

NCAA

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chance to play field hockey — not just for Penn State, but on the field they have played on for the last four years.

"It just makes everything much more special for us just because we're able to stay here and be on our home turf where we're used to," Purvis said. "Just our fans get to come see us, it's going to be an amazing experi-

ence and we are so, so psyched for that."

As the dust cleared and the commotion settled after Penn State's selection, Morett reminded the team that the Lions have never lost a home game in the NCAA tournament.

But if the Lions want to keep that streak alive and face the winner of Saturday's Ohio State-Albany (N.Y.) 2 p.m. matchup, they'll have to first take care of business against Syracuse.

And as far as preparation goes,

Morett said she plans on keeping things simple. She said her team needs to work hard at practice like it has the entire season and prepare for the Orange as if it's an everyday regular season game — even if this is the biggest game of some of their careers.

"Syracuse has had an outstanding season and they're just very strong," Morett said. "They're very tournament savvy."

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Slay

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well as Freshman of the Week for her performances during both matches. She is the first Penn State player to be named conference defensive player of the week since now-senior Arielle Wilson in November 2008.

Early in the opening set against Michigan, Slay displayed her ability to affect each opposing hitter. In back-to-back rallies, the Raleigh, N.C. native helped shut down attacks from both Michigan outside hitters by sliding to each side of the net.

Slay and senior Blair Brown each recorded four blocks during the match's first nine rallies, and the freshman believed the Lions' defense sparked their play.

"It definitely gave a little confidence boost, not only for me but for the whole team in general," Slay said. "We were able to kind of take control of the match from

there. We didn't really let the crowd get into the match that much."

The blocking production is nothing new from Slay, who leads the team with 1.59 blocks per set. However, she had just 25 kills this season before her 17 last weekend.

While Slay's length aids her blocking, Brown said it gives her the ability to hit over opposing blockers, as well.

"It's important that she's up in the air all the time so she can either take blockers or if the blockers are going at someone else, she can be up and available to put the ball down," Brown said of Slay.

Much of Slay's production against the Wolverines and Spartans came on overpasses, coach Russ Rose said. He said he's not expecting Slay to continue to be a large contributor on offense, but Rose was happy with her ability to turn the opponents' mistakes into Penn State points.

Rose has been putting either Slay or senior Fatima Balza into the lineup based on matchups. Slay said. The freshman and Rose both said Balza provides more quickness at the middle hitter position, while Slay brings a bigger block.

Slay said she's been learning a lot from Balza, and she tries to perform up to the standards of the Venezuelan native.

Senior libero Alyssa D'Errico said Balza has been playing well, but she realizes Slay has the ability to play a different style of middle hitter. D'Errico knows Slay is a valuable asset to the team when she's on the floor.

"It's great that we have such a strong blocker," D'Errico said of Slay.

"When they have a great opponent on the other side attacking-wise, we can put her in and know that she's going to kind of shut them down."

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Stanley

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Latimore (wrist). Crawford may play more this week. Joe Paterno said at his press conference Tuesday, but Latimore isn't making much progress despite being listed as probable on this week's depth chart.

The depth Stanley provided the defensive line was crucial to the Lions' success against Northwestern. Stanley said it was

obvious the Wildcats offensive linemen were "gassed by the fourth quarter."

But Stanley will face a much tougher offensive line this week when the Lions head to No. 8 Ohio State. The run-pass threat of Buckeyes quarterback Terrelle Pryor is similar to that of Northwestern's Dan Persa, and defensive line coach Larry Johnson said Stanley's quickness is especially key in shutting down dual-threat quarterbacks.

"He rushed the passer well,"

Johnson said. "We're playing with a quarterback that was a runner so we need to be quick at the end position. Sean's got great quickness, great speed, so we had the ability to take the advantage of that."

Stanley said Johnson was the coach he went to following the marijuana charge and suspension. Johnson, Stanley said, reminded him to stay focused on what was important and not pay attention to what was being said.

"Coach J. he just kept it all fam-

ily oriented," Stanley said. "He told me to move on and that everybody's still on my side. I just had to put it past me and move on."

With last Saturday's game, he feels like he has finally done that. Defensive captain Ollie Ogbu feels the same way.

Ogbu talked to Stanley after the suspension and told him to try and take the positives from the incident and grow from it.

"It happened now, and I'm sure it won't happen again," Ogbu said. "He explained to me that he did

580 yards during the past three games. The team's 127 carries during that span are a season-high.

The offensive line's improvement during the past three weeks has also opened up more holes for the backs and given McGloin more time, something Bolden didn't have at the beginning of the season. Bolden was sacked seven times in eight games while McGloin has taken just one sack in three games.

"It all starts with the offensive linemen and they've really picked up their game and they've been playing great," fullback Joe Suhey said.

With the offense as a whole being more productive with McGloin, some players attribute it to the confidence the redshirt sophomore brings to the team. Described by Suhey as a competitive, fiery guy, McGloin's swagger is on display when he's out on the field making plays and on the sidelines encouraging his defense to step up.

Paterno said confidence is something that comes with age, and at this point, McGloin's been around longer and had more time to learn the offense. But the coach didn't want to dismiss Bolden's effort to run the offense either.

"They've both been effective up to a point," Paterno said. "And in all fairness to [Bolden] he was in there when we were having more troubles holding on to the ball, running the football and all those kinds of things."

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Alton

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Andrew Alton pinned Lynch after mounting a quick 11-2 lead to take the starting job going into this weekend's matches against Bloomsburg (3-0) and No. 17 Lehigh (1-0).

"It was a tough match," Lynch said. "Alton is really good."

Sanderson said the coaches staged the wrestle-off to duplicate a match-like atmosphere. Both wrestlers made weight and wrestled in front of the team to create a competitive environment.

Throughout the offseason, Sanderson has said he will put the best team possible out on the mat. While he could not help but praise Lynch for all he has done for the team, Sanderson admitted the results of the wrestle-off indicate Alton is the guy.

"That is my least favorite part of the job," Sanderson said. "You really want both guys to do well but only one guy can represent your team at that weight."

Sanderson said Lynch is one of his favorite wrestlers on the team. He added that Lynch is so coachable and gutsy that he will bounce back.

For now though, the team will look to its unproven freshman to take the reins, and no one has more confidence than Alton himself.

"I'm really prepared for this weekend," Alton said. "I've been preparing since the summer time."

Alton said participating in a wrestle-off is something he was not used to. He said he didn't need to wrestle off in high school, but added he could not help but get swept up in the competitive environment.

"It was different at first," Alton said. "But I was able to get on top

of Lynch and put him on his back for the pin."

While Andrew will be the only Alton starting this season, he said he will have his brother in mind when he is out wrestling on the mat. The Alton brothers have wrestled together their entire lives, most recently at Central Mountain High School in Mill Hall. Andrew said when one of them loses, it is like a loss for both of them.

One thing Andrew will be focused on coming into this weekend's matches will be staying calm. While he is excited to get under the bright lights, he said he


needs to make sure he does not get too worked up.

"The coaches do a good job of getting me warmed up before each match," Alton said. "I just need to stay calm and go through my routine."

Sanderson, as well as many of the upperclassmen on the team, have said they can not wait to see many of the younger wrestlers get their feet wet in real competition this weekend.

"Alton is definitely ready to go this weekend, there is no question about that," Sanderson said.

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