

Alabama trip an experience Lions can use or abuse

By Brendan Monahan

THE noise inside of Bryant-Denny Stadium was intangible — a mix of class and pride.

Alabama students and fans cheered for Joe Paterno at half-time. They also raised their voices before the game as four state-of-the-art video screens pictured Penn State fullback Matt Suhey, then running back Mike Guman, being stopped in the 1979 Sugar Bowl goal-line stand.

Penn State had reached the "Big Show." The Nittany Lions were playing a lauded Southeastern Conference team, the defending national champions and the highest-ranked squad in the nation.

Fast forward to the next week. Now the Lions prepare for a Mid-American Conference team that didn't make a bowl game last season and finished 5-7 overall.

Heading into Kent State and the upcoming Big Ten schedule, there are lessons to be learned from the Alabama drubbing — some simple, others on a broader scale.

"We learned that we could be a very good football team, but we didn't play like a good football team," right guard Stefan Wisniewski said. "[We] played like a team that was making mistakes left and right, and you're not going to win games if you do that. But I think what we take away is that if we play a lot better, we can be right in there with anyone in the country."

The talent is there, but the

Lions are still gaining the proper experience needed to contend against the nation's best teams. The linebackers need more time, as does the offensive line and freshman quarterback Rob Bolden. The next two games against Kent State and Temple should provide the proper training ground to prepare the team for Iowa, though, the game is on the road against a top-10 team.

If Alabama was a game in the middle of the season, would Bolden throw that first interception or would he eat the sack in the first quarter? Maybe the offensive line would have provided the proper blitz protection on that play.

There's no answering those questions, but the Lions would be more prepared.

Take the inexperienced 2008 Oregon State Beavers, who traveled to Happy Valley in the season's second game only to get manhandled 45-14. The Beavers went on to win nine of their next 11 games, with a victory over USC, and later, Pittsburgh in the Sun Bowl. They were Rose Bowl bound with a win against Oregon the final week of the season and finished No. 18 in the Associated Press Poll.

Putting it into perspective, the Penn State loss in Alabama is in no way doomsday.

"Hey, anybody can beat anybody any given Saturday," tailback Stephon Green said.

But the loss is in no way promising either. Coming back against Kent State is much different than beating Iowa or Ohio State on the road. Only time will tell if the Alabama game proves to be a learning experience or a microcosm of the season as a whole.

Bolden will get his chance again, as will the running game and the defensive front seven.



Robert Bolden (1) walks off the field Saturday night in Alabama. He threw two interceptions in the loss. Chloe Elmer/Collegian

Though the opportunity to show its worth against the SEC is gone for now, Penn State can gain legitimacy if they steal wins in either Iowa City or Columbus.

The opportunity comes next at Iowa, where a win is tangible and

within grasp if the Lions learn from Tuscaloosa.

The second try in the "Big Show" comes in three weeks, and all one can do is wait.

"This is one game out of 10 more we got left," senior Brett

Brackett said. "We got to get back to work."

Brendan Monahan is a senior majoring in English and is a football reporter for The Daily Collegian. His e-mail address is bjm5146@psu.edu.

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HOROSCOPES

By Jacqueline Bigar

HAPPY BIRTHDAY for Tuesday, Sept. 14, 2010:

This year, you will experience a change in direction and a willingness to fight for what you want in a more overt manner. Before this year, you didn't feel that action or that a sense of direction was possible. Consider your options before committing to a course of action. Backing out could be a more problematic than you realize. If you feel single, you could meet someone with whom you are very at home or comfortable. If you are attached, the two of you will center much more on your domestic life. Discussions often pop with energy, spirit and opinions — on both sides. No below-the-belt hitting, and you will be a lot happier. SAGITTARIUS understands you better than you think or might like.

The Stars Show the Kind of Day You'll Have: 5-Dynamic; 4-Positive; 3-Average; 2-So-so; 1-Difficult

ARIES (March 21-April 19) *** A project or plans that were on the back burner now can be pushed forward. Look to greater insight and understanding through animated discussions. Make it OK that someone disagrees. Tonight: Burning the midnight oil.
TAURUS (April 20-May 20) ***** Finally, what has eluded you becomes obvious. Though an associate could be on the warpath, you might wonder what is the best solution. You have a strong sense of direction, but others might be challenging. Tonight: An important meeting of the minds.
GEMINI (May 21-June 20) ***** Deal with finances directly with the parties involved. The more the merrier.

you are, the better off you will be. Try to maintain an even pace and not get sidetracked by a hot topic. Tonight: Go along with others' plans. Try to take it easy.
CANCER (June 21-July 22) *** You could regret a demonstration of anger. Why not work with another person? The problem might be that the person you are dealing with, though already difficult, could become quite controlling. Look to long-term success, and there won't be a problem. Tonight: Gain a perspective.
LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) ***** Greater flex and creativity draw dynamic results. If someone gives you a lot of flak, then you can be sure this person feels vulnerable. Stop and see if you can help walk him or her through the issue. Tonight: Dance to a new tune.
VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) ***** Keep a conversation going without losing your temper. You might be justified in your feelings, but it simply might not be effective. Look at your basic concerns and don't mitigate the power of your interest and words. Tonight: Homeward bound.
LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) ***** You have a way of expressing yourself that is quite unique and charming to many. However, how much you need to "splurge" in order to make an impression might not be reasonable. Pull back a little. Tonight: Hang out with a pal.
SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) ***** Listen to your inner voice before acting. Afterward, you could find that you have more of a problem than you might like. Use caution with a business dealing. You might not have the right

book.
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) ***** Finally, you feel empowered. A situation could be difficult, as you might not be in contact with some less-than-pleasant feelings. Use care with your choices and decisions. Tonight: Why not do exactly what you want?
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) *** Be direct with a loved one who cares a lot. You have the ability to trigger many reactions. Is this what you really want? Mobilize supporters, knowing full well what you want. Tonight: Take some personal space.
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) ***** You become practical at work. You will go the whole way in order to hit a home run. Others support you, though you could go over the top with your focus and drive. Tonight: Where the action is.
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) *** You could be overwhelmed by all the different options. Step up to the plate and handle a matter directly. Investigate options that you hadn't thought about. Find an expert if you are questioning a choice. Tonight: Burning the midnight oil.

BORN TODAY: Actor Clayton Moore (1914), actor Sam Neill (1947), singer, songwriter Amy Winehouse (1983) ***

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