

Icers lose two to Rhode Island over weekend

By Anthony Barton
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Coming into the weekend series against Rhode Island, the Penn State Icers had a chance to make a statement against one of the ESCHLs top teams.

ICERS

After mustering only one goal in two losses to the No. 11 Rams (13-2-1, 4-1-1 ESCHL) over the weekend, the No. 8 Icers (9-4-0, 2-2-0) could fall out of the top 10 for the first time in more than a decade when the next ACHA National rankings are released Friday.

The Icers lost 4-1 to the Rams on Saturday, following a 5-0 shutout loss Friday night.

"Our team wasn't doing the little things," assistant captain Paul Daley said. "We put out a decent effort, but turnovers at the blue line really hurt us. We just weren't getting any bounces this weekend."

Junior captain Marek Polidor said the score in Saturday's game wasn't indicative of how close the game actually was.

With the Rams leading 2-1 late in the third, the Icers pulled freshman goalie Matt Madrazo for an extra skater Rhode Island capitalized, putting in two empty-net

goals to secure the win.

After being shut out for the first five periods of play this weekend, Polidor finally got the Icers on the board midway through the third period of Saturday's game.

"We really wanted to make sure we came out strong in the third," Polidor said.

"We were still in the game once it was 2-1 but we weren't able to get it done."

In their previous two losses, the Icers cited inconsistent effort as the main reason they struggled. This time though, senior assistant captain Tim O'Brien said the problem wasn't effort, but the inability to solve the Rams' defensive schemes and put goals on the board.

"They did a great job shutting our top guys down and it obviously showed with us only scoring one goal all weekend," O'Brien said.

One major story line coming into the series was the Icers' ability to shut down sophomore Shawn Tingley. The Rams forward, a Division I transfer from Providence, is Rhode Island's leading scorer on the season with 26 points.

After playing two games against him, the Icers weren't impressed as they held Tingley to one assist on the weekend.

"To be honest, I don't even know what number he is," Polidor said. "We didn't focus on him at all."

Madrazo, getting his second start in as many weeks saved 35 of

37 shots he faced, good for a save percentage of .946.

"I feel like I played well, but obviously not well enough to get the team a win," Madrazo said. "Sometimes you have to come up with the big saves but we really didn't get any bounces."

The Icers will now play a home and home series against Towson this weekend before heading into the Thanksgiving break.

"We'll get back to work on Tuesday and have two good games this weekend," O'Brien said.

"After that, hopefully the guys can get some rest and enjoy the break."

To e-mail reporter: acb5152@psu.edu

Sweep of Illinois gives Lions share of first place

By Ryan Loy
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

For the past seven weeks, in the back of their minds, some of the Penn State women's volleyball players had something bothering them.

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL

The No. 8 Nittany Lions (23-1, 13-3 Big Ten) erased that thought Saturday night against No. 9 Illinois (21-5, 13-3).

It was the Illini that defeated Penn State in its Big Ten opener — causing the Lions to play catch-up in the conference title race ever since. Saturday, Penn State

finally caught up by defeating Illinois in straight sets (25-18, 25-16, 25-18) at Rec Hall to earn a share of first place in the conference.

Senior libero Alyssa D'Errico said the few losses Penn State suffered this year all hurt, but the Sept. 24 loss to Illinois was a little harder because the Lions had a match point but were unable to put the Illini away.

Freshman outside hitter Deja McClendon agreed — while unable to hide a big smile while talking about Saturday's win.

"It's always kind of in the back of your head because you know they're above you," McClendon said of Illinois. "Personally, to play

them and beat them, just kind of boosts my confidence."

McClendon was one of three Lions to finish with double-digit kills, tallying 12. Senior opposite hitter Blair Brown led the team with 13, while freshman outside hitter Ariel Scott had 10.

Coach Russ Rose believed his team was more competitive than in the earlier loss at Illinois. One factor in the Lions' performance was the play of Brown.

"Blair played to be the best player on the floor," Rose said. "Last time we played, she didn't step up into that position. This was a nice transition, in my eyes, to see her do that."

Rose also attributed Penn

State's success to better ball-handling and defense. Freshman Ali Longo and senior Cathy Quilico paced the Lions' defense with 12 digs and 10 digs, respectively. D'Errico added eight digs, while all three defenders each contributed one service ace.

D'Errico said the Lions stopped Illinois from going on scoring runs Saturday — something they struggled to do in the first matchup with the Illini. Strong defense from both teams caused a few lengthy rallies, which elicited applause to acknowledge the players' effort from the 3,563 fans in Rec Hall.

Rose said he was happy with nearly every facet of the game, but he isn't ready to declare his

team front-runners just yet.

"We can't pretend that we're some juggernaut team here," Rose said.

The sweep of Illinois did give the Lions an idea of how far they've come since the start of conference play, D'Errico said. The senior is happy with the position the team is in after the win.

"We've put ourselves in a good situation to be able to achieve one of our goals in winning the Big Ten," D'Errico said. "We have four matches left. We've got to bring our A-game for all of those and hopefully close out with at least a co-championship."

To e-mail reporter: rml5138@psu.edu

Men's basketball

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play at the end of the half and we come out in the second half and we play well."

Battle's shot at the end of the half, coupled with an inspiring halftime speech by DeChellis, ignited the Lions and set the team off after a lackluster first half performance.

DeChellis said his team was playing without a purpose, and that was evident even before the opening tip-off.

Other than Battle — who "tweaked" his ankle in the first half and gave the Lions a short-lived scare — every Penn State starter looked unenthusiastic during the pregame announcements, and it carried over into the game.

"The first half guys that were seniors weren't really giving us much of anything," DeChellis said. "We have to have those guys play and do some things for us. They

responded at halftime and came out and played completely different."

The coach attributed some of it to pregame jitters — which senior Jeff Brooks admits he still gets. Once the players settled down, the Lions looked like a completely new team in the second half.

Seniors D.J. Jackson and Brooks started to play much more aggressive while providing extra scoring behind Battle's 21 points. Jackson turned the game around in the second half to finish the game with 14 points while Brooks

ended up with 10 points, nine rebounds and five blocks.

"We just felt like in the second half we just have to take over," Brooks said. "We have to start scoring a couple buckets here and there. We had to continue getting rebounds and playing defense as well."

Key reserve Billy Oliver also tallied 10 points off the bench to give the Lions four scorers in double figures.

After not playing as a cohesive team in the first half, things started to click for Penn State in the

second half and the team shot nearly 60 percent from the field after the break.

After forcing their shots in the first half, the players eventually started to spread the ball around more.

"It was a tale of two different halves," DeChellis said.

"The second half is where I think we can play and hopefully they've learned something. They have to come out and be aggressive."

To e-mail reporter: ada147@psu.edu

Record

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numbers, we're looking at the next match," senior co-captain Alyssa D'Errico said. "The streak is not going to matter if we don't win the next two games at home because then we're not going to hang another banner."

Rec Hall — an all-brick building nestled on the far west side of campus — has been in use since 1929. It is also home to the Penn

State men's volleyball, wrestling and men's and women's gymnastics teams. But nobody has had such a successful streak like the women's volleyball squad.

In fact, at the Main Gym, there are three separate rafters donning women's volleyball championship banners. And a lot of that success has come on the Lions' home court.

The team's current streak of 88 straight wins, which began on Sept. 1, 2006, ranks second in NCAA volleyball records, behind

only Nebraska's streak of 90 straight.

"Rec Hall just gives you a totally different kind of confidence," freshman Deja McClendon said. "Just being home and being on your court, you feel like you can serve easier, you feel like you have the crowd behind you."

Though the Lions value the importance of the Rec Hall advantage, they said they didn't think about the record-breaking streak.

After Saturday night's match, D'Errico said she knew the Lions

striving to keep that going.

"Our goal is always to hang more banners, decorate Rec Hall a little bit more, try and get a little more accomplishments for people to see and draw more people in and make the program better and more special," D'Errico said. "So it's a great accomplishment, but I don't even know what the number is. I just know that we keep winning at home and we like playing here."

To e-mail reporter: exk5049@psu.edu

Lady Lions

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more transition opportunities on offense thanks to 37 Rider turnovers, 18 off of steals.

"Once we got it rolling like that, our confidence got really high," Penn State coach Coqueuse Washington said after the game.

The Lady Lions were 11-for-16 from 3-point range in the game, including 81.8 percent from downtown in the first half. They closed out the first half on a 36-4 run, including 20 unanswered points at one point.

The Lady Lions didn't look back from that point on, continuing to pour on the points in the second

half en route to their second-straight high-scoring output and the blowout victory. Rider's horrid 15.4 field goal percentage was incomparable to Penn State's 52.9.

Milligan, whose team dropped to 0-2 on the season, said some bad misses from her team's offense led to many open 3-point shots in transition for Penn State.

"That's where the game got blown open and then obviously it got worse for us," Milligan said. "Their transition 3's, they do a fantastic job getting the ball up the floor. And their shooters are ready."

Junior guard Zhaque Gray led the way with six of Penn State's 11 3-pointers, and recorded 22 points, her second consecutive 20-point

game. Freshman guard Maggie Lucas also had 22 points on 9-for-13 shooting from the field.

Two other players, sophomore point guard Alex Bentley and senior forward Julia Trogele, also scored in double digits with 13 and 12 points, respectively.

"We're scoring in so many different ways," said Lucas, who was 3-for-5 from beyond the arc. "We have so many weapons. They have to pick their poison out there."

The most points Penn State scored in a single game last season was 88. In each of its first two games thus far, the Lady Lions have shown their offensive prowess, averaging 103.5 per game. Friday night, they won at Dayton, a team receiving votes in

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Coqueuse Washington
coach

both polls, 112-107 in double overtime.

"I think we made a huge leap from where we were last year," Bentley said. "I think we have, like everybody's been saying, we balance the score. We balance the stats, too. Everybody's rebounding. Everybody's putting the ball in the basket. I just think we're really, really talented this year and we're just going to get better as the season goes on."

Despite two big wins in totally

different ways, Washington said her Lady Lions still have a lot to work on.

"We want to play with a level of excellence no matter what the score is, no matter what's going on with the game," Washington said. "But we're going to play hard and we're going to give it all we got. And when we do that, I think we'll be able to be competitive with anybody we face."

To e-mail reporter: jyk5142@psu.edu

Men's soccer

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would have done the same thing," Nittany Lions coach Bob Warming said.

"You want to try to keep that goal out of the net and give your keeper a chance to make a save and maybe get us fired up, I would have done the same thing."

Senior co-captain Andres Casais said Cost's goal gave the players energy and had them thinking another rally was in store.

Despite having scored three goals in a half Thursday night, this one wasn't meant to be.

"We thought we could have made it, we've had early goals against us and we proved we could come back," Casais said. "Unfortunately, we didn't and the

opportunities were there but credit to them."

In its wins on Thursday and Friday, the team had to rally back in order to advance through the bracket, and the tired legs of the players showed Sunday.

Wolverine freshman Soony Saad scored 4:09 into the game after a miscommunication caught Birmingham and Fogue out of position.

Though the Lions have responded to being scored on early this year, having played two games in the last three days finally caught up to them.

"It was a shocker, you never want to come out in a huge game like this and give up an early goal," Cost said.

"I think after that we were a little stunned and we let them run through us for the second goal and after that we were shocked and we

really didn't come to play."

After the first goal, Michigan got two goals from Justin Meram, who had been suspended for the Wolverines' semifinal game after getting two yellow cards in the team's first round game. Both of Meram's goals, shots taken from outside the penalty box, were perfectly hit balls that had no chance of being saved and Warming said it was obvious Meram was just more fresh than any other player on the field at that point in the ball game.

Meram's first goal came on a through ball from Hamoody Saad where he beat Penn State's defense and ripped a ball to the upper right corner in the 14th minute. Sixteen minutes later, Penn State misplayed a corner that set the Wolverines off on a field-length counterattack that ended with another blast from

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Drew Cost
senior

Meram out of Birmingham's reach.

Penn State's tired legs showed most in the midfield, where the players weren't able to close on Michigan's attacks. After 60 minutes, Warming had seen enough and started to pull his starters knowing there was no point in wasting their legs for another 30 minutes.

Despite a lackluster showing, the student section not only stayed for the entire game, chanting and yelling for 90 minutes, it

gave the Lions a standing ovation as they left the field.

Warming said the gesture meant a lot to him and the players because he knew his team didn't turn a performance worthy of the support.

"All these fans that came out all year, every single game, gave us a great environment and we'd like to thank them for supporting us even though we were down," Casais said.

To e-mail reporter: adr5079@psu.edu

Women's soccer

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then continued to knock on the door for the rest of the game."

Penn State's final push started in the 72nd minute when freshman Taylor Schram's header just

missed and went over the bar.

West Virginia's Bri Rodriguez tried to respond but her shot went wide a few minutes later, setting up a chaotic scene at the other end of the field.

Midfielder Christine Nairn had a shot blocked, collected her own rebound and fired again, only to have Butler stop it. Freshman Hayley Brock followed that drive with a cross that eluded an open

Costa and Schram but found Nairn.

The sophomore's resulting shot was blocked again, but Brock followed up only to have that effort saved out of bounds for a corner kick.

Butler, a senior, came up huge for her team, stopping a hungry Lions team for the last 20 minutes of the match.

"I would say Butler was the

player of the match," Walsh said. "She was outstanding, she kept them in the game."

At one point late in the second half, the Lions had one defender composing their back line, with every other player pushed up to get a goal. Walsh said after the game the players were understandably upset but kept their heads up knowing they gave their

But just like a year ago, they were left heartbroken in the national tournament.

"I was sure that one was going to go in. The effort was there, the desire, the communication, all the pieces that in every sport you feel are necessary to have success," Walsh said. "But soccer's a little bit more cruel than most sports."

To e-mail reporter: adr5079@psu.edu