

Two Lions honored with conference awards

By Andrew Robinson
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

A day after breaking her scoring slump against Illinois, Hayley Brock got a text from her mom that read "Congratulations."

The freshman forward on the Penn State women's soccer team didn't think about it much until she saw she had been named Big Ten Freshman of the Week. Once Brock realized what her mom had been talking about, she was excited by the news.

"It felt really good [getting the goal]," Brock said. "I had been kind of discouraged because I hadn't been scoring then to score again felt really good."

Brock's insurance goal in the Nittany Lions' 2-0 win over Illinois gave her four on the year, tying her for second on the team with fellow freshman Maya Hayes. Prior to Sunday, Brock had been held without a goal since the Sept. 15 win over Bucknell.

Despite Brock not getting the goals in games, senior forward Dani Toney said the freshman has scored plenty in practice and her ability didn't disappear. Going into the match with the Fighting Illini, Penn State coach Erica Walsh told her young forward it was time to make her shots count.

"She does it in training every day," Walsh said. "She can run right through a back line, a good quality back line. I spoke to her before the game that it's time to do it in a match and she did it."

Toney said the forwards in general had been struggling a little bit and Sunday's game was the breakthrough they needed. The senior said she was happy to see her teammate get recognition for her efforts and Toney feels the offense is on the right track for the rest of the year.

Knowing they needed to pick up the scoring, Brock said a lot of the work has been on the little things in practice.

"We've been working really hard on our runs and through balls and timing and it all came

together," Brock said. "Dani had a great run with perfect timing and I had a ball with a run-through from a great pass. It's all coming together."

On the other side of the ball, junior defender Emma Thomson collected her second career Big Ten Defensive Player of the Week award. The defense held Illinois to just two shots on net in the win and recorded seven blocked shots.

Thomson has been consistent all season and Walsh said the junior's leadership has come a long way over the course of the year. Walsh said Thomson keeps the defense focused and helps keep the unit together even when things aren't going in the Lions' favor.

While Thomson got the recognition, junior midfielder Jess Rosenbluth said the entire back line played a strong game and any of them could have won the award.

"It's awesome. Hayley was in a scoring slump so for her to score was really good and boosted her confidence a lot," Rosenbluth said. "Even now in practice she

was playing awesome. Emma's always been solid in the back line and a good defender so she deserved that too."

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Daniel Bott/Collegian

Emma Thomson (25) slides into a Wisconsin player during a 3-2 loss.

Lions set to start second half of Big Ten schedule

By Jake Kaplan
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

The first 10 didn't go as well as the players hoped, but the Nittany Lions women's volleyball team is hoping the second round of Big Ten matches goes a bit smoother.

With five weeks and 10 matches of the Big Ten volleyball season complete, each conference team has played the rest of the Big Ten once.

When No. 9 Penn State (17-4, 7-3 Big Ten) hosts Indiana Friday night, the second half of the season will begin.

Penn State is hoping to finish its conference slate stronger than it started. The Lions lost three conference matches, all on the road, and 10 sets total in the first run through the Big Ten.

The last time Penn State lost three conference matches in its first half was 2003.

That season, the Lions finished on a roll, winning their 10 remaining conference matches.

This season, Penn State, which currently sits third in the conference behind No. 6 Illinois (17-3, 9-

1) and No. 15 Michigan (19-3, 8-2), hopes to do the same.

Freshman outside hitter Deja McClendon said having already played their next 10 opponents one time will help the Lions, but at the same time, it helps the opponent in the same way.

"Now teams know you and your strategies," said McClendon, who ranks seventh in the Big Ten in kills.

"But now you can look at things that you didn't do right, and improve on those and what you did do right and get stronger."

Penn State coach Russ Rose echoed similar sentiments, saying that playing against a certain team a second time is an apparent

advantage for every team.

However, Rose did point out another advantage the Lions own in the second round of conference games. After playing six of their 10 conference matches thus far on the road, the Lions will have six home games opposed to four road games down the stretch. Penn State has won all 10 of its home matches in 2010 and is on an 84-match home winning streak dating back to 2006.

Some of the toughest matches of the second half figure to be bouts in Ann Arbor, Mich. on Nov. 5, at No. 20 Minnesota on Nov. 27 and a home contest against Illinois on Nov. 13. The Fighting Illini, who sit at first place in the

Big Ten, knocked off the Lions in a five-set thriller back on Sept. 24 in Champaign.

Senior middle hitter Arielle Wilson said it helps having seen a team already, but sometimes teams switch up their strategies. Wilson said Purdue (14-7, 5-5), which Penn State hosts Saturday night after losing to the Boilermakers on the road on Oct. 8, has been doing different rotations.

"I think it helps a lot, but then they switch it up and it's kind of something new," Wilson said. "But just because we know how they are as a team, it helps."

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