Senior Parr matures through career's injuries

By Andrew Robinson COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

It hangs in the hallway outside the Penn State men's soccer team's locker room, a large pic-

ture of a young man all but swimming in an oversized jersey, his long hair flying wildly behind

MEN'S SOCCER

him, the number 12 surrounded by a circle on his chest.

These days, Andy Parr keeps his hair short, his jersey fits a little better and he is constantly ribbed by his teammates for the simple fact he is the oldest player on the team. But the fifth-year senior, dubbed "Grandpa" by his fellow Nittany Lions, is anything but an old man, playing a key role in the middle of the back line.

"It's my senior year. It's getting down to the end and I want to make this thing last as long as I can," Parr said after Friday night's 2-1 Big Ten semifinal win Parr's experience has been a over Indiana.

"I'm playing every game like to the starter's role. it's going to be my last. We're trykeep this season going.

exclamation point. Warming said real well together.

the centre back was the team's best defensive player Thursday against Northwestern, and he was just as good Friday against Indiana.

Once Sunday's championship game against Michigan was decided with the

Wolverines fourth goal, Warming began systematically pulling his starters, but Parr stayed in for the

Parr

entire 90 minutes. With the NCAA tournament starting this week, the Lions will look to Parr's veteran presence as they look to advance through the brackets.

Parr's eyes have seen plenty of battles on the field, but they have also watched far too many from the sideline.

For redshirt freshman goalkeeper Brendan Birmingham, comfort zone as he has settled in

"He's great, he has all the expeing to get out there, work hard rience he's been around here forand win every game so we can ever and we mess with him about that," Birmingham said. "He If the regular season was brings knowledge of the game. Parr's message that he was back. he's a smart player out of the back the Big Ten tournament was the and him and Brian [Forgue] work

anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee as a sophomore, costing him not only the remainder of that season, but also all of

Last year, Parr, along with forward Jason Yeisley, returned and sparked a resurgence that saw the team get to the Big Ten tournament final. But again, Parr could only watch that game. The defender sprained the medial collateral ligament in his right knee in the first round of the tournament and had to sit out the team's final three games.

But for the first time since his freshman season in 2006, Parr has avoided serious injury in 2010. In fact, the entire team has enjoyed relatively good health this year, so much so that it caused superstitious coach Bob Warming to pause his interview Friday night so he could knock on a wooden table before addressing

"He's been great, the whole team's health has been fantastic," Warming said.

"They've really taken care of themselves, it's really helped us this year.'

Parr hasn't totally dodged injury, though. On Oct. 10, the redshirt senior collided with a

On Sept. 26, 2007, Parr tore the him with a small, jagged scar for Being at Penn State for five years the rest of the year.

Always composed in interviews, Parr is fiery on the field. Whether it's in practice or a game, the redshirt senior is vocal with his teammates, with aggressive language mixed in, to get the message across.

'Me and all the other seniors. we know this is our last year, we want to make the most of it. Some of the younger guys may not understand yet because they haven't been here long enough but we're getting into them." Parr said.

Especially when we've gone down we're yelling at everybody, 'Come on now, do this for yourselves, do this for your team.' The seniors are trying to pump up everybody for this final stretch here.

Though his right knee injuries may have cost Parr more time than he would have ever wished, that lost year did provide a benefit. Parr's younger brother. Dan, transferred to Penn State from Rutgers before this season, marking the first time the brothers have been on the same field since playing at Lower Dauphin High School.

Junior forward Corey Herztog said one of Parr's biggest Michigan State player, opening a strengths is the way he organizes gash on Parr's forehead that left and controls the Lions' defense.

has made Parr consistent, and junior midfielder Justin Lee said Parr is rarely caught out of position.

That was evident last Thursday against Northwestern, when by Warming's count, Parr gave away just one ball out of the back and was integral to the containment of the Wildcats' dynamic counter-based attack.

"Andy Parr looked like a bigtime centre back tonight," Warming said Thursday. "His passing out of the back was fantastic. His passing helped start a lot of the good sequences that kept them pressed in the final third of the field."

While he may have shed the Alexi Lalas-like hairdo of his younger days, the photo of Parr with his head wrapped in a bandage, covering the gash on his head this season, sent the same message about his tenacity.

'Grandpa" can bring it with the best of them.

"When your nickname's 'Grandpa' it means you ought to have a little experience." Warming said. "He's given us experience and some maturity and calmness in the back, just like a grandpa out there. That's been great.

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Defensive specialist Longo continues to play well

By Jake Kaplan

COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

defensive specialist Ali Longo of the Lions' four service aces. saw a drastic improvement in her performance the

second time around against Illinois Saturday night.

WOMEN'S on VOLLEYBALL

In the Nittany Lions' five-set road loss to Illinois the team-leader on Sept. 24, Longo struggled, missing a couple of important digs in the fifth and deciding set.

However, Saturday night, when now-No. 7 Penn State swept No. 9 Illinois in front of the Rec Hall crowd. Longo looked almost like a different player than the defen-Hall in Champaign, Ill. seven weeks prior.

Saturday, the most of any player Similar to her team, freshman in the match. She also tallied one then-No. 15 Michigan on Nov. 5 in

> turnaround from the last time we played Illinois. said senior libero and co-captain Alvssa D'Errico. in digs this sea-

"She's one of Longo those kids, you can tell by her

persona on the court, she's tough on herself. She wants to be the best player she can be, and she's sive specialist that played at Huff kind of a spit-fire kid that's hardnosed and just goes after it out on

career-high 12 digs on either. The 5-foot-6 defensive specialist played well in a sweep of Ann Arbor, Mich. In that match, "I think, for her, it's a huge she came in to serve and helped her team to seven consecutive

> She played really well against Michigan and I wouldn't have put her in those matches if I didn't think she could be successful," Penn State coach Russ Rose said after Saturday's win, which put the Lions in a first-place tie in the

So, when kids make mistakes they feel bad as well. It's not like they feel bad and I tell them that they were bad. They know when they make mistakes and don't

Freshman outside hitter Deja This wasn't the first time McClendon said the play of the cially nice to see one of her fellow

came off the bench and recorded Longo has stepped up recently, back row helped her get more freshmen perform well. chances Saturday. Longo, as well as starting defensive specialist Cathy Quilico who had 10 digs and D'Errico who had eight. helped keep rallies going and give the Lions' hitters more opportunities.

That showed, as on Monday, opposite hitter Blair Brown was Week while McClendon was the conference's Freshman of the Week.

"Our defense is getting so much stronger with Ali, and, I mean [D'Errico] making some great digs," said McClendon, who had 12 kills on 20 attempts Saturday.

"The fact that they keep makplay well. So, she did a real nice ing digs just gives me more opportunities.

McClendon added it was espe-

"She is just a ball of fire," McClendon said of Longo. "When she gets on, she's great. I just love to see her do well. When she does well, we're all happy.

The Lions (23-4, 13-3 Big Ten), which at some points have four freshmen on the floor at one time, hope Longo maintains her named the Big Ten Player of the high level of play for the last four games of the regular season and into the postseason. Penn State hosts Ohio State (20-9, 8-8) at 7 p.m. Wednesday at Rec Hall.

"It's a great turnaround and confidence builder for her to have the past couple of games that she's had and be able to contribute to the team," D'Errico said.

"cause that was her goal from the start.

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Volleyball team seeing improvement in serving

By Emily Kaplan COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Coach Russ Rose suggested to his players that they should arrive a half-hour early to last Saturday night's match to work on serving.

As senior co-captain Alvssa D'Errico recalled the conversa-State women's vollevball team following Friday night's match, she laughed, using air quotes as she said the word "suggested."

"You can put the quotation marks in the paper," D'Errico said, with a smile.

That's because D'Errico and their serving woes were cured. her teammates know that serving has been an area of concern servers, they were serving all season. They didn't need their coach to suggest anything, especially after Friday night when they committed 12 service errors

against unranked Wisconsin. So Saturday night, all of the players arrived at Rec Hall 30 tion her coach had with the Penn minutes earlier than usual to

work on their biggest flaw. The extra effort paid off. Against No. 9 Illinois, a team Penn State had lost to earlier in the season, the Lions recorded

only six service errors. And, for at least one night,

"A lot of it was our jump tough." freshman Deja McClendon said. "It's hard for them to keep their serves in and still be aggressive. But they practice. We practiced extra serving,

and I think that helped us a lot." In 38 matches last season, the Lions recorded 242 service errors.

This year, 27 matches in, the team has already accumulated 201 service errors.

The No.7 Lions' failure to serve the ball in play has been a topic of discussion in nearly every one of

ences this season — win or lose.

After Saturday's match, the coach didn't elaborate much on Friday night's discussion with his team. When asked, he just smiled and added: "We had a lot of conversation about it.

Yet Rose did say he was pleased with Saturday's improve-

His players were, too.

D'Errico said on Friday night, the Lions were tentative. They served just to keep the ball over the net — and didn't even do a

good job of that, she said. On Saturday though, the team

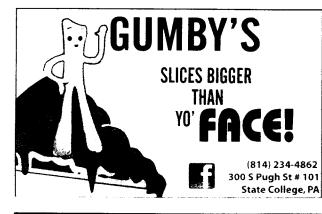
Rose's post-game press confer- was effective because it had a confident, aggressive attitude.

'We're going to serve better when we're going after it," D'Errico said.

McClendon said serving is an area the coaching staff emphasizes in practice. And though the Lions saw improvements Saturday night, she doesn't think

they'll stop working on it. We focus on serving in practice a lot," McClendon said. "It's a huge chunk of the game that you think is small, but it really does make a difference.'

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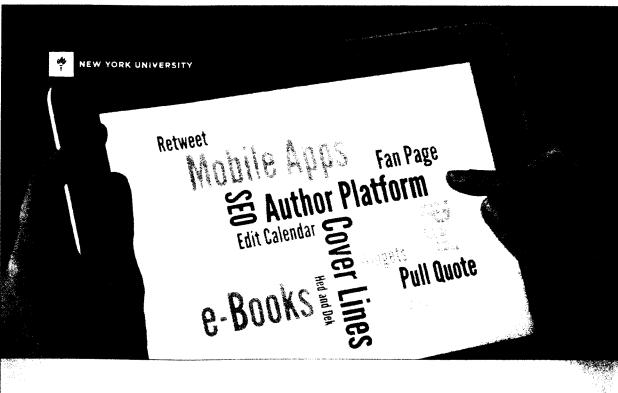
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