



Sarah Finnegan/Collegian

Penn State is at a crossroads after a shocking loss to Illinois and could miss out on a bowl game for the first time since 2004.

Reality setting in for PSU

By Andrew J. Cassavell
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

It didn't work. A players-only meeting following a 21-point loss at Iowa made it clear Penn State's season was on the brink. The players were given the option of turning it around or suffering through a long season.

An embarrassing 33-13 loss to the Nittany Nation a good idea which of the two directions the team could be heading. Thoughts of top-tier New Year's Day bowl games have instead turned to the Insight or the Texas Bowl — or even no post-season at all.

Most Joe Paterno, however, the season hasn't been the results. It's been the lack of improvement from game to game.

"We're not making any progress," Paterno said. "I thought by this stage we'd be a pretty good football team. I didn't think we'd be great, but I thought we'd be pretty good, and we're not getting any better. That's the discouraging part."

Halfway through the season, that lack of progress makes the remaining schedule look far more difficult than it did in August, and Penn State could be underdogs in its three remaining home games. At Beaver Stadium, the Lions will face Michigan State, one of two unbeaten teams left in the Big Ten, along with Northwestern and Michigan, who suffered their first losses Saturday.

Throw in a road trip in early November to current No. 1 Ohio State, and it means the Lions will have to beat at least one of those

four teams simply to become bowl eligible.

"That's obvious," said running back Evan Royster, whose 35 yards Saturday left him 93 shy of breaking Penn State's all-time rushing record. "If we don't start to win games, then we're not going to go to a bowl game, and nobody wants that."

Senior captain Ollie Ogbu isn't looking that far into the future. First and foremost, he said, the Lions need to put their foot down before the season spirals out of control.

"It's just one of those things where enough is enough — enough is enough," Ogbu said. "Did you come to Penn State to lose, or did you come to be a winner? Each person has to reevaluate and check themselves and come with a winning attitude." Ogbu added he wasn't plan-

ning on gathering the team this week, saying, "We're not going to have any more secret meetings or this or that. We've got to come lace it up in practice."

During his postgame press conference, Paterno wondered aloud whether the coaching staff was doing its job of putting the best players on the field. With a slew of injuries, specifically to the defense, that task could become even more difficult in the coming weeks.

Offensive, the answers are a little less clear than simply getting healthier. The Illini dominated time of possession and Penn State managed only seven first downs.

The same problems are persisting, too.

Much of the focus has been on red zone offense and the Lions

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Team falling apart

By Nate Mink

NEVER has a youth movement toward tomorrow looked so stale. Check the label on the 2010 season, expiration date: Oct. 9.

Are we headed back to the early 2000s, the dark ages, a futile program? Can't say after just one game, especially with a patchwork defense. But you're starting to see signs of real trouble, players' faces puckering up, being forced to swallow the sour milk the coaching staff has refrigerated for years.

Predictable, conservative play-calling and an egregious offensive line that can't knock anyone off the ball does not bode well for an offense. Soft zone with slow linebackers hung out to dry in pass coverage and a unit absent of play-makers won't do an offense any favors.

Forget being out-schemed, out-manned, out-executed. Penn State is defeating itself, its staff losing its players that won't believe the boring, outdated propaganda, that see the restrictions on their talent.

And it's ruining the psyche of this young, fragile team. Players are discreetly questioning coaching, they feel the shackle and bolt of unimaginative play calls and they're losing patience, desperately reaching for a reason to care when a coaching staff handicaps their potential.

Jack Ramsey cornerback Jack Ramsey fumbled a punt, which Penn State recovered deep in Illini territory. On the first chance, creativity budded for a second with a shotgun pitch to Silas Redd that let him operate in space and pick up eight yards. On second down, running coordinator Galen Hall calls for Redd up the middle. No gain. Third down, passing coordinator Jay Paterno has Rob

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Offense doesn't improve

By Brendan Monahan
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Frustration reached its peak in the Penn State media room after Saturday's game.

Joe Paterno was frustrated at his team's effort, frustrated at the mounting injuries, but notably, also frustrated at himself.

The head coach said he did a poor job coaching in the 33-13 Illinois win. The Nittany Lions' offense, which has struggled converting short-yardage and red-zone opportunities, didn't consistently convert in those situations. On third downs, the stagnant Lions' offense was only successful in gaining first downs on two of 14 chances.

Part of the reason for the failures, aside from the players not executing, was the coaches.

"Any time you lose you can point the finger at anybody else," Paterno said.

"But I think [the coaching staff] could've probably done a better job somewhere down the line."

Penn State's play calling against the Fighting Illini defense when the Lions got into the red zone. The state Lions' offense is one of many major concerns for a 3-3 team with the potential of missing out on a bowl bid if it keeps on its current course.

"If you're going to be honest with yourself, you got to start with the

coaches," quarterbacks coach Jay Paterno said.

Joe Paterno said going into the game, he felt his team was prepared for the red zone. Both opportunities inside the 20-yard line came after Illini's return man, Jack Ramsey, fumbled two punts.

The first Penn State attempt started at the Illinois 23-yard line, and the Lions made their way to the Illini five-yard line on three run plays and a pitch to running back Silas Redd. An illegal procedure penalty due to wide receivers Justin Brown and Derek Moye mixing up the play call and an incomplete pass attempt resulted in three points and no touchdown.

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Sarah Finnegan/Collegian

Devon Smith has been one of the few bright spots for the offense.

LAST WORD

Bye week comes at great time

By Audrey Snyder
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Penn State did not see this one coming.

Joe Paterno said he expected his football team would be pretty good by this point in the season, but his team enters the bye week with the harsh reality of a 3-3 record staring it in the face.

The Nittany Lions head in to the off week with an offense that's struggled to score on just about every opponent and a defense that still hasn't been able to turn in strong first-half performances. Add in mounting injuries and continuing red zone miscues and the Lions said the bye week is a time for reflection for both players and coaches.

"If you told me a couple weeks ago that we would be in this position I probably would've laughed at you," co-captain Ollie Ogbu said. "It's just one of those things



Chloe Elmer/Collegian

Eleven defensive players who played significant downs this year did not finish Saturday's 33-13 loss to Illinois.

Report Card: Illinois 33, Penn State 13

POSITION	COMMENTS
Quarterbacks D	Take away the 80-yard TD and Bolden was 7-for-20 for 62 yards and a pick. Saturday marked his worst performance yet.
Running backs C-	Royster and Redd found a few holes, but they weren't on the field enough to make a real difference in the game.
Wide receivers C	Another big day for Moye, but overall, the routes were too sloppy to help out a young quarterback.
Offensive line F	Most of the reason for the difference in time of possession was the line's inability to get a push. It halted several PSU drives.
Defensive line F	Because of injuries, the D-line of Jones-Terry-Still-Latham was getting significant minutes late. Not exactly the "Sack Exchange."
Linebackers C-	Khairi Fortt impressed with 11 tackles in his first start, but the Illini still ran all over the Penn State defense.
Secondary D	More missed tackles from the unit, and they couldn't intercept a young Nathan Scheelhaase. The RS freshman was 15-for-19.
Special teams B+	Wagner made both his field goals, and the kicking teams forced three fumbles — the lone bright spot on the afternoon.