

Young roster no longer valid excuse for Paterno, Lions

By Audrey Snyder

WHEN Joe Paterno first met with the media back in the spring, he made one thing clear: Freshmen didn't exist.

The 83-year-old coach peered through his thick glasses and became agitated when asked about the role the freshman class would play in the 2010 season. Yet Paterno stuck by his belief young players should be brought along slowly and given time to develop. "You bring the young guys along and you try to encourage them," Paterno said in April.



MY OPINION

"Take a look at what potential they have and take a look at if they are in the right spots and the whole bit. Basically, you better get the guys who have been in some tough football games ready to play."

Fast forward eight months, and it's no secret injuries and performance issues forced Paterno to alter his original game plan. Forget about easing the freshmen and sophomores into the program. Rather, suit them up at key positions for road games at Alabama, Iowa and Ohio State and hope for the best.

And there's no denying Paterno had little choice but to have 15 freshmen and sophomores start during the course of the season.

However, the coach — who has been known to not waver his

stance over the years — was quick to point to the team's inexperience as a reason why the Nittany Lions' 7-5 record was just about on par with his preseason prediction. But the excuse the team was "young" was simply used too much and became another term for underachievement. "How long are we going to be the young team?" right tackle Chima Okoli said. "How long? It's the last game of the season, and football makes you grow up. It's not really an excuse anymore."

Though Okoli's coaches continue to harp on the fact there is a lot of "young talent" on the team, it's up to the coaches to do something about it.

Paterno said the struggles from this season — which he attributed to injuries and youth

— are one of the reasons why he'd like to continue coaching and is optimistic about next season.

But once again, it falls on the coaching staff to put together a plan that will ensure this young team overcomes the reoccurring issues of poor tackling, a nearly non-existent pass rush and the development of at least one of the quarterbacks.

Not to mention the staff will have to plan for the overhaul the offensive line will go through after the bowl game, as well as bringing along freshman running back Silas Redd, so he can fill in after the graduation of Evan Royster, the program's leading rusher.

Since the Lions have yet to attract the type of elite talent for the incoming recruiting class, these freshman and sophomore

classes better get used to carrying more than their fair share of the load. Perhaps next year's team will learn from the inevitable growing pains so many believed were to blame for this season and will be able to compete for an entire 60 minutes.

However, if the team does struggle, the finger will have to be pointed at someone other than the 19- and 20-year-old athletes.

"We have a good, young group of guys," defensive coordinator Tom Bradley said. "We just have to figure out a way to get them better."

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HOROSCOPES

By Jacqueline Bigar

HAPPY BIRTHDAY for Wednesday, Dec. 1, 2010. This year, you make waves wherever you go. Enjoy the spotlight, though understand that it comes with responsibilities. Admirers tend to be very observant. Pressure builds financially. You might want to cut back, re-examine your budget or perhaps consider a second job. You can create exactly what you want. If you are single, you'll have multiple suitors. Choosing the one who will help create the type of relationship you desire also will be important. If you are attached, look to socializing more or taking up a key cause together. Discussions about money might be a bit too animated. Count on LIBRA.

The Stars Show the Kind of Day You'll Have:
5-Dynamic; 4-Positive; 3-Average; 2-So-so; 1-Difficult

ARIES (March 21-April 19) All is not what it seems, as you wake up in perhaps an overly serious mood. Communication flourishes with a boss or someone you look up to. You might not need to agree, but listen well. Your instincts serve you well. Tonight: Where people are. **TAURUS** (April 20-May 20) Focus on a matter that is tripping you up. Touch base with a respected, intellectual friend or associate. Consider ways of moving this boulder from your life once and for all. There just might be a way. Tonight: Easy does it. **GEMINI** (May 21-June 20) Where others hit a roadblock, you move right around it. Tap into your ingenuity more frequently. You'll get acknowledgment for all that you shoulder, but perhaps you might want to delegate or find some other way to lighten the load. Tonight: Take a midweek break. **CANCER** (June 21-July 22) Resist pushing yourself. Know that sometimes taking time off is quite necessary for your health and well-being. News creates yet another perspective, though you still don't have all the facts. Tonight: Close to home. **LEO** (July 23-Aug. 22) You can keep conversations steady and not let emotions plunge to the "dark side" with others carrying on. Note a tendency to look at matters far differently from in recent years. How much do you feel that this attitude is coloring your life? Tonight: A dear partner or friend knows how to entice you into joining him or her. **VIRGO** (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) Be more tuned in to what is needed. Trust that you have what it takes if you slow down some and connect on a more meaningful basis. An argument or a situation in your personal or domestic life could take a lot of time. Tonight: Treat yourself on the way home. **LIBRA** (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) Though still serious, you draw many into your camp. Interruptions seem like the name of the game. Be upbeat in how you proceed with another person. Keep asking questions. There is a meeting point. Tonight: As you like. **SCORPIO** (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) Resist trying to get control of a situation, as uncomfortable as it might be. Realize what happens when you push too hard to get your way. Many people will distance themselves from you. Use your intuition with a money matter. Tonight: It is as you like it. **SAGITTARIUS** (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) How you see a situation and what you do with it could change. Others have firm ideas about what is workable, which you may or may not agree with. Look at reorganizing your finances. Tonight: Only, while people are. **CAPRICORN** (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) Reach out for new information. The unexpected twists established plans to the wind. I stress your willingness to find the path through today's maze. You could be delighted in the end. Tonight: A must appearance that could go late. **AQUARIUS** (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) Others seek out your perspective. The wise Aquarian will let others know that your view is nothing more than that — your view. Trust in your ability to let go of a barrier or relationship issue that might be causing problems. Tonight: Let your imagination lead; you follow. **PISCES** (Feb. 19-March 20) Direct dealings continue to be the only path that works. How you handle someone and the choices you make could cause a change in the dialogue. Go with an associate's or partner's suggestion. Tonight: Don't delay making a call. **BORN TODAY** Comedian, actor Richard Pryor (1940), actress, singer Bette Midler (1945), singer Lou Rawls (1933).

Jacqueline Bigar is on the Internet at www.jacquelinebigar.com
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