

PIGSKIN PREVIEW

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THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Northwestern vs. Penn State, 3:30 p.m., Saturday



After winning the starting job in the summer, Rob Bolden was supposed to be Penn State's quarterback for the next four years. But with Matt McGloin's play over the last two weeks and the unknown mystery that is Paul Jones, Penn State fans are wondering who will be the

QB OF THE FUTURE?

By Andrew J. Cassavell
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

The competition was over. Rob Bolden had supposedly won.

Following one of the most highly publicized quarterback competitions in his 45 years, Joe Paterno had chosen the first true freshman to start a season at quarterback, and everyone — those in the program and those who follow it — hastily dubbed the next four years the Bolden era.

Then came the Minnesota game, where Bolden was knocked out and backup Matt McGloin led Penn State to its first win in three weeks. A week later, in his first career start, McGloin directed an offense that put up 41 points in a crucial win against Michigan.

Now, Paterno has said Bolden is healthy, but the coach nonetheless reopened the competition for starter following McGloin's performances. On his radio show Thursday night, Paterno didn't name a starter, though it wasn't clear if that was because he hasn't chosen one or if he's simply keeping his hand close to his chest.

Paterno said he hopes to go with his typical one-quarterback system, and sources with direct knowledge of the situation said

that quarterback will likely be Bolden.

Since the win against Michigan, Paterno and his players have been hounded for their insight to the "who will start" question for this Saturday's game, a 3:30 p.m., kickoff at Beaver Stadium against Northwestern. At his Tuesday press conference, it was the first thing inquired, and Paterno simply laughed, saying, "I would've bet a hundred bucks that's the first question."

But the question that hasn't been posed with nearly the same vigor is one that may be more pressing for the program as a whole: "Who is the quarterback of the future?" Bolden was set to be that guy after the summer, but McGloin filled in very nicely during the last two weeks. Even freshman Paul Jones, who is redshirting this season, has drawn rave reviews as scout team quarterback in practice for his athleticism and his arm.

Paterno deflected thoughts about that, pointing to the strides Bolden made in the Minnesota game before he went down. In a quarter and a half, Bolden was 11-for-13 with a touchdown.

"He was getting better all the time," Paterno said. "When he got hurt, he was having a good day ... I think Bolden has got a very promising future."

But before that game, Bolden was making very little progress. He got out of the gate well in his first two home games but recorded his worst start in his last full game against Illinois. He struggled on the road against top-notch opponents Alabama and Iowa, leading the offense to a total of six points.

But even if Bolden were to lose his spot for now, Paterno isn't concerned at all about his demeanor.

"He's a mature guy," Paterno said. "I think he's a very good team man. I think he understands he's not anywhere near as good as he can be someday. He'll go into practice and try to get better."

Former Penn State quarterback Wally Richardson may comprehend the plight of Bolden better than anyone. Along with Tony Sacca in 1988 and Bolden this season, Richardson is one of three quarterbacks who has started as a true freshman under Paterno.

In Richardson's case, he entered the mix because of injuries as a freshman in 1992, eventually losing his spot to Kerry Collins for the next two years. He earned the job in 1995-96 after Collins graduated.

"I was the last man standing," Richardson said of being inserted as a freshman. "I was put in

out of necessity. For Rob to be named starter on opening day, with everyone else on campus before him, that's a lot different of a situation and a lot to handle for a freshman."

Richardson, who is now the Associate Director of Academic Services at Georgia, noted the difficulties of being a true freshman starter, coupling football with learning how to deal with campus life. He also added how hard it could be on Bolden if he loses the job down the road.

"Once you get to run the show, it's not something you want to just give up," Richardson said. "Back then it was hard for freshmen to break into the lineup. We did a lot of paying dues, and once you got to the point where you were the guy, you earned it."

Richardson cited the old cliché that a quarterback can't lose his job because of injury. But at the very least, McGloin said he felt he "performed well enough to believe I was going to be able to open the competition."

"When that opportunity arises, you've gotta make the most of it," McGloin said.

He did just that Saturday. McGloin went 17-for-28 for 250 yards and a touchdown in a nationally televised White Out game, firmly cementing himself as an option, along with Bolden, for quarterback of the future.

Throw Paul Jones into that mix, and it gives the Lions three options for that title. Jones was by far the best passer in April's Blue-White scrimmage (played before Bolden had even arrived on campus). He tossed the game's only two touchdown passes.

When asked how Jones has handled being relegated to the second-tier of quarterbacks, McGloin said aside from the redshirt, which delegates him to scout team quarterback, he didn't see Jones that way. McGloin hinted he expects Jones, a five-star recruit from Sto-Rox High School, to be in the thick of the competition for the starting spot next spring.

Sophomore Kevin Newsome figured to be the lead candidate for the spot heading into the off-season last year, but he has dropped to third on the depth chart this season, mostly relegated to mop-up duty.

With the departure of Daryll Clark after last season's Capital One Bowl, fans and media alike vocally wondered who would be the quarterback of Penn State's future.

Eleven months, eight games and two starting quarterbacks later, those same questions still linger.

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Daily Collegian Predictions

Andrew J. Cassavell

Score: Northwestern 27, PSU 23
What's good: Exciting game comes down to the final drive.
What's bad: Letdown after a big win; no 400 for Joe.
What to look for: Persa's purple posse from Bethlehem.



Audrey Snyder

Score: PSU 23, Northwestern 21
What's good: The Lions become bowl eligible.
What's bad: Defensive line struggles to pressure Persa.
What to look for: A loud celebration for Paterno's 400th win.



Brendan Monahan

Score: PSU 24, Northwestern 20
What's good: Joe's 400th win.
What's bad: Persa attacks PSU secondary.
What to look for: Possible snow showers.



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VS. NORTHWESTERN

GAME 9

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