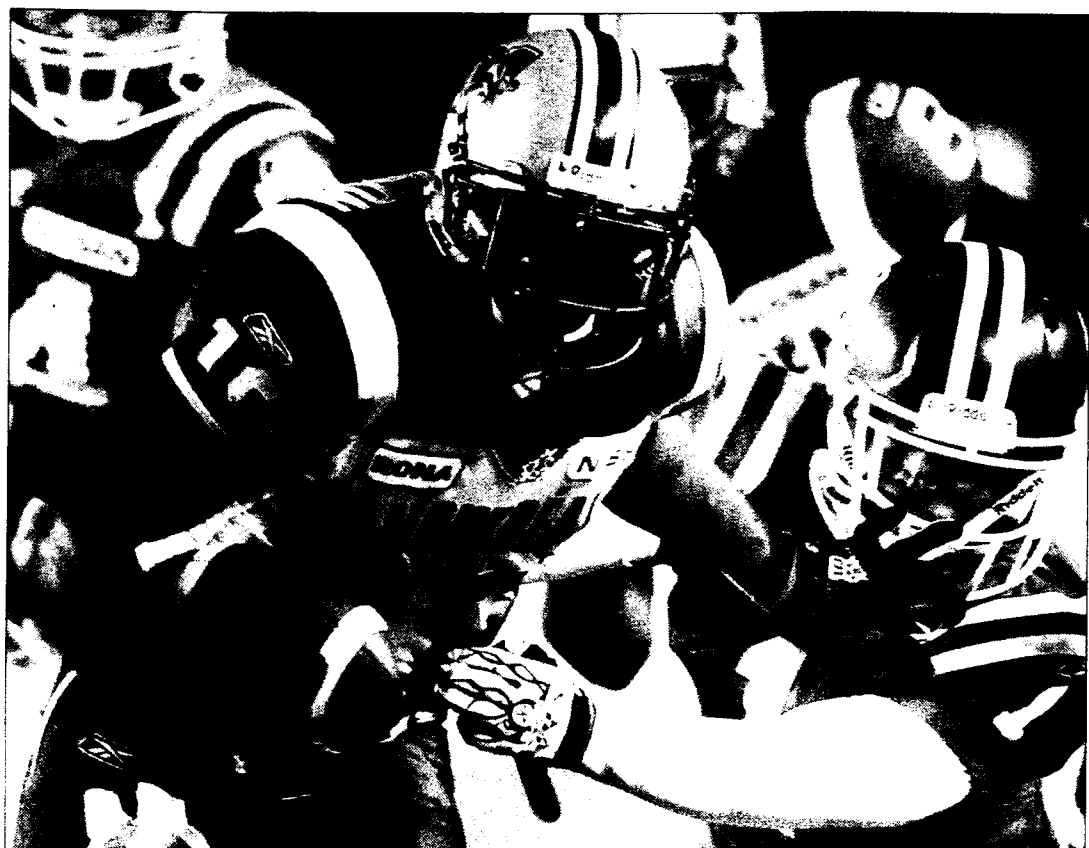


ALOUETTES RÈGNE



Montreal Alouettes slotback **Jamel Richardson** (left) powers through a Saskatchewan Roughriders' defender during the Alouettes 21-18 victory in the 98th Grey Cup in Edmonton, Alberta.

Mink

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asked to reflect on the last five years.

And how it ended like this, a self-inflicting defeat by penalties, missed blocks and errant throws. Correcting that still may not have been enough to knock off Michigan State, who controlled scrimmage and played as if a Big Ten title was on the line.

Penn State, again, played as if a Florida bowl was at stake, an injection of energy absent, the opponent too strong-minded to fold when the Lions flashed signs of life, unlike Temple, Northwestern and Indiana.

A senior class exits having missed meeting expectations by one win, at least according to most media and the most influential man in their Penn State foot-

ball lives.

Settling for ho-hum. So, another Jan. 1 Florida bowl trip is imminent.

BCS geek Jerry Palm pegged Penn State landing in the Outback Bowl at 75 percent after Iowa's upset loss to Minnesota on Saturday. It's there or the Gator Bowl, the site of Paterno's first bowl game, a 17-17 tie with Florida State on Dec. 30, 1967.

"We're gonna try like hell to get that eighth win," offensive tackle Chima Okoli said. "Seven's good and everything, but we really want that eighth win. And if we were at 10 wins, we'd want the 11th win."

Does it matter? Fifteen practices are available to undress the outgoing seniors and give their powder blue and navy blue jerseys — designated for starters — to future contribu-

tive coordinator Tom Bradley, who knows Paterno's bowl blueprint better than most, is prepping for another December of going back to fundamentals, technique and tackling.

Then, it's one final moment to stamp the season a success before hibernating in Lasch for a long winter, muscling up and game-planning for Alabama.

"I'm a mirror guy. I'm not a window guy," Bradley said, acknowledging the coaching staff has to take a look at itself when evaluating the program's progress.

But who's staring back. Scrap? Thirty-two years and the man wearing those coke-bottled glasses hasn't even flinched.

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Last word

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Stupar also forced Spartans running back Edwin Baker to fumble in the fourth quarter.

Day to forget

Offense: QB Matt McGloin
McGloin only completed 53 percent of his passes and threw an interception that almost halted the Lions' comeback attempt. McGloin was inaccurate on throws and threw several dropped passes into the hands of opposing defenders.

Defense: CB Chaz Powell
Michigan State wide receivers

beat Powell on several passes, and the redshirt junior recorded only one tackle, but the Penn State defense played poorly as a whole and allowed 331 yards of total offense.

Did you notice?

Empty seats lined the upper portions of the student section ... Mauti played in the fourth quarter and tallied two tackles ... "Silas' Santas" made its appearance in Santa hats in honor of freshman tailback Silas Redd.

Extra point

Penn State had eight penalties Saturday for 67 yards. The Lions' eight penalties were the most in

a game this season. "We had a lot of penalties today that were uncharacteristic, that were big," safety Drew Astorino said.

"We missed some calls, and we missed some assignments. We just have to sharpen up a little bit."

Quotable

Joe Paterno on his departing seniors: "I'm going to miss some, some I'm not obviously. There are a couple guys thinking about maybe trying to get into the NFL. I'm not sure whether they should, or they shouldn't."

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Record

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thought we would probably be better than we were on that stage."

Royster said he thought so, too. Although he won't be a part of future teams, he said those experiences against the nation's best teams will help the team in the coming years.

"Those other teams we played were good, and we just didn't bring it those days," Royster said. "It's tough to even think about now. But, like I said, this team's got a lot of promise in the future. I'm looking forward to coming back and watching."

Coming into the season, many had the Lions projected at 8-4, and almost no one had them finishing

better than 9-3 with three very difficult road games. Ultimately, the Big Ten exceeded expectations as three teams finished in the BCS top 10. The Lions also suffered some significant losses on defense and a mid-season quarterback change.

Despite some adversity and the tough schedule, at Saturday's post-game press conference, Joe Paterno said he felt the team performed up to par this season. He then paused to add the phrase, "Most of the time."

"At the end of the year we became a good team," Paterno said. "I thought the young kids had some chances to be in the tough games. There were some games that they were behind and they were able to come back."

A reserved Royster reiterated just how close the Lions were to breaking

through. Ultimately, however, they have a seven in the win column and a five in the loss column with just a bowl game left to play. That's what he said would and should define them. But he said he feels with the Lions' youth, they'll be able to prove themselves in whatever bowl game they are selected for. Then, he expects to see that carry over into his time as a Penn State alum.

"It's tough," Royster said. "You can't put it on anything other than those other teams we played were good, and we just didn't bring it those days. It's tough to even think about now. But like I said this team's got a lot of promise in the future, and I'm looking forward to coming back and watching."

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Caps top 'Canes

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON -- Semyon Varlamov made 26 saves and stopped all three Carolina attempts in the shootout to lead the Washington Capitals to a 3-2 win over the Hurricanes on Sunday.

Alex Ovechkin converted his shootout attempt to give the edge to the Capitals.

Carolina's Eric Staal forced overtime with 3 seconds left in regulation, scoring his 11th goal of the season. Semin has scored 18 goals this season and four in two games after his hat trick against Tampa on Friday.

Varlamov won his third straight start after missing more than a month because of a groin injury.

The Capitals have won three straight overall and all three matchups against Carolina this season. The previous two meet-

ings were in Carolina, including a 3-2 Washington victory on Wednesday.

The Capitals' first goal came seven minutes into the game, when Eric Fehr won the puck in the right corner behind the goal and passed to Marcus Johansson, who was all alone on the right side in front of the net. Johansson brought the puck across the crease and slipped it past Carolina goalie Cam Ward for the score.

Semin added another goal when Ovechkin brought the puck down the left side and made a move to get around Carolina defenseman Tim Gleason. From there, Ovechkin pushed a backhand pass to the right side for Semin, who banged it home to give Washington a 2-0 lead late in the first period.

Washington finished the first period with a 17-7 edge in shots, but Carolina answered in the first minute of the second period on Cole's goal.

Staal brought the puck behind the net, and with Capitals defenseman John Erskine skating with him, Staal turned and dumped to Cole, who tapped in the goal from the right side of the crease 50 seconds into the second period.

Notes: It was the 1,000th NHL game coached by Carolina's Paul Maurice.

Maurice is the 19th coach to reach the milestone, and the youngest at 43 years and 302 days old.

Seniors

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but the fact that we fought I'm always going to remember that," Ogbu said. "I'm going to say, 'Yeah we lost that game, but we gave one hell of a fourth quarter.'"

While several seniors chalked the loss up to simply running out of time, the Lions once again couldn't turn in a 60-minute performance.

The team concluded the regular season with many of the same mistakes that both veteran and first-year players have made all season. Missed tackles, blown assignments, penalties and a slow start all played into the seniors' belief the team once again only showed flashes of its potential.

The same Penn State team that made the game competitive at the end couldn't settle down during the first three quarters, and not being able to pull out the win for the seniors is just added disappointment, sophomore Jordan Hill said.

"There's always going to be a sour feeling when you lose when it's your last time on the field," Hill said. "You always want to have that memory of just going out on top."

While Ogbu said he did catch a glimpse of the Spartans' postgame celebration, just the sight of the opponent celebrating on his field was more than enough to anger senior Stefan Wisniewski.

Wisniewski said the confetti "was about all I had to see" before stepping off the field one last time, but he was thankful the team at least stayed in the game until the end.

Redshirt sophomore Pete Massaro said the seniors thanked the rest of the team for at least trying to turn the game around after falling behind early, and several players said the loss should serve as another lesson to help both the young and older players prepare for the bowl game.

While the bowl game will be the finality of a season Ogbu said he would've never predicted to have gone this way, he stands by his belief the team is better than its regular season record indicates.

"As a senior leader you always think you have guys that can go out and fight the world," Ogbu said.

"Guys did well, we didn't quit and I think that's what we can take from this."

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