

Icers

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but he's also the type of kid that the guys on the team respect," Balboni said. "He does all the things you want in a guy because he gives 110 percent all the time. He's the type of guy kids want to emulate on the ice and off and it's tough to find that mix."

Daley said the decision came closer to the start of the season

"I'm the outspoken leader."

Tim O'Brien
Icers forward

than in past years because there were so many quality options.

"We have so many guys on this team who can wear a letter on the team this year," Daley said. "It was a close call I think for everyone."

Steinour said the group of Polidor and his fellow assistants all bring different leadership qualities to the team, which will guide it to being successful.

"I'm probably more of the outspoken, outgoing leader," O'Brien said. "I'm a team guy and if anything goes wrong I know guys can count on me to take care of something on the ice of off the ice whatever it may be."

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Secondary

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That form is a dynamic one. Bradley's unit is starting to rotate from base to nickel more often, and on Saturday, Bradley used subs on multiple occasions after rarely doing so in the first two weeks.

As for why the secondary improved against Kent State, recording its first two interceptions of the season, Bradley noted the pressure the coaching staff put on the players to succeed in both coverage and tackling.

"I don't think they had a choice," Bradley said.

Safety Drew Astorino, who started 12 games last season was relegated to the bench aside from nickel situations after he missed a couple tackles early. Bradley removed cornerback Stephon Morris for part of a series when he didn't think Morris gave a good enough effort on a missed tackle.

Andrew Dailey filled in at safety when Astorino was out, and Bradley said he was impressed with the junior's performance. For Dailey, it was his first game with significant playing time since arriving in Happy Valley.

"I had a pretty good sense," Dailey said of getting time, even in Bradley's base defense. "But you gotta have a sense every game no matter what, because you're always one play away from getting in."

Dailey said he wasn't sure if he would play as often next week, saying, "We'll see how the evaluation goes."

Joe Paterno said overall, the secondary made progress but still has plenty of room to improve.

"There are some kids that obviously made some plays — we finally got a couple interceptions," Paterno said.

"We just have to anticipate a couple things better, make some things happen for ourselves, and then we'll start to be a better football team."

Freshman cornerback Derrick Thomas had one of those two picks and played cornerback in the nickel package. Morris, who played with Thomas at Eleanor Roosevelt High School in Greenbelt, Md., said he was impressed with Thomas' performance Saturday and expects to see more of him as the season progresses.

Junior cornerback D'Anton Lynn noted the interception,

where Thomas readjusted in mid-air after a deflection and tiptoed his feet inbounds just before half time, as an athletic play he sees almost every day from Thomas in practice. He said making a play in a key situation should lead to more playing time for Thomas in the coming weeks.

The secondary isn't very deep, but that didn't stop Bradley from getting some lesser-known players significant time on Saturday. With the nickel package, Morris and Thomas play corner on the outside, while Lynn, who had the other interception, generally covers the slot receiver, a position he says he is "very comfortable at."

Heading into Saturday's game, the Lions stressed the need for a takeaway and the need to improve on the opposing team's 76 percent completion percentage against the Penn State defense. That led to the style and the rotation, which will most likely continue in the coming weeks.

"I wasn't happy about that, nobody on defense was happy about that," Morris said.

"We just tried to mix it up, and confuse the quarterback a little bit."

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Phils top Braves

By Rob Maaddi
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

PHILADELPHIA — Cole Hamels had another outstanding outing, and the Philadelphia Phillies took advantage of an error by Jason Heyward to beat the Atlanta Braves 3-1 on Monday night, increasing their lead in the NL East to four games.

The two-time NL champion Phillies won their eighth straight game and improved to 42-15 since July 21, when they trailed the Braves by seven games.

Hamels (12-10) allowed one run and six hits, striking out six in eight innings to win his fifth straight start — a career-best. Brad Lidge finished for his 24th save in 29 chances.

Brandon Beachy (0-1) gave up three runs — one earned — and four hits in 4 1-3 innings in his major league debut. He was a late fill-in for Jair Jurrjens, who is still nursing a sore right knee.

The 24-year-old right-hander was at the Braves' instructional

league program in Florida when he got the call to join the team.

A crowd of 45,256 was the 118th straight sellout at Citizens Bank Park. A fan wearing a red spandex costume and mask ran onto the field and briefly eluded security guards during the seventh inning before Braves left fielder Matt Diaz helped tackle him.

The Phillies adjusted their rotation so their three aces would pitch this series. Next up are Roy Halladay and Roy Oswalt.

Hamels did his job. The 2008 World Series MVP is pitching better than he did when he led Philadelphia to its second championship two years ago.

Despite a slew of injuries this season, the Phillies are primed to win their fourth straight division title and are trying to become the first NL team in 66 years to capture three consecutive pennants.

The Braves went ahead 1-0 in the second on McCann's RBI double.

Derrek Lee singled and scored on McCann's shot off the scoreboard in right.

Hamels has a 0.49 ERA in his last five starts, and a career-low 2.93 ERA this season. Hamels would have a better record with some more run support.

Braga

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doing that and helping the team this fall."

Lions coach Bob Warming is happy with the way the seniors, including Braga, have handled this season, not letting the pressure affect their play negatively. During the team's media day in August, Braga said he wished he had another year at Penn State to which Warming laughed and said, "So do I." "They're determined to embrace it and take advantage of it and leave a great legacy," Warming said of the seniors. "They're just going out and playing really hard."

Braga isn't the only Lion at top of a national list. Junior forward Corey Hertzog's 17 total points, split between his seven goals, worth two points each, and three assists, are best in the country and his goal total is first in the Big Ten.

While Hertzog is clearly the Lions go-to scorer, Braga has assisted six of the junior's seven tallies. Hertzog said earlier in the season he doesn't pay much attention to awards and just wants to focus on the team's success.

After netting his first goal, Braga hopes his scoring touch keeps up, but he's not going to shy away from setting up his teammates either.

And while the defenders may not be on the receiving end of many Braga assists, they're more than happy to give the Brazilian senior the ball anytime he comes open.

"As a defender whenever we come out with the ball we look to play Matheus because he's so successful and he's so creative on the ball," Fetrow said. "He's just helping out the team in every game and we love giving him the ball."

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Massaro

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game when it happened and remembered feeling uneasy when seeing former linebacker Sean Lee and Johnson talking to Massaro after the injury occurred.

Gionta said the mental strain of such a serious injury is something a player can only fathom once he actually goes through it, but Massaro, who also wrestled in high school, was always mentally tough.

The coach's initial concern over the injury led him to call Johnson and linebackers coach Ron Vanderlinden the next day. But Gionta puts the injury in the past

now, as does Massaro.

"Every day just thought about football," Massaro said, "worked toward getting back, worked toward helping this team be successful."

Team co-captain Ollie Ogbu said Massaro's recovery made it seem like no injury ever took place. In Massaro's first Penn State start this past Saturday against Kent State, he was a disruption in the Golden Flashes' backfield. On two consecutive plays in the first quarter, Massaro broke the line of scrimmage on rushing plays.

The first time, he tackled Kent State's Spencer Keith but not before the Golden Flashes' quarterback pitched the ball to running

back Jacquise Terry on an option play. The next snap, he hit Terry for a five-yard loss.

"He's running with his body," Ogbu said, "using it as if he was never hurt and not playing anxious or hesitant."

Massaro didn't put too much stock into his first start. For the redshirt sophomore, Saturday was just another day on the job.

With coaches planning on rotating the defensive linemen to stay fresh, Massaro's role should stay the same. Because of it, his intensity and speed should remain fully visible on the defensive line.

"Just looking forward to things to come," Massaro said.

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Lord

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Track and Field junior champions.

But with only a couple of weeks to rest before training for the 2010 cross country season, Lord fell behind in training, which she believes led to her lowest-career finish at the Sept. 11 Harry Groves Spiked Shoe Invitational.

"Taking those two weeks off, I felt like I started from the very beginning," Lord said. "I had only been running 30 minutes a day, a lot less miles than I had been doing before that. I feel like I started so low below everyone else at the meet. I had a month to train, where everyone else had three months."

And although Lord has had a hard time rebounding from the summer, Ridder — Lord's roommate freshman year — has posted two top-four finishes, despite a very similar summer.

Lord said she and Ridder are very different athletes, which explains how reducing summer training affected the pair differently.

"Brooklyne is just a natural runner. You give that girl shoes and

she can run fast. Last year was my first whole year running, so my body is still like, 'What are you doing?'" Lord said. "Brooklyne is a runner, she knows what she needs to do to be good, and I'm still learning. I tried to catch up in August before I came into pre-season, but I feel like I overdid it with so much running at one time, that now I have it, I feel like I get it, then I hit a wall."

Before collegiate running, Lord, a native of Media, spent her time playing varsity lacrosse, field hockey and swimming at Penncrest High School, though she had never run a cross country season until she got to Penn State. Because she came into her first season physically fit from other sports, Lord succeeded on the track. But Lord said that is also the reason she wasn't able to maintain her level of fitness this summer.

"People might think I'm just naturally talented, but the only reason I was good at running last year is because I put so much work into swimming and lacrosse, it made me a good runner," Lord said.

"Taking so much time off with everything that went on [this summer] and having only a month to

train for it really just took a toll on everything."

Lord said because of her long summer, her 12th-place finish at the Spiked Shoe Invitational was disappointing, but not unexpected.

But what Lord said is in her favor is that she faced a setback before.

After her freshman cross country campaign, Lord won the Blue-White intrasquad meet, going home for her December break determined to carry her success into track season. Lord ran an hour each day, leading to being in the best shape of her life.

But once Lord returned to campus in early January, there was a sudden difference in her ability to perform as she had been.

"The workouts started to get really hard for me, even just running 30 minutes was getting hard," Lord said. "Even walking up stairs, I'd have to stop and break I was so exhausted."

Lord found out days later she had contracted mononucleosis, and had to stop running until she recovered.

Initially told she would be out as little as one week, Lord said a week turned into two, and before finally returning, she had been out two months — returning a full sea-

son later for outdoor track.

"At the time, I was like, 'You've got to be kidding me,'" Lord said. "I was ready to go, everything was coming easy. They told me I had mono and I was devastated."

After finally returning, Lord was able to provide a spark in the steeplechase — a 3,000-meter race with hurdles — winning her first race at Bucknell, and making it all the way to the USAF junior championships by the season's end.

Lord tied her two setbacks together, saying her ability to overcome mono has improved her outlook on getting back to her old form.

But Lord said she never even felt like she regained her form after her illness during indoor track. "Last winter when I got sick, I took two months off, and I didn't get to run at all, so I lost all my base. I had been running 60 miles a week," Lord said. "Since I missed that and came into outdoor track and did the steeplechase, I never really got back to where I was."

Ridder said Lord being relatively new to the sport is why she has had a hard time rebounding from running deep into the summer.

"For everybody else, we've been

running since seventh grade," Ridder said. "I think it's just a challenge for her to understand that it's pretty rough on your body for an entire year since you haven't [run]. I think a lot of it is mental for her, and it's harder on her because she's never run before."

Lord admitted she is concerned about getting back, though she has noticed results already.


"I've already seen it start to happen, and I feel like I'm going to peak at a good time — I still have two months," Lord said. "If I keep consistent, it will come. I just have to let it happen and not worry about it so much, because I do worry about it a lot."

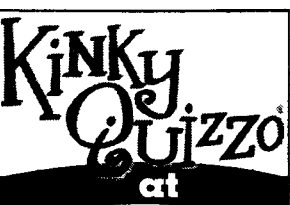
But while many athletes have to work back to the top, coach Beth Alford-Sullivan said if anyone can do it, it is Lord.

"Nicole's going to be a player when it matters at the end of the season. This is one of the toughest athletes I've ever met," Alford-Sullivan said.

"As long as she stays patient with herself, she's only going to get better, and she'll be there when it matters in October and November."

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