

Senior Cost's effort leads Lions to narrow victory

By Andrew Robinson
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Drew Cost stepped in front of an attempted breakup, putting the ball at his foot then let rip a shot from just outside the top right corner of the box.

The ball whipped across the grass before striking the far post and nestling into the net. Cost turned in a standout performance in the team's 1-0 win against Villanova.

"The number one thing with Drew has been keeping the ball and that whole sequence of the goal came off him connecting passes," Penn State coach Bob Warming said. "He's tried to do a little too much with the ball at times this year where he's lost possession so a big emphasis with him tonight was keeping possession."

Playing his customary central midfield position, Cost provided a key pivot offensively, constantly finding an open teammate on the

far side of the field. That ability to get the ball into space opened up the Lions' offense, leading to five shots with three on goal.

In the 41st minute Cost played arguably his best ball of the match, a long through ball to right back Matt Smallwood that hit Smallwood in stride up the sideline. While Smallwood's cross didn't get to its target, Cost's pass set up a prime chance with the Lions only up one goal.

"We made a point of it to come out and really keep possession and we were moving and buzzing really well," Cost said. "It was just easier I had more options tonight and it helped that they only had one top so I could get deeper in the midfield to get the ball and make decisions."

All season, Cost has been selective with his shots, taking just eight with four put on goal. Of his three shots Wednesday night, Cost put two on net, including a rocket in the 32nd minute that forced a reaction save.

The senior made an impact on the defensive end as well. In the

70th minute a long free kick from Villanova put the ball in a dangerous spot, but Cost was able to get a foot on it.

"I think we all had a little bit of an off weekend this past weekend at Michigan and for Drew especially to come out and have a performance like that, that's big time," sophomore defender Brian Forgue said. "That's what we need put of our captain."

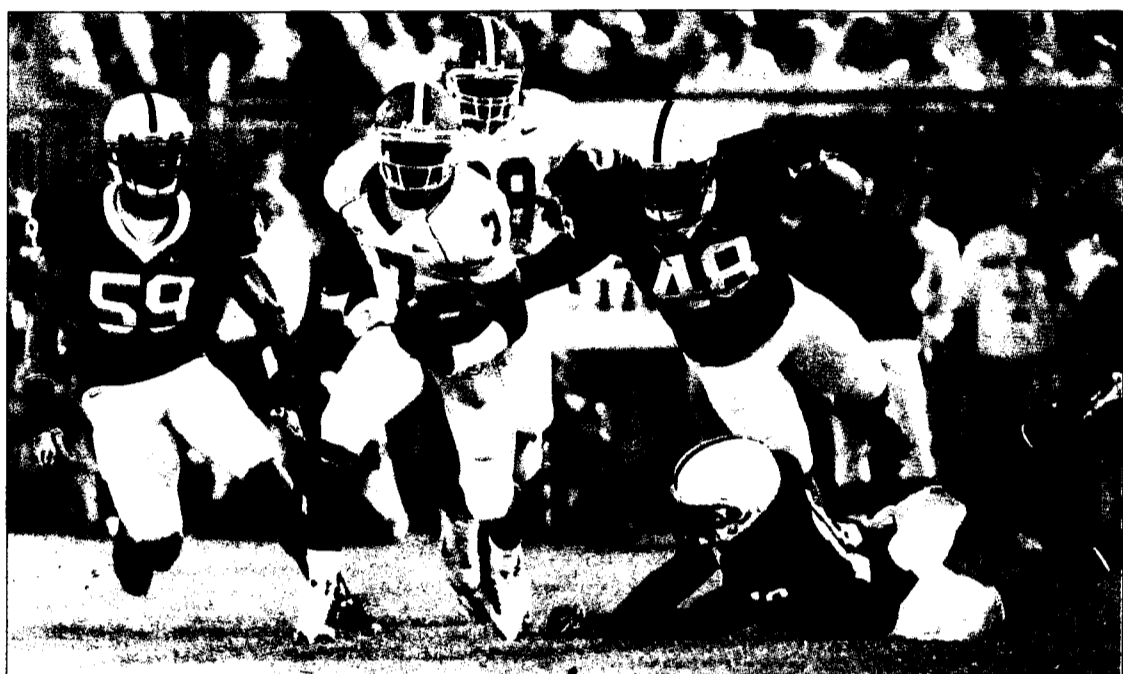
About halfway through the second half, Cost said the team changed its approach to protect the lead and stop pressing for another goal. Goalkeeper Brendan Birmingham said he's come to expect this type of performance from Cost.

Warming said he moved Justin Lee closer to Cost in the midfield and Cost said it helped his passing game Wednesday. Cost's ability to keep the ball and hit the right pass was an integral part of the shutout the Lions defense and Birmingham posted.



Steph Witt/Collegian

To e-mail reporter: adr5079@psu.edu Drew Cost (8) fights for a ball during the Lions 1-0 win Wednesday.



Collegian File Photo

Juice Williams (7) runs from members of the Penn State defense during a 2008 game at Beaver Stadium. The former Illinois quarterback has since graduated and the team is now led by a redshirt freshman.

Illini moving on without Williams

By Andrew J. Cassavelli
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Nathan Scheelhaase sees plenty of similarities between himself and his quarterback predecessor at Illinois, Juice Williams.

But that doesn't mean when the Illini enter Beaver Stadium noon Saturday, he will be leading the same offense Williams did.

In fact, Scheelhaase said this season's offense could not be more different than the one Williams manned last season, and the one he manned as a four-year starter from 2006-09.

"If you look at our offense from last year to this year, it's a 180," Scheelhaase said. "Not only from the Xs and Os, but from the mentality of the offense to the focus of the offense."

Scheelhaase said Illinois' offense is more balanced and, as a result, more unpredictable. After operating almost exclusively out of the shotgun last season, now the Illini have spent some time in the I-formation and some time with a tight end set.

The biggest difference from last year, Scheelhaase said, is the offense actually features a full-back. Penn State safety Nick Sukay has taken notice of the shifts, saying, "this year they're coming to hit you."

"Their offense has changed a little," Sukay said. "They do some things different, but some things are still the same. It's the same type of quarterback, so obviously that helps a little bit, but they're a

good team and they're a different team, so it's gonna be a different challenge."

Scheelhaase has struggled a bit this season, completing only 54 percent of his passes with three touchdowns and four interceptions. The Illini (2-2, 0-1 Big Ten) have relied heavily on tailback Mikel Leshoure, who is rushing for 120 yards per contest.

But Scheelhaase is just a redshirt freshman and he said the transition would have been more difficult had Williams not been so willing to pass on his knowledge.

"Juice knew one day he was gonna have to pass the torch," Scheelhaase said.

"He obviously wanted the tradition of Illinois to keep on. It was definitely important to him and I was definitely blessed to have him around."

Williams went 1-3 in four starts against Penn State, struggling the most in his first two games. Despite an 11-for-24, two-interception performance in 2007, Williams led an Illini upset that knocked Penn State out of the Big Ten title race after two games, a scenario starting the Lions in the face Saturday.

In his final two seasons, Williams looked good against the Lions, throwing three touchdowns and averaging 223 yards in those games.

Scheelhaase said not to read anything into those stats. Williams, he said, had a much stronger arm and was a more powerful runner. But he thinks he might be a little quicker.

Given the differences, Scheelhaase gave Illini offensive

coordinator Paul Petrino the credit for adapting the game plan.

"It really is just based off the dynamic of our team," Scheelhaase said.

"Coach Petrino is able to do a lot of things. We run spread, we use two tight ends, two backs - he uses the players well."

Joe Paterno noticed the versatility of the offense, saying part of it stems from Scheelhaase, who he refused to compare to Williams.

"[Scheelhaase] is a good football player doing well," Paterno said. "But I haven't said, 'Well, how does he compare with this guy.' I usually don't do that. Not unless there's a reason."

While Sukay said he saw obvious similarities between the two on film, he said it doesn't help in preparation because of the shifts the Illini have made in their post-Juice offense.

The offense may have shifted, but Scheelhaase said Williams' legacy is felt through the lessons he left. Most of all, Scheelhaase said he hopes to be the leader Williams was.

"Obviously he's played a lot of football," Scheelhaase said. "He's been through a lot. He's been through a lot of Big Ten seasons. He has a lot of notches on his belt. I was taking any advice that he would give or anything I'd see he was doing, and I'd learn from it."

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Illinois linebacker Martez Wilso is looking for another breakout season: psu.collegian.com

Lions seeing more productive offense

By Zach Fleagle
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Coming into her freshman season in 2009, Kelsey Amy showed the field hockey team there is one thing she can do better than most — run.

The 5-foot-4 Amy did not only show promise on last year's team, which finished 7-13 and 1-5 in conference play, she led them in points and goals.

Now it's 2010. Through two-thirds of the season, Amy has already surpassed her previous season totals and has accounted for eight goals and two assists, good for 24 points on the stat sheet.

Amy exploded against Monmouth, netting four goals in the game's first 28 minutes — a career high.

On two of those goals, Amy raced past the defense for break-aways. The showcase moved Amy into third place in the Big Ten for goals scored, three goals behind Ohio State's Aisling Coyle.

But Amy said the credit goes where it's deserved — to her teammates. This new team, scattered with freshmen and underclassmen, has a different chemistry.

"We're definitely able to read each other better this year than we were last year," Amy said. "Overall that has everything to do with our success."

"The fact that mids are [passing] balls for us to run onto, defense is transferring nicely across the back and not allowing the other team's defense to set up in the backfield as quickly, and giving us more space to run onto."

With a third of the season left, the Nittany Lions (8-3, 2-1 Big Ten) are only one goal behind what the team scored all of last year.

Amy said the team is still getting better and the offense isn't going to let up.

Freshman midfielder Brittany Grzywacz and Amy have connected frequently, especially on the long runs. Coach Char Morett said Grzywacz's ability to play aerial passes from the midfield opens up the chance to use Amy's speed.

"In the beginning of the season I think we were still feeling each other out," Amy said. "A lot of the people that were starters

were new to the team, they were freshmen so I just think it took some getting used to but now that we're getting in the swing of things, I definitely think it's running a bit smoother."

After corraling a pass, Grzywacz will look up to find the defenders. If there are sticks on the ground in front of her, she lifts the ball several stories high and lets Amy run under it downfield — like a receiver in football — hopefully several steps past a defender.

"It's nice having Kelsey in front of me because I know I can always trust her to always get to the balls that I throw," Grzywacz said.

"Either in the air or just laying it down the sideline, like however hard I hit it, there's a pretty good chance she's going to get there because she's so quick."

Amy's Randy Moss-like ability to stretch the field for the Lions has made defenses focus on her, which has opened up the offense for converted forward-to-midfielder Jess Longstreth.

In the beginning of the season, the offense consisted primarily of her and Amy running up and down the field, using their speed to create opportunities. Longstreth now finds herself in a point-guard role, and embraces it — leading the team with 11 assists, good for third in the Big Ten.

Longstreth said the team has found open windows to pass through, which helps them move the ball upfield.

"As a midfielder I've always been more of a passer and not a finisher as what a forward would be," said the junior.

"I think what I bring to the midfield is more speed and I look laterally to transfer the ball left and right."

Morett has enjoyed the new look the team has taken, but hasn't given credit to anyone specific. Five starters, including Amy, have four goals or more this season — two more than the team finished with in 2009.

For Morett, it's nice to watch the team spread the field.

"Brit feeds her down that sideline and Jess' game has opened up so she's a threat as well," Morett said. "I think we have more threats in Lauren Purvis and Jenny [Purvis] and Whitney [Reddig]. I think those guys are more of a threat than we had last year."

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New corner strategy paying dividends for Lions

By Joe McIntyre
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In games this past weekend against Iowa and Monmouth, junior midfielder Jessica Longstreth was at the goal line during a penalty corner shooting passes to Kristen Schaefer at the top of the circle.

Schaefer laid her stick on the ground to stop the ball and on three separate occasions did something opponents have yet to see against the Nittany Lions in 2010.

She shot a pass to Hannah Allison on her right who fired the ball to the far post to beat the goalkeeper — all three times.

This new penalty corner formation was a perfect three-for-three for a Penn State field hockey team, which leads the Big Ten confer-

ence in earning penalty corner attempts.

Coach Char Morett knows exactly what the new corner variation entails. She knows exactly where it came from and how it was so successful, but she won't talk about it.

"Well if I do that then all the opponents are going to know what it is," Morett said.

But Morett would admit one thing — the reason Penn State has been able to score on a variety of different penalty corners is the fact that she has a number of players on the team who have the ability to put the ball in the back of the cage on any given moment.

"We have Hannah [Allison], Britt [Grzywacz], Daneen [Zug] and Kelsey [Amy]," Morett said. "So we have four kids right there that can really crank the ball."

But last weekend, it was Allison whose wicked slapshot found the back of the cage each time.

When Longstreth passes the ball to Schaefer at the top of the circle, it brings the goalie way out of the net, expecting either Daneen Zug or Kelsey Amy to fire a ball on goal.

But when Schaefer passes the ball to Allison on her right, the goalie is way out of position, leaving the far post open for Allison to put the ball home.

"The other team isn't ready for it," Allison said. "Kristen [Schaefer] has the perfect stop and then she waits until the flyer comes out and then passes it off so basically I'm wide open for a wide open shot so I think that's why it's so successful."

It's a corner that the Nittany Lions have had in their bag of tricks for awhile but have waited until Big Ten play to pull out.

Sophomore forward Kelsey Amy, a key player on a number of other penalty corner formations, said whichever corner the Lions

run depends on the defensive style the opposition shows before the play.

"Well before each game we watch film," Amy said.

"There's two different kind of defenses they can run, so we see which one it is. There's always certain corners we have that worked better against certain defenses so we try to use those when they're appropriate."

But no matter which formation they decide to go with, coach Morett knows if the Lions execute properly, they should be able to score on every opportunity. No matter what defense the opponents brings.

"I think with us we've scored off of five different corner variations, if not more than that," Morett said. "We have at least six different options, which is pretty impressive."



Tom Ruane/Collegian

To e-mail reporter: jm5401@psu.edu Hannah Allison chases a ball.