

Defense looking to put rough season in the past

By Audrey Snyder
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

2010 by the numbers

- 1975: rushing yards surrendered, most since 2003
- 271: points given up by Penn State, most since 2001
- 19: passing touchdowns surrendered, most in the last decade
- 16: sacks recorded, fewest amount in the last decade
- 12: rushing touchdowns surrendered, most since 2008

Heading into the 2010 season, Tom Bradley expected the Penn State defense to find a way to uphold the legacy of being one of the team's strongest assets.

FOOTBALL

The staple of Bradley's dominant defenses has come in the form of pass rushing legends such as Courtney Brown, Michael Haynes, Tamba Hali, Maurice Evans and Aaron Maybin.

Add in the dominant linebackers like LaVar Arrington, Dan Connor and Paul Posluszny, and Bradley has always had the luxury of working with marquee players.

However, this season was the exception.

With Jared Odrick, Sean Lee, Josh Hull and NaVorro Bowman being the latest players from Bradley's defense to head to the NFL, the defensive coordinator expected there to be growing pains for his defense in 2010 — but certainly not this many.

"There is no magic defense," Bradley said about the future of his unit. "I tell the guys all the time, I say, 'Hey, a great defense played by the wrong guys isn't better than the wrong defense played by the right guys.' So we all have to look at ourselves and go from there."

The Lions will have a lot to look at, as the defense finished one of

its worst seasons statistically in the past decade. With 19 touchdown passes surrendered — the highest total during Bradley's 11-year tenure as defensive coordinator — coupled with a pass rush that recorded just 16 sacks, the defense fought an uphill battle all season.

For a unit that's averaged 29 sacks per season since Bradley took over in 2000, the defense couldn't find a way to increase its production.

As injuries mounted and key players like defensive end Jack Crawford and safety Nick Sukay missed extended periods of time, Bradley was forced to throw some of his younger players into the mix.

As inexperienced players like Pete Massaro, Jordan Hill, Sean Stanley and Malcolm Willis became mainstays for the defense, moving past the unit's blown coverages and missed tackles became a reoccurring issue.

"Individuals got better, but we need to be better on defense," safety Drew Astorino said. "When you think of Penn State, you think

of defense, that's what you always think. You think of coach Bradley, you think of the defense holding people to 10 points, under 100-yard rushers and that's what we've got to get better at."

This season the Lions did lose the identity Astorino spoke of, as they gave up an average of 22.6 points per game, and for the first time since Shonn Greene in 2008, couldn't hold an opposing rusher under 100 yards.

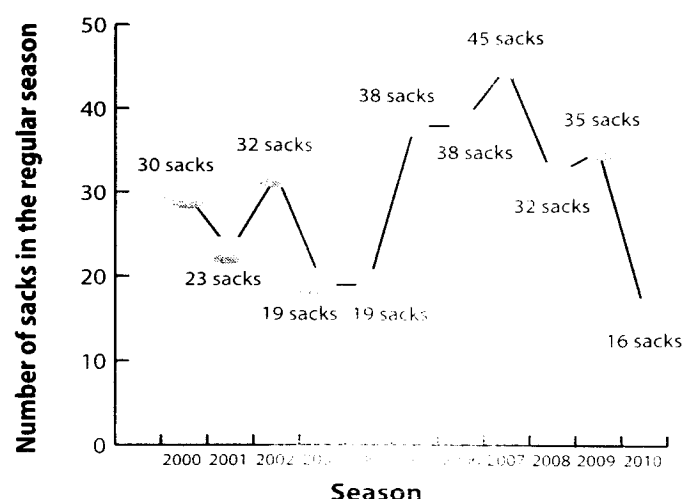
Bradley said lapses in play from the unit would usually happen during one or two series in past seasons, but this year, the mistakes would happen for quarters or even halves at a time.

"Going into the bowl game and next year we're going to remember this [season]," cornerback Stephon Morris said.

"We're going to feel it throughout the whole training camp next year, throughout the spring and when we do play them tough teams again, because we do have a very tough schedule next year, we're going to remember this. And we're going to know how to finish games."

Defenseless

The Nittany Lions' sack total dwindled during the 2010 season.



Source: Collegian archives

Junior Chen, Collegian

Morris' optimism for the defense is shared by many of the players. The Lions will need to replace senior defensive tackle Ollie Ogbu, as well as senior linebackers Chris Colasanti and Bari Gbadyu, but the younger players had plenty of opportunities to compete this season.

With the nucleus of the defense returning, Massaro said he's certain the team has the right players to be a successful defense. Though he said the defense's statistics weren't completely indicative of its performance, he said this season's struggles will improve the unit's character.

But Ogbu said the injuries the unit suffered this season gave it a deficiency, but that a turnaround will be quick. When asked how he sees the defense coming along next season, he feels Bradley's group will once again return to top form.

"This team is going to be unstoppable next year," he said. "Mark my words now. You can put this on any website, blog it, or do anything. I guarantee you. We have a lot of great talent, and it's only going to get better next year. Trust me."

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Paterno's return pleases players, but raises questions

By Brendan Monahan
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Quarterback Matt McGloin wasn't surprised when Joe Paterno halted any further questions about his possible retirement more than a week ago.

"I want him back," said McGloin, a redshirt sophomore. "But it wouldn't surprise me one bit if he was around for a couple more years." Many others share that same sentiment, as Paterno has extended his time coaching the Nittany Lions on multiple occasions. The Penn State coach announced his plans last Tuesday to return for 2011, the final year of a three-year contract.

Paterno must go through his end-of-season review meeting with athletic director Tim Curley and president Graham Spanier before the university will make a decision on Paterno returning.

But with one year left on Paterno's contract, everything should remain status quo for the 83-year-old coach, who would enter his 46th season as head

coach next September and possesses a significant amount of leeway in any university discussions, let alone his own as coach.

Questions abound on whether Paterno's return hurts recruiting. Paterno hasn't visited a recruit since Terrelle Pryor in 2008, yet Penn State has brought in top 15 recruiting classes the past two years. The 2011 recruiting class seemingly looks to take a dip in talent, as Penn State has nabbed only seven commits, two of which are considered four-star prospects.

On the recruiting trail, opposing coaches — telling recruits Paterno won't last the possible incumbent's entire collegiate career — use Paterno's age against him. This strategy, as defensive coordinator Tom Bradley previously noted, has gone on for decades, since speculation of Paterno retiring first started, and yet, Penn State has still been able to bring in some top-notch recruiting classes.

Many current players, including redshirt juniors Joe Suhey and

Nate Stupar, noted playing for the same coach as their fathers. Suhey's father, Matt, was a running back from 1976-79, while Stupar's father, Stephen, was a defensive lineman during the same span as Matt Suhey.

"I never thought I'd have the same coach all five years as my dad," Stupar said. "That's something we joke about... It's fun, and it's exciting because I've had [Paterno] since my freshman year, and he's been a great coach."

Current players have said Paterno's possible retirement as coach hadn't factored much into their decisions to come to Penn State, and many have alluded to his still significant involvement in the program, a notion under scrutiny for years.

The intestinal flu and an adverse reaction to antibiotics hindered Paterno from attending several university events this past summer. At press conferences, the head coach has trouble hearing questions and sometimes forgets players' names.

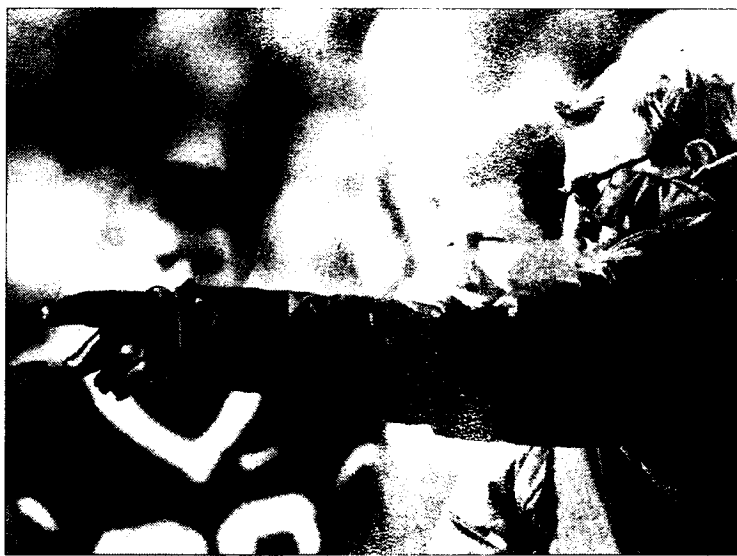
Middle linebacker Chris

Colasanti said his head coach is still energetic and vocal at practices this season, even to a higher degree than previous ones.

"I've always believed that when you're not excited to do what you love, then it's time to step back."

Colasanti said "He still loves to come out and coach and be vocal. He has fun with it. We see that, and we feed off of that. I expected him to come back."

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Joe Paterno (right) points during the Lions' loss to Michigan State.

Heavyweight Wade benefitting from schedule

By Mike Still
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Cameron Wade's two losses in five matches this season aren't indicative of the quality of his wrestling.

WRESTLING

The No. 7-ranked heavyweight in the country is 3-2 this season, but Wade's two losses have come against the No. 1 and No. 3 wrestlers in his weight class.

Having seen arguably the country's best heavyweights so early in the year, the junior knows he can only learn from those losses.

"It's always good to see the good competition," Wade said.

"But you definitely want to beat them."

"Going in there and just keeping the match close or losing, there aren't any moral victories for me. I want to go in there and beat everybody."

After starting the season with a victory in Penn State's dual meet at Bloomsburg on Nov. 12, Wade took on No. 1 Zach Ley of Lehigh just two days later in the Nittany Lions' home opener.

Though he battled Ley to a tie-breaker, Wade fell to Ley, 4-2, in extra time and then lost to No. 3 D.J. Russo of Rutgers, 7-2, the following weekend at the Sprawl and Brawl duals on the road in Binghamton, N.Y.

Confident in his training, Wade will be ready if the opportunity arises later in the season to wrestle Ley or Russo again.

"I just wrestled two bad matches," the junior said. "I think I should be able to beat those guys."

"I train to beat those guys. I have the best training partners in the country, and I just need to go out there and beat those guys the next time I wrestle them."

Coach Cael Sanderson hasn't lost any confidence in Wade either.



Wade

As a national qualifier last season, Wade is no stranger to tough competition, Sanderson said. And being forced to compete against the best at this point in the season will hopefully give Wade the urgency to just work that much harder.

Wade knows what he has to work on from his two losses.

When on top, he has to focus fighting off reverses, Wade said. He also wants to keep the pressure up, fine tune his footwork and make conditioning a factor in every match.

The Lions are hosting the Nittany Lion Open this Sunday, starting at 8:30 a.m. in Rec Hall.

Eager to get back to work, Wade will look to put the losses behind him and compete at the level he knows he can this weekend.

"I'm working hard as it is," Wade said.

"I just have to keep pushing forward. I can't let those stay on my mind. I have to push past them and go out there and keep wrestling and working on the things I need to work on."

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Read about how the Nittany Lions worked over the break:
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- ➔ ARMED SERVICES DAY — Any fan showing a valid Military ID receives free admission
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- ➔ WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL EXHIBITION AT HALFTIME

Tuesday (12/21) @ 5:00 PM vs. **MAINE**

LADY LION BASKETBALL

BRYCE JORDAN CENTER

Sunday (12/5) @ 2:00 PM vs. **TEXAS TECH**

- ➔ BIG TEN/BIG 12 CHALLENGE

Wednesday (12/8) @ 6:30 PM vs. **ARMY**

- ➔ MILITARY APPRECIATION DAY — All Fans with a military ID will get a free ticket to the game. Free Coquese's Corps blue camp tees to the first 200 fans!

Sunday (12/12) @ 12:00 N vs. **MAINE**

Sunday (12/19) @ 2:00 PM vs. **DELAWARE**

Tuesday (12/21) @ 7:00 PM vs. **DREXEL**

Tuesday (12/28) @ 7:00 PM vs. **BUCKNELL**

Thursday (12/30) @ 7:00 PM vs. **IOWA**

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NCAA FIRST ROUND Friday (12/3) @ 7:00 PM vs. **NIAGARA**

NCAA SECOND ROUND Saturday (12/7) @ 7:30 PM

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WRESTLING

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Sunday (12/12) @ 2:00 PM vs. **LOCK HAVEN**

Sunday (12/19) @ 2:00 PM vs. **OHIO STATE**

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