

Lions prep for Lock Haven

By Brandt Gelman
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Going into its first single-team dual meet in almost a month, the Penn State wrestling team is facing some uncertainty in its young season.

WRESTLING



Sanderson

The No. 5 Nittany Lions (5-0) will take on Lock Haven (2-1) at 2 p.m. Sunday and will look for a strong performance to motivate the team in its last match before the Big Ten season opens next Sunday with a home meet against No. 22 Ohio State. Penn State has won its last eight matches against Lock Haven.

The most pressing issue for the Lions is the health of All-American Quentin Wright. The redshirt sophomore is currently out of the lineup with a left shoulder injury, which coach Cael Sanderson said may keep Wright out until mid-February.

Sanderson said freshman Andrew Church will wrestle in place for Wright this Sunday, making his 184-pound match against Lock Haven freshman Jacob Bachman one of the most anticipated matches of the day. Church has been wrestling at

174 pounds for the majority of the season, yet Sanderson said his bump to 184 pounds should not be a problem.

"Church is a kid that will go out there and compete hard," Sanderson said. "He trains hard every day."

With the depth the Nittany Lions have, the 184-pound match will most likely not determine the final outcome on Sunday, but as Wright's injury will take time to heal, the Lions need to find stability at that weight class.

Redshirt freshman Ed Ruth, and junior Frank Molinaro will look to bounce back Sunday after both wrestlers received their first loss of the year in last weekend's Nittany Lion Open.

Both wrestlers lost in the final of their respective weight classes at the Open, but Sanderson is not worried about either of his wrestlers.

"Molinaro is a competitor," Sanderson said. "Right now Frank is still cleaning the cobwebs out."

The Nittany Lions will also come into this Sunday's match dealing with deservedly high expectations. Both redshirt freshman David Taylor and true freshman Andrew Alton, who is now 11-0 with nine pins on the year, saw the largest increase in individual rankings.

Taylor is also undefeated at 11-0 and is currently the No. 3-

ranked 157-pound wrestler in the country, while Alton has moved up to No. 10 in the 141-pound weight class. Junior Cameron Wade, who cruised through the Nittany Lion Open at 6-0, has moved up to the No. 6 heavy-weight spot, while despite his loss in the Open championship, Ruth has moved up as the No. 12-ranked 174-pound wrestler in the country.

Dealing with injuries and high expectations to fulfill, it could be easy for the team to overlook an outmatched Lock Haven opponent. Sanderson said that is not something he is expecting.

"Lock Haven is a good team," Sanderson said. "They have a solid history, and this is one of those meets where it is important to keep the rivalry going."

Sanderson avoided calling the match a tune-up for the Big Ten season, and wants his team to keep the same intensity no matter who the opponent is.

Redshirt sophomore Justin Ortega said he is looking forward to this weekend's meet. Ortega said this match will act as a chance for the team to get back into its routine.

"I'd say it's a tune-up for us," Ortega said. "Right now we are doing individual workouts because last weekend's Open kind of killed us all."

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Matheus Braga (left) goes for a tackle against Indiana earlier this year.

Braga eyeing MLS

By Andrew Robinson
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

While Matheus Braga will no longer be finding his Penn State teammates with precisely placed crosses or well-timed through balls, the Brazilian senior will get a chance to showcase his talents with a new group of players.

MEN'S SOCCER

And this time, the competition will be amongst college soccer's top seniors in front of scouts representing all 18 Major League Soccer clubs.

Braga, a midfielder on the men's soccer team, earned an invite to the Major League Soccer Player Combine and will join 53 other collegiate players, 36 from Division I, in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. for a four-day event running Jan. 8-11.

"I got an e-mail Tuesday night from the MLS guys but it was confidential so I didn't tell anyone beside [coach Bob Warming] because I knew it was coming out [Thursday]," Braga said. "It was good news, man, and I'm really happy about it."

Braga, who led the NCAA with 17 assists, was Penn State's only invitee, but 11 players coming from teams the Nittany Lions faced this season also earned invites.

The initial list of players was selected by a panel of D-I college coaches, which then voted in conjunction with MLS coaches on the final selections.

This marks the second season in a row that a Penn State player attended the combine. Forward Jason Yeisley, the 2009 Big Ten Offensive Player of the Year, worked out at last year's combine and was taken in the third round by 2010 MLS runner-up FC Dallas, and Braga got a chance to talk with his old teammate this weekend.

"I talked to him for awhile about having a good chance to get into the combine and he gave me all the tips, like what they do there and what I should do to do well," Braga said. "Jay's a pretty nice guy and I'm going to call him this weekend to talk about the invitation."

Braga played only three years at Penn State, but totaled 28

assists in 57 career games, good for a fourth-place tie on the school's all-time record list.

The midfielder's 17 assists this season set both the Penn State and Big Ten single season records.

The midfielder was also a unanimous first-team All-Big Ten selection the past two years.

Braga's season coincided with junior forward Corey Hertzog's nation-leading 20 goal year and the two combined for 73 points, the highest total among two players in Penn State history.

Warming said most of the credit for the pair's success goes to the players themselves and the work Hertzog in did shortening his runs.

"Especially when you've got this guy, Matheus, who can give it to you right in front of you, the ball's all of a sudden right in front of you near the goal," Warming said. "We told Corey, 'You've got to shorten your runs so you can be in front of the goal. [Braga] will get you the ball.'"

"And man, he can get you the ball, he's unbelievable."

Warming said senior midfielder Drew Cost is scheduled to attend camps with the San Jose Earthquakes, Seattle Sounders FC and Real Salt Lake, three MLS Cup playoff teams this past season.

Hertzog has been linked as a possible Generation Adidas target for early entry, but the final list has yet to be released and will come out sometime after this weekend's College Cup concludes.

While it's still early, Braga said he would be fine playing for any MLS team, but laughed and said he would prefer "somewhere warm."

He said the prospects would be split into four teams and play three games over the four days and being on the same field as some of the top talents in college soccer is something he is looking forward to.

"It's gonna be good, they know how to play soccer, they know how to move the ball, it's going to be like my game right now," Braga said.

"Hopefully I get to see the ball a lot of times and get to show what I can do."

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Lucas using early season to learn

By Andrew Robinson
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

There was the 27-point outburst against Hartford, followed by a 28-point show against Boston College, the clutch 3-pointers against Texas Tech and the efficient 20 points on nine shots against Army.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Safe to say, Maggie Lucas is a natural scorer.

But the freshman is still learning. And with every passing Lady Lions game, the life of a college basketball player is becoming a little bit easier.

"Offense comes pretty naturally to me. Defense, it's something that's taken a lot of extra work."

Lucas said at Tuesday's press conference. "Coach [Coquese Washington], she pushes me really hard at practice to get better at that and my teammates are there 100 percent of the time, helping me get the rotations right."

"That's been the hardest thing. Other than that, I'm trying not to press when I get in the game, I'm just trying to let it come to me and catch a flow for the game."

Wednesday, in Penn State's 95-65 win over the Black Knights, Lucas shot 4-of-9 from the floor and a perfect 10-of-10 from the foul line. The 5-foot-9 guard said she was trying to find the post players first, didn't force shots and when she got fouled, made sure to hit her free throws.

Lucas' clutch shots against Texas Tech halted two second-half runs to guarantee a win, while her 12 points in the second half against Army helped the Lady Lions push their lead out of the Black Knights' reach. The freshman has won the last three Big Ten Freshman of the Week awards, and Washington said that streak isn't a surprise.

"She's a tremendous talent, she's a very competitive player," Washington said Tuesday. "She plays without fear. She goes in the game and is relentless in her attack, but I also think it speaks volumes about our team and the selfishness they have to find her."

The lessons Lucas has been picking up early will pay off once

Big Ten play begins and the guard said she's excited for the conference schedule to start. While she's happy to be recognized for her play, Lucas said her goals are team-oriented, focused on winning the conference and making the NCAA tournament.

On Tuesday, Lucas admitted most of her mistakes come when she tries to make something happen too fast once she comes in, and she needs to let the game come to her. Washington has been experimenting with Lucas as the point guard when sophomore Alex Bentley is off the floor, and Lucas said while it's difficult, playing a new position is making her a better player.

While playing the point has improved the guard's handle with the ball and her understanding of the offense, Lucas said Washington has told her to start the play after she makes the first pass, then return to being a shooting guard and look for her shot. The freshman has played with streetball flair this season, scoring on reverse lay ups, using a crossover dribble and rising up for a shot with a hand in her face. If Lucas continues to apply the lessons of the season, the freshman could become a big weapon for Penn State in the Big Ten.

"I've had to be a crafty scorer a lot in my life," Lucas said. "I play with boys on the playgrounds in my area and you have to find different ways to score when you're playing against bigger guys and faster people. I've always had a knack for figuring things out."

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Maggie Lucas (33) looks to pass.

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