

Men's basketball puts away scrappy Dukes

By Jared Shanker
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Ed DeChellis couldn't help but think the basketball deity was hovering around the Duquesne bench the entire second half Saturday.

Time and time again, it looked like the Penn State men's basketball team put away Duquesne, but each time the Dukes found a way to hang around, whether it be a banked in 3-pointer or a Penn State missed free throw.

It wasn't until the clock reached triple zeroes were the Nittany Lions able to finally exhale, relieved they came out on top with a 77-73 win over the Dukes at the Bryce Jordan Center.

"They banked, I don't know, three [3-pointers] in," DeChellis said. "Sometimes you think the basketball gods are going to get ya."

A back-and-forth game all evening, the Lions (6-2) appeared to finally put it away when they took a seven-point lead with just 41 seconds left. But the Dukes (3-3) rushed back down the court wasting little time, and guard Bill Clark hoisted up a 3 that needed the help of the backboard to go in.

Earlier in the half, Damian Saunders, who scored a team-high 23 points for the Dukes, banked in a 3 to draw the Dukes within one.

"They definitely kept hitting some big shots," Lions guard Talor Battle said. "As it went down, we felt pretty comfortable and confident we'd win the game, but then they'd bank a shot."

The Lions weren't helping their cause from the free throw line, though. The Lions shot an abysmal 16-of-31 from the line and missed 12 in the second half. The Dukes were over the foul limit just seven minutes into the half, and the Lions were shooting the double bonus with under nine to go.

"That was horrible, inexcusable," Battle said.

Lucky for the Lions, they, and especially Battle, weren't missing from the field. The Lions shot 60 percent (15-of-25) in the second half, and Battle scored 17 of his game-high 31 after the break.

Battle put on a display from the 3-point line, finishing 5-of-8 from beyond the arc — way beyond the arc. Battle often lifted from points exceeding the NBA 3-point line, but, no matter the distance, they went in.

With DJ Jackson suffering a

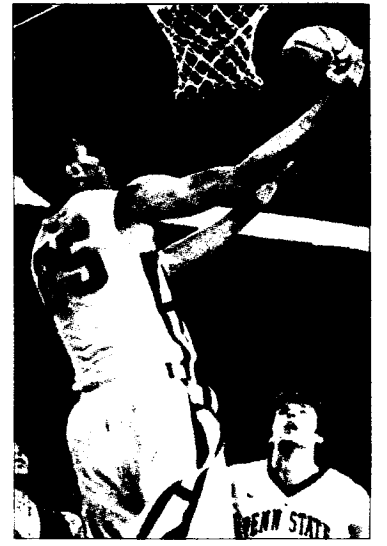
neck stinger early in the first half and Billy Oliver injuring his head early in the second, the Lions leaned on Battle for a spark.

"He's a game changer, there's no doubt about that," Dukes coach Ron Everhart said.

It was a sluggish start for the Lions, who trailed the Dukes 33-30 at halftime. The Lions were plagued by 13 turnovers to just one assist in the first half, but had 12 assists to just one turnover in the second half.

"I laid it out there to them, I said, 'The NCAA Tournament committee is not gonna like losing to Duquesne at home.' That's the way it is at the end of the day," DeChellis said of his halftime speech. "I'm proud of the fact that we found a way to win and the guys had to do it shorthanded."

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Senior forward Jeff Brooks (25) puts up a shot during the Lions' win vs. Duquesne on Saturday.

Nickson leads team to win in first collegiate start

By Ryan Loy
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Mia Nickson spent her freshman season coming off the bench at Boston College and last year sitting on Penn State's bench after transferring.

Sunday against undefeated Texas Tech, Nickson finally got a chance to start, and the sophomore forward made the most of the opportunity.

Nickson recorded her first career double-double with 26 points and 14 rebounds, as the

Lady Lions (7-2) defeated the Red Raiders, 76-68, at the Bryce Jordan Center.

Sunday's point and rebound totals were both career-highs for Nickson.

The Ashburn, Va. native said she doesn't mind coming off the bench but told Penn State coach Coquese Washington she could start if needed.

Washington felt Nickson's style of play would help the Lions get off to a quick start against the Red Raiders (8-1) — something Penn State has struggled with this season.

"I thought that if we could get Mia into the lineup, one thing she's good at is rebounding the ball, and she's good defensively," Washington said. "That was really the thought process behind it, to get us some more energy from start of the game."

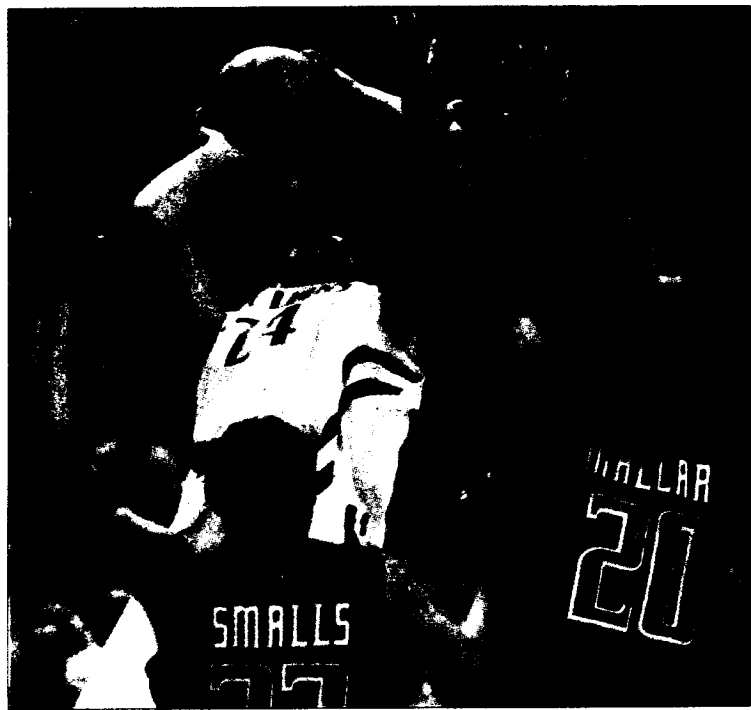
Each of Nickson's three offensive rebounds resulted in putback layups from the sophomore co-captain.

With some physical play in the paint between each team's forwards, Nickson took advantage of several trips to the foul line throughout the game.

She shot 10-of-11 from the char-

"[Nickson] was amazing down low getting the other post players in foul trouble. She was making her shots. She was posting up strong and hard. She was getting rebounds."

Alex Bentley
sophomore guard



Nickson (24) goes up for a shot during the Lions' win vs. Texas Tech.

ity stripe to help pace her career-high point total.

Sophomore guard Alex Bentley said Nickson played great Sunday, as she listed Nickson's contributions.

"She was amazing down low getting the other post players in foul trouble," Bentley said.

"She was making her shots. She was posting up strong and hard. She was getting rebounds. Her performance [Sunday] was really great."

Texas Tech coach Kristy Curry said Nickson concerned her team heading into the game.

Curry described the Penn State forward as an "intense" player and said Nickson's work ethic in the paint caused the Red Raiders trouble.

While Nickson racked up points and rebounds, it was a few hustle plays that really helped the Lions hold off Texas Tech's comeback attempts.

With less than two minutes left

in the game, Penn State led 68-63 with center Nikki Greene shooting free throws.

After missing the first foul shot, Greene's second caromed off the rim and appeared to be heading to a Texas Tech player when Nickson jumped up and batted the ball back to Penn State's Maggie Lucas.

The play paid off, as Nickson received the ball later in the possession and hit a jump shot to extend the Lions' lead to seven points.

Penn State controlled the game from that point, and Washington said plays like those are "humongous" for the team.

"They give us that added jolt of energy," Washington said.

"When we can get around and get those hustle plays, it just breeds confidence amongst everybody. Her energy is definitely infectious."

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