

ROLL TIDE

'Bama trip serves as teaching moment

By Audrey Snyder
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Opportunities like Saturday's don't come around too often.

Going on the road and taking on the defending national champions and the No. 1 team in the country, Penn State understands this is a test that doesn't happen every couple years.

Even Joe Paterno, who's coached against enough Alabama teams to pinpoint the best squads, said his team is out manned by the Crimson Tide. But he was quick to point out regardless of Saturday's final score, his young team can learn a lot by being tested early in the season.

"It's a great experience to take a bunch of kids down to the stadium, such as the one we're going to play in with that many people and the kind of enthusiasm," said Paterno, who compared Alabama to the Miami team he defeated in the 1986 Fiesta Bowl. "And they'll learn from it. They'll be better. They'll remember."

With freshman quarterback Rob Bolden making his second career start, the hostile environment of 101,000 screaming fans inside newly renovated Bryant-Denny Stadium

will be anything but pleasant for him.

But the crowd noise and highly skilled competition will be a good tune up for a team that has to play Big Ten powers Ohio State and Iowa on the road this season.

"Being in that kind of environment, it's hard to replicate it in practice," captain Brett Brackett said. "You try really hard to do it, but it's hard to do that, and getting that experience is just priceless."

While the Lions tried to simulate the away game environment this week by practicing with crowd noise, there is no substitute for playing the nation's top team in front of a nationally televised audience.

Even if the players said practices were "more intense" this week, when the lights come on, it's time for each team to bring its best.

Whether that means Bolden settles in behind a struggling offensive line and stays competitive, or the Lions can't keep pace, the game is the true measuring stick.

"You play for a national championship every year, and if you lose one game you have to re-rack your goals for that year, and that's hard to do," said John Shaffer, quarterback of Penn State's 1986 Penn State national

championship team. "It's a great adjustment."

Few outside the South believe Alabama are expecting a national title. They're looking at this young talent and how they'll adjust to the road schedule. But the way Alabama is going to compete in a hostile environment and challenge Alabama's skill-position players is what will determine the team can learn from this experience.

While Shaffer played in the 1986 season, he said he never heard the noise more than he did in Alabama. With fans who have spent the entire day to painting the stadium, he said he heard the noise. Bolden has never played a college game in a hostile environment, so he's not sure what he's most nervous about.

If this means Alabama will hand the ball off to running back Evan Royter or quarterback Nick Saban passes until his nerves get the best of him, the experience of being in that environment will manage an intense game for him.

"It's a test that you're going to where you are, and you're going to see you are," Alabama coach Nick Saban said. "It tells you where you're going to go to get where you're going to go, regardless of the result."

No. 18 Penn State (1-0)



Time: 7p.m. Saturday
Place: Bryant-Denny Stadium
TV: ESPN

No. 1 Alabama (0-0)



Daily Collegian Predictions



Brendan Monahan

Score: Alabama 34, Penn State 10
What's good: Nick Saban's team eases up in the fourth quarter.
What's bad: The offensive line struggles to match up against the 3-4 defense.
What to look for: Bolden may



A.J. Cassavell

Score: Alabama 20, Penn State 10
What's good: A great series of plays.
What's bad: Bama's not better.
What to look for: Bolden may



Audrey Snyder

Score: Alabama 34, Penn State 10
What's good: Nick Saban's team eases up in the fourth quarter.
What's bad: The offensive line struggles to match up against the 3-4 defense.
What to look for: Julio Jones open down field.

2010 GIVEAWAY

Sponsored by Collégian

Cut out and submit the game piece to The Daily Collegian office by 5PM. Enter 8 out of 11 game pieces to be eligible to win a 42" Panasonic HDTV

VS ALABAMA

GAME 2

Name _____
Email _____
Phone No. _____
Address _____