

Icers confident for marquee series

By Greg Garcia
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

So far, it hasn't been the easiest of roads for the No. 11 Penn State Icers.

The first half of the schedule was no easy test, as the Icers faced off against four teams ranked within the ACHA's top-25. In those games, the Icers went head-to-head against No. 21 Central Oklahoma, the team that prematurely ended Penn State's season in last year's ACHA playoffs, and other bitter rivals, including No. 8 Rhode Island.

Battled by injuries, inconsistent play and lacking a consistent starting goalie, head coach Scott Balboni's squad has gone an ordinary 4-4 in those games.

Now, with No. 4 Delaware slated this weekend, the Icers (11-4-0, 2-2-0 ESCHL) realize how important this home two-game series is, with Friday night's action getting started at 9 p.m. and Saturday's contest at 3:30 p.m. in the Greenberg Ice Pavilion.

"It's the biggest weekend we

If you go

No. 11 Penn State Icers vs. No. 4 Delaware Blue Hens

When: 9 p.m. tonight, 3:30 p.m. Saturday

Where: Greenberg Ice Pavilion

have had all season long," assistant coach Josh Hand said.

"I think positives will come out of this weekend no matter what. We'll get a good grasp of where we stand."

The Blue Hens (16-0-1, 5-0-1) are no strangers to the Icers. Throughout the team's history, the Icers have faced no other opponent more with Friday night marking the 95th time.

Delaware has got off to a fast start this season helping elevate itself to a top-5 team.

The Blue Hens have still yet to lose a game in regulation, with their lone loss coming in overtime to Rhode Island.

Junior forward Paul Daley

described the Blue Hens as fast and skilled skaters.

He also described the importance of coming away with two wins.

"If we lose, we put ourselves in a pretty big hole," Daley said.

"It would be an uphill battle from there."

Daley and the rest of his teammates will receive an extra boost this weekend with the return of three key players in sophomore forward George Saad, junior forward Nick Seravalli and junior defenseman Dan Loucks.

"George is our best player," Hand said.

"Getting him back can only be positive. Seravalli will add offense and Loucks will provide help on defense. It's good to have them back."

Throughout the week, Balboni has focused on some of the smaller facets of the game.

The Icers have worked on bringing a positive attitude to the rink.

"The intensity level has been high all season, but we need to



Lynn McGowan/Collegian

Icers forward Eric Steniour (left) maneuvers around a defender.

kick it up a notch this weekend," Daley said. "We're pretty confident."

Senior forward and assistant captain Tim O'Brien will make his own evaluations after the two-game series.

"I've never faced Delaware when they were undefeated," he said. "This will give us a chance to see how good they really are. It's basically do-or-die for us."

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Ice Lions ready to face opponents in showcase

By Lauren Henderson
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

The Penn State Ice Lions will take on three teams in three days this weekend.

ICE LIONS

They will take part in the Mid-Atlantic Collegiate Hockey Association (MACHA) Showcase in Warwick, Pa.

The MACHA Showcase features teams from Temple, Rowan, Saint Joseph's, Monmouth, East

Carolina, The College of New Jersey and Penn State.

"It allows us to see other teams in our league," coach Ryan Behnken said.

At 7:30 tonight the Ice Lions (7-4-2) will face the No. 13-ranked Rowan Profs at The Rink in Warwick, then will face St. Joe's and Temple on Saturday and Sunday, respectively.

The Ice Lions faced Rowan in their last game on Nov. 19, and defeated the Profs, 4-3.

Sophomore goalie Ryan

DeMuth, who will be playing this showcase in his hometown rink, said. "We are a good team and we could definitely beat them again if we bring our game."

Behnken said his players know exactly how each other are going to play.

At 10:15 a.m. Saturday the Ice Lions will take on the Saint Joseph's Hawks. They have yet to face St. Joe's this season but will play them later on in January.

At 2:30 p.m. Sunday afternoon the Ice Lions will take on the No.

5-ranked Temple Owls. The Ice Lions lost their second game of the season, 5-1, against Temple.

Behnken, however, thinks his team has improved since that loss.

"We are much better than we were in the second game of the season," the first-year coach said.

When asked what he thought about his guys playing three games in three days, Behnken said most people say this is one of the toughest sports physically there is, and this is when time in the gym spent conditioning will

pay off, adding that his guys are definitely in shape.

Behnken said he plans to rotate the guys well, some of the guys that play a lot on Saturday might not play that much on Sunday.

Also featured in this Showcase are three junior league teams.

Behnken said it gives coaches a chance to scout future players, and gives the coaches a chance to see players they would not normally see.

"We have to be the best team we can be," Behnken said.

FIFA decision on Qatar leaves empty feeling for U.S.

By Andrew Robinson

If you would, please look at the mug shot accompanying this column.

Clearly, you can tell I've been beat up a few times as my grotesque visage proves, and by that reasoning, I know what a hard punch to the gut feels like.



MY OPINION

Well, I got one of those Thursday morning when I saw which nation received the 2022 World Cup bid.

You know, the one I wrote about just a few days ago and the one I was sure the United States was going to win.

But, for about the 8,637th time in my life, I was wrong.

In a bit of a surprise, the tiny Middle Eastern nation of Qatar will play host to the World Cup in 2022, while Russia won the rights to the 2018 Cup.

Qatar destroyed the United

States by a 14-8 margin in the fourth round of voting for 2022.

"We go to new lands," FIFA President Sepp Blatter said Thursday after the announcement.

Neither Russia nor Qatar has ever hosted a World Cup, and while I can understand the Russia bid, something about Qatar doesn't sit right with me.

It might be the fact the country has a total area of 4,416 square miles, which means it could fit inside the state of Connecticut.

In its bid, Qatar promised to build nine brand-new stadiums, as well as refurbish three existing structures to provide the venues for the Cup.

That's 12 stadiums, each of which will cost at least several million dollars, inside an area smaller than the 48th largest state in the U.S. that will probably see zero use after the World Cup is over.

Seems a little ridiculous to me.

As the host nation, Qatar receives an automatic bid into the 2022 World Cup and will be seed-

ed at the top of Group A when the draw is made.

Qatar is the 113th ranked men's national team in the world in the current FIFA rankings and barring some kind of absurd explosion of talent, won't make it out of group play in 2022.

Playing in Qatar presents a fair share of problems as well. Because of its location, temperatures in Qatar will likely exceed 100 degrees during the day, when the bulk of the games, and training sessions for that matter, will occur.

Qatar's government promised state-of-the-art technology in its bid to make sure players and fans are kept cool.

Short of air-dropping a massive air-conditioned dome over the entire country (which at this point, I wouldn't entirely rule out), I don't see any feasible way that happens.

FIFA medical chief Michel D'Hooghe was said to be preparing a report on playing in the heat, but wouldn't take a stance on the issue Thursday.

It should be noted that D'Hooghe was severely critical of playing during the day, especially in southern areas like Florida, Texas and California, when the World Cup was played in the U.S. in 1994.

"I have to think it over and discuss it with people at the right moment," D'Hooghe said in an Associated Press story Thursday.

Wednesday, the United States submitted a final bid, headlined by speeches from actor Morgan Freeman, former president Bill Clinton, MLS commissioner Don Garber and U.S. midfielder Landon Donovan who spoke about watching an Argentina-Romania match in California during the 1994 World Cup.

"After watching Argentina-Romania play in the Rose Bowl, a dream was born in me," Donovan said in his speech.

"That dream was to emulate my heroes on the world's biggest stage, and five years later, I was given that opportunity at the FIFA Under-17 world championship. Like me, my teammates

had been inspired by what had happened in 1994."

Wednesday night, I watched part of the United States U-17 men's team as it defeated South Korea 2-1 in a friendly.

As I tried to explain to my roommates why I was so excited about the prospect of an event 12 years away, I turned back to the screen and said, "We could be watching some of these guys in that World Cup on our home soil."

Now I know we won't be doing that, but I'm more concerned that the surge the U.S. team gave soccer after this summer's Cup will fade.

"I think we are still going to see the sport grow, except without the target of 12 years from now for us to grow toward," U.S. Soccer Federation President Sunil Gulati said on a conference call Thursday.

I only hope he's right.

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