

LIONS WRAP-UP

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Year reflects attitude

By Nate Mink

THE captain, company man, philanthropist snapped, a scene never seen out in the open, for all to see.



MY OPINION

Moments earlier, Brett Brackett couldn't save a low snap on a meaningless extra point, his gloved fingers unable to find the laces in between tucking the ball and running right, then retreating left and overshooting Joe Suhey in the end zone.

He unsnapped the buckles on his white helmet, ripped it off, smacked it on his knee walking back to the sideline. It was more emotion anyone outside of the Lasch Building had seen from the generic voice of the team.

"Where's your head at?" red-cheeked Mike McQueary barked in Brackett's face.

Perhaps the reality of mediocrity set in. Seven wins, regardless of an ensuing inside kick with 56 seconds left in another forgettable Penn State football season on the same day a rival school wrapped up its sixth-straight conference crown.

Perhaps he was thinking of letting another opportunity to knock off a top-10 opponent slip away. Or that this team never had any business beating the schedule's best.

His coach didn't seem to think so, the blunt admission 2010 was an eight-win team at best was probably more candid than contempt.

Not after enduring a midseason quarterback swap. Or a reshuffled offensive line. Or a litany of injuries that decimated the defensive front seven, the cornerstone of the team for years.

Knowing leadership was scarce when the two faces of the offense are bypassed for captaincy.

Perhaps it was the simple realization Penn State would not win its home finale for the first time since a 31-27 loss to Michigan 11 years ago, a realization Brackett's glossy, moist eyes no doubt revisited when

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Chloe Elmer/Collegian

Poor tackling has been a year-long issue for the Penn State defense, one of the team's most disappointing units in a mediocre season.

Record disappoints team

By Andrew J. Cassavell
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

As sour as Saturday's defeat tasted for quarterbacks coach Jay Paterno, he said it was only fitting.

In a season defined by losses to highly ranked teams, the Nittany Lions came up six points short against No. 8 Michigan State, when they ran out of time despite a frantic, fourth-quarter comeback attempt.

"It's almost symptomatic of our season in that we have not played that full 60-minute game," Paterno said. "That's kind of how we played [Saturday]."

Following losses to Alabama, Ohio State and Iowa, each of which was ranked in the top 10 at the time, the players said they felt the results weren't indicative of the team's progress. The post-game reaction after Michigan State was no different.

"They're 11-1, and we played

right with them," senior running back Evan Royster said. "So it's kind of tough to finish with a 7-5 season. It hurts, but it shows that we're really close."

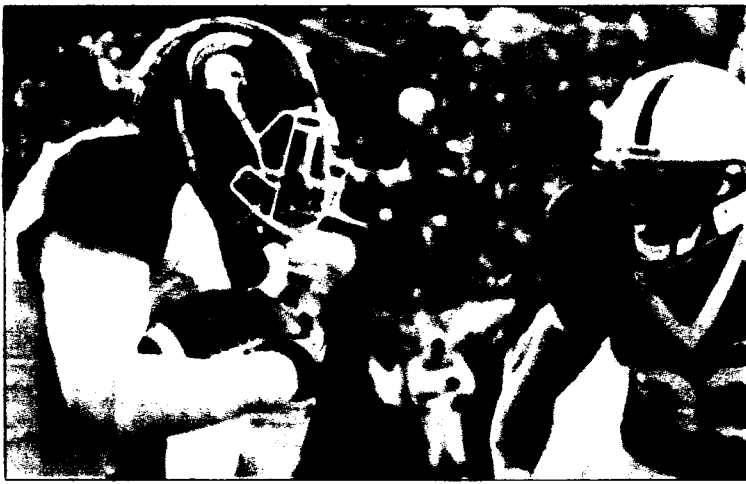
Close, but ultimately, the Lions are left in the second-tier of the Big Ten, three conference losses worse than a trio of teams — including the Spartans — that shared the title.

Despite the players' sentiments that they could have been much better, Joe Paterno said he

felt the team's record wasn't far from what he expected in August. He said Penn State notched one fewer win than his own expectation, citing Illinois as the team the Lions should've beaten but didn't.

"Going into the season, to be very frank with you, I thought we had a shot at being [8-4]," Paterno said. "We had some tough games that included three tough teams on the road. I

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Kelley King/Collegian

Penn State lost on Senior Day for the first time in 11 years.

Seniors end on low note

By Audrey Snyder
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

There was no easy way for the 18 Penn State seniors to comprehend walking out of Beaver Stadium one last time.

With heads hanging down as the Nittany Lions stepped off the field without giving the victory bell one final ring, the reality of the situation started to sink in.

As the seniors thought about the 19 fourth-quarter points they scored, the pain of the loss to Michigan State, which resulted in

the Lions finishing the season with a 7-5 record, became a tough pill to swallow.

"It was pretty unreal," senior Graham Zug said of the way his final home game ended. "Words can't even describe what it was. It is just a little disappointing that we lost, but at the same time there have been so many ups and great memories that it's hard to look past those."

Though the first three quarters of the game will mainly be remembered by the seniors for all the wrong reasons — six

penalties and an 18-point deficit told the story — the near comeback the Lions staged is what the seniors pointed to as the silver lining in the loss.

The fight the defense showed to not give up after surrendering 108 rushing yards after three quarters is something co-captain Ollie Ogbu said speaks to the character of the team.

"If we would've got our butts kicked the whole game I probably would've been a lot more down on myself and the whole team,"

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Signature win still eludes Lions

By Brendan Monahan
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Four games against ranked teams equaled four losses.

Penn State fell just short in its comeback against Michigan State on Saturday and failed to tally a signature win, this time at home.

"We didn't give our 'A' game until the last 10 minutes of the game," senior co-captain Ollie Ogbu said. "For us to beat a team like that, we have to be consistent all four quarters, and that's what we've been preaching all year. We just couldn't pull it out."

The Nittany Lions' last shot to beat a ranked opponent could come in their upcoming bowl game. Penn State's season has largely been gauged in its inability to get a signature win this season.

Sophomore wide receiver Justin Brown said Penn State can match up athletically with

any team, but an early deficit against the Spartans translated into a hole too big to climb out of.

Penn State lost three of its games against ranked opponents by at least 21 points before the six-point loss against Michigan State. The Lions' 7-5 record is a far cry from expectations prior to the season.

Day to remember

Offense: WR Derek Moyer The redshirt junior was second in Penn State receiving to Justin Brown's 106 yards, but Moyer was instrumental in the Lions' comeback that fell just short. After quarterback Matt McGloin's interception in the end zone, Moyer stripped Michigan State safety Trenton Robinson at the 4-yard line. On the next play, Moyer made a catch on the ground that McGloin threw behind him.

Defense: LB Nate Stupar Stupar and middle linebacker



Chloe Elmer/Collegian

McGloin couldn't post a big win.

Chris Colasanti tied for the team lead in tackles with 10. The redshirt junior took on a bigger role for the second week in the absence of Mike Mauti, who sat the first three quarters with a lingering shoulder injury.

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Report Card: Michigan State 28, PSU 22

POSITION	COMMENTS
Quarterbacks C-	McGloin completed 23-of-43 passes for 312 yards and one INT. Several misfires and many more near interceptions were critical.
Running backs B-	The Lions ran the ball just 21 times because they were playing catch up. Royster's 14 carries for 85 yards led the way.
Wide receivers A-	Justin Brown, Derek Moyer and Graham Zug each had at least five catches. Moyer's play in the fourth quarter kept the game close.
Offensive line B-	Klopacz was able to play, thus avoiding any major position changes. The line gave up one sack, but McGloin did drop back an awful lot.
Defensive line D-	Torched by running back Edwin Baker for 118 yards and once again not recording a sack hurt the Lions' chances.
Linebackers C-	The line can't entirely be blamed for giving up 163 rushing yards and not getting to Cousins. Missed tackles once again hindered the unit.
Secondary D+	Quarterback Kirk Cousins completed 17-of-22 passes and missed assignments and penalties played a part.
Special teams C+	Field position is huge and Wagner didn't record a touchback and Butterworth averaged 34.5 yards per punt.