

BULLETIN BOARD MATERIAL

Mid-season Report Card

Quarterbacks



Bolden

Grade: C+

What's good: Freshman Rob Bolden's poise.

What's bad: No time in pocket leads to happy feet and some poor decisions, especially in the red zone.

What to look for: Not much development or progress so far. Will that change in the last six games?

Running backs



Royster

Grade: D

What's good: The Temple game. Royster went for a career-high 187 yards.

What's bad: Royster has struggled. Green has been quiet and Redd is hardly involved at all.

What to look for: Royster breaking the Penn State rushing record.

Wide receivers



Moye

Grade: B

What's good: Derek Moye is having a career year, and Bravett has become a reliable option underneath.

What's bad: Some key drops, especially from senior Graham Zug

What to look for: Justin Brown and Devon Smith continuing to be involved.

Offensive line



Wisniewski

Grade: F

What's good: There's still a second half of the season to turn things around.

What's bad: No holes for Royster, no time for Bolden.

What to look for: Progress for Okoli and Barham at the tackle positions. They'll both be back next season.

Defensive line



Ogbu

Grade: D

What's good: Younger players will gain valuable playing experience.

What's bad: Injuries hurt an already thin line that has yet to live up to expectations.

What to look for: DT Devon Still to step up and contribute more.

Linebackers



Mauti

Grade: C-

What's good: Mike Mauti returns to top-form and leads the linebackers.

What's bad: Poor play from the seniors and lots of missed tackles.

What to look for: The emergence of freshman Khairi Fortt.

Secondary



Lynn

Grade: B-

What's good: Drew Astorino and D'Anton Lynn continue to be solid in coverage.

What's bad: Nick Sukay, who leads the team with three interceptions, is gone for the year. Who will replace him?

What to look for: Powell once again returning to defense.



Second half storylines

Will Penn State reach a bowl game?

Two weeks ago it seemed like a foregone conclusion. Now, it's a toss-up. The once-unthinkable notion of the Nittany Lions missing a bowl game became very real with Penn State's 33-13 loss to Illinois last Saturday. The Lions still play four teams with one loss or fewer this season, and they will have to win at least one of those games to reach a bowl.

If it doesn't get to the six wins required for bowl eligibility, it will be the first Penn State team to miss the postseason since 2004. Even if it is able to knock off Michigan, Northwestern or Michigan State (unreasonable win over Ohio State is unreasonable at this point) it'll have to settle for a lower-tier game like the Insight or Texas Bowl — a failed season given the initial thoughts of New Year's Day games.

When will Evan Royster break the rushing record?

After getting off to slow start behind a poor offensive line, the senior continues to find his way. With just 93 yards separating him from becoming Penn State's all-time leading rusher, Royster could break the record against Minnesota.

The Golden Gophers have the conference's worst run defense, but the Lions have had anything but a solid ground game. With Royster averaging 64.7 rushing yards per game and totaling just 388 yards at the season's midpoint, he's faced his share of criticism.

With one touchdown to his name, this is certainly not how he wanted to improve his NFL Draft stock, but Royster said he doesn't regret returning for his final season. A spiraling team might overshadow the milestone, but becoming the school's all-time leading rusher it's a big feat nonetheless.

How will Bolden progress?

Freshman quarterback Rob Bolden was thrown into the fire, and the competition doesn't get much easier during the second half of the season.

During the first six games, he's seen receivers drop balls in key situations, pressure from opposing defenses and a lack of a rushing attack.

The quarterback storyline for the rest of the season remains how much Bolden will progress and whether future losses would prompt a quarterback change from the Penn State coaches.

Bolden hasn't run out of the pocket much, and there have only been several designed running plays for the freshman. But for the Lions to win, it

starts with the freshman's passing abilities.

Those abilities must be at their greatest when Bolden and Penn State travel to Columbus to take on the No. 1 Ohio State Buckeyes. That game will be the last game for Bolden to prove himself in a hostile environment.

Will Joe reach 400 wins?

The question before the season wasn't, "Will Joe reach the milestone?" — it was, "When will he reach 400?"

Three wins seem harder and harder to come by with a trip to Columbus and games at home against No. 13 Michigan State, Michigan and Northwestern looming.

After Illinois' 20-point win on homecoming at Beaver Stadium, even wins at Minnesota and against Indiana — who, along with Penn State, share the worst record in the Big Ten — aren't given victories.

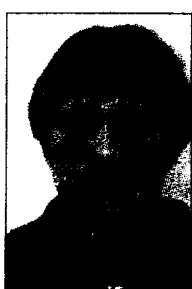
Reality is starting to sink in that 400 may not come this season, unless Penn State changes its current course.

They'll have to do so with three games on the road, though the Indiana game is at a neutral site, FedEx Field in Landover, Md.

—Compiled by Andrew J. Cassavell, Audrey Snyder and Brendan Monahan

Daily Collegian Predictions

Andrew J. Cassavell



Nothing went right on either side of the ball in Saturday's homecoming loss to Illinois. It can only get better from there. That said, there isn't a whole lot of hope with three over-achieving teams still set to invade Beaver Stadium against an under-performing Lions squad. I say one win in those three games gets them to 6-6 and a berth in the Texas Bowl.

Audrey Snyder



The Lions need to take a hard look in the mirror after getting off to a 3-3 start. Even before the injury bug hit the team, the Lions weren't playing good football. The team has yet to take a step forward and getting to 6-6 at this point will be a challenge. If the Lions get some help in the conference and beat Michigan, a trip to the Insight Bowl might happen.

Brendan Monahan



A bowl may be hard to come by after a 3-3 start, but if Penn State manages to reach 6-6, it'll have enough pedigree for an offer. An eighth-place Big Ten finish ahead of Minnesota, Indiana and another team would be enough to land Penn State a bid to the newly created Dallas Football Classic.