

With 400 looming, fans should appreciate the achievement

By Brendan Monahan

THE time is ripe for a 400th victory. Joe Paterno sits at 399 with four regular season contests and a possible bowl game left to go, but this Saturday is the perfect time to capture the milestone.



MY OPINION

The matchup takes place in Beaver Stadium. Paterno's home since 1960 when the venue opened, and Northwestern gives Penn State its best chance to gain the achievement in front of the Penn State faithful.

The Nittany Lions' only other home game takes place Nov. 27

against No. 14 Michigan State. The Lions are coming off two-straight victories, confidence is high, and the Penn State community is wondering whether this is the 83-year-old coach's last season.

The magnitude of this Saturday's game is palpable. Anticipation will line the faces of Penn State fans entering Beaver Stadium at 3:30 p.m. Saturday, but amid the pressure and hype, the players are simply trying to win one more game and continue turning around a season that, just two weeks ago, was marred with failed expectations.

This game, if Penn State wins, is a chance to put the season on hold and appreciate a feat so rare, it hasn't happened in

Division I-A before and probably won't happen again. Take a step back, enjoy what's going around you and if the Lions pull off a victory, try to remember where you were when it happened while putting the achievement into perspective.

Consider redshirt senior Graham Zug, who was born on April 12, 1987, is the oldest member of the Lions. At that time, Penn State fans were riding high off a national-championship victory over Jimmy Johnson and his renegade Miami Hurricanes — and sitting on the verge of Joe's 200-win milestone.

Now, we're here 23 years later and Joe is still going.

Consider Joe's first win as head coach, which took place against Maryland on Sept. 17, 1966. That was more than two

years before Neil Armstrong became the first man to walk on the moon.

Consider the number 400 itself. Wide receiver Brett Brackett said he and some of his Penn State teammates came across a Penn State-Michigan program after the win last Saturday. The program listed the NCAA Division I-A schools that had the most victories. Michigan currently sits at the top with 882, and Penn State stands No. 6 with 816.

The players, Brackett said, took notice of the Lions' 800-plus victories.

"He's there for half those wins," Brackett said. "Pulling back and taking a look at that is pretty amazing."

Joe tried to downplay the milestone Tuesday at his weekly press conference. This week, the play-

ers said the achievement mattered a lot, but the emphasis is on Northwestern. The logic is simple: If you focus on the 400 milestone and its importance, you'll get away from the task at hand. And if the task at hand isn't fulfilled, there is no 400th victory.

Yet, the time is ripe. Fans are excited. Pressure is on. Saturday is the perfect opportunity for Joe to capture his 400th win.

But instead of focusing on those things, take in the game, and if the milestone happens to be fulfilled, understand the magnitude.

You'll never see anything like it again.

Brendan Monahan is a senior majoring in English and is a Collegian football writer. His e-mail address is bjm5146@psu.edu.

Women's soccer playing for league title on senior day

By Andrew Robinson
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Everything is on the line. At 1 p.m. Sunday, the Penn State women's soccer team will step out onto Jeffrey Field with a chance to secure at least a share of its 13th straight Big Ten title vs. Michigan.

WOMEN'S SOCCER

Just 19 days ago, the team sat with two conference losses and needed some help.

However, the Lions have kept winning and watched Ohio State drop two games, putting Penn State right back in the race. For seniors Dani Toney and Megan Monroig, their final regular season home game will be the biggest of the year.

"We're super-excited with it being senior day and our chance to win the Big Ten. Think Pink Day, there's so much going on so it's going to be an exciting day overall," said Monroig, a co-captain. "But it being senior day, it's sad because it will be our last game on Jeffrey Field but with the chance to win the Big Ten, it makes it extra special."

Toney quickly shared her classmate's feelings.

"It's a really, really big day. We

get to be with our families and our friends and the team, which is also part of our family," Toney said. "We're just really excited and I try not to think about our last game on Jeffrey but it is the truth. It's going to be a great day."

Standing in the Lions' way is a team vastly improved from last year. After finishing 1-4-5 in the Big Ten a season ago, Michigan is currently in fourth place with a 5-2-2 record with an outside chance for an NCAA Tournament bid.

Lions coach Erica Walsh said it's a completely different Michigan team and the Wolverines bring a hard-working mentality and will look to keep the ball. While there are plenty of implications in this game, Walsh said the fact the Lions had to battle to get to this point is keeping the players focused.

The coach also knows her team wouldn't be in this position without its seniors.

"They have carried us, along with [junior co-captain] Emma [Thomson], they have absolutely put us on their backs and carried us," Walsh said. "I couldn't be more proud of both of them. They've earned everything they've gotten up to this point and I hope they go out and earn themselves a championship."

If you go

Women's soccer vs. Michigan
When: 1 p.m. Sunday
Where: Jeffrey Field

Ohio State plays its final game tonight, a home match against Michigan State, meaning that when the Lions take the field Sunday, they will know if a win gives them a split title or an outright win. While Walsh said she's going to monitor the Ohio State game, Monroig said she won't be watching and is focused on Sunday's game.

Monroig and Toney said they don't feel any extra pressure, just excitement for Sunday. For the first time since the Sept. 26 win over Michigan State, the Big Ten is in Penn State's hands, and Monroig and Toney are ready to go fight for their fourth title.

Asked their favorite moments at Penn State, Toney quickly responded with the goal she scored against Virginia in the first game of last season while Monroig had to think about it. After joking about how few goals she's scored compared to Toney, Monroig finally settled on her first official Penn



Daniel Bott/Collegian

Senior Dani Toney (left) dribbles the ball through Wisconsin defenders.

State game, a 2-1 loss at Tennessee where she had the only goal, because it marked the start of her Lions career.

Freshman midfielder Taylor Schram said both seniors were huge reasons the team got through its challenging season.

Individually, though, the seniors have helped Schram get through

"more than they know." "I love those guys. I've only been here a couple months but they already feel like big sisters to me," Schram said.

"They're a huge part of the team leadership-wise. We're really going to miss them next year."

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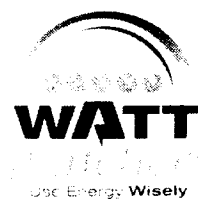
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