

Lions soccer looks to stay fresh at NCAAs

By Mike Still
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The never-ending grind of playing 21 games over the course of 12 weeks takes a toll on the body.

So is the case for the Penn State men's soccer team, the No. 15 seed in the NCAA tournament and the Big Ten tournament runner-up.

That conference tournament held last weekend at Jeffrey Field, in which the Lions played three games in four days, did a number on the team, physically.

"Obviously I'm a little tired,"

senior Andy Parr said. "I think there'd be something wrong with me if I wasn't a little tired right now."

Though Parr and the Nittany Lions fell to Michigan 4-1 in the Big Ten championship game, their 13-7-1 record this season earned them a first-round bye and a home game in the NCAA tournament.

The Lions would have had to play this Thursday had they not earned one of the tournament's top-16 seeds.

Instead, Penn State will play



Warming

the winner of Virginia and Old Dominion at 2 p.m. Sunday, and the players couldn't be more grateful to have this week off from competition.

"At this point in the year we're all in shape, we all know the system we're playing in," co-captain Drew Cost said.

"We just need to have our legs under us and be able to come out with a lot of energy and intensity at home."

All year, coach Bob Warming has been stressing to his players the importance of resting up and taking care of their bodies in the days off from games.

Warming encourages his team to always keep its fluid intake up, eat well and to make the most of

the knowledge the training staff has to offer.

"It's everything," Warming said of recovering properly. "The good news is the guys have practiced it a lot. It's not like all of sudden we're saying, 'OK, make sure you get rest now.' The guys have done a good job of taking care of themselves."

One of the results of taking such good care of themselves throughout the season is that the Lions have very few injuries on the team.

Warming said his players have also been smart enough to avoid potentially dangerous tackles and situations on the field.

One player who has been battling injuries this season is Cost.

Having suffered an injury to his left foot before the Lions' game against Michigan State on Oct. 10, Cost can still feel occasional pain and regravitated the injury against Indiana on Nov. 12.

With ample time off this week, Cost will do the best he can to let his foot heal.

However, he also knows the season is on the line, and injuries can wait until the offseason.

"It's getting better and doesn't really hurt all that much anymore," Cost said.

"But you just go out there for 90 minutes and figure it out later."

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Braga sets record, shows ability in tournament

By Andrew Robinson
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Nobody is quite sure how that ball stayed in.

Maybe it was magic, like Bob Warming suggested, maybe it was a divot in the usually flawless Jeffrey Field grass or maybe it was some freak shifting of the planet's magnetic poles. Whatever it was, the ball that Matheus Braga threaded down the sideline last Thursday night cemented what most people already knew — Penn State's senior midfielder from Brazil is a gifted player.

To Warming, who is in his 33rd year of coaching but just his first with Braga, the senior has already earned a place among the most talented players he has ever coached. Actually, gifted was the wrong word, because Warming sees Braga as something more.

"I'd go beyond the best player on the team, he is a soccer genius in a lot of things he does," Warming said. "He's taught every player on our team something this year and I think that's

also the mark of a great teammate."

With his two assists against Northwestern last Thursday, Braga set Penn State's single-season assist record, then added to his total with a gorgeous cross against Indiana on Friday night. Despite having 15 assists, good for second most in the country, the senior is humble in recognition of his mark.

"It's awesome to come to this university, especially for me coming from Brazil and I didn't know anything about Penn State before coming here or anything about these guys," Braga said Thursday. "It's a great place to be, I love these kids here. I told Coach these are some of the best guys I've played with. Just to leave my name here at the school, it's awesome to be remembered and hopefully someone gets here next year and can break that record."

Braga's Penn State career will last for at least one more game when the Lions take on either Old Dominion or Virginia in the second round of the NCAA Tournament at 2 p.m. Sunday at

Jeffrey Field. Braga, as well as the rest of his teammates, is hoping for a deep tournament run and at least a College Cup appearance.

Just getting to Penn State was a challenge for Braga. Three years ago, he spoke no English and had to pass a proficiency test before he would be allowed to play soccer in the United States. With help of former teammate Diego Correa, Braga was able to pass the test and now speaks English very well despite the occasional mix-up.

Happy-go-lucky by nature, Braga's upbeat attitude is something his roommate, senior co-captain Andres Casais, has come to know quite well.

"He's just a happy person, man. He's the type of person that gets along with everybody," Casais said.

"But at the same time, he's got a really strong personality. He's one of the oldest players on our team and it shows his maturity. He has a really good philosophy on life and I'm really lucky to have him as a friend."

Casais said Braga is a game-

changer and is the type of person who can accomplish any goal he sets his mind to. Casais said without Braga's playmaking, the Lions wouldn't have had the success they did this year and added he was very happy to see Braga set the record last week.

But as easygoing as Braga can be off the field, once he's in a game, the inner Brazilian soccer mentality takes over. While he starts on the left wing, by the time the game's over, the senior has left his trail on the left side, right side, middle, final third and even on the defensive end of the field.

Though his passing, corner-kick ability and crosses have been the catalysts of several Penn State goals this year, Braga's one-on-one skills have been just as important for the Lions. The Brazilian has taken on countless defenders and beaten most of them with one of his deep array of moves.

Add to that the senior's five goals, second on the team behind Hertzog's 17, and Braga is a complete offensive player. While none of his goals have been game-win-

ners, a few, like his equalizing volleys against Michigan State and Ohio State, have swung games in Penn State's favor.

"Matheus is the most important player on our team," Hertzog said Thursday. "He sees the game, plays the ball, scores goals, gets assists, does everything for us. Him breaking that record, it's great. It'll always be here."

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Kelley King, Collegian

Matheus Braga (7) kicks the ball in a loss to No. 1 Akron earlier this season at Jeffrey Field.

Women's volleyball

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hitter Emily Danks, who possesses one of the best serves in the nation.

Danks is ranked second in Division I having .64 aces per set.

While the Buckeyes have some dangerous players, they'll be going up against a Penn State team that senior Alyssa D'Errico said is hitting its stride. D'Errico said the midweek match-up is tough for both teams to prepare for, but the Lions are excited to play again.

"Every match that we head into, we know what's on the line," D'Errico said.

"It's just that aggressive approach and kind of wanting to win every game and wanting to show people around the country, before it gets to the tournament, what this team's all about — and Ohio State's first."

D'Errico said the Lions may feel a little more comfortable with Ohio State because the current Penn State lineup is similar

to the one that played in the Oct. 20 straight-set victory at Columbus.

Despite the fact the Lions swept Ohio State on the road, Rose said tonight's match certainly isn't a given.

"Everybody is a relevant opponent, and you have to take each of them seriously," Rose said. "It doesn't make a difference if you won earlier because one doesn't impact the other."

While previous matches don't hold any importance in tonight's match-up, each remaining conference match could potentially have a big impact on determining the conference champion at the end of the year.

D'Errico said even though Penn State just beat Illinois, both teams are sitting in the same position. One slip up could prove to be very costly.

"Just knowing that we're a couple of games out of third place, let alone one game away from being out of first place, that's tough for any team," D'Errico said. "You have to know that every game, for sure, matters. Every match matters."

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Men's basketball

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out why the team missed so many three-pointers.

Penn State finished the night 1-for-21 from three-point range. The lone basket was actually the first score of the game, from Jackson in the opening minute.

"We were actually on fire in warmups," Brooks said, with a grin.

"I don't know, but since we weren't hitting shots from the perimeter, I guess we made up for it on the defensive end. We tried to just stop them from scoring since we couldn't hit any of the outside jump shots."

That game plan proved to be effective in the Lions' second game of the season.

In the postgame press conference, St. Joe's coach Phil Martelli singled his players out for their lack of offensive production.

Martelli used 11 different players in the first ten minutes alone, as the Hawks (0-2) struggled to get anything going.

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senior

St. Joe's ended the first half shooting a mere 20 percent from the field.

The Hawks finished the game with a 34.5 shooting percentage, but hovered under 30 percent for most of the night.

The last time the Hawks shot under 30 percent in a game was November, 2008 in a loss to then-No. 6 Texas.

"We were abysmal on offense in the first half," Martelli said Tuesday.

"We didn't read the floor properly."

The coach said he wrote only one thing on the board during halftime: "Act like you belong out there."

That's because his players limped into the break.

With the score knotted at 17,

Penn State went on a 13-2 run in the final 4:15 of the first half — highlighted by two dunks from Brooks — which got the crowd involved and gave the Lions a lead they would never relinquish.

Penn State didn't come out of the break nearly as strong, but it didn't matter — to the team's ability to win, at least.

The Lions tallied 16 defensive rebounds in the second half, and for DeChellis, that was good enough.

"I've tried to emphasize to this team that we have to defend and rebound the ball and if we do that, we're going to give ourselves a chance," DeChellis said. "You can't let your offense affect your defense."

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Molinaro

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sophomore Josh Roosa, 8-4, but fell to Lehigh's Joey Napoli, 9-7, in Sunday's home opener.

"He's been wrestling tough," Molinaro said. "He has represented Penn State and the 141-pound weight class well."

While English has taken his starting role and performed well, he said he wants Molinaro to get fully healthy as soon as possible. This weekend, the Nittany Lions will participate in the annual Sprawl and Brawl duals in Binghamton, N.Y.

Penn State will have three consecutive duals against Harvard, West Virginia and No. 24 Rutgers.

While Molinaro said he plans to wrestle this weekend, he knows realistically, he will not be able to go in all three matches.

"I'm training like I will be the starter," English said. "I feel really comfortable, and I have been working really hard."

During practice on Tuesday, Molinaro ran without a noticeable limp, and said as far as his body goes, he will be ready to wrestle this weekend. Sanderson said getting back onto the mat is a two-part process — Molinaro's body will have to be ready to go, and the same will hold true for his mind.

"Molinaro is a powerful wrestler," Sanderson said. "He needs to feel comfortable in situations where he will have to drive from his feet."

Sanderson said he was considering putting Molinaro out on the mat last weekend, but added that he felt Molinaro wasn't quite there. Sanderson has faith English will continue to perform well, no matter how long it takes Molinaro to heal.

"English is a tough competitor," Sanderson said. "The more time he sees on the mat, the better he gets. I think he learned a little about the way he wants to compete against Lehigh."

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Brooks

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out a roar to the Bryce Jordan Center fans, which returned the favor with an even louder cheer after being given a reason to get out of their seats for the first time all game.

Just two minutes later, Brooks took a pass from D.J. Jackson and dunked it right on top of the Hawks' Carl Baptiste, nearly coming down on top of the sophomore forward.

"Some things happened in the last game that kind of carried over, the thing about me and DJ not playing aggressive coming out," Brooks said. "That was something that was different tonight. I was trying to be as aggressive as I could."

That aggression led to career bests throughout the stat sheet for Brooks.

The senior forward finished with a career-high 18 points and tied career highs in rebounds

"[Brooks] is helping our team tremendously. He's taking so much pressure off me. Jeff helped us out and had a big night"

Talor Battle
senior

(nine) and field goals made (seven).

"He's helping our team tremendously. He's taking so much pressure off me," Battle said.

"If you look at last year, if you look at this stat sheet and a game like this, we probably lose by 15-20 points. Jeff helped us out and had a big night."

The most notable stat for Brooks is that all 18 of his points came in the paint. An athletic forward at 6-foot-8 and 215 pounds, Brooks has sometimes relied too much on the perimeter. Against the Hawks, Brooks attacked the basket.

Early in the second quarter, Brooks followed a Jackson miss

with a tip-in on an offensive rebound. Later, Brooks started at the top of the key before driving to the hoop and finishing with a lay-up after a spin move in the paint.

"He's trying to pick his spots. We try to show him tapes, here's where you can drive, here's where you can post up," DeChellis said. "He has improved his perimeter shooting. He's got a nice 15- to 17-foot jump shot."

"He's playing with a lot more confidence, and this is a confidence game. When guys feel good and feel like they're playing well, it's a little easier task."

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Paterno

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will make his third start of the season, Paterno said.

"He had what you expect sometimes with a young quarterback," Paterno said of McGloin's performance. "He got a little careless with the football, made up his mind where he was going to throw the football and threw it right into the hands of the Ohio State kids."

McGloin was a big part of the

reason why the Lions turned in "five really good quarters" dating back to the second quarter of the Northwestern game, Paterno said.

The team did not practice Monday because Paterno sensed the group was tired from the five successful quarters and "didn't look like we had the bounce that we had."

But McGloin's ability to bounce back and move on after throwing two interceptions against Ohio State is something Paterno will be

paying close attention to.

"Where McGloin goes from there is part of the process of maturing as a quarterback," Paterno said.

Unpredictable Hoosiers

While Indiana has yet to win a conference game this season, Paterno isn't taking the team too lightly.

The Hoosiers nearly beat Iowa, yet were blown out by Wisconsin last weekend, and though the Badgers put up 83 points on the

Hoosiers, Paterno said he expects Indiana to be ready Saturday.

He said he's looked at the film from the Hoosiers' game against the Hawkeyes, but after the Badgers went up by 30 or 40 points, he turned the game off.

"I was really impressed that they went toe-to-toe with Iowa," Paterno said.

"They went at it and they were a good looking football team against Iowa."

But Paterno didn't want to answer the question about

whether or not the Badgers ran up the score on Indiana.

"I'm not going to get into the other part of it," he said.

Notes: The status of freshman running back Silas Redd, who was cited for disorderly conduct Monday morning after urinating near the Agricultural Engineering Building, remains unknown. When asked if Redd will play Saturday, Paterno said, "We'll find out."

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