotions.

The rest of the team is hoping to send their seniors off with one last home victory.

Junior defender Aidan Boccia said the overall experience she gains from the seniors is invaluable.

"It's our senior game, so it's definitely a big game for us," Boccia said. "We want them to go out with a win, so it'll be successful."

To email reporter: gjs944@psu.edu



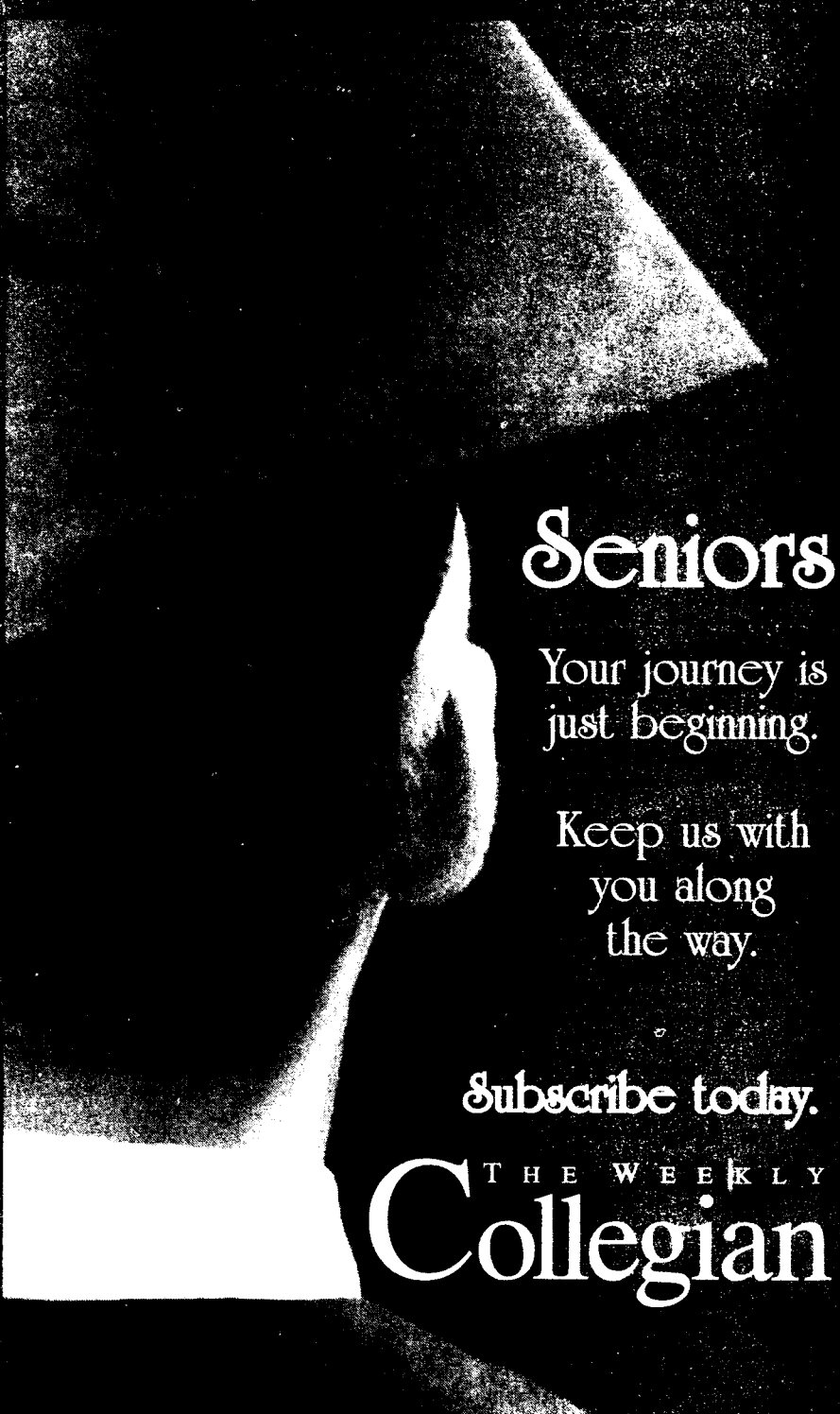
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