

Lions use long layoff to prep for weekend

By Zach Fleagle
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

After an upset win against then-No. 7 Michigan State last Friday, the competition doesn't get any easier for the Nittany Lions — and they're looking forward to it.

FIELD HOCKEY

A nine-day layoff, the longest since early September, gave Penn State field hockey team an opportunity to rest up and enjoy its upset win. But that's not how the team has worked.

In a casual Thursday practice, the team stretched and did some light jogging and stretching mixed with jokes and laughs before they went to watch film on their opponent, No. 6 Ohio State.

The center of many of those jokes was sophomore Kristen Schaefer, who took a stick to the forehead during their last game, leaving her with a cut between her eyes. Primarily known as 'Shady,' she picked up the new nickname 'Avatar,' thanks to the swelling. She said the swelling is gone now

and the cut is healing just fine.

Also dealing with a lingering ankle injury, Schaefer said she is ready to play and will do so at full strength.

She said last week's upset was not a surprise to the team and the players are now focused on the Buckeyes.

"If anything we feel more confident now because this is where we should have been, and can be," Schaefer said.

"Now we're just really happy to be up there."

Schaefer, who plays the primary passing role on penalty corners, said she caught a little of the film before the workout and was confident the Lions would execute on Sunday in Columbus.

The sophomore said coach Char Morett has put in a few new wrinkles in their penalty corner formations, and she expects to have success.

Senior Jenny Purvis said the light day was much needed after a long week.

The team's last loss came on Sept. 26 to Michigan, 2-0, but the Lions have gone on a three-game

win streak since. Purvis said the loss helped them re-establish their identity.

"I think they really showed us where our weaknesses were and what we need to improve," Purvis said.

"We found a lack of connection with the ball and I think that really helped us because obviously we've scored a bunch of goals."

With two of the top three scorers in the Big Ten on the field Sunday in Penn State's Kelsey Amy (13) and Ohio State's Aisling Coyle (15), the team is ready for the competition and Amy is up for the challenge.

Amy reiterated Purvis' comments, saying the rough week has set the tone for Sunday.

"These next couple games are going to be tough games and being in shape is one of the most important things," Amy said. "Char's been kicking our butts this week, but it's definitely going to pay off in the end."

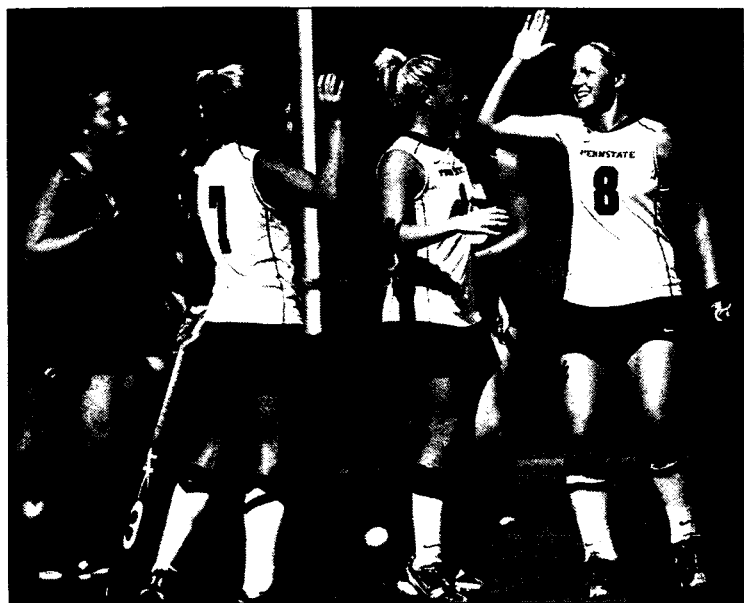
Amy said the upset showed the team's confidence in itself and prepared the players for future games.

Her mindset is effort equals wins.

"It's really exciting. We've worked really hard," Amy said. "Just [Wednesday] we were doing sprints in the middle of the season

and I doubt too many teams can say that. "We just go in feeling confident in ourselves and I feel like we can beat anybody."

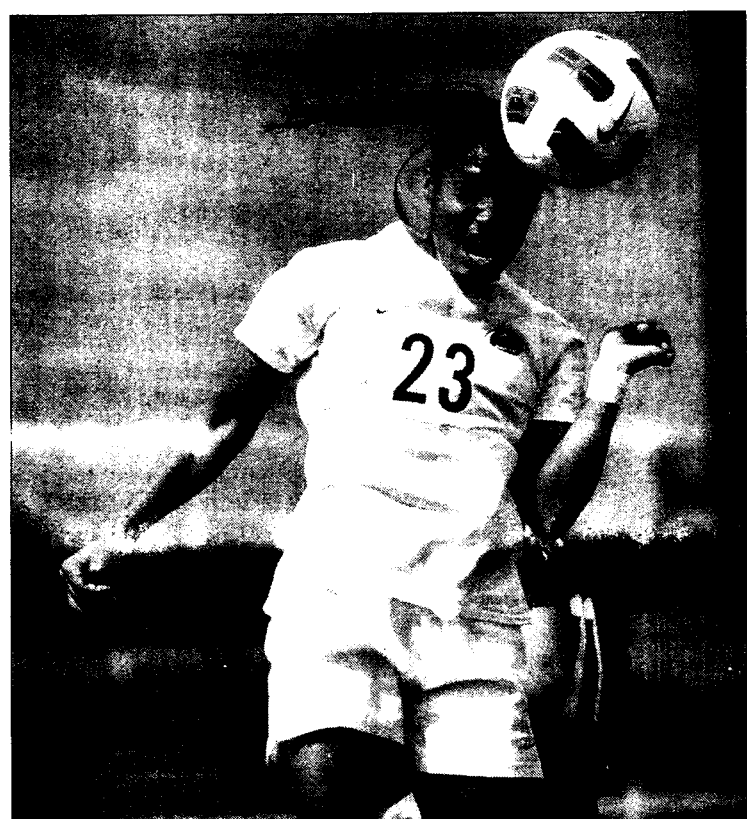
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Kelsey Amy (left), Jess Longstreth and Daneen Zug celebrate a goal.

Hovington expects to play after cautious approach

By Alex Angert
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER



Amanda August/Collegian

Bri Hovington goes for a header in a game against Michigan State.

After pulling her groin in last Friday's game against Northwestern, Bri Hovington expects to be ready to go for this weekend's games against Minnesota and Wisconsin.

The freshman defender felt the pull after going in to kick the ball against the Wildcats, but she stayed in the game to help her team complete the 2-1 comeback.

Starting again two days later in Iowa despite the minor injury, Hovington came out of the game 34 minutes into the match and remained on the sideline. Having two more big conference games on Friday and Sunday, the coaches have been cautious with her workload at practice this week to make sure she is ready to go for the weekend set.

"We're coming into a big weekend so to be able to sit out against Iowa and rest my leg, that helped a lot," Hovington said. "Especially winning 3-0, I think that sitting out helped. I've been taking it easy at practice this week so I should be fully ready for Friday."

Hovington started the season as a reserve while recovering from an injury but slowly worked her way into the lineup. After coming off the bench a couple of times, she found a place on the backline for good. Ever since coming in 34 minutes into the game against Connecticut on Sept. 5, Hovington had played every minute for the Lions before coming out against Iowa — 728 consecutive minutes.

For a freshman adjusting to the college game, the wear and tear of playing a full 90-minute game twice a week for a month can mount.

That's why the Penn State trainers and coaches aren't taking any risks with the defender, who has racked up the miles recently.

"It's definitely something I've never experienced before," Hovington said.

"I'm taking it head on and listening to the coaches. After practices I'm getting in the ice baths and contrasting on our days off. It's just the little, simple things that really help us."

Comfortable with her team's depth on the backline, coach Erica Walsh said she was just trying to

protect the freshman by taking her out of the game.

With Hovington also having an extensive injury history before coming to Penn State — including an anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) tear — the coaches have been extremely cautious about overworking her while also teaching her how to protect her body.

"It's all about education and making her smart with her choices," Walsh said after practice on Wednesday. "She wanted to come out here and do some services and we told her now is probably not the time but to do some shorter stuff. It's a lot of education."

Walsh said Hovington has been wearing a wrap in practice and is doing better. Focusing on quality instead of quantity in her training, Hovington's cautious approach has helped her adjust to the rough college game and prevent any further injuries.

"Coach has been talking about how important this time in the season is — getting into Big Ten play and finishing off the Big Ten," Hovington said.

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