



Photo by Caitlin Lee/Collegian

ON ANOTHER LEVEL

Micah Parsons caps off his All-American sophomore season with a stellar performance to help lead Penn State to a win in the Cotton Bowl

By Benjamin Ferree
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

ARLINGTON, Texas — In August, Micah Parsons shared a piece of advice that he was told by Mark Dupuis, a graduate assistant with the Penn State football program — a piece of advice that motivates and drives him to this day.

Dupuis explained to Parsons that he needed to take steps from being a killer on the field, to a serial killer and finally to an assassin.

Parsons labeled himself as a

serial killer saying that “even the greats aren’t assassins yet” and labeled NFL superstar Aaron Donald as a player who had flashes like an assassin.

But on Saturday in the Cotton Bowl, Parsons took that step.

Parsons was an assassin.

The sophomore linebacker was honored as the Cotton Bowl’s most outstanding defensive player and frankly, the decision wasn’t up for debate. Parsons finished the game with 14 tackles, three tackles for loss, two sacks, two forced fumbles, two pass break-ups and a quarterback hurry.

“This was another level,” Parsons said.

And after he received the award, the first thing he told Penn State’s defensive coordinator Brent Pry was “I told you so.”

According to Parsons, he told Pry every day this week that he was going to win the award, a mindset that Parsons turned into reality.

“That is the type of mindset that I have. Know before it happens,” Parsons said. “You can’t be surprised in your moment. You have to know your moment is there and when you are on the biggest stage, it’s time to shine.”

Parsons was all over the field, constantly breaking up plays, clogging running lanes, making big hits or pressuring the quarterback on a blitz.

“You got to play your game,” Parsons said. “You can’t let others take you out of your game.”

“I just had to play my game and nobody else’s that is when the plays come to you.”

But one play certainly stood out to him as one to remember.

Early in the first quarter, Memphis had the ball and was driving and ran a reserve, a reserve that got blown up in the backfield with a massive hit by Parsons.

“That was the one that I was like ‘oh yeah, it’s time,’” Parsons said.

But that wasn’t the only high caliber play that Parsons made on Saturday, his one quarterback hurry caused a momentum changing pick-six and his forced fumbles came at critical times in the game.

When Penn State’s defense needed a play, Parsons was the one to make it. And according to Parsons, it was no surprise to him that today was the day he had a career game, simply because it was raining.

“Anytime it rains, I know I will have a good game. So when it started raining this morning, I texted my mom and my dad in a group chat and said ‘a storm is coming, this is great’ and I ended up having one of the best games of my life.”

Parsons continued by saying that it all started when he played youth football and had a great game in the rain, this trend continued in high school and is now on full display at the college level.

“That Pitt game last year was one of my first best games,” Parsons said. “Then it started to rain at this Pitt game, had another good game.”

“So then it started raining at Michigan State, had another good game and I’m like ‘the rain is my thing.’”

And when a player is having a career game like Parsons did on Saturday, it inspires the whole team.

“You get ecstatic. Watching that kid grow, wherever he is, it’s been a blessing for me honestly,” linebacker Cam Brown said. “Just watching him mature and the way he plays. He plays hard. Y’all see he makes plays.”

“It motivates the team. It motivates you to want to play harder. The sky is the limit for him.”

Brown and Jan Johnson both played their final games in Penn State uniforms on Saturday and both had one last chance to play with Parsons.

“I’m just happy that I could’ve helped him in any way. It means a lot that I can see him doing well,” Johnson said. “He is an unbelievable player and I don’t think he has reached his full potential yet.”

“I think there is still more to come.”

And the influence that Parsons had on the game was one that extended beyond the defensive side

of the field, the offensive players took notice.

“Micah makes plays that people aren’t supposed to make,” tight end Pat Freiermuth said. “He is an impressive athlete and an awesome football player I’m happy that he is on my team.”

Although, Lamont Wade might’ve summed up Parsons’ game the best with simply — “that boy, he is a dog.”

But even after having the best game of his career, in the last game of the season, Parsons isn’t satisfied.

“I’ve just got to build on it. No one is perfect,” Parsons said. “I’ve got to keep learning. I’ve got to keep doing more, keep helping the younger guys... You’ve just got to keep building on top of this, and we’re just going to keep getting better and better.”

In fact, Parsons is setting his eyes on another goal next season. The Heisman Trophy.

“I think the door is open... I have a chance to do it,” Parsons said. “Just being able to get to the table would be an extreme blessing and an extreme honor for myself and this program.”

“To be able to do that and influence the kids, all defenders around the country and high school and things like that. That would be ridiculous.”

And according to Parsons, the way he will accomplish this great accomplishment is through hard work and belief.

“It’s just following God’s plan. I always tell people you can’t go out of your way to make the play, let the play come to you and that’s what I do,” Parsons said. “You can’t force things to happen. It’s either in God’s plan or not. If it’s in God’s will, it’s in God’s will.”

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Caitlin Lee/Collegian

Micah Parsons (11) is covered in confetti by his teammates after the 2019 Cotton Bowl Classic at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas.

Record-setting day for running backs

By Caleb Wilfinger
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

ARLINGTON, Texas — On Penn State’s second drive of 2019 Cotton Bowl, Journey Brown took a handoff and exploded through the right side of the Memphis defense, bursting into the second level and dispatching multiple Tiger defenders on his way to the end zone.

Brown was greeted with enthusiasm by his teammates on the sideline, before he put the “Lawn-Boyz” chain around his neck and stood on the bench with his arms outstretched, facing the Penn State faithful who had made the trip to Arlington, Texas.

Shortly thereafter, he would pass the chain off to Noah Cain, who would later hand the gold piece to fellow freshman Devyn Ford.

Eventually the chain made its way back to Brown, completing the cycle and serving as a bit of an indicator for how the season has come full circle for this running back group.

“We’ve been able to accomplish a lot of things this year, and I’m proud of that,” Slade said. “I can think back to when we all scored in Week 1, and each of us had an impact on the game. I got that same feeling today.”

Brown has been Penn State’s leading rusher this season, and that didn’t change on Saturday, as the Meadville, Pennsylvania, native finished with 202 yards and two touchdowns on 16 carries in their 53-39 win at AT&T Stadium on Saturday. He ended the day with the most rushing yards in a bowl game in program history.

Unsurprisingly, his teammates in the backfield couldn’t be more supportive.

“He’s a great guy to have around, and he’s been nothing but supportive of me since I’ve gotten [to Penn State],” Cain said. “Even when I was hurt, he was still checking in on me and since I’ve been out he’s been playing like one of the best running backs in the country. I was very proud to see him play like that today.”

Brown was the star, but Penn



Caitlin Lee/Collegian

Running back Journey Brown (4) jumps over a Memphis defender during the 2019 Cotton Bowl Classic against No. 17 Memphis at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas on Saturday, Dec. 28, 2019.

State’s production out of the backfield came from more than just its veteran leader.

After registering only one

carry since injuring his ankle against Michigan State back in October, Cain’s 92 rushing yards and two touchdowns were nearly

as impressive as his older mentor in the backfield.

See **RUNNING BACKS**, Page 4.

HUB mural showcases PA foliage

By Ashley Hayford
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

The HUB-Robeson Center will look more colorful this semester as the HUB Galleries commissioned Katherine Mann to create a new mural for the space.

Mann, an independent artist and Washington, D.C. local, prepared a few potential pieces for selection for the HUB’s newest mural.

A work entitled “Small Planet” was chosen, and she worked on the collage elements of the piece throughout the semester in her studio.

“This piece was chosen, I think, because it combined free floating, verdant and textured painting technique with fluid dynamics, maximalism and an interest in the local landscape,” Mann said via email.

“Each of the flowers, leaves or branches in the mural is a depiction of a plant or tree that is endemic to Pennsylvania and the region directly around State College.”

Plants scattered throughout the mural include magnolias, fringe trees, tupelos, redbuds, dogwoods and maple leaves, along with other twigs and flowers native to Central Pennsylvania.

“I wanted to take details from the daily scenery of the region – mostly, tree leaves – and use them to populate a fantastic,

immersive and imaginary world,” Mann said.

Along with paying attention to the State College landscape, Mann said the mural holds personal significance to her.

“The mural represents, to me, a joyful celebration of the mess of matter that make up the world around us,” Mann said. “The local maple tree on the meridian in the middle of the street might not be given a second glance, but recontextualized into this kaleidoscopic landscape it becomes alien, invites a new appreciation.”

Installed during the final week of the fall 2019 semester, Mann signed the mural with 15 minutes left to spare before the HUB closed for holiday break.

Curator of HUB-Robeson Galleries Lindsey Landfried said she hopes the piece not only touches the Penn State community, but those who visit, as well.

“The HUB-Robeson Center commissioned this work by Katherine Mann to share high quality contemporary art with our students in the spaces they work and engage in during their Penn State experience,” Landfried said via email.

“This artwork enriches the University community and its visitors by deepening a sense of place and the experience of space, stimulating viewer curiosity and wellness and ensuring that art engages the educational,



Lindsey Toomer/Collegian

Katherine Mann’s mural “Small Planet” in the HUB-Robeson Center on Sunday, Jan. 12.

cultural and historical dimensions of our environments.”

Landfried praised the mural for being “rich, complex and dynamically and visually arresting” and hopes each student resonates with artwork in their own way.

“We anticipate that students will each have their own response to its physical presence and transformative potential,” Landfried said.

“The HUB-Robeson Center is a cultural destination at Penn State, and we activate the arts here in the Union to address today’s complex questions and serve local and global communi-

ties through access to the arts.”

Campus Arts Associate Tamryn McDermott helped Mann carefully install and hammer the mural, alongside HUB Galleries staff and student interns.

“Katherine was wonderful to work with,” McDermott said via email. “While we nailed, Katherine added more layers of paper and paint to the mural to integrate her work into the architecture and surrounding space.”

According to McDermott, students would stop by the mural throughout finals week to watch the installation process and ask about the piece. Students thought

it added energy to the space.

“One student told us how grateful she was that we were installing the mural for the students to enjoy,” McDermott said. “Another brought up something she learned in one of her psychology classes. She said she learned that plants help to increase productivity.”

McDermott added that the HUB team is looking forward to the student body “seeing new things within the dense and layered surface over time” and enjoying the mural.

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Professor witnesses Australia fires firsthand

By Morgan Miller
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Michael Mann, a professor of atmospheric science and director of the Earth System Science Center at Penn State, has spent his winter break working alongside Australian colleagues in order to observe and combat the unprecedented damage caused by the bushfire season.

Mann works at the forefront of his field analyzing the growing impacts of man-made climate change and looking to recognize

the effects of these new ecological threats. Mann said he is no stranger to the extreme and dangerous new weather patterns.

“The unprecedented Australian bushfires are just one example of the record breaking extreme weather events we’ve seen in recent years around the world,” Mann said via email, “in the form of unprecedented heat waves, droughts, wildfires, floods and superstorms.”

The outbreaks of fires — which have raged the Australian countryside for weeks — represent a

prime example of these record breaking weather events. The destruction caused by the bushfire season is taking its toll as many of Australia’s major cities have experienced unsafe air conditions; over a billion animals have died, which has driven some species into extinction; and Australia’s six hottest recorded days have all occurred over the course of this fire season.

Mann had been planning to take a sabbatical and head to Australia in order to more effectively observe the growing effects of

climate change that were located there. He just happened to land right in the middle of one of the “most devastating events” the country has experienced to date.

“It’s rather surreal,” Mann said. “More than a year ago I planned a sabbatical lead to study the impacts of climate change on Australia with collaborators in Sydney. Little did I realize that I would arrive to see one of the most dramatic examples of that phenomenon play our in real time.”

Despite the efforts of

Australia’s government and local volunteer firefighters, it has been difficult to come up with a solution on how to quell the rapidly spreading bushfires. While students at Penn State may not be able to directly influence the destruction occurring in Australia, the staff at Penn State’s Sustainability Institute did have some advice on how students in Pennsylvania could work to combat climate change and prevent further damage from occurring in the future.

“Everyone should be looking for little ways that they can take care of the environment,” Lydia Vandenberg, the associate director of employee engagement and education for the Sustainability Institute, said via email. “Even if it seems like you won’t make a difference, every individual’s actions count when it comes to combating climate change.”

Mann also had some advice to share with Penn State students who are concerned about the developing threat to the global environment and are looking for ways to help.

“Over the next decade we must dramatically reduce global carbon emissions by a factor of two in order to avert ever more devastating climate change impacts,” Mann said. “The only way that will happen is if we elect politicians who are willing to support policies to decarbonize our economy. We all have a voice and we have to use it.”

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Glen Morey/AP

Bushfires rage under plumes of smoke in Bairnsdale, Australia on Dec. 30. Thousands of tourists fled Australia’s wildfire-ravaged eastern coast Thursday ahead of worsening conditions as the military started to evacuate people trapped on the shore further south.



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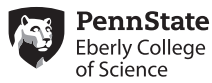
Statistics and the future of the Antarctic ice sheet

MURALI HARAN
Professor and Head, Department of Statistics, Penn State

How do scientists study climate, and how do they make projections about future climate? What is the role that statistics plays in climate science? Murali Haran provides answers to these questions, with examples from collaborative research between Penn State statisticians and climate scientists. His research focuses on the future of the Antarctic ice sheet, which has an important role to play in the future of the planet. Haran explains how statistical thinking is central to science, especially now, as we have access to an unprecedented amount of new scientific data.

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It’s important to remember the merits of department stores

After losing another store, the Nittany Mall could be in for a down year in 2020. It was recently announced that Macy’s in the Nittany Mall will close in the next 8-12 weeks, signifying the end of an era in more ways than one, with many more Macy’s nationwide slated to close in 2020. With the rise of online shopping services like Amazon — or even the respective sites of retail stores — it was a foregone conclusion that department stores would eventually fall by the wayside. But this particular Macy’s closing is more than just a department store ceasing operations. It’s important to realize that by virtue of being hours away from a city, having a store like

OUR VIEW

The closing of Macy’s in the Nittany Mall has more of an effect than people may realize

Macy’s increases access to relatively affordable, necessities from a well-known department store. At their core, many department stores have helped provide shoppers with easy access to quality, affordable clothing, and Macy’s was chief among them. So for the people in the State College area who frequent the Nittany Mall and relied on Macy’s for necessities, this is a loss that will be particularly hard. And yes: the mall itself is still open, there are still many shops in the area and many can resort to Amazon and other sites to successfully shop online. But for the roughly 6,000 Centre County residents without wired internet, having access to major department stores to shop at in person are a necessity. There’s also the sentimental aspect to Macy’s closing: many people like visiting brick and mortar stores, especially those of certain generations who grew up only shopping at malls and department stores like Macy’s. Macy’s was one of the first department stores to carry everything from clothes to tools to appliances, and with its competitor Sears also closing at the Nittany Mall in 2018, many have lost a staple to acquiring those goods. The Macy’s demise shouldn’t be totally surprising though. It seems as though over the years, the Nittany Mall itself has failed to market itself to younger demographics, like young State College locals or college students, thus not capitalizing on a key group of potential consumers. While malls have had merits for older people, it also provides younger people — many of whom are inherently sociable and enjoy being around others

— with a space to congregate, talk, shop or relax. Since the Nittany Mall has seemingly failed to capitalize on the potential mass appeal to younger people, it seems as though many in those generations might not be as distraught about Macy’s closing. At most malls, Macy’s is an important store and on the surface, to some, it might seem like that’s it. But in an area where prominent department stores are hard to come by, and where many don’t have internet access and just generally might not want to shop online, it makes it that much more important to remember the merits of stores like Macy’s and the potential communities they serve.

MY VIEW | Cassandra Kidwell

How I overcame my freshman year doubts and decided not to transfer

There is a saying that “the best time of your life” is at the ages of high school and college. Whenever I return to my hometown from school, I get a fair share of questions from my family members not only about how I am doing academically but if I am “having fun.” My answer was often a lie in my first year of college, covering the so-so response my honesty would have given — that I was considering transferring. I would say I had a great high school experience with friends I’ve had since 7th grade or earlier, as well as a general sociability with most of my peers. Still, I was eager to start the next chapter of my life at Penn State. I thought about all the new friends and memories I would make in the supposed best years of my life. But, my social life, which was never a problem before, suddenly became an obstacle to face. I was insecure, thrown into a sea of students I did not feel I stood out in. I realized how truly shy I could be — I’m not an extremely



Kidwell

outgoing person until I get to know someone. This trait did not matter in high school, as I had a basic knowledge of who everyone was. Once I got to college, it was easy to feel invisible. From not talking to those around me in lectures, to the amount of time secluded in the dreaded dorms, I was put into a funk that many freshmen can possibly relate to. While this funk did improve second semester, its dreariness continued my feelings of uncertainty about whether Penn State was right for me, but I was scared to admit that. High school is essentially a long buildup to your future, whether that be the college route or job route. For me, this buildup created such high expectations of what college truly would be like, only to be subtly disappointed in my first year. Many, like myself, question whether transferring would be the best bet. In the fall 2019 semester, I was sitting in a quiet corner of the library and overheard an upset freshman girl on the phone with her mom. She spoke of how she wanted to leave Penn State after her first semester because she was feeling lost.

For some, the populated school of Penn State can be too intimidating and not meant for them. But sometimes it just takes the right group of people to make you feel at place. After she was done talking on the phone, I asked if she was okay and told her that freshmen year isn’t a breeze for everyone. I told her I went through my own questioning. Should I take a semester off and go to a community college, or should I attend another school? Online and through social media, I saw my friends from childhood having the best time of their lives at their colleges; I wondered why I wasn’t having the same experience. She thanked me for telling her and said her freshmen year so far sounded a lot like mine. I assured her that she can make the choice that feels right, but often sophomore year can provide the freedom and friendships that many come to college for. I cannot universally declare that everyone can find their spot at Penn State. There are some circumstances like change of major, location and money that can incentivize a student to leave the school. Penn State’s large student population does give more benefits than just a large alumni

network and many educational offerings. It gives students so many opportunities to find where they belong — they just have to make the effort to find it. I overcame the bubble I placed myself in during my sophomore year by understanding my mistakes of seclusion the prior year. I started off my sophomore year by talking to those around me in class, and I realized the relationships I made required more effort on my side to keep in contact than I previously thought. Now, I can say I have great friendships I made at college. I found my people in returning friends from freshmen year, club friends and even class friends that I don’t keep in contact with but know they’re still there for me. Although it may be overstated, joining clubs and putting your best foot forward to meet those around you makes State College more than just a town in which you attend college, but a home. Cassandra Kidwell is a sophomore majoring in journalism and is a columnist for The Daily Collegian. Email her at cpk5276@psu.edu or follow her on Twitter at [@cassiewellkid](https://twitter.com/cassiewellkid)

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Veterans step up in wake of injuries

By Malcolm Wilson
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

It's no secret that Penn State has been bitten by the injury bug this season.

WRESTLING But as much as this could've proved a blockade, the Nittany Lions' wrestling squad hasn't been deterred.

Senior Anthony Cassar, the team's starter for the 285-pound weight class and a regular point-scorer, injured his shoulder at U.S. Senior Nationals earlier this month.

Sophomore Brady Berge, also a consistent scorer and starter at 157, suffered a concussion in an international competition over the summer, which held him out of multiple matches before eventually keeping him out of the lineup recently.

Former All-American Kyle Conel also got shut down for the season after injuring his shoulder, an injury which will require the former Kent State wrestler to get surgery, per Cael Sanderson.

Both Cassar and Conel are not expected to wrestle again this season.

So that means Penn State is without prominent scoring threats in the upperweights and for most collegiate wrestling teams, losing two starting



Lily LaRegina/Collegian

Nick Lee wrestles Cody Trybus during wrestling's season opener against Navy at Rec Hall on Sunday, Nov. 10.

athletes — especially of the caliber of Conel and Cassar — is a death sentence, all but ending their hopes of coming anywhere close to a national championship.

Penn State, however, has proven to be different.

Refusing to let their injuries weigh the team down, the Nittany Lions have come out on top of both meets they've wrestled in since Cassar and Berge went down. After beating Illinois and Northwestern, the squad has been gaining momentum since

the turn of the decade.

Cael Sanderson said that the team's ability to succeed despite the injuries to multiple starters is a testament to the strength of the unit as a whole.

Even though Cassar, Conel and Berge haven't been in the lineup, the team's other stars — like Roman Bravo-Young and Nick Lee — have done an excellent job of picking up the slack.

"We win and lose as a team. Obviously guys compete as individuals, but the big picture is about

the team," Sanderson said. "And when the kids are focusing more on the team, they're going to do better as individuals, too."

"That's part of being a team, you step up, and we're all in this together."

Sanderson also spoke on the way Bravo-Young and Lee's dominance on the mat make up for the missing starters' absence.

"These guys know that they wanted to get the team off to a fast start, and that's what they did," Sanderson said of his team's

performance on Sunday.

But the weekend as a whole saw several backups inserted into the lineup over the course of two days, whether it was Bo Pipher at 157, Austin Clabaugh at 133, Creighton Edsell at 184 or Konner Kraeszig at 165.

And while that's a rarity for many Penn State teams Sanderson's coached, he admits and recognizes things are a little different this year.

"It's a little different this year. We've got to figure things out a little bit more," Sanderson said on Friday.

"We don't have some of the guys we had in lineup the last few years, it's kind of a transition year. If you don't have your best team wrestling, you're going to have to scrap."

While the Nittany Lions had a reliance on scrap this weekend, it was also veterans like Lee, Bravo-Young and Mark Hall, among others, that helped pick up the slack and make things easier.

Penn State will continue to be tested throughout the remainder of the season, especially as the Big Ten season continues and these veterans will be crucial to the Nittany Lions' success on the biggest stage.

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Penn State's shooting slump proves costly

By Matt Lingerman
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Penn State's day began with 12 empty trips down the floor.

MEN'S BASKETBALL During a more than eight-minute span of fruitless possessions, the Nittany Lions couldn't get the lid off the basket, no matter what they tried.

Some shots, like Mike Watkins' baseline fadeaway in the first 30 seconds of the game, were ill-advised and didn't have much of a prayer of falling. Others were open looks that couldn't find the twine.

Whatever the reasoning, Penn State simply couldn't get the lid off the basket until after the second media timeout of the game. While some would argue that stretch was a sign of things to come, the case can be made that the team has been trending toward a game like this for the better part of a month.

For as impressive as the No. 20 Nittany Lions have been this season, the shooting numbers have been a problem which the squad's 12 wins may have allowed observers to glance over.

"We gotta hit shots," Pat Chambers said. "Let's call it what it is. If you had told me we'd hold Wisconsin to 58 points, I'd say we're gonna win the game, especially at home."

The paltry shooting continued over the course of the entire 40 minutes, with Penn State finishing the day shooting 32.7 percent from the field.

In fact, the Nittany Lions didn't hit their 10th field goal until a few minutes into the second half, and that wasn't because they were living at the charity stripe — Penn

State shot only three free throws in the first 20 minutes.

The loss to Wisconsin isn't going to sink Penn State's season, and as Chambers said after the game, his team's "goals are still intact."

But this game should also serve as a warning to the Nittany Lions that if they don't improve their outside shooting soon, tough sledding could be ahead.

Chambers has always given his players green lights from beyond the arc, and much of Penn State's offensive scheme is built upon shooting 3-pointers at a high volume and turning defense into offense.

Penn State has certainly shot the 3 at a high volume — the Nittany Lions' 416 attempts through 16 games are the most in the conference by more than 30 shots — but, as Chambers put simply, the shots aren't falling.

At one point, Penn State had hit only 2-of-12 3-pointers, both makes coming from Jamari Wheeler, who entered the contest shooting the deep ball at an 18.6 percent clip.

During the opening eight minutes alone, Penn State missed all six of its 3-point attempts, some of which were contested, others not.

"I wouldn't say they were awful shots," Chambers said. "We got a couple of good ones there. But we can't panic, because now the basket looks like a golf hole."

But the numbers suggest the hoop has been looking like a golf hole for some time now.

In Penn State's six games prior to Saturday, a 5-1 stretch dating back to its upset win over Maryland on Dec. 10, the team has shot 30.1 percent from beyond the arc.

In fact, the 5-for-21 performance Penn State put on against

Wisconsin was actually a small improvement over the numbers the Nittany Lions posted against Rutgers on Tuesday.

But while Chambers will hope the results change, don't expect the methods to.

During that six-game struggle, the Nittany Lions attempted fewer than 26 3s in only one game, and at one point during the second half against Wisconsin, nearly half of the field goals Penn State had attempted were from beyond the arc.

"I think the right guys are taking 3s, I really do," Chambers said. "And the guys who are low percentage are only taking a couple, at the end of the clock, so you know I think we're taking the right ones, and we've gotta keep taking those right ones, because we do have good shooters on this team. And we're going to continue to play that way."

The right guys, presumably guards Myles Dread, Myreon Jones and Curtis Jones Jr., combined for their worst collective performance of the season on Saturday, hitting only 1-of-14 deep balls they attempted.

But in gritty conference matchups with teams who prevent Penn State from getting out on the break, those players are going to have to start hitting shots in order to win.

While arriving at that goal may not be simple, it's understood in the locker room that the team needs to improve in that area.

"I went 0-for-5, I think Curtis didn't make anything either," Dread said. "It's just a bad day... Sometimes the ball just doesn't go in."

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Caitlin Lee/Collegian

Running back Noah Cain (21) avoids being tackled during the 2019 Cotton Bowl Classic against No. 17 Memphis at AT&T Stadium.

Running backs

FROM Page 1.

Cain's second touchdown of the game gave him eight on the season, breaking the single-season rushing touchdown record for a Penn State freshman — a mark that was set by Saquon Barkley in 2015.

In his first year at the collegiate level, the Baton Rouge, Louisiana, native did admit that the rotation between the four running backs frustrated him at first. But this is a group that is very close, and didn't let this unorthodox system get in the way of building a supportive relationship.

"Our room could have went sideways quick," Cain said. "[Adjusting to the rotation] was rough at first, I won't lie. But I think it got all of us closer, and it really taught me how to be unselfish and happy for other guys when they're out there making plays and helping the team win."

Saturday marked another game in which the Nittany Lions went with a running back by committee approach, racking up nearly 400 total rushing yards as a team and dominating at the point of attack for the entirety of the game.

Even as its passing game struggled for the majority of the contest, Penn State's rushing attack continued to eat up large chunks of yardage.

While the Memphis defense was showing more fatigue with each snap, the Nittany Lions kept rotating in fresh legs, epitomizing the mantra that has defined the mentality in the running back room since last spring.

"There's no drop-off for the LawnBoyz, and we all hold each other to the same standard," Brown said. "Everybody eats, and all of these guys in this room are my best friends. Even though Ricky [Slade] didn't score, he was able to get his confidence back with that [33-yard] run and just get back to

doing what he does."

As Penn State took the field for its final series of the 2019 season, it did so with a bit of symbolism, one that could serve as a metaphor for the team's season as a whole.

The Nittany Lions ran four consecutive running plays to close out the game, each by the four members of the running back committee that has shouldered the load as a collective unit all season long.

Ricky Slade opened the season as the starter, Cain seemed to seize the job in October, and Brown and Ford each closed the season with some of their best performances of the campaign.

And while Brown and Cain shined under the bright lights of AT&T Stadium, it was Ford that was quick to heap praise on his teammates in the backfield after the game.

"With this year, we really established the rotation," Ford said. "I love those guys and we've been able to grow together this entire season. Seeing how talented those guys are, and knowing what we can do on the field, it just makes us all better."

With two new running backs expected to be added to the fold in the summer — four-star recruits Cazia Holmes and Keyvone Lee — Penn State will have six players on scholarship in the backfield next season.

However, the four-man rotation has not been a problem for this group all season long, and they all insist that they have no plans to leave this offseason.

It remains to be seen if a loaded, six-man backfield can keep everyone happy for at least another year. But since this year's system, there are grounds to suggest that a successful rotation can still be a reality in 2020.

"I think I can speak for all of us when I say that we'll be back," Brown said. "I've still got stuff to do, and I know that we all have things that we still want to accomplish."

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James Leavy/Collegian

Coach Pat Chambers walks to the bench during the game against Wake Forest University at the Bryce Jordan Center on Wednesday, Dec. 4, 2019. Penn State defeated Wake Forest 76-54.

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