

Morris

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as much football knowledge as he could. Bellamy tried to lead by example with hard work in the offseason and by not taking plays off in practice.

"I knew he was a special player," Bellamy said. "I knew his time was gonna come eventually, so I just wanted to get him prepared once the time came."

Morris got the message. "That's one of the hardest work-

ing kids I've ever seen," the Penn State cornerback said. "He just showed me the way. I was a freshman coming in. I saw how committed he was, and his effort, and I said, 'OK, this is what I need to start doing.'"

Morris and Bellamy weren't the only two family members in the Eleanor Roosevelt defensive huddle. Their cousin, Redell Spinks, who played four seasons of basketball at Marymount University, was a senior linebacker on the team.

He called the three, "a family of

athletes," and said he isn't sure whether he'll don his Illinois jacket or one of his many Penn State shirts when he attends the game, which kicks off at noon Saturday.

He just wants a defensive struggle. "I'm gonna be rooting for both my relatives, but I have no idea what I'm gonna wear," Spinks said.

"That might depend on where I'm sitting."

Spinks and Bellamy both raved about how much Morris has matured since he stepped on the

field as a high school freshman. He said the three had friendly competitions during drills that always kept them motivated.

"We were always competing hard in practice," Spinks said. "Stephon got bullied around as a freshman, but as you can see, he's really playing well."

Perhaps the best example of Morris being bullied came before a playoff game against a rival, when Morris made his first start at cornerback instead of his typical position in the nickel package. Spinks and Bellamy spoke with

him during stretches and said, "Don't blow the game."

Morris said he hasn't felt more pressure in a football game in his life, and no, he said, he didn't blow it. Now he, Bellamy and Spinks all joke about it.

"It's one big happy family," Morris said. "We were all blood, sweat and tears getting ready. We were all going out there playing for each other. We have a lot of memories — memories I'll never forget."

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Ullrich

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the Boilermakers program. She declined to elaborate on exactly why she left, simply citing "personal reasons."

"The school was just not right for me, and those things happen," Ullrich said. "I needed to make a change for me, and luckily that landed me at Penn State."

Ullrich said she couldn't be happier with the way things worked out at Penn State. She loves her teammates, the school and the program. So when the Lions square off against the Boilermakers tonight, she's viewing it as just another match

between two good squads.

"And she can't wait. I'm excited to play a good team and Purdue's a great team," Ullrich said. "Of course it's going to be nice to see some old friends, but I'm not worried about showing them up or this and that. I'm just excited to play."

The feeling is mutual. Purdue coach Dave Shondell also declined to comment on the specifics of Ullrich's departure. What he did talk about, though, was fond memories he had about the outgoing Illinois native, who played in 61 matches over her two years at Purdue.

Shondell, who described his former player as "just a wonderful girl to have in the gym," said

Ullrich was often the first one at practice and the last one to leave.

He said the two talked briefly last season when Purdue traveled to Rec Hall. But there were no hard feelings, Shondell said. Sometimes things just don't go according to plan.

"For a little while right after she graduated, we were still trying to develop some new players as her replacement, so that was hard," Shondell said. "But Purdue has always been strong with ball control players so her departure hasn't really affected us too negatively. I just hope it has affected her positively."

According to the Penn State coaches, players and Ullrich herself, it has.

Ullrich, who was recruited by the Lions in high school, said within the first month with her new team she felt as if everyone welcomed her and took her in "with volleyball, and also on a friendship level."

It helped that Ullrich was already familiar with the coaching staff and some of the players. She played club volleyball in high school with the Lions' All-American middle hitter, Arielle Wilson, who Ullrich said had actually encouraged her to come to Penn State from the beginning.

Ullrich did have to adjust to becoming a different type of player. At Purdue, she started every single match but sophomore year. For the Lions, she's more of a role

player, playing in 12 sets so far this season, mainly as a serving specialist.

"Jess is a really hard worker," coach Russ Rose said. "She has a good serve and is a terrific teammate, and I think that's her greatest strength."

Senior Fatima Balza said Ullrich is one of the players who brings the most energy to the team.

"Especially this week," Balza said.

"She doesn't even have to tell us how excited she is for Purdue, it just shows. You can tell she is pumped. All week in practice she's been smiling."

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Men's soccer

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Last year, the Nittany Lions grinded out a 1-0 win over the Spartans in East Lansing by way of a 10th minute Mateus Braga goal. Penn State also played the last 38 minutes of the game with 10 men after defender Mark Fetrow drew two yellow cards.

That game sent a message to the conference that Penn State soccer was back. Sophomore defender Brian Forgue said last year's win set the tone for the rest of the season and he thinks this

year's contest could have similar results.

"They're always a good opponent always top 10 or 20 in the country and we're sure not going to take them lightly," Forgue said. "We're going to come in focused, off a good win [Wednesday] night and yeah, I think it has the potential to have the same effect it did last year."

To overcome the Spartans' composure, Warming said his team will have to apply constant pressure and stay close to Michigan State's players. But overcoming Michigan State's style of play isn't the only challenge.

Spartans goalkeeper Avery Steinlage led the NCAA in save percentage last year and also owns the national record for consecutive shutout minutes. Warming said while Steinlage isn't a prototypical goalkeeper, the Spartans reminds him of Mike Gabb, a goalkeeper from Warming's days at Creighton.

"He wants to two Fignol. [Steinlage] is a heavier guy like him, not super-fast but very powerful," Warming said. "He's got just great, great soft hands. I really like him."

Senior midfielder Matheus Braga said last year's Michigan

State team was young but having a year together, he expects a tougher Spartans team this year. Last weekend, the Lions held Michigan, a team averaging 21.9 shots per game to just six, and Braga said this week is another test with Steinlage.

"Challenge motivates anyone," Braga said.

Michigan State is the second in a three-game homestand for the Lions that concludes with a Wednesday match with No. 1 Akron next week. Braga and Forgue said the stretch of games could set the direction of where the rest of the season goes and

Warming added it provides a great measuring stick to where his team is.

After an 0-2 start in the Big Ten, and two games he felt his team let slip away, Warming takes on extra importance leading up to the match with Akron.

"If anybody wants to come watch games this year, these might be the two regular season games they want to come watch," Warming said. "It's the best soccer-playing team we'll see leading up to Akron, the No. 1 team in the country."

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Icers

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more interest in Penn State lately and were excited."

Playing in front of the home crowd is something Daley has been anticipating for some time now.

"I've missed this feeling since the summer," he said. "Playing at home is that much better and we want to win for us and them."

After sweeping the Pittsburgh Panthers on the road, the Icers have been practicing different techniques and strategies to help better pre-

pare them for Friday night's contest.

"We've been working on our penalty kill and forecheck system," Daley said. "The breakout is crucial and we can't afford to turn the puck over."

Polidor agreed with his teammate saying the players' forecheck is not where the players would like it to be. He also expects a stronger all-around effort from his team.

Against the Panthers, the Icers were particularly strong on the powerplay, as the team went 3-for-7. The Icers also limited their opponent to only one goal on 11 chances with the man-advantage.

Coach Scott Balboni was not worried about who the opponent was, but more about executing the team's systems.

"Drexel will be much like everyone in the first semester," Balboni said.

"We're going to be working on our systems and our game plan. We want to get ourselves better and better, regardless of who we're facing."

For Polidor, the game plan is simple.

"We are expecting Drexel to come out hard," he said, "and if we come out even harder than we should be fine."

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Women's soccer

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around their season in the Big Ten after the first two weeks and captured the conference crown.

Sophomore midfielder Maddy Evans said the players brought up last year in the post game huddle on Sunday and they talked about not losing hope because of one loss. Instead, the focus is now making sure the overtime loss to Ohio State doesn't define their Big Ten season.

"It's something that crosses the mind when you look at the record

from last year but ultimately this is a brand new season," junior midfielder Aii Schaefer said. "Every team in the Big Ten will have a loss, and we just had ours so what that means is we have to finish it out with Ws."

While they have confidence from a year ago, the players know they can't rely on history to shape their future.

"We're a completely different team from last year," Nairn said. "We lost seven great seniors and you can never replace that class but we're building and we're learning from each other. We're pretty young so we're just doing what's in our power and that's taking care of Northwestern and Iowa."

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