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Coach Joe Paterno walks the field at Beaver Stadium while his team practices before his 35-21 comeback victory — and 400th win — Saturday night against Northwestern.

JoePa achieves legendary feat

400-win milestone defies fast-paced college football culture

By **Brendan Monahan**
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

The present isn't much like the past.

Things have changed since 1966, when Joe Paterno became the head coach at Penn State. There wasn't Twitter or ESPN. Schools paid coaches less money. There wasn't much talk of firing a coach if he failed to meet expectations within a year or two.

The college football landscape has become different, and coaches have changed with it.

"They're greater than they ever have been in the history of the game," said former Purdue coach Joe Tiller, a close friend of Paterno. "With that compensation comes an expectation level that is nearly impossible to reach from a long range point of view."

Paterno is the exception to the rule, and the 400-win milestone he achieved Saturday defies impossibility. Achieving 400 is significant not just because it has never been done in Division I-A — it's significant because Paterno has remained a head coach in one place for 45 years and counting in a college football culture obsessed with instant success and defined by short leashes. For those reasons, people around college football say the 400-win milestone in Division I-A probably won't ever happen again.

"I don't think anybody will threaten it in a while either because coaches are not staying on one job like they used to — because of the high salaries and because they get fired quicker, or they get rich quicker and get out of coaching," former Florida State coach Bobby Bowden said. "I don't know if we'll see another football coach in college coach at one school as long as Joe has at Penn State."

Bowden experienced the culture change firsthand. After last season, Florida State's president, T.K. Wetherell, forced out the longtime coach — who tallied 377 wins at Sanford, West Virginia and Florida State.

Paterno, though, has lasted through the change in college football. He turned down chances for more lucrative coaching jobs, most notably the Pittsburgh Steelers in 1969 and the New England Patriots in 1973. He outlasted what

Penn State fans call the Dark Ages, a five-year span from 2000 to 2004 in which Penn State compiled a combined 26-33 record and suffered four losing seasons.

He achieved the wins under the Penn State title "Success with Honor" and his self-dubbed Grand Experiment, which emphasized education first and football second.

"He did not follow the philosophy that some college and university coaches follow, which is win at any cost," said former Penn State President Bryce Jordan, whose term lasted from 1983 to 1990. "He chose a path that's far more beneficial to the sport and the university, and yet he managed to win national championships and to win 400 games."

The coach who didn't put winning first is now on a tier far above any other FBS coach. He arrived in Happy Valley in 1950 when Rip Engle left Brown to receive the head coaching job at Penn State. Engle needed an assistant, so he brought his starting quarterback with him.

The university named Paterno the associate head coach in 1965 to replace Engle, which he did a year later.

"The fact that he spent his entire coaching career at one place, that's more amazing to me than the number of wins," said Fran Ganter, the associate athletic director for football and former offensive coordinator and player under Paterno. "It's just mind-boggling in this profession for a guy to be able to be at one place for that many years and naturally to win that many games."

Paterno emphasized loyalty and education to players while downplaying his own achievements over the years. The head coach's last great personal accomplishment was surpassing Paul "Bear" Bryant's 323 wins in 2001.

Paterno's wife, Sue, said she was happy when her husband surpassed Bryant because only then did people stop talking about it. When Paterno won games No. 200 and 300, Sue said thoughts of the milestones never crossed her mind.

Her husband is the same way, Paterno said his job is to win for his players, not himself, but those around Paterno understand the significance.

Kenny Jackson, a former wide receiver under Paterno

from 1980-83, recalled when schools recruited him. The house phone was the only way to get in contact with Jackson.

Now it's a different story.

The advancement of college sports and the Internet caused a shift in recruiting. High school football players are now celebrities with websites writing about every visit to a college campus and ESPN broadcasting national signings.

"That's why I think it's so hard for somebody to get to 400, especially at the Division I levels," Jackson said. "In other levels, that will be different. There's not as much attention."

Only two other have done it. Eddie Robinson won 408 games at Division I-AA Grambling State, and John Gagliardi has won 477 games as coach of Division III St. John's — where he currently coaches — and Carroll College of the NAIA.

The pressure that comes with that attention is why Tiller believes many college football coaches aren't enjoying the profession as much as before.

"Coaches have never been under greater scrutiny, and their programs have," Tiller said. "All that stuff wears on you after a period of time."

The old-school Paterno found just as much success in the attention-filled age of college football as he did before it. He remained steadfast in his ways despite the change in culture. Bowden said the milestone of 400 wins takes on a greater meaning because Paterno got his wins the honorable way. Amid recruiting, practice and academic violations at other programs — such as USC, Michigan and Florida State — Paterno's NCAA file has remained virtually spotless.

"It's a plateau that's never been reached by any Division I-A football coach, which that unto itself is historic," Tiller said. "I think it's also symbolic of the idea that coach Paterno has been a survivor in a profession that is difficult to master, which I think speaks volumes about his abilities."

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Lions come back for win

By **Andrew J. Cassavell**
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On Saturday night, Joe Paterno made it very clear why he's still coaching in the same place he was on September 17, 1966 — the night of his first victory.

"People ask me why I stayed here so long," said Paterno, who, 399 wins later, became the first FBS coach in history to reach 400 victories with a 35-21 comeback win over Northwestern, the largest deficit overcome in a home win for the 83-year-old coach. "Look around."

Paterno stood at the center of a podium in front of the south end zone. Cameras flashed, fans chanted his name and players eagerly looked on during his speech. Some wore smiles, others had tears in their eyes and many held signs and donned white hats reading, "400: The Paterno Way."

The iconic coach joins Eddie Robinson and John Gagliardi as the only coaches in college football history to reach the milestone. Gagliardi is first all-time with 477 career victories, 453 of which came at Division III St. John's (Minnesota). Robinson had 408 wins, all of which came at Grambling of the FCS.

In a career that has seen Paterno win two national titles, total five undefeated seasons and earn 24 bowl victories, reaching 400 wins could be the legendary coach's last great accomplishment.

Paterno had his arm around his wife, Sue, and three generations of Paternos stood on stage, while athletic director Tim Curley presented him with a crystal football commemorating his contributions, both on and off the field, to the university.

"To see the fans all stick around like that — it was very moving for me."

Joe Paterno
Penn State head football coach

As is typical of Paterno, he deflected the credit to all the players who have come through Penn State during his 45-year tenure, some of whom are the third generation in their family to play for him.

"The guys that have played here have just all been great," Paterno said. "And to see the fans all stick around like that — it was very moving for me."

But No. 400 didn't come easy. The Lions fell behind 21-0 late in the first half with a lifeless offense and a defense that had trouble stopping shifty Northwestern quarterback Dan Persa.

"If I had my choice," Paterno cracked in his postgame press conference, "I would've had it a little easier."

For 29 minutes and 10 seconds, it appeared Paterno would have to wait at least another week to reach the milestone.

But instead of taking a knee and heading into the locker room trailing by 21, with 50 seconds remaining in the half, Paterno opted to take a chance. What ensued was a 47-second, 91-yard drive that ended with redshirt sophomore quarterback Matt McGloin finding senior co-captain Brett Brackett in the back of the end zone.

It sparked a run of 35 unanswered points led by McGloin, who entered the game for freshman Rob Bolden in the first quarter. Paterno made the decision to

switch to McGloin, who rewarded him by tossing four touchdowns and 225 yards. It was the Lions' third straight win, all finished by the former walk-on quarterback.

"To be a part of it, I'm just speechless," McGloin said. "It really hasn't sunk in yet. In years you're gonna remember that night. You were there, and you were quarterback for coach Joe Paterno when he got his 400th win."

Once McGloin and the offense started to catch fire, the defense and the entire Beaver Stadium crowd followed suit. When the milestone victory became imminent, the fans broke into a chorus of "JoePaTerno," and as the seconds ticked down, offensive linemen DeOn'tae Pannell and Eric Shrive lifted Paterno onto their shoulders as he approached midfield.

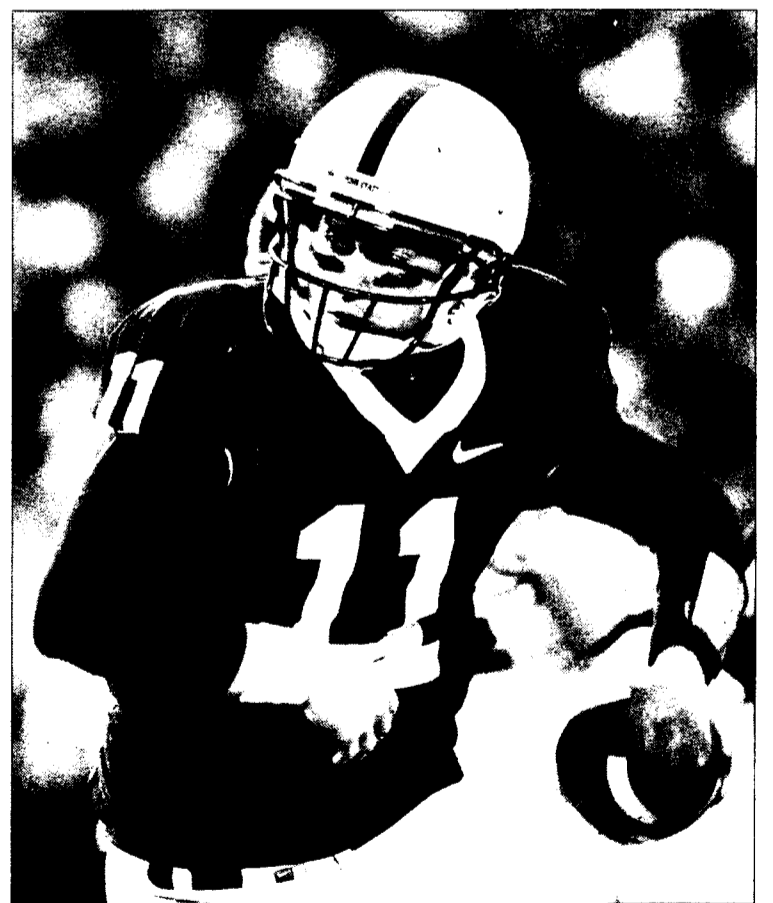
"All of that was nice," Paterno said. "Carrying me off the field — we all have a little bit of ham in us. I felt pretty good about it."

Paterno downplayed the record all week, as did his players and the coaching staff. They were focusing strictly on Northwestern, they said.

But Paterno's son and quarterbacks coach, Jay Paterno, who had tears in his eyes during his father's postgame speech to the crowd of 104,147, at least took the time to make sure the moment wasn't forgotten.

"After we beat Michigan, I said 'Mom, is [all the family] coming in next week?' " Jay Paterno told reporters after the game. "She said, 'No, why?' I said, 'I hate to tell you, but it's kind of a big deal.'"

Jay Paterno choked up again in his postgame interview, noting both the history of the moment



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Quarterback Matt McGloin (11) runs with the ball during Saturday night's 35-21 win — Coach Joe Paterno's 400th — against Northwestern.

and how much his father has meant to the Penn State program.

Former linebacker Jack Ham, who played under Paterno from 1968-70, and called the game Saturday, said he's sure the record will never be broken.

"This one will stand forever," Ham said. "It just speaks of what he's done for this university. When I first went to school a lot of people thought Penn State University was the University of Pennsylvania. It didn't have an identity and Joe put this university on the map way back when."

Offensive line coach Dick

Anderson, who has been on Paterno's staff for 33 seasons, echoed Ham's sentiment. Paterno's legacy, Anderson said, was cemented well before Saturday's milestone.

"It was all about integrity, the university, the people and the team," Anderson said.

"For Joe, it's not about himself. I think personally, I don't know if there is anybody in the history of Penn State that has done more for Penn State University than Joe Paterno."

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