

Set pieces continuing to trouble Lions

By Andrew Robinson
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

After her team conceded two goals off of free kicks Sunday, Emma Thomson was clearly frustrated.

WOMEN'S SOCCER

While the junior defender wasn't happy that the Penn State women's soccer team had given up the goals, she was more upset that they came after weeks of repeated drills on set piece defense.

"It was very disappointing because all week we had worked on set pieces," Thomson said Sunday.

"We've put so much emphasis on set pieces, before practice or after everyone's been going out and working on clearances, headers staying with their markers every time."

Despite plenty of work and drills focusing on set pieces, the Nittany Lions have struggled at times on the defensive end.

While there have been several factors contributing, overall the team has shown improvement

over the course of the season.

The biggest blow to Penn State's set piece defense came on Sept. 12 when sophomore centre back Lexi Marton went down with a knee injury against Portland. Losing the 5-foot-11 defender, who is in the Canadian national team pool, removed a physical and vocal presence from the box.

"We've missed Lexi in a bunch of games just with her communication and her size," sophomore midfielder Christine Nairn said. "She's definitely one of the leaders for us but a lot of people have stepped up, whether it's Emma or Carly [Niness] winning those head balls."

Against Wisconsin, the free kicks played well into the Badgers style of play and Thomson said the more the Lions put the ball in the air, it made Wisconsin more dangerous. Last Friday against Minnesota, a cross found the defense spread out and caught out of position, leading to a goal.

While the cross wasn't a true set piece, the Golden Gophers had enough time to set up the play, and Thomson said she was upset the players were caught off-guard on

that play. Penn State coach Erica Walsh said Sunday Wisconsin had the heart to win on set pieces Sunday.

"Set pieces have been our nemesis and we've spent a lot of time working on them," Walsh said.

"But [Wisconsin] proved today why we've struggled with them so much."

The players aren't oblivious to the struggles and Nairn said it's annoying that they have trouble stopping set piece goals. Midfielder Maddy Evans said the players knew set pieces and balls in the air would be a big factor in Sunday's game and going into the match, the players felt like they were prepared for it, which added to the frustration of that loss.

Nairn has seen an improvement in the overall defense and said it's all about having the right mindset now.

The remainder of the Lions season is do-or-die and with set pieces so pivotal to their success, Nairn said it's going to take an entire team effort to shore up the defense.

"There's nothing we can say

that will make it better," Nairn said.

"But, if we continue to make it a mindset and just keep banging it

into our heads like coach has been doing, we'll be fine."

To e-mail reporter: adr5079@psu.edu



Daniel Britt Collegian

Emma Thomson (right) makes a slide tackle in a match against Wisconsin. Thomson said the Lions have been practicing set pieces.

Sweep

By Page 8.

...piked the ball for a Penn State point.

The Bad-eyes believed it was a foul contact, and coach Geoff Warming left the sideline and consulted the call with the officials and Ohio State was forced to call a timeout.

"It was a tough match and we competed hard," coach Russ Rose said. "And that's what you have to do when you're on the road."

The crowd also contributed to a hostile environment at St. John Arena. Carpenter said some fans picked on the Lions' Cathy Quilico, a 5-foot-1 defensive specialist.

She said the crowd began singing "The Oompa Loompa Song" from Charlie and the

Chocolate Factory and "It's a Small World" to throw Quilico off her game.

"It wasn't tough, we're used to things like that," Carpenter said. "That's what happens when you have to deal with when you go away."

"You just have to deal with it, and tonight we did."

To e-mail reporter: exk5049@psu.edu

Soccer

From Page 8.

14th goal off a feed from Jordan Tyler.

"It's unreal," Cost said. "The kid has the flu, can barely run and he gets himself wide open in the box and nails a left-footed volley."

"It's awesome, we needed him tonight and he contributed."

Though the Lions turned up the intensity in the second half, the players realized it shouldn't have taken 45 minutes and one very sick teammate to make it happen.

Sophomore defender Brian Forgue said the players overlooked Wednesday's game in a sense because it was a midweek game without much hype leading into a pivotal showdown with Big Ten foe Ohio State.

"It was a poor performance from top to bottom," Forgue said.

"We've got to be tighter in every aspect of the game and we just didn't do it and they took advantage."

At halftime Warming said did most of the talking, something he never wants to do more than a few times each season. The coach went as far as to say Wednesday's first half was one of the poorest he's seen at home in his long coaching career.

UMBC played a good game and Warming said the Retrievers didn't deserve to lose the game because they played

"It was a poor performance from top to bottom."

Brian Forgue
sophomore defender

hard. The last time the Lions were home, they played in front of a raucous crowd against the No. 1 team in the country, but Wednesday there was a small crowd and Warming said it's a test to get energized without strong fan support.

"The mark of good players is when you can do it when no one's here and you do it for the pride in yourself and the pride in your school and program," Warming said. "I have to take the blame for that, the guys weren't excited about playing tonight so that falls straight back on me."

With the Buckeyes looming on Saturday, Cost said the focus is now on getting back to practice and turning in strong training sessions before the game. While Forgue said he hopes Ohio State is enough to get the team motivated, there's one player he doesn't have to worry about.

"It's unbelievable how Corey comes in and he's a game changer," Forgue said. "I know he was feeling really under the weather but I commend him for giving us all he had tonight and it showed. The rest of us, we didn't reciprocate."

To e-mail reporter: adr5079@psu.edu

Secondary

By Page 8.

...his leadership and production standpoint. Sukay's absence from the secondary that hasn't been seen in the three losses, but most of the struggles can be attributed to a poor pass rush. After being named a starter for his performance last season, Sukay was in the midst of a breakout year before the injury. He has three interceptions, and despite missing most of the Illinois game, remains sixth on the team in tackles.

As the free safety, Sukay was also in charge of calling coverages, and Astorino said his presence in practice will now be vital to the team's success.

Obviously he's a little bit nervous about "who wouldn't be?" Astorino said. "But he's keeping his composure high. He's been coming in practicing. He helps out the other guys, but he keeps a positive attitude, and he's obviously a leader on the team, so we're going to let him stay positive."

The implications of Sukay's injury combined with Powell's lack of production on offense (three catches for 11 yards) led the junior to ask Joe Paterno for a switch to defense. Powell practiced at cornerback in the preseason before being moved to offense with injuries at a couple skill positions.

Paterno, however, said aside from an opportunity, nothing else is guaranteed for Powell.

"He's got to make a spot for himself," Paterno said.

Junior cornerback D'Anton Lynn is convinced Powell will establish that spot. Right now Powell is listed as the backup right cornerback on the depth chart.

"He's right where he left off [in the summer]," said Lynn, who hasn't taken any reps at safety in the absence of Sukay despite coming to Penn State playing the position. "There were a couple of new defenses he had to learn, but he picked those up the first day."

Given Powell's athleticism, Lynn is confident Powell will be able to transfer his performance from practice to games.

It is unclear how the Lions plan to use Powell, but he may see time in the nickel package, where Lynn would likely shift to cover a slot receiver as he did before nickel back Derrick Thomas was suspended for undisclosed reasons.

Astorino and Lynn also had praise for Malcolm Willis, a sophomore safety who was at the top of this week's depth chart at free safety — before Astorino's move was officially announced — and had played in the nickel package against Illinois.

Astorino said the athletic Willis looks like a first-team safety in practice, but he said given the relationship between him and Sukay on the field, Sukay's injury can't be underestimated in the defense's progress.

"We knew where each other were going to be," Astorino said. "I knew he was going to make the big plays ... I'm definitely going to miss his presence on the field, but we just have to have guys step up and play."

To e-mail reporter: ajc5238@psu.edu

Line

By Page 8.

"It's a little bit of everything," tackle Michael Zordich said. "It's always going to be technique and there's always going to be good things that you need to fix, and a lot of it is attitude, too."

"We just need to be mean up and down."

While the Lions average just 126 rushing yards per game, Wisniewski expects to stay com-

mitted to the ground game and establish a rhythm.

Though the situation of the game dictates the team's dedication to establishing the running game — as evidenced by the Lions' inability to rush for more than 70 yards while trying to play catch up during each of their last two losses — the team wants the run game to be a big part of its offensive identity, Wisniewski said.

The coaches grabbed the attention of all the players by stripping them of their colored jerseys dur-

ing bye week practices, and though no major changes came of it the offensive line has some players possibly looking over their shoulders.

While Zordich said the move should help inspire his teammates to play with more enthusiasm and understand that no jobs are set, Wisniewski said he was unsure whether or not some of the offensive linemen might be more nervous.

DeOn'tae Pannell, who previously started at left guard and was

replaced by Johnnie Troutman, has been practicing with the second team at tackle, Wisniewski said. With Chima Okoli preparing to make his third career start at right tackle, Wisniewski is doing his best to be a senior leader and help Okoli improve.

"I've been coaching up a lot of the guys, Chima in particular," Wisniewski said. "He's pretty new in there. There's a lot of things he's learning about, different blocking schemes, footwork and things."

With Zordich hoping he and the line will be able to create creases for running back Evan Royster, he said the running game should reap the benefits from last week's intense practices.

"Evan's a great back and he's shown that in the last years," Zordich said.

"And once we give him the opportunity, he will take advantage of that. He's been doing that all week."

To e-mail reporter: aas5220@psu.edu

Nickson

By Page 8.

...responsibility. Nickson showed leadership despite merely sitting on the bench during home games and staying behind in Happy Valley during road trips.

When her teammates were on road trips, Nickson would send text messages to her teammates with messages that ended with "Be the Glory" to keep her teammates encouraged.

This season, Nickson will bring her leadership skills onto the

court at the Bryce Jordan Center.

"I think I'm a leader by example, so they took that and thought that was good," Nickson said on media day. "I also help my teammates calm down, boost them up, everything like that. I'm a well-rounded person so I think that had something to do with it."

Nickson said she decided to leave Boston College, where she averaged just 1.6 points and 2.0 rebounds per game her freshman year, because she said she was not particularly needed. Washington had been familiar with Nickson after recruiting her out of high

school, so that connection led to the transfer to Penn State.

A 6-foot-2 forward from Ashburn, Va., Nickson was described by the Lions' lone senior and other co-captain, Julia Trogele, as the Jamelle Cornley of Penn State women's basketball because she is an undersized post player, passionate and a hard-working player.

"One thing you can see in Mia is a certain type of toughness she carries herself with," Trogele said, adding it never really felt like Nickson wasn't playing last year. "She is a very physical player,

which makes you want to respect her. Last year, when she was a practice player, she would hurt us a lot on both offense and defense. That's just the type of game that she plays, so that generates a lot of respect on the court."

Nickson said it was hard sitting out last season, but she feels she learned a lot, especially patience.

"I feel like as a player on the court, the game is always going a certain speed, but you don't have to go the speed of the game," Nickson said. "You have to go the speed of what you can do."

She won't have to be patient too

much longer, though. Penn State, which missed last year 17-14 and lost in the first round of the WNIT, plays an exhibition game against Gannon on Nov. 7 at the BJC.

The Lions open their regular season on Nov. 12 at Dayton.

"I really just wanted to get out there sometimes, especially to help with the rebounding and the posting up on the bigger players," Nickson said of sitting out last year. "But I learned a lot, so now I'm excited to go and play the game."

To e-mail reporter: jyk5142@psu.edu

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE AVAILABLE NOW!

You can get your foot in the door as early as Spring semester and get paid doing it!

WISER (Women in Science and Engineering Research) and MURE (Minority Undergraduate Research Experience) programs offer you a chance to do research NOW!

Application Deadline: November 1

Information visit pa.spacegrant.org

The principal funder for WISER and MURE is NASA through the Pennsylvania Space Grant Consortium Office
 100 University Park • PA 16802 • Phone: 814-865-2535 • Email: spacegrant@psu.edu
 221 3rd Engineering Sciences Building

Penn State HOCKEY VS. OHIO

FRIDAY, OCT. 22 AT 9 PM
 SATURDAY, OCT. 23 AT 3:30 PM

THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS: PEPSI XEROX HAMPTON INN
 MCDONALD'S HONEY BAKED HAM QUDOKA SUPERLUIS
 MCDONALD'S LITTLE CAESAR'S TACO BELL JOSTENS DAIRY QUEEN
 POOL ANDERSON LION'S PRIDE PSU COMPUTER STORE PSU ORTHOPEDICS

Stay up to date on deadlines and promotions!

mycollegianad Sounds good but g2g ttyl.

collegiantent. magazines are always popular the deadline is next week

www.twitter.com/mycollegianad