

# Lions' wake up call comes one week too late

By Audrey Snyder

WHEN running back Stephfon Green pounded his hands

together and spoke about Penn State getting its "behinds kicked" during his Alabama postgame interview, it was as if something suddenly set off the junior tailback.

Green vowed he wouldn't let the Nittany Lions turn in the same type of performance again as the intensity and anger in his voice grew deeper.

"They just woke up a sleeping giant because we're gonna practice hard, we're gonna play hard and we're gonna make sure that this doesn't happen again," Green said.

But shouldn't the sleeping giant have woken up before playing the defending national champions on the road?

The Alabama game was the Lions' chance to make a name for themselves and to show a nationally televised audience they were deserving of holding a spot in the top 10.

Home games against Kent State and Temple don't do much to help this team establish its prominence.

Who cares if the Lions steamroll the Golden Flashes since the same team couldn't capitalize on redzone opportunities and score a touchdown against Alabama?

After the fee-fi-fo-fum of Green's words stands a measly Kent State team.

It's a program that went 5-7 last year and failed to qualify for a bowl game.

A team that's so unknown among college football's ranks that arguably the best athlete to come out of the school is San Diego Chargers' tight end Antonio Gates, who didn't even suit up for the football team.

Yes folks, the Lions definitely need to break out the pregame smelling salts to get pumped for this one. An expected win against the Golden Flashes means nothing more than the Lions' opening weekend pounding of Youngstown State.

OK, so Penn State can beat up on the underdog in front of the home crowd, but the next two games aren't measuring sticks.

The Lions won't have a chance to wake up from the magical sleep they experienced in

Tuscaloosa until they hit the road Oct. 2 to take on Iowa.

By that time, maybe running back Evan Royster will have rushed for more than 100 yards in a game, or else the fans' grumblings to give true freshman Silas Redd more carries will grow louder.

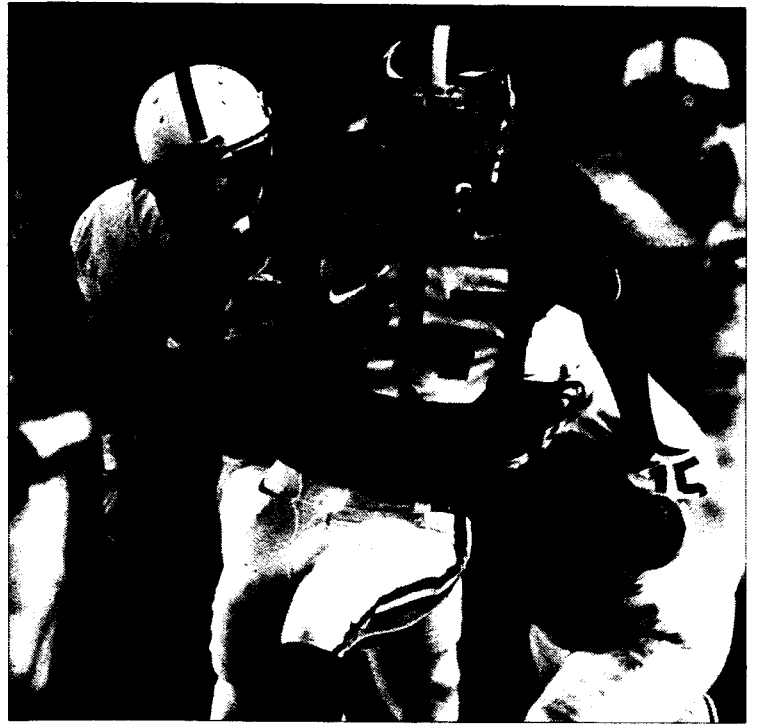
But even so, does a 100-yard day against a team that has no business coming to Beaver Stadium other than to collect its participation check mean much?

Outside of the people in the Lasch Building, I'd be willing to bet 90 percent of the fans don't know much about Kent State, other than the university hails from the same state as the Buckeyes.

And really, that's all there is to know about the team.

These aren't well-known names like Alabama's Nick Saban, Trent Richardson and Greg McElroy, so how the Lions bounce back against this B-league opponent isn't too meaningful.

Yes, the Lions were punched in the mouth against Alabama and out-manned by a physical team, but how they "wake up" and respond against Kent State is not a reflection of what they learned from the 24-3 drubbing.



Chloe Elmer/Collegian

Alabama's Darius Hanks (15) runs away from Penn State defenders.

The sleeping giant has been asleep for two games now and while a blowout win might help the Lions regroup for the time being, the real response doesn't come until Iowa City.

Audrey Snyder is a junior majoring in journalism and secondary education and is a football reporter for The Daily Collegian. Her e-mail address is aas5220@psu.edu.

# Heat teammates unfazed by shots at LeBron's status

By Tim Reynolds  
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

MIAMI — When it comes to LeBron James, the Miami Heat are more concerned about W's than Q's.

With training camp less than two weeks away, many of James' new teammates either insist they're not paying attention to the steady stream of critics who continue denouncing how the NBA's two-time reigning MVP's made his decision to join the Heat, or say they believe it'll all give him plenty of motivation for the coming season.

In the two months or so since James left Cleveland for Miami, his "Q Score" — the measure of how something or someone appeals to a broad audience — has taken a big hit.

But as long as the Heat put up big wins, no one around the team will likely care, or probably even notice how anyone inside the locker room is perceived nationally.

"We'll take it as a challenge," Heat center Zydrunas Ilgauskas, who also left Cleveland for Miami this summer, said Thursday.

"We'll get everybody's best shot

every game, but that only happens to good teams for a reason. So you have to take the good with the bad and just roll with it. We'll use it as a motivation, obviously. It's going to be an interesting year."

James has been working out in Miami at times this summer, but was not part of a voluntary session with several teammates Thursday.

He has seen his former No. 23 jerseys burned in Cleveland this summer, been called a quitter by Cavaliers owner Dan Gilbert, even had his competitiveness questioned by Orlando general manager Otis Smith.

And on a Dallas radio show earlier this week, outspoken Mavericks owner Mark Cuban said James may have "lost a billion dollars in brand equity, give or take a couple bucks here or there."

By now, many Heat players are just starting to tune naysayers out. Or trying to, anyway.

"I think they're making it a bigger deal than what it is," Miami point guard Carlos Arroyo said of the buzz — much of it negative — about James, Dwyane Wade, Chris Bosh and the rest of the

new-look Heat. "We're going to have a lot of distractions and our focus should be winning a championship. That's why they came here. Other than that, we shouldn't focus on what people are talking about because we knew there were going to be critics who attacked us that way."

The perception of James differs wildly, depending on perspective.

In Miami, before he's taken a single shot for the Heat, he's already treated like royalty.

From a marketing standpoint, James might be bigger than the 2006 NBA title was for the franchise — considering that in the 30 days after he said he was "taking my talents to South Beach," the Heat sold 30 percent more merchandise than it did in the 30 days after winning a championship four years ago.

So far, the Heat have seen merchandise sales rise 1,000 percent over last year's clip, and there's a long waiting list for James, Wade and Bosh jerseys, with the team awaiting more shipments from Adidas.

And the Heat also went through 13,000 tickets for the welcome-to-Miami party for Wade, James and

"We'll use it as a motivation, obviously. It's going to be an interesting year."

Zydrunas Ilgauskas  
Miami Heat center

Bosh — in less than an hour.

"I think everybody's eager to see how we're going to jell and how we're going to progress," Ilgauskas said.

Yet in other markets, James' popularity needs a rebound.

In January, James' had a positive Q Score of 24, and a negative Q Score of 22 — meaning 24 percent of Americans familiar with James listed him as one of their favorite personalities, and 22 percent said he was among their least-favorites in sports.

Now, his positive Q Score number is 14. His negative Q Score? 39. "I think it's probably the biggest negative jump I've seen not related to any anti-social behavior," said Henry Schafer, executive vice president of The Q Scores Company. "It was clearly perceived as a negative move on LeBron's part."

James' negative Q Score ranks sixth among athletes.

The only ones with worse negative numbers are Michael Vick, Tiger Woods, Terrell Owens, Kobe Bryant and Chad Ochocinco, Schafer said.

Schafer said there could be a "slight correction factor" when the NBA season begins, given the old adage that just about everyone loves a winner.

"There's no question that winning helps," Schafer said.

"But it's not the only thing that gets taken into consideration when evaluating a celebrity or a personality."

Inside the Heat locker room, James doesn't have a negative Q Score.

For now, especially on the verge of the season, that's what the team says matters most.

"We've just got to stay focused," Heat forward Juwan Howard said.

"Keep your eye on the prize and stay together as a team. Stay together, stay one, stay united."

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