

# PIGSKIN PREVIEW

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Photo illustration/Ashley Buck

Robert Bolden joins Wally Richardson and Tony Sacca as the only true freshmen to start at quarterback in Joe Paterno's 45-year career as head football coach at Penn State.

## BOLD MOVE, JOE

### 2010 season starts with unprecedented QB choice

By Audrey Snyder  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

When four blue school buses pull up to Beaver Stadium for Saturday's home opener against Youngstown State, there's no longer a question as to who will step off the bus behind Joe Paterno.

Robert Bolden is the first true freshman quarterback to open the season as the starter during the Paterno era, seating him across from Paterno in the first row on the first bus.

The unprecedented move to start Bolden in his first collegiate game will challenge the young quarterback both physically and mentally. But to figure out if Bolden has the goods to maintain the starting job, Paterno will throw history by the wayside and let him play.

"It is unusual for Penn State and unprecedented for Joe Paterno to go with a true freshman at quarterback," said former Nittany Lions quarterback and college football analyst, Todd Blackledge. "For a guy who hasn't been there all that long, Bolden obviously made a good enough impression in his time there."

Matt McGloin and Kevin Newsome are listed as 1B and 1C on Saturday's depth chart, but Blackledge said Bolden's true test is how quickly he can acclimate to

the speed of a college game.

During Bolden's time at St. Mary's Preparatory in Michigan, quarterbacks coach Don Buchanan was certain Bolden could challenge for Penn State's starting job.

The four-star recruit's intelligence was an attribute Buchanan and St. Mary's head coach, George Porritt both said make Bolden unique.

Though Buchanan didn't realize history worked against Bolden, as the quarterback spoke to his coach about his desire to start right away no matter what college he chose, a few trips to State College during Bolden's junior year of high school helped reaffirm the coach's beliefs.

"The first time we out to Penn State to watch spring practice, Darryl [Clark] was the quarterback and we saw Kevin [Newsome] there," Buchanan said. "I looked at Robert and flat out told him, 'If you come here, he's gonna be here. But I can tell you this much; you can compete with him.'"

Buchanan also told Bolden he would need to pick up the Lions' offense quickly to have a shot at starting, something the quarterback took to heart, spending time studying installments of the playbook after Signing Day.

But the fact Bolden didn't step on campus until one day after his



**PENN STATE**  
vs.  
**YOUNGSTOWN STATE**



**Time:** Noon Saturday  
**Place:** Beaver Stadium  
**TV:** Big Ten Network

high school graduation in May is what surprised former Penn State broadcaster Fran Fisher the most about the decision on the winning quarterback candidate.

"He's the one who didn't attend in the spring like [Paul] Jones did," Fisher said. "But when Joe has a decision to make, experience is usually a big factor. I have confidence in who they selected since I know Joe watches a lot of video of what they do in practice."

Though experience has been a factor in many of the recent quar-

terback battles — as Paterno is known for giving the older guys the first shot at starting — if a freshman quarterback has enough poise, moxie and confidence, Paterno would be forced to reconsider his ways, Blackledge said.

According to Lou Prato's Penn State Football Encyclopedia, Eugene Miller was the last freshman to start at quarterback for the season opener, and that was in 1910. Tony Sacca (1988) and Wally Richardson (1992) were previously the only Paterno-coached quarterbacks who have started as true freshmen.

Paterno's decision to go with the least experienced player, which may have included advice and input from his assistants, is something Prato said is historic in its own right.

"This shows that Joe can adapt to the present times, and it also shows that Joe says what he means when he said that he wasn't sure which quarterback was good enough to start," Prato said. "He said he'd start the best one he thinks the others have weaknesses and that Bolden has strengths."

But seeing how Bolden reacts to various defenses and watching how he handles himself under pressure are components to the game Blackledge said Lions' fans will watch closely.

How the freshman responds to a mistake and how he takes command in the huddle are aspects that will be looked at during the game. With any young starter, Blackledge said his success is equally dictated by his decision making and by his physical tools.

With all three quarterbacks expected to see time during Saturday's game, it's unknown whether or not the coaches will keep Bolden on a short leash.

"They hope they can open the season with a big enough win to play all three guys and keep all three interested," Blackledge said.

"But I don't think it's something where he has to worry about losing his job in the first week. By going with the true freshman, it indicates that he's their guy."

But going with Bolden as the player in charge of the offense also sends a message to the rest of the team.

"A quarterback can win a game for you pretty quickly, and he can also lose a game for you pretty quickly," quarterbacks coach Jay Paterno said last month. "I think the fact that we pull up near the stadium and the quarterback is the first guy off the bus kind of makes a statement to our team as to how much we value that position."

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#### Daily Collegian Predictions

**Andrew J. Cassavell**

**Score:** PSU 42, YSU 3

**What's good:** Linebackers don't miss a beat.

**What's bad:** Top-ranked Alabama is next.

**What to look for:** Bolden plays the whole first half.



**Brendan Monahan**

**Score:** PSU 34, YSU 9

**What's good:** Bolden's debut comes in opener.

**What's bad:** Empty stadium for the second half.

**What to look for:** QB tryouts.



**Audrey Snyder**

**Score:** PSU 45, YSU 10

**What's good:** Royster starts pursuit of rushing record.

**What's bad:** A noon kick on my 21st birthday.

**What to look for:** The cohesiveness of the offensive line.



**2010 GIVEAWAY**

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**GAME 1**

**VS. YOUNGSTOWN STATE**

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