

Despite injuries, Lions still going strong

By Andrew Robinson
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Losing a starter, another young player coming off a strong camp and a freshman expected to contribute immediately would hinder most teams in the first weeks of a season.

WOMEN'S SOCCER

Then again, most teams don't have the depth of the Penn State women's soccer team.

Despite injuries to Maddy Evans, Jackie Molinda and Emily Hurd, the No. 13/11 Nittany Lions' deep roster has allowed them to maintain a high level of play.

"We had a bunch of players come off the bench against West Virginia and I thought they did well to actually elevate the level of the game," Penn State coach Erica Walsh said. "That's always a good thing when you see a player go on and they really give you the boost that you need."

Assistant coach Ann Cook said Evans had all but secured a starting role after a strong preseason while Hurd, a freshman left-footed wing player and Molinda, a speedy and versatile player, are both expected to contribute all season. But with the three sidelined, the Lions

bench has stepped up.

Sophomore Julie Hubbard started on Friday against West Virginia, while redshirt sophomore Bri Garcia, junior Ali Schaefer, redshirt freshman Tani Costa and true freshman Taylor Schram came off the bench.

Costa scored the game-winning goal in overtime and said the competition in practice has been a daily battle.

"It's just working hard for yourself individually to push the starting lineup, to make a difference out there and make an impression for the coaches," Costa said. "Especially for our team, it's important that everyone needs to go out there, work hard, work for every ball, don't take anything for granted. We make each other better every day."

With so many players capable of contributing, Hubbard said everyone is fighting for minutes. At the same time, the injured players are frustrated they can't be on the field helping the team.

"Coming in as a freshman it's always hard because I didn't know any of the girls and I feel like a lot of the bonding teams do is made on the field," Hurd said. "You're playing with people, getting to know them and interacting with them and I had to sit out on the sideline."

Now that the games have start-

ed, Hurd said the desire to get on the field is stronger, but she also knows it's better to wait and heal. The freshman said she would much rather be healthy for the end of the season than play with risk of an injury in an early season game.

Evans said she expects to play this weekend while Molinda and Hurd might return a little later. Molinda echoed Costa's and Hubbard's sentiments in saying the practices have been intense thus far.

"We're really deep this year, it's been a battle at every practice," Molinda said. "You gotta battle every day because there's so much talent, everyone can step up."

It takes teams a couple weeks to determine a starting lineup, and even then, it's subject to change based on match-ups. Toward the end of the season, the Lions' depth will make each player capable of playing their role.

"Our depth is incredible, all over the field too," Evans said. "That just says a lot about who we are as a team and individuals because we're all willing to contribute when the time is right and when it's our time. Everyone contributing is really going to pay off when we need those players."



Sophomore Jackie Molinda (6) and freshman Emily Hurd (14) sit on the bench during the team's Blue-White intrasquad scrimmage this weekend. Molinda and Hurd are currently recovering from injuries.

Tyler Sizemore/Colegian

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Team confident, poised as 2010 season begins

By Alex Angert
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Winning a Big Ten championship can cause a team to have a different swagger going into the next season.

Winning 12 Big Ten championships in a row is a whole different story.

That's the case this season for the Penn State women's soccer team, which showed both a sense of confidence and looseness on Sunday during its Blue-White intrasquad scrimmage at Jeffrey Field.

"We are very confident," red-shirt freshman Tani Costa said. "We are all working hard. We are



Costa

all playing really intense with each other. We have high expectations for one another and we keep living up to that, so we're going to keep moving forward."

And while the White team came away with the 3-1 victory, it wasn't the score that mattered at the end of the day, but rather that exact level of intensity Costa pointed out.

After evaluating the team's play, head coach Erica Walsh said she didn't see as much intensity in Sunday's Blue-White matchup as compared to Friday's opener against West Virginia, however, that can be expected in an intrasquad scrimmage.

Nevertheless, the players still competed at a high level throughout the entire scrimmage.

Both teams hustled all game long. They fought for every ball

"Good team chemistry and good team dynamics. They absolutely seem loose and they should seem loose right now."

Ann Cook
assistant coach

As the two teams were announced, Carly Niness, Dani Toney and Emma Thomson huddled up and jumped around together to fire up the crowd and the rest of the team.

Most of the players danced along with the music playing from the loud speakers as they warmed up before the game.

"We have a good personality on this team right now," Cook said.

"Good team chemistry and good team dynamics. They absolutely seem loose, and they should seem loose right now."

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ON THE BLOG

and the players still jawed with the referees up until the final buzzer — all while playing at what Walsh considered to be about 70 to 75 percent of Friday's level.

Walsh added building this positive attitude early on is one of the most important things right now for the team, and it's apparent by the team's demeanor that Penn State is ready to defend the Big Ten crown.

"I think we're carrying a certain amount of confidence right now for sure," assistant coach Ann Cook said.

"We're playing well. We're

buzzing. We should have a lot of confidence."

Hand-in-hand with the team's upbeat outlook on the season is how the players are very loose and undaunted by the lofty task of winning yet another consecutive conference title.

During a shootout following the scrimmage, Costa skipped on her approach to the ball, then turned around to laugh and shoot a quick smile to her coach, who jokingly yelled at the young forward for her antics.

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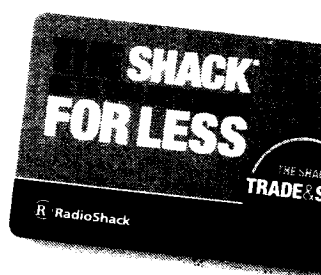
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