

Captains

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But Paterno pointed to the term "captain" solely as a title. He compared the leaders of football huddles to the ally commanders on D-Day.

"When they landed at Normandy and the Germans had them pinned down and were shooting the devil out of them on D-Day, Eisenhower got all the credit," Paterno said. "But it was a whole bunch of young officers who said to their group, 'Let's get the devil out of here,' and they

kind of responded to the adversity."

He said he still isn't sure who will step up vocally when the game is on the line after losing so many key pieces last season.

The naming of captains comes just four days before the season kicks off at noon Saturday against Youngstown State. Last season, Clark and Lee were announced as captains in mid-May.

"Until we get into where we have some guys respond to some adversity, it's very difficult to tell you just what kind of leadership we have right now," Paterno said.

"I think we're gonna have good leadership, but you gotta have some things happen. Kids get a little confidence, and they have some success in tough situations."

Following captains such as Clark and Lee made the honor greater, Ogbu said.

"It means so much to me. A lot of my friends in the past couple of years have been captains," he said.

"It's a great feeling to know that your team's behind you and they know you can be a leader of the team."

Ogbu played alongside defen-

sive tackle Jared Odrick last season. This year, junior Devon Still has received notoriety for a solid spring game and his offseason comeback from a pair of knee injuries.

Staying under the radar is something Ogbu said he is used to as a nose guard. He said he enjoys it "because no one's ever looking for you."

Ogbu had 30 tackles last season, eight of which went for a loss. As for Brackett, the senior receiver from Lawrenceville, N.J. struggled, catching just three passes for 13 yards, but will switch back to the slot role he

played during his sophomore season, when he caught 13 passes for 160 yards.

Brackett called the captaincy "a tremendous honor" twice, first because of the respect of his peers and also because of the "legacy" of past Penn State captains.

"You have to lead by example on and off the field and do things the right way," Brackett said of his new responsibilities. "And obviously they expect you to be a key contributor come game time."

To e-mail reporter: ajc5238@psu.edu

Defense

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to position themselves accordingly.

The Lions' blocking has been a strength. As a team, Penn State had 37 total blocks while opponents had just 8.5. Rose isn't looking too seriously into those statistics because the talent level of his team's opponents will begin to rise as the season progresses.

But the coach did say he believes this season's team is stronger at blocking than it is offensively.

While she believed the blocking was almost perfect in the first three matches, senior middle hitter Fatima Balza said size isn't the only reason for her success.

"I always focused on my blocking," Balza said. "The coaches always help us to get in the right spot, and I'm always trying to get better."

While those players in the back

are often Quilico or D'Errico, there are a number of freshmen showcasing their talents in hopes of seeing the court.

The depth at the position ensures each player will continue to work to improve as the season continues.

"If they're going to outplay me, they're going to play. If they're going to outplay Alyssa, they're going to play," Quilico said.

To e-mail reporter: rml5138@psu.edu

Spikes

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said the Spikes felt relieved after regaining the lead.

"It's been a long road trip, a long season, and to put up a couple runs with our closer coming in, we felt pretty good about it," Brown said.

Unfortunately for the Spikes, Batavia made its third comeback of the game. The first one

came in the third inning, when the Muckdogs scored six runs to give themselves a 6-4 lead.

The Spikes took their 9-6 lead into the fifth inning, but the Muckdogs didn't give up. Batavia (42-27) scored one run in each of the fifth, sixth and seventh innings to tie the game.

"I thought we did a good job of just bouncing back," Brown said. "We just came up short."

To e-mail reporter: jyk5142@psu.edu

Freshmen

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said having teammates in the same classes helps create a routine, and helps prepare for learning on the field.

"I definitely need to work on my defensive skills one-on-one, moving my feet and staying low," said Grzywacz. "I think instead of disciplining myself I just need to realize that staying low and keeping my feet moving will make it so much harder for an offensive player to get around. That's what Char and the coaches have been telling me."

Grzywacz had experience playing high level field hockey before with the Women's National Indoor Team in Denmark and played for the United States in Holland in 2007 and 2008. Purvis has also had some experience in international competition, playing for the Under-19 National squad and the Women's National Indoor Team as well.

Morett was an assistant coach for the girls when they traveled with the U.S. U-19 team to play in Argentina earlier this spring.

"I think it helped them tremendously because down in Argentina every game we played was just very competitive and a much faster level," Morett said. "I think having to

make decisions quicker and having to use quick skills definitely helped them in their learning process."

Purvis, the younger sister of senior forward/midfielder Jenny Purvis, said she couldn't have had such a smooth transition into the sport without her sister help along the way. Both freshmen said that the team is the closest-knit they have ever been on and has helped them transition into the college lifestyle.

"A lot of us freshmen are in the same classes so we wake up and go to class together," Purvis said. "Sometimes we go to lift together, go back to the dorm, come back to practice. It's busy but it helps a lot knowing that you have a lot of other people doing the same thing as you and you're not alone doing a lot of work."

The 5-foot-7 forward/midfielder recorded two shots and one assist in the Lion's first two games but knows practice and conditioning will help her be more effective in game situations. Morett said there is always a way to sharpen up her game.

"I think with Lauren, we have her in the midfield and we've asked a lot of her, doing a lot of running offensively and defensively and she's willing to do the running," Morett said. "But I need to just teach her how to be more set in her position so she can save her legs a little longer."

Purvis said the sport is going to be

tiring no matter where you're at on the field so the conditioning isn't a problem for her to adjust to.

Purvis is more concerned on making the right play and helping her team by knowing what to do when the ball comes to her.

"[It's] just perfecting passes," she said. "You can always get better on perfecting your passes, knowing when to lead, when not to. Working on my defense and breaking down my steps, and communicating."

As their skills improve this season, the two freshmen starters will find themselves in a solid position to contribute to their team. Morett said one of the best strengths they have is their ability to listen and absorb everything coaches and upperclassmen have tried to help them with. Work ethic is something the coach said they have and will help them succeed.

The coach said that when you join a program at Penn State, you're family. That bond, the freshmen said, has helped them find a routine and likewise a place to relax, whether it is an upperclassmen's place, an older sister's living room or the dorm room they were assigned.

"It's like we're one big team and not separate between classes," Grzywacz said. "You really can tell."

To e-mail reporter: zsf5003@psu.edu

Tight Ends

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Szczerba, who appeared in 11 games last season, was supposed to be the starter.

"Coach Kenney has done a good job of preparing them and putting them in live situations," said Brackett.

"They're starting to pick up the passing game, starting to pick up the blocking and I feel like they're going to have the potential to be some really good tight ends in the future."

Whether Gilliam or Haplea can be effective enough with their blocking in the run game, or haul in passes from whichever quarterback is throwing the ball, is something Paterno didn't have an answer to.

"They're working hard at it, but we've got a ways to go," Paterno said.

To e-mail reporter: aas5220@psu.edu

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