

Junior midfielder Schaefer remains reliable

By Andrew Robinson
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Ali Schaefer hasn't started a game this season, didn't even see the field against Yale and her minutes have fluctuated from as low as 10 to as high as 62.

While that may look like numbers for a player struggling through a tough season, Schaefer

has been one of the most consistent players on the Penn State women's soccer team.

"She just defines reliability right now," Nittany Lions coach Erica Walsh said. "She comes into the office, when she's on the sideline she watches the game and makes mental notes, she helps us out and she's as solid and steady as they come right now."

The junior midfielder has accepted her role off the bench despite no guarantee of set minutes each game. An offensive force in high school, Schaefer has completely revised her game at Penn State, taking on a hard working mentality and making her mark with hustle.

"My mindset as an individual is to just connect passes and keep

the energy up," Schaefer said. "I see that as my role on this team. When I do go in I try to boost everyone around me and make sure the starters are playing well and try to keep the energy up. It's all about the team winning."

Schaefer is one of the Lions most colorful personalities and highly energetic, constantly dribbling a ball off her foot at any free moment or dancing to warm-up music. Once she gets on the field however, the junior is all business, chasing after balls, making tackles and talking to her teammates.

With an abundance of talent in the central midfield, Schaefer has seen some time at wing, a position she played for the first time last spring. The junior said she'll play wherever, but she prefers being in the central midfield because it's easier to communicate.

"Life's about taking on new things and soccer's the same way," Schaefer said. "You've gotta take risks to get anything, so I'd rather take risks on the outside than just sit on the bench and wait for a turn in the middle."

The past two summers, Schaefer spent her summer playing for the USL W-League team

Pali Blues based in Los Angeles. Schaefer said it's a great environment with quality players and the intensity of practice helped raise her level of play.

Where in high school, Schaefer could score in any manner of ways and did so 96 times, at Penn State she has scored just once. Playing holding midfield, Schaefer knows her scoring won't be frequent and her shots won't usually be from close range, but she has been working on her long-range shooting to give the Lions another weapon from outside the box.

Schaefer's teammates have taken notice of the junior's reliability this season. Sophomore midfielder Maddy Evans said Schaefer has set a good example for what the team expects the reserve players to give.

"She's been incredible on the field and off because she's been so positive about it," Evans said. "Whatever role she's given she's willing to take on happily and she does it really well and she does a great job when she is on the field being that spark and being that player."



Junior midfielder **Ali Schaefer (11)** kicks the ball past defenders during the team's loss to Dartmouth Sunday.

Alexis Simchak/Colegian

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Lee adjusting to new position as Lions' middle man

By Andrew Robinson
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Justin Lee stepped into a soft pass from assistant coach Jason Mims and ripped a line drive shot that clanged off the crossbar, drawing whistles of appreciation from his teammates.

While Lee's attempt, taken about seven yards outside the box looked average, it wasn't a shot the junior would have normally taken last season. However, a transition from right back to defensive midfield this fall has Lee adapting to a new style.

"If you change positions, naturally there are going to be things that you know you need to work on," Lee said. "Coming into that position and realizing what my role was, it's taken me some time to really understand what I have to do."

The biggest change from defense to midfield, Lee said, is the number of touches he gets. Lee has one assist on the year to go along with 10 shots and has started every game at holding midfielder.

When Bob Warming took over the team this summer, two things struck him about Lee that prompted the change. The first-year Penn State coach said he liked Lee's technical ability and felt it would be better suited to the middle, and that Lee's stamina wasn't enough that the junior could last 90 minutes at right back.

"We knew he couldn't last 90 minutes playing outside back, he'd never been able to," Warming said. "It didn't make any sense to me, because in the back I don't like to make changes very much, to have someone who couldn't play 90 minutes."

By putting Lee in the midfield, Warming thinks it's actually helped senior winger Mathews Braga's start to the season. In the central midfield, Lee partners with senior co-captain Drew Cost and it gives the Nittany Lions a pair of players who can use both feet effectively.

Having two dual-footed players, Warming said Lee or Cost can play a ball out to either wing, where a right-footed player would tend to send more passes to the

right side. So far, Cost has enjoyed partnering with Lee despite the fact it took the duo a little while to get on the same page.

"It took him a little bit in preseason to get used to the movements and stuff and it took us longer to get used to each other in the middle," Cost said. "But overall, he's been playing fantastic. He's in there moving a lot of balls and distributing well so it's been good for us."

Having been an outside back, Lee is a quick player and Cost said Lee's speed is an asset in the middle as well. Cost said Lee covers a lot of ground and can recover well if he gets beat.

Cost played the defensive midfield role last year and both midfielders are comfortable pushing up knowing the other can drop back and cover the defensive end. Lee said being the defensive-minded midfielder, he doesn't try to dribble and is looking more to shift the point of attack with his touches.

Lee said he and Cost have combined well both on and off the field and it's translated into success.



Justin Lee (2) races alongside a Bucknell player in Friday night's game.

And while Lee hasn't scored yet this season, Cost sees the work his teammate is doing and expects good things from Lee in the future.

"He's always been able to slap the ball for us," Cost said. "On cor-

ners if it comes out to him he'll slap it back in the middle. He has a great shot he just needs to work on getting it on frame then he'll be lethal."

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