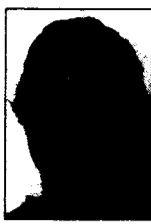


Icers face turning point in 2010 season

By Anthony Barton

ON paper, the Penn State Icers look like a top ACHA Division I club team.

What if I told you they have skilled veteran forwards, aggressive defensemen and solid depth at goaltender? What if I also told you the Icers are now 11-4 on the season, outscoring their opponents by 44 goals, and they score 5.6 goals a game, while allowing a measly 2.6? You would probably feel pretty confident about the direction of the team.



MY OPINION

Then with what seems to be such a positive start to the season, why is there so much concern? Why are team leaders like assistant captain Tim O'Brien saying the team is struggling to find their identity?

The answer is simple. The stats don't tell the whole story.

The Icers have faced numerous cupcake opponents including West Chester, Drexel and most recently Towson that have inflated these numbers leading casual fans to believe the team is on the right track.

Alas, here are some stats that don't lie: Against ranked opponents, the Icers stand a mediocre 4-4. They have scored 23 goals while surrendering 26.

In the ESCHL, a league the Icers have historically dominated,

they are currently fourth at 2-2. They trail No. 4 Delaware, No. 8 Rhode Island and No. 20 Robert Morris (Pa.). They dominated the league's historical doormat West Chester, and were swept by Rhode Island. In two games against the Rams, the Icers managed just one goal by junior captain Marek Polidor.

They are currently ranked No. 11 in the ACHA national rankings, the first time the Icers have been outside the top 10 in more than a decade.

The reasons for the drop off range from injuries and inconsistent goalie play, to the inability to play a full 60 minutes.

But there is hope.

The Icers are getting healthier. Forwards Nick Seravalli and Dominic Morrone are recovered

and have played in recent weeks. While somewhat effective, the more time they have to acclimate themselves with their linemates and get back into hockey shape, the better chance the team has of reaching its potential. On top of that, sophomore forward George Saad, who scored five goals in the Icers' first five games, should be back from injury soon.

This brings the Icers to this weekend's matchup against Delaware. The Blue Hens don't have a regulation loss on the season at 16-0-1, and went 1-0-1 against the same Rhode Island team that swept the Icers a few weeks ago.

What the series brings is two home games against the No. 4 team in the ACHA on Penn State's home ice. If there was a

time to make a statement, this is it.

Two wins or even a split should not only put Penn State back in the top 10, but would give the Icers the confidence to know they can contend with the other elite ACHA teams.

Getting swept, however, would leave the team struggling for answers and at jeopardy of missing the playoffs.

Looking impressive on paper won't win the Icers anything, and if they want to be considered contenders, this weekend's series against the Blue Hens is where it starts.

Anthony Barton is a senior majoring in journalism and is a Collegian Icers reporter. His e-mail address is: acb5152@psu.edu.

Johnson, Finnegan fined \$25,000, no suspensions

By Barry Wilner
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — The NFL fined Houston's Andre Johnson and Tennessee's Cortland Finnegan \$25,000 each Monday for their fight in Sunday's game, but is not suspending them.

The Texans' star wide receiver and Titans cornerback slugged it out in the fourth quarter of the Texans' 20-0 victory.

Finnegan set off the brawl by jabbing at Johnson's neck and face mask at the line of scrimmage. Johnson ripped off Finnegan's helmet and landed at least two punches to Finnegan's head and neck. The two spun each other, and Finnegan tore off Johnson's helmet before players and referees intervened.

Johnson apologized after the game, and Finnegan has not spoken about the incident.

"I would like to apologize to the organization, our owner, and my teammates," Johnson said. "What happened out there today was not me. I just lost my cool and I wish that I could take back what happened, but I can't. It's over and done with now."

This is the second time they scuffled. Last season, Johnson was fined \$7,500 for taking Finnegan to the ground by the face mask.

The Texans (5-6) play at Philadelphia on Thursday, and were concerned that their Pro Bowl receiver may be suspended. Johnson was expected to be available to comment after an evening practice.

The Titans (5-6) host Jacksonville on Sunday.

Finnegan was fined for personal fouls in three consecutive

games earlier this season and was warned by the league after the third incident to watch his behavior after the whistle.

Titans coach Jeff Fisher, co-chairman of the NFL's competition committee, spoke with league officials earlier Monday. Fisher said in his opinion Finnegan didn't throw a punch, but did get Johnson's face mask.

"I have very strong opinions about the fact I think he should not be suspended," Fisher said of Finnegan.

"As far as what the league decides to do, that's a league decision."

"It's an unfortunate thing that happens. You've got two very talented, good football players competing, and it's just very unfortunate. It's not good for our game and I'm just disappointed that type of thing happens on the playing field."



Andre Johnson (80) and Cortland Finnegan (31) are separated after a fight Sunday. Both players were ejected from the game and later fined.

Struggling Miami Heat delighting many basketball fans

By Tim Reynolds
ASSOCIATED PRESS

MIAMI — When it comes to the Miami Heat, it almost seems like there's no choice between loving them or hating them.

Most hate them.

Booing, sure, that's a given. Happens in every arena in the league, even sometimes their own. Hawks of "Beat The Heat" T-shirts in Orlando were busy when Miami visited there last week. In Philadelphia, Dwyane Wade got jeered more loudly than ever, getting no love in the city where it's allegedly brotherly.

And the only time LeBron James draws applause on the road is when something goes wrong.

Which, to the delight of many in the NBA, is happening far more often than anyone expected.

"I want them to lose all their games," Dallas owner Mark Cuban said.

Hey, they're coming closer to that than many ever imagined.

A team that expected magnifi-

cence is getting mediocrity instead - a 9-8 record entering Monday's game against Washington. The Heat began the day in sixth place in the Eastern Conference, a half-game ahead of the New York Knicks. If the Heat had that record in the West, they'd be barely hanging on to the final playoff spot.

And this week, James goes back to Cleveland for the first time as a visiting player. For as harshly as the Heat have been received until now, Thursday's trip to a city scorned by its longtime hero might prove downright venomous.

"If you lose, no one's going to be happy, nor should they be," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said.

Well, actually, plenty of people are happy about it - the rest of the NBA, for starters.

From the moment that James made his decision on July 8 to play for Miami, the Heat knew this was coming. They knew they would carry the biggest bulls-eye in the NBA, even though the Los Angeles Lakers are the defending champions and the Boston Celtics

are the reigning kings of the Eastern Conference.

"As an opposing player, you're going to have those boos, no matter what," James said. "I had those boos when I was a Cleveland Cavalier and I'm having them again as a Heat."

Taking hits from across the league, that's one thing.

Taking hits from one another, that's the latest issue.

James bumped Spoelstra during a time-out in Dallas on Saturday night, a shoulder-to-shoulder bump that may have been unintentional, may have been out of frustration, may have been intended to send a message. James reached back instantly, almost as if making an apology, but no matter - by the time that quarter was over, the play was already on YouTube and the Twitterverse was buzzing that the two-time NBA MVP just hit his coach.

"A perfect case of overspeculation on this team," Spoelstra said.

Yes, but to that fire, the Heat added plenty of fuel.

Spoelstra said he will not change his coaching style - "I'm going to demand, push, prod. A lot of times players don't know what is needed for a team to break through," he said - and, at least publicly, none of the Heat players have demanded change.

But tensions are unquestionably high.

On Monday, Wade - who has had a close relationship with Spoelstra - said he wouldn't refer to him as "my guy" but rather "our coach."

"When you go through stretches where you're not playing up to your capability, there's always something wrong," Wade said.

Wade said he didn't see the James-Spoelstra interaction during that time-out, which came during a horrific start to the second half by Miami.

There's been no shortage of bumps in the road, though, for the Heat this season.

Dealing with it when visiting 28 different clubs will likely be much easier than dealing with what awaits in Cleveland on Thursday.

The Cavaliers and the NBA are

taking extra security measures. The Heat are involved in some of those decisions, and James - who said he was leaving in a critically acclaimed hourlong special on television from Greenwich, Ct. - acknowledged last week that it might not be the best idea for family and friends to attend the game.

"If James had made the announcement of his decision in Cleveland and explained his reasons for leaving, fans still wouldn't have liked it, but they would have accepted it better," said Dr. Jack Ramsay, the former Heat broadcaster who will call Thursday's game in Cleveland for ESPN Radio.

Hating the Heat could take on a whole new meaning.

"We'll deal with that when we get there," Spoelstra said. "Right now, we have enough to think about."

AP Sports Writers Teresa M. Walker and Associated Press Writer Adrian Sainz in Memphis, along with AP Sports Writer Stephen Hawkins in Dallas, contributed to this report.

Football

From Page 8.

a young team, one that featured only 11 seniors.

Brown said the coaches and players know how good they were, but several breaks and mistakes here and there meant results going the opponents' way.

For as much as the Lions possessed potential, they didn't tap into all of it and fell short against signature teams. But that's not to say Penn State didn't crunch down and play better in spurts against top-tier opponents later in the season.

Penn State led Ohio State at halftime before the Buckeyes scored 35 unanswered points in the final two quarters. In a reversed role, the Lions came back against Michigan State two weeks later and outscored the Spartans by 12 points in the fourth quarter.

The Lions haven't been able to put

together a full four quarters all season, which is a dilemma that keeps popping up in interviews with players. Progression on the field is an aside to improvement in demeanor, a downtrodden area for the team after the Illinois loss.

Redshirt sophomore defensive end Pete Massaro said the Lions' 7-5 record is a good mark considering how Penn State's morale took a dip after the Illinois game. The team used the bye week as a way to regroup.

With all that happened this season, Massaro said the team's character has improved for the bowl game and going into next season. Redshirt junior linebacker Nate Stupar said winning comes down to making or missing plays. Inexperience is no longer an excuse.

"We're not young anymore," Stupar said. "We're old guys who know what's going on."

To e-mail reporter: bjm5146@psu.edu

Loss

From Page 8.

D'Errico said the loss was tough because the Lions lost three deuce games in a row. By allowing the Gophers to fend off a match point in the third set and gain some momentum, she said the Minnesota crowd of 4,268 became a factor.

Penn State won't have to worry about any opposing crowds. As the No. 4 overall seed in the tournament, the Lions can host each match at Rec Hall until the Final Four in Kansas City, Mo.

Though the Lions ended their regular season with a loss, D'Errico said they want to enter the tournament with the right mindset. Senior middle hitter Arielle Wilson said the Minnesota match reinforced the idea that Penn State has to focus on controlling what it can control.

The Lions have a week of practice to recover from the lengthy match that last-

"Losing this game wasn't a good thing, but it was a learning experience."

Fatima Balza
senior

ed nearly two and a half hours.

Senior Fatima Balza said the loss was not only tough physically, but mentally as well.

Though she and the Lions hate to lose any match, Balza said it was good the loss occurred when it did.

"I think it was good for us it happened [Saturday] so we learn from it," Balza said.

"Because from now on, if we lose any other match we're out, and the season is over. So losing this game wasn't a good thing, but it was a learning experience."

To e-mail reporter: rm15138@psu.edu

Men's soccer

From Page 8.

see that, but he's a phenomenal coach. Very knowledgeable, really loves his players and we reciprocate that feeling."

Forgue and the rest of the team's underclassmen will have the chance to take the team even further in the postseason in the coming years.

Ultimately, they are hoping to reach their goal of bringing a national championship to Happy Valley.

But the team's five seniors will move on from their Penn State careers after the end of the season.

Having helped the team improve from a losing record in 2007 to a Sweet 16 appearance this season, the seniors are satisfied with the legacy they're leaving behind.

"I'm very proud of the season that we had," redshirt senior Andy Parr said. "I think that we could've gone a little further,

but we're definitely pleased with getting to that Sweet 16 for the first time since 2005, and that's something that the group of seniors are proud of, that we were able to bring the program back after a couple losing seasons."

With two straight NCAA tournament appearances, the Lions have set the example for future players and recruits.

Casais and the Lions are sure the precedent set by this year's squad will have a lasting effect on the program in years to come.

"I think we've created an expectation for our team that hasn't been there for awhile," Casais said.

"Now we're expected to make the tournament, we're expected to do great things and hopefully the next generations that come through are going to look at where the program is at and try to make things better and go even further."

To e-mail reporter: mas5860@psu.edu

Men's basketball

From Page 8.

"This game is the most important game of the year because it's the next one," senior co-captain D.J. Jackson said. "We can't look past anybody."

The Lions do, though, recognize the significance of the game. Sophomore guard Tim Frazier said a strong game could be a statement that Penn State is "legit."

The Lions have a 5-1 record so far through non-conference play, but none of the wins have come against teams from a true power conference like the ACC. The five wins are against teams with a combined 15-11 record. The lone loss comes from Penn State's first real test of the season, a road game against Mississippi.

"If you don't get up for games like

[Maryland], you shouldn't be playing this game," senior co-captain Talor Battle said.

Wednesday's game also has some added significance for some Lions including Maryland natives Cammeron Woodyard and Johnathan Graham, and also freshman guard Taran Buie.

When Buie went through the recruiting process, he dwindled his choices down to a top 5. On that short list was Maryland.

Though he chose the Lions, Buie said he became close with the Terrapins' coaching staff and some of their players. But in the days leading up to Wednesday's game between the two teams, Buie hasn't gotten in touch with any of them.

"Not leading up to the game," Buie said. "It's kind of a friendship you don't really lose, because they spent a lot of time recruiting me. But they're doing their own thing, I'm at Penn State. And we both know it's a big game."

To e-mail reporter: exk5049@psu.edu