

# Pirates fire Russell after three seasons

By Alan Robinson  
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

PITTSBURGH — He didn't make the trades or strip the major league roster of so many proven players. In the end, John Russell's resume will always include 299 losses in three seasons, and that was way too many, even for the Pittsburgh Pirates.

Russell was fired Monday after matching the Pirates' record for most losses by a manager in three seasons. The only other manager in the franchise's 124-season history with so many losses in so few seasons was Fred Haney, who was 163-299 from 1953-55.

Russell (186-299) had records of 67-95 in 2008, 62-99 in 2009 and 57-105 this season. Only the 1952 Pirates, who went 42-112, lost more games in baseball's modern era than Russell's final team, which was the NL's worst in batting, pitching and defense.

Those Pirates were bad from

April to October, putting together a 12-game losing streak, four seven-game losing streaks and eight five-game losing streaks. They were 17-64 on the road, equaling the 1963 Mets for the most road losses during baseball's expansion era.

No pitcher won more than nine games on a team that was outscored by 279 runs, or almost 100 runs more than any other major league team. Five pitchers lost 10 or more games, led by 15-game losers Zach Duke and Paul Maholm, and no starting pitcher had a winning record during the franchise's record-extending 18th consecutive losing season.

While Russell was fired, general manager Neal Huntington was retained despite making a succession of poor trades and questionable moves that have left the Pirates with one of the majors' least-talented teams — a pattern that began long before either arrived in Pittsburgh.

Both Russell and Huntington were under contract for 2011 — deals that were worked out a year

ago, but weren't announced by team president Frank Cooney until mid-June. Russell will not be retained in another capacity.

"We asked John Russell and his staff to compete against some incredible odds," Huntington said. "We've turned the club over in three years. I'm not shy about taking responsibility for the record. It's not the manager's record. The won-lost record at the major league level goes beyond just the manager."

Russell's stoic demeanor, reluctance to argue most calls and peculiar strategy — such as letting a pitcher bat with runners in scoring position while the Pirates trailed by five runs — made him unpopular among fans.

Russell was praised by his players for his refusal to publicly criticize them and his hands-on teaching. The team's top three prospects — Pedro Alvarez, Jose Tabata and Neil Walker — all had promising, above-average rookie seasons. But the Pirates' talent was so thin and their power, pitching and payroll were so lacking,

Russell had no virtual chance to win with a team that surpassed even the cocaine-scandal 1985 Pirates, who lost 104 games, for the most losses by any Pirates team in nearly 50 seasons.

"It's unfortunate, but you learn to deal with it and move on," Russell told MLB Network Radio. "I can't wait to get back in the game in some other capacity because it's what I love."

The 2010 Pirates sustained the worst loss in club history, a 20-0 defeat to Milwaukee on April 22, and had the fourth-worst ERA (5.00) in club history.

"We lost 84 games in the rotation and that's just ... astounding," said Russell, whose team began the season with a major league-low \$35 million payroll. "It kind of floors me every time I think about it. That's the bottom line, and everybody knows if you can't pitch, it's going to be very difficult."

The search for the sixth full-time manager to serve during the ongoing losing streak already has begun, but Huntington — a former Indians executive — did not iden-

tify any possible candidates. "It's not about placing blame," Huntington said. "We all feel a sense of urgency to expedite the development process to put this organization on a better track at the major league level. We're doing some incredible things with scouting and development. We're looking forward to having those make an impact on the wins and losses at the major league level."

Russell, a former major league catcher and Phillies minor league manager, was a surprise hire by the Pirates in September 2008. He had been fired as the Pirates' third base coach by previous management only two seasons before, yet was hired by Cooney and Huntington because of his reputation for being a patient, adept developer of younger talent.

Russell's first team in 2008 was competitive until midseason, when the franchise — eager to stockpile a talent-bereft farm system — began dealing away or cutting productive players such as Jason Bay, Xavier Nady, Freddy Sanchez, and Jack Wilson.

# Bears' Cutler could be back from injury soon

By Andrew Seligman  
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

LAKE FOREST, Ill. — Chicago Bears coach Lovie Smith sounded optimistic that quarterback Jay Cutler will be back soon from his concussion, although he would not say just how severe the injury is.

Smith said Cutler was back at the practice facility Monday and was "feeling OK" after sitting out the second half of a 17-3 loss the previous night against the New York Giants. Even so, his status for this week's game against Carolina is in question.

"Jay is here," Smith said. "It seemed like he was in pretty good shape right now. There are no visual signs or anything that I could tell. I try not to be the doctor, and I leave that to other people. It seems like he's OK today."

Smith said the Bears started

noticing symptoms after the second-to-last play of the second quarter, when Cutler's head banged the turf while being taken down by Aaron Ross on the Giants' ninth sack. The Bears then went with a run by Chester Taylor, and Todd Collins replaced Cutler to start the third quarter.

He actually wound up leaving with a stinger late in the game, forcing Chicago to go with Caleb Hanie.

Smith hopes to have all three quarterbacks available for practice on Wednesday.

On a night when the Bears wound up allowing 10 sacks, the most ever for them, Cutler started taking a beating as soon as he stepped on the field. His injury casts a big cloud over the Bears and wipes out the good feelings they created by winning their first three games.

"We played four games and we lost one," Smith said. "Let's not panic around here, all right? The

reality is we're 3-1 with this group. Our offense has done a lot of good things. Last night, we didn't get it done. We didn't get it done. No more than that."

Smith got testy when someone pointed out the Bears allowed nine sacks in the first half.

"I realize that, too," he said. "Believe it or not, I was at the game also, all right? And we're working to correct that. It happened one time, all right? It's no more than that. We'll correct the things that we can, of course, and we have some different options to go with and we'll play better this week."

Left tackle Frank Omiyale said the breakdowns are "all stuff that can be fixed."

Cutler, who has made 57 straight starts since Denver turned to him as a rookie in 2006, had absorbed more than a few big hits by the time Ross got to him late in the first half.

There was one sack early in the

second quarter when Osi Umenyiora ran through tight end Greg Olsen and leveled Cutler from behind, the ball popping out and into the arms of center Olin Kreutz.

Cutler got up and took a few steps toward the wrong sideline before correcting himself. Soon after, he had what appeared to be a dazed look when the TV cameras showed him sitting on the sideline, and his decision-making was questionable at best.

"We are responsible when he's hit," Kreutz said.

Cutler didn't help himself by hanging on to the ball too long at times, in an apparent effort to make plays that just weren't there, and the result was more hits from a relentless defense.

"As I said, when we thought something was going on was after that last sack that he took right before the half," Smith said. "That's when he showed the symptoms of a concussion, and we

did something about it." He would not elaborate on those symptoms.

Smith also said he didn't consider lifting Cutler earlier, adding "We were trying to win the football game, and Jay gave us our best option to do that. Jay wasn't thinking about coming out of the game. Everybody out there was trying to make a play. Keep in mind, it was a 3-0 game. Taking out the quarterback during that time? No, that doesn't cross my mind."

Guidelines adopted by the NFL in December 2009 say players who leave a game or practice because of a concussion should not resume football activities until they are "fully asymptomatic, both at rest and after exertion" and have been cleared by team physicians and an "independent neurological consultant."

"We have a process that we go through if a player gets injured during the course of a game," Smith said.

## Parr

From Page 8.

on again to start against Bucknell on Sept. 10.

However, since Penn State's 2-1 loss to the Bison, sophomore Brian Fergie has earned eight starts on the Lions' back line, moving Parr to fill the role of a defensive substitute.

As a defender on a team with such depth at the position, Parr knows earning his spot on the field is a daily battle.

"You just have to work hard every day in practice, and in the games you have to come out and prove it," Parr said.

"There's always guys on the bench that are pushing the guys on the back line for playing time, and you have to prove yourself out on the field and if you do that,

that's all the coaches can really ask for."

Since Fergie's rise to a regular starter, Parr has taken the cut in playing time in stride.

A lot of players might sulk or complain about not playing, coach Bob Warming said. But Parr has chosen to take on a different mentality.

"I think Andy has done the most important thing you can do when you're not playing as much as you'd like," the coach said. "And particularly as a senior, that you set an example for the team about how hard you need to come to work every day."

Parr's work ethic and determination are things that the team can always use whether or not he's starting.

In practice last week, the senior has been making an impact on the team's offensive set pieces, head-

ing in a few goals off corner kicks.

And in the Lions' 2-1 loss to Michigan this past weekend, Parr fired a shot onto Wolverine keeper Chris Blais in the 90th minute.

Though it was saved, Parr's shot gave the Lions a chance late in the game.

Fellow defender Mark Fetrow recognizes the important role Parr plays on the team, and knows his teammate will always come through when called upon.

"He knows that he's a good enough player that he could be starting and when the opportunity arises, he'll be ready to fill that hole," Fetrow said. "It's great to have a guy like Andy Parr on the team who's really experienced, knows how to get the job done and does it when he gets the opportunity."

To e-mail reporter: [mas5860@psu.edu](mailto:mas5860@psu.edu)

## Miller

From Page 8.

some day. Now the Nittany Lions are glad they have him.

As a true freshman, Miller has been the most consistent golfer for the Lions.

He has finished in the top 10 of all three tournaments so far this season, including a first-place finish in the Maryland Intercollegiate three weeks ago.

"You just hope that he can make the adjustment to college and to traveling and continue to keep his playing ability up," coach Greg Nye said. "He has survived the initial month very, very well."

Miller himself said he is a little surprised with how well he has played in the first few weeks of the season.

"I just wanted to come out and not try to step on anybody's toes," Miller said.

"I just wanted to get my bear-

ings and play my own game. So far, that is working pretty good."

According to Nye and senior T.J. Howe, Miller has meshed quickly with the rest of the team. "He fits in really nicely," Nye said,

"both competitively and as a human being."

Howe said that Miller contributes to the camaraderie of the team and has made his job as senior leader, "very easy."

It is that team unity that ultimately sold Miller on playing for the Nittany Lions.

"When I came for my visit what really got me was the camaraderie of the team," Miller said.

"Everyone does everything together."

Since he is only a freshman, it seems the sky is the limit for Miller's potential.

"I'm only going to get better," Miller said.

To e-mail reporter: [mjc5290@psu.edu](mailto:mjc5290@psu.edu)

## Poor play

From Page 8.

and it's translating to the entire team to the point where you're not consistent."

Through the first three games Penn State's offensive line was praised for keeping defenders away from freshman quarterback Rob Bolden. Now, after giving up sacks in the past two games and watching Bolden take several hits, the Nittany Lions' pass protection has been questioned.

Joe Paterno said if his offensive line plays with confidence from the beginning of the game, the pass protection will improve.

Forced to keep a running back in to help keep pressure off Bolden, the offensive line's play had a domino effect on the rest of the offense.

With defensive fronts able to

generate a steady pass rush, in many instances Penn State's running backs have become added blockers.

Evon Royster carried the ball just 10 times against Iowa, partially because the Lions needed to pass to try and catch up to Iowa and partially because there were few holes to run through.

With the running backs staying in to help out the offensive line block, the wide receivers were blanketed and the offense stalled.

"It's kind of tough to throw the ball sometimes because we can't take the defense off our wide receivers for the deeper routes and it makes things a lot more difficult," Royster said.

"The throws have to be a lot tighter and it's a lot of pressure for a young kid."

Part of the offensive line's inconsistent play stems from the loss of right tackle Lou Eliades,

who was a veteran presence on the line. Replacing a player who started every game of the 2009 season is no easy task, but his replacement, Chima Okoli, said, "it is what it is."

With tight end Garry Gilliam, who was mainly used as a blocker, suffering an ACL injury, the Lions' pass protection will once again turn to a young player.

Freshman Kevin Haplea filled in for Gilliam and will be relied on to help an offensive line that after five games, Barham said, is still trying to gel.

"It's just a matter of coming together and getting better at our position and I think with that it just takes time," Barham said. "Unfortunately we gotta overcome guys like this to get ourselves better and to see how good we really are."

To e-mail reporter: [aas5220@psu.edu](mailto:aas5220@psu.edu)

## Men's soccer

From Page 8.

games are against No. 11 Michigan State, Northwestern and No. 19 Ohio State, along with a mid-week nonconference game on Oct. 13 against No. 1 Akron.

What the Lions have going for them is the quality of the teams in the conference and the fact it will be tough for any team to run the gauntlet.

"The conference is really competitive," Penn State coach Bob Warming said. "I don't think anybody's going to get through this conference unscathed. For us right now that's a positive so I'm not worried about that, I'm just worried about playing better."

What the two losses have given the Lions is perspective on what

the team is doing wrong. Casais said after watching Sunday's game again, he spotted several mistakes that can be easily corrected before Wednesday night's game against Villanova.

Senior midfielder Matheus Braga said both Big Ten games could have swung either way. The Lions had a late goal called back in their 3-2 loss to Indiana and had a last minute shot off a corner kick saved Sunday.

"We know the results are going to come and the wins are going to come," Braga said. "We just have to relax and be patient with that."

One thing the Lions hope to correct in their next conference game is being the first team on the scoreboard. The team has developed a fast-starting mentality, but it was lacking against Michigan.

Warming said the head

coach, it's on him to make sure the Lions come out with the right energy from the start and it doesn't require a halftime speech to get his team going.

The two losses isn't how the Lions wanted to start the Big Ten, but there's plenty of time left in the season and to Warming, each game is a new measuring stick.

"The theme I've had with our guys is every stop along the way this year we have to learn what we can and try to be better the next game," Warming said.

"There's a reason the team lost eight games last year, it wasn't because everything was perfect. I've really got to make sure our guys understand they need to keep working at things and making progress."

To e-mail reporter: [adr5079@psu.edu](mailto:adr5079@psu.edu)

## League

From Page 8.

Penn State," Dunbar said.

"They lost a lot to graduation, but they still play like Penn State. They still play with confidence and play like they expect to win. It's just now some other teams have become more competitive."

Minnesota coach Mike Hebert thinks the increased level of competition is because the league has a strong core of veteran coaches who continue to bring in heralded recruits.

Hebert said it's not as if everyone's on the same level, but there's definitely less disparity between the bottom and the top.

For example, Northwestern's 13-2 start — including a 3-1 conference mark — is the pro-

gram's best since 1987.

The Wildcats are currently tied for third in the Big Ten standings after not being ranked at all in the coaches' preseason poll.

Meanwhile Michigan State, picked sixth in the Big Ten preseason poll, has begun conference play with a 1-3 record.

But through it all, Hebert said one thing has remained the same.

"Penn State, in my book, continues to be the team to beat," Hebert said.

"At this point in time, they're still the favorites. They have good athletes, are well-coached, and know how to win. But it's just two weeks into the season, and it's all about who can go down the stretch in November."

To e-mail reporter: [exk5049@psu.edu](mailto:exk5049@psu.edu)

## Short yardage

From Page 8.

percent success rate but the nine short-yardage attempts, showing Penn State is putting itself in more 3rd-and-long situations.

As Jay Paterno noted, Penn State put itself in more short-yardage situations in the second half with seven attempts as opposed to two in the first half. But aside from the start of the first drive in the third quarter,

the Lions converted only one of four short-yardage attempts.

Not capitalizing on 3rd-and-4 or less is a problem throughout the whole game, not just first-half play.

"We came out throwing," Jay Paterno said.

"It wasn't like we didn't try to mix it up, but I think the first third down call probably not a great call on our part, probably should've thrown it. And then, we got ourselves into some 3rd-and-longs early in the game. We put ourselves in a hole."

To e-mail reporter: [bjm5146@psu.edu](mailto:bjm5146@psu.edu)