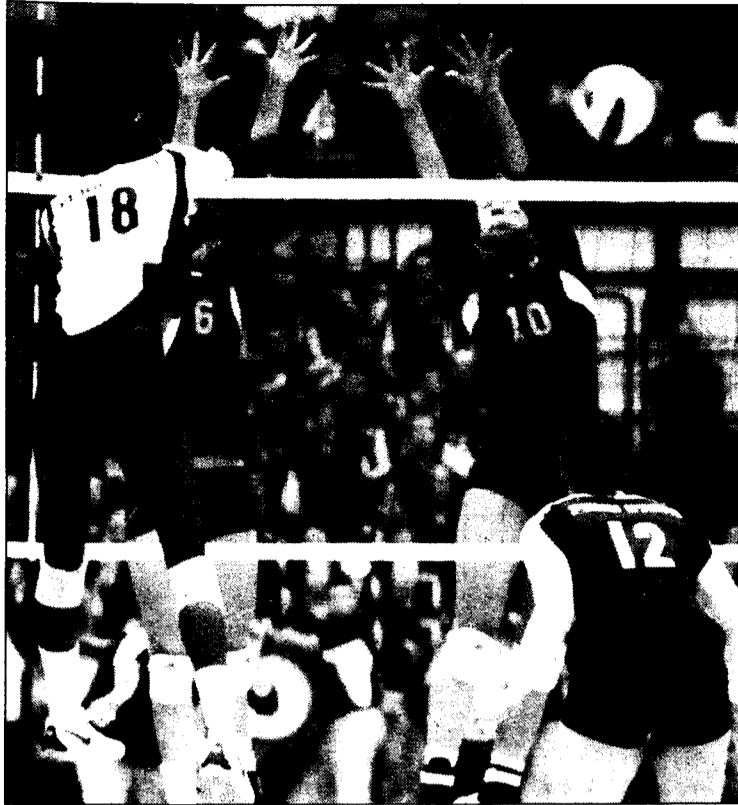


Freshman Deja McClendon continues to excel



Deja McClendon (18) makes a play against George Washington.

By Jake Kaplan
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

The Nittany Lions are asking a lot of freshman Deja McClendon. But at the same time, it hasn't seemed to faze her. Not one bit.

McClendon, a **WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL** hitter on the No. 4 Penn State women's volleyball team (13-2, 3-1 Big Ten) had another impressive weekend, leading the Lions with 28 combined kills in sweeps of Michigan State and then-No. 19 Michigan on Friday and Saturday. Against the Wolverines, the 18-year-old freshman was especially sharp, recording a "double-double" with a team-leading 14 kills and 10 digs.

The Louisville, Ky. native was also efficient, notching a .407 hitting percentage.

At one point in the second set against Michigan, McClendon tallied three straight Penn State kills and in the third set, the highly touted freshman dominated the stat sheet with six kills and five digs.

"I think she's great," senior opposite hitter and co-captain Blair Brown said. "I think we're asking her to do a lot for our team. As a freshman it's unbelievable that she can pick so many things up so quickly."

With 15 matches under her belt, McClendon is ninth in the conference in hitting percentage (.356) and ranks 10th in kills (166). Through six weeks, she has earned two Big Ten Freshman of the Week honors.

The one aspect of her game she deemed a "problem area" is her defensive play, but one would not be able to tell from her back-row performance Saturday night. The 6-foot-1 freshman was second on the team in digs in the match and has 98 in 2010, also second on Penn State.

"I'm really happy because I feel like my defense got a lot better and really, that's my problem area," McClendon said Saturday night.

McClendon, who had never played in the back row before coming to Penn State, said senior libero Alyssa D'Errico and senior defensive specialist Cathy Quilico

have been helping her with defense in practice.

D'Errico said after Friday night's match, there is not much more the team can ask from McClendon, especially considering her inexperience from the back row.

"She's exceeding a lot of expectations in her ability to play back row, especially at such a high level," said D'Errico, who leads the Lions with 196 digs.

"I'm excited. I love playing with her. She's just a great, great person."

Michigan coach Mark Rosen said it's tough to prepare for the Lions because of their plethora of dangerous hitters, referring to the trio of McClendon, Brown and middle hitter Arielle Wilson as a triple-threat.

"[McClendon] had a great match," Rosen said after Saturday night's match. "And obviously we knew [about the talented Penn State freshmen], we all recruited them. We were hoping they'd wear a different color. But she did a great job."

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Special teams play could make or break Icers

By Anthony Barton
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

When assistant coach Josh Hand thinks of a game-changer, he isn't thinking about a single player on his Penn State Icers team.

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To him, the most important game-changer in hockey is special teams play — both the powerplay and the penalty kill.

When two competitive teams meet, the success or failure of those two units can give one team the edge.

"If two evenly matched teams meet, the way hockey is supposed to go is you play five-on-five and nobody scores until a penalty is taken," Hand said.

"Then a team goes down four-on-five, and the other is able to capitalize."

The Icers' series sweep against Pittsburgh this weekend proved that point, as the team went 3-for-7 on powerplays, while limiting the Panthers to only one goal in 11

chances with the man-advantage. Junior forward Paul Daley said the team did better than he expected on special teams in the first two games.

The assistant captain, who plays on both the powerplay and the penalty kill, said he only expects the special teams' play to get better as the season moves along.

One player Daley said always stands out on the Icers' penalty kill is senior forward and captain Marek Polidor.

"He goes a million miles an hour, blocks shots and just makes things happen," Daley said.

"He's probably our best penalty killer and is just exciting to watch."

Polidor attributed his success to playing alongside senior forward Chris Pronchik. The two have been paired together on the penalty kill for the better part of two seasons, and he said the chemistry shows.

"We know what each other are doing on the PK, so it helps out a lot," Polidor said. "The trick is to

just be quick on your feet, get in shooting lanes and take away passes. I think Chris and I do a good job of that."

Polidor liked what he saw from the penalty kill unit this weekend, but said the powerplay can always improve.

"We really need to focus on the powerplay and get more quality scoring opportunities, get more shots on net and generate more traffic in front of the net," Polidor said. "If we do that, it will lead to more goals."

Senior forward and assistant captain Tim O'Brien said at the end of the day, the Icers' goaltender is one of, if not the most important part of the team's penalty kill. That goalie is senior Teddy Hume, who played a major role in allowing only one powerplay goal in 11 chances over the weekend.

"I think he did an extremely good job on Friday night and then we didn't give him much help on Saturday," O'Brien said. "He hung in there when the game was close. It was a one-goal game through-

out the whole game on Saturday so I think that he did a pretty good job in net."

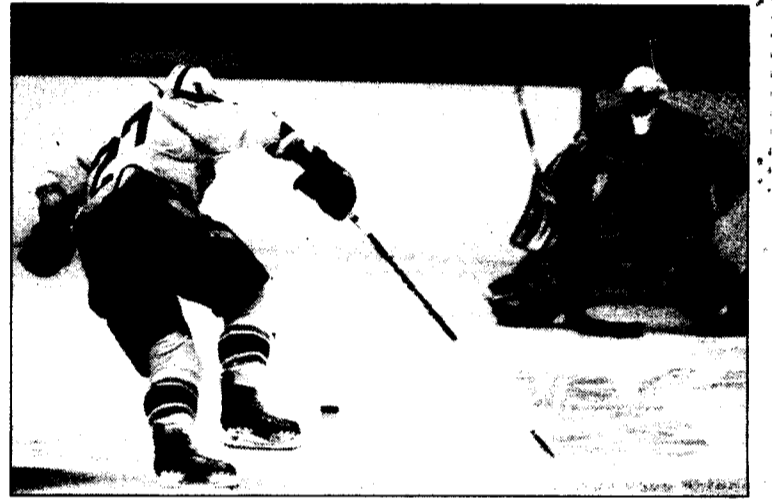
Polidor said the Icers will face competitive ACHA teams throughout the season where the game might not be decided during five-on-five play.

Special teams could determine

how far the Icers go this season.

"When we get on special teams, especially the powerplay, we need to make sure we're in a position to capitalize," Polidor said. "Special teams play can win or lose games for us."

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Paul Daley (27) skates on goal during the Blue-White scrimmage.

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