

## Recruiting

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Division I hockey in any recruiting pitches to prospective students. He said while playing on the varsity team cannot be guaranteed, it is definitely a great opportunity for any incoming player.

"What we're going to say is they have every opportunity to come in here and play for our club team for a few years and then transition into playing Division I," Hand said.

Balboni said a transition committee would be put in place by the university shortly, which will help give the coaches direction during the recruiting process.

Once the committee and new coaching staff is in place, he said their wants will come first as far as recruiting goes.

Icers players also weighed in, as junior forward Nick Seravalli said he believes the opportunity to play Division I at Penn State will cause many players to reevaluate their prospective school choices and come to State College.

While junior forward Paul Daley is hopeful Seravalli is right, he also said it has the potential to hurt the process.

His concern stems from Athletic Director Tim Curley's comments at Friday's press conference saying there is a strong possibility the Icers could be moved to a lower club level.

"It could turn kids away a little bit," Daley said. "Having that fear of the Icers going away and them not having a place to play."

In response to Daley, Balboni said while that could happen, he believes the student athletes come to Penn State for academics first.

"They're coming to the university to get a great education and get a Penn State degree," Balboni said.

"They knew they weren't going to play in the NHL once they left here and make a career out of hockey. I'm hoping that student athlete still decides to come to Penn State."

Balboni said during recruiting in the past, the coaching staff has always looked for student athletes who excel in the classroom first before the ice, and that will not change.

The only adjustment will be the caliber of the athletes being pursued.

"The main mantra of the Penn State student athlete is in-class attitude and the academic first side of things," Balboni said. "I think that will always remain the same and be constant as we make the change from club to varsity."

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## Smallwood

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said. "We just all want to go and do the same thing."

Smallwood's laid-back demeanor off the field has shown itself in a unique way this season. The junior has been recording random moments with the team on a small video camera he said he bought impulsively before the season.

The camera goes everywhere, even road trips. Fetrow said Smallwood will tape anything from team meals to bus rides to away games and even pregame antics. Warming started to laugh when he was asked about the camera, but said he's happy Smallwood is preserving the memories of this season for his teammates to look back on years from now.

"At the end of the year hopefully I can compile something to make a video of the season," Smallwood said. "It's just completely random things, I grew up with [seniors] Treavor [Gelsinger] and Drew [Cost] playing and it's their last year so I figured I might as well do it."

Injuries slowed Smallwood through his first two seasons, a dislocated shoulder in his freshman year cost him two games and he played much of last spring with a small brace on his right knee. However, he said this year is the healthiest he's been and it has helped his start to the season.

Moving to defense was a bit of a surprise for Smallwood, but the junior likes his new position and the fact he's a consistent starter now. Right backs often get involved in the offensive flow of the game and Smallwood has linked well with right outside midfielder Mackenzie Arment early.

"Coach tells me to get up and down the line when I can," Smallwood said. "It's a good position to do that cause you're open most of the time and guys won't mark you so you get some good crosses in."

It's early but Smallwood is proving his worth to the Lions both as a tough guy on defense and by saving memories of what they hope is a special year.

"The players enjoy it right now. They have fun with it right now, but I think they'll treasure it 20 years from now," Warming said. "Hopefully the same media will still be available to watch it 20 years from now but we're going to try and have a special season and to look back on that is great."

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## Wilson

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former teammate, Christa Harmotto, in 2007.

Now, with sophomore Kristin Carpenter quarterbacking the offense and freshman Deja McClendon playing to her side, Wilson is poised to continue her efficiency and have a strong senior campaign.

"She's just sneaky good," Ohio State coach Geoff Carlston said. "She just takes care of her business. She's certainly one of those players that are returning that is one of the better players in the conference, just because of her experience and background."

"She's very efficient and does everything pretty well."

Given her past success, and 85 kills this season, Wilson, a co-captain, is probably one of the first names to appear on many opposing teams' scouting reports.

Purdue coach Dave Shondell said though he hasn't started to prepare for Penn State yet — the Boilermakers don't play the Lions

"She's just sneaky good. She takes care of her business. She's very efficient and does everything pretty well."

Geoff Carlston

Ohio State women's volleyball coach

until Oct. 8 — he knows Penn State will want to setup Wilson and opposite hitter Blair Brown as frequently as possible.

"Fortunately I haven't had to stress out over that yet this year," Shondell said.

Penn State coach Russ Rose said he expects most teams to have a good defensive scheme to stop Wilson, as well as Brown.

However, good plans don't always pan out.

"Just because you know they're good doesn't mean you can stop them from doing what they do," Rose said.

Her contribution isn't evident only in the box score, either.

Though Wilson is not the most vocal player on the court, Fatima Balza, who normally starts with

Wilson at middle hitter, said Wilson helps her teammates, nonetheless.

"Even though she's not one of the energy players we have on the team, she knows what she's doing," Balza said.

"She's like taking the setters and the younger players and giving them good advice and things like that to get the team to a different level, a better level."

And with Penn State starting its Big Ten season with away matches at No. 9 Illinois on Friday and Wisconsin on Sunday without the graduated Hodge and Glass, it's Wilson's time.

"I think she's always known what she has to do," Balza said.

"And now it's time to shine even more."

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## Football

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Bernard Pierce, the game gives the Lions a chance to prove they can have a strong run defense against a legitimate back, or that they need to continue working on tackling.

"It's going to be one of our bigger games that we have had these last three weeks before the Big Ten," safety Andrew Dailey said.

"It's going to be a great tune-up game. ... It's going to be like a Big Ten game this week, I feel, because Temple is starting off hot, and they

have a lot of big playmakers."

While Zug said he doesn't expect the offense to approach this game much differently than it has for the first three, it does give freshman quarterback Rob Bolden a chance to rebound after throwing five interceptions during his first three games this season.

But Zug said he's not worried about the quarterback's play and said Bolden shouldn't feel more pressure going against Temple.

While each game so far has been a learning experience in preparation for the conference season for Bolden, the Lions as a whole want to head into

Iowa with the belief that their last road game was also something to learn from.

Having the confidence that comes from two consecutive wins, especially with one coming against a team that made a bowl game last year, helps the Lions see where they stand heading into Iowa.

"It's a very important game," Troutman said. "Every game is an important game, but you know going into the Big Ten season it is very important to start off good and go in there on a good note."

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## Conference

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years, but the challenge they've faced has increased each season. In 2008, the Lions split the conference title with Minnesota and last year they were in a dead heat with Ohio State until the season's final weekend.

Right now, Penn State sits dead last in overall record among Big Ten squads, but nonconference record has no standing on the conference champion.

The standings are a sign that teams that have traditionally been at the bottom of the Big Ten tables are making progress.

"They're better. The Big Ten overall is better," Penn State coach Erica Walsh said prior to the season. "The traditional bottom of the conference is now really risen and the difference between top and bottom is a lot smaller."

"There are four or five teams that could compete for this championship this year."

Walsh said this year is the strongest she's seen the Big Ten, a statement

Saxton agreed with. At the same time, there is a noticeable difference between the quality of some Big Ten teams' nonconference schedules, which Saxton said makes it hard to truly identify where some teams are.

The first few weeks of Big Ten play offer the best chance for teams to start off well, even in years where Penn State would come in with a good nonconference record. Ohio State coach Lori Walker said it's anyone's game at this point but she won't count out Penn State in any year.

"They have a unique way of sorting things out once conference play hits," Walker said. "I wouldn't really be able to even predict who can rise to the top of the conference, it's too wide open."

Penn State opens Big Ten play Sunday at home against the Spartans, then travels to Ohio State one week later, putting the team up against two of its biggest rivals early. Walker commended the Lions for their consistently difficult nonconference schedule, but agreed with Saxton that the difference in opponents among the schedules clouds any judgment right now.

Both Saxton and Walker were cautious to identify what has caused the Lions' struggles early this season. However, the coaches did think Penn State's young core may be part of the slow start.

In her experience, Walker said she has found upperclassmen-laden teams perform better in conference because the younger players don't fully grasp how to handle the rigors of the season.

The Lions lost a good deal of talent to graduation and are relying mostly on underclassmen this year. But at the same time, a 12-year streak still carries a lot of weight around the Big Ten.

"I have a great respect for Penn State and their incredible string of Big Ten championships, I certainly think they remain the conference favorites," Saxton said. "But again I think it's going to be a wide-open affair. Last year there was more parity than ever in my career here and I think we're going to see another year like that this year. I think anything's possible."

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