

Not going anywhere

University returns newsstands, Collegian searches for answers

By Kaitlyn Murphy
& Emma Naysmith
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Penn State removed The Daily Collegian's newsstands and papers from their on-campus locations overnight on Wednesday, Sept. 18 without notifying the Collegian.

There were around 35 racks inside campus buildings, with three running a Kamala Harris advertisement and six running voter registration ads in poster space above the newspapers. All racks and newspapers were removed by the university and held in an undisclosed location.

According to correspondence between the Collegian's general manager and the university's chief procurement officer, racks were to be returned by Friday, Sept. 20 without the advertisements.

Stands in the Willard Building were returned later that Friday, after the Collegian's distribution hours between 4:30-7:30 a.m. The stand that belongs outside of the Collegian office on the second floor of the Willard Media Center was returned Friday evening.

As a result, the latest edition of the Collegian wasn't delivered to these stands.

Conversations surrounding the advertisements and their potential violations had taken place with the Collegian's former general manager, Wayne Lowman, but Collegian leadership was never notified of the university's plans to remove the newsstands.

"I don't think whoever's making these decisions has thought through the impact," Lowman said. "What are they trying to accomplish?"

Penn State Senior Vice President and Chief of Staff Michael Wade Smith said in a letter to the Collegian, "The racks were temporarily relocated by personnel so that the unauthorized activity in violation of University policy could be removed."

In the letter, Smith stated the Collegian violated University Policy AD27, Commercial Sales Activities at University Locations.

"I don't think whoever's making these decisions has thought through the impact,"

Wayne Lowman
Former general manager



Kate Hildebrand/Collegian

The Sept. 20 edition of The Daily Collegian sits on the ground of the Willard Building after the university temporarily removed the Collegian's newsstands from their on-campus locations.

"While Policy AD27 does allow for advertising through newspapers available at the University, it does not grant the right to post advertisements or convert structures such as newspaper racks into signage for commercial advertisements independent of the newspaper publication itself," Smith said.

The letter also states the Collegian violated University Policy AD02, Non-University Groups Using University Facilities, which Smith said "unambiguously states that use of University facilities must be for non-commercial purposes."

"The University is not challenging The Collegian's distribution of newspapers on the newspaper racks or otherwise; it is prohibiting the sale by The Collegian of advertising space on University premises that is occurring outside the actual publication of its newspaper," Smith said.

The Collegian's latest contract with Penn State detailing advertising specifics expired in

June.

"The goal was to quickly rectify the situation and ensure that all advertisements in violation of University policies were removed," Wyatt DuBois, director of university public relations, said in an email. "Our intention was never to stifle news delivery, and we value the service and mission of The Daily Collegian."

Collegian Editor-in-Chief Amy Schafer said she felt disrespected by the situation.

"Our student journalists put in a lot of really hard work in making sure that we produce a really quality print edition," Schafer said. "I'm surprised that they would do something like this, especially without giving us warning, because we're not affiliated with the university."

The Collegian utilizes advertising sales as a revenue source. The importance of advertising revenue has become increasingly vital after receiving a 100% funding cut from the university's general fund in 2023, beginning this school year.

"Political advertising isn't something that's new to the Collegian," Schafer, a third-year studying public relations and global and international studies, said. "(John) Fetterman purchased ads previously during

the campaign that ran in our paper and on our website ... We've had Republican candidates and Democratic candidates in the past."

Schafer added there was a complete lack of communication from the university on the matter.

"I was under the assumption that conversations were still going on about the advertising — (the university) didn't say anything," Schafer said. "No one from the university reached out to me directly, and in conversation that they had with the general manager, as far as I'm aware, they never said anything about removing our newsstands or the advertisements."

The Collegian has had newsstands on campus for as long as anyone can remember, Schafer said.

"I was very alarmed when I first noticed that our newsstands were missing. More alarming to me wasn't necessarily the removal of the stands, but also the papers themselves," Schafer said.

"It's censoring our outlet, and it's a violation against free speech to remove our papers."

As the Collegian is independent and student-run, Dylan Crothers said he believes it means it should feel like a "place where it's the voice of the students" rather than the voice of faculty or administration.

"It doesn't take into account the time and effort that all the students put into writing their papers in the hopes of getting it out there and having the students read it, and people downtown," Crothers, a fourth-year student studying data sciences, said. "So then, not having them out there and not even knowing that they were getting taken down, is messed up on the part of the school."

Director of Penn State Student Media Ray Schmitt said he frequently picks up the print edition of the Collegian and believes it to be an essential part of the Penn State community.

"I believe wholeheartedly in journalism as a service, an important part of our democratic society," Schmitt said. "The services the Collegian provide are absolutely essential."

In regards to the First Amendment, Schmitt said he believes it's essential to a land-grant institution, with Penn State having the responsibility of its protection.

"I think that American news consumers, news consumers at Penn State, do deserve to have access to print journalism," Schmitt said.

"When I pick up the paper to read, it's because I enjoy the tactile experience of holding the paper, turning the pages and seeing the journalists', the editors', determination."

The university hasn't responded as of Wednesday to further questions regarding clarification about the removal of all newsstands and papers, regardless of their advertisement status.

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'Losing a voice of representation'

Students react to university's removal of Collegian newsstands

By Louise Bennett
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

When Alex McCrystal opened Instagram last week, he was shocked to learn Penn State removed The Daily Collegian's newsstands and papers from campus.

McCrystal, a second-year studying broadcast journalism, said this isn't the first time he's seen Penn State silence student speech.

"They just don't want people saying anything controversial," he said. "At this point, that's what it feels like."

The university removed approximately 35 of the Collegian's newsstands from their indoor locations in campus buildings on the night of Wednesday, Sept. 18 and returned them Friday, Sept.

20.

McCrystal said he especially disagreed with the university's decision to remove the papers without prior notice to the Collegian.

"It's like putting someone in jail before they go to trial," McCrystal said.

Nick Peters said he was also shocked when he found out about the university's actions.

"It is so important to have a publication that is fully student-run as a proper way to express the student experience or issues on campus," Peters, a third-year studying architecture, said. "To me, it kind of felt like losing a

voice of representation."

Peters also questioned why the university removed the papers, but has allowed polarizing individuals to speak on campus.

"They let the wildest people ever go out onto their campus and say the wildest and most offensive and actual hate speech," Peters said.

Alyssa Durant said she thinks Penn State needs to reevaluate who they're supporting.

"Just why — especially with the way they allowed the whole Proud Boys thing to happen but then they are getting rid of something supporting Kamala

Harris. Why is that allowed but then this isn't?" Durant, a fourth-year studying public relations, said. "What does Penn State really stand for?"

Eva Hines said she was surprised with Penn State's decision.

"It should not have happened and it's completely wrong and inappropriate," Hines, a third-year studying broadcast journalism, said. "No matter what your political beliefs are, censorship of any kind is unacceptable."

Megan Heineman said she doesn't agree with the university's decision, especially when the university no longer funds the Collegian.

"It's weird that our school is silencing a newspaper — especially when it's student-run," Heineman, a second-year studying environmental resource manage-

ment, said.

"If they're not affiliated, why should they be doing that?"

Kate Patterson said she's concerned this may not be the last time the university takes away the paper.

"Taking it away for one day could turn into other days too," Patterson, a second-year studying public relations, said.

Patterson said the university needs to be "thinking about if they want people to be engaging with the news and the organization."

"People don't read newspapers as much anymore," Patterson said. "For them to do anything that would restrict that is just going to make that even worse."

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‘Surprising and disappointing’

Despite history of success, Penn State women’s rugby still seeks varsity status

By Kahlie Wray
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

After a crushing defeat in the spring of 2022, the ‘80s hit single, “Funkytown,” was on repeat for Penn State. Backs captain Darby Miller said she doesn’t recall the final score, but she does remember “the dancing.”

According to Miller, a fifth-year studying architectural engineering, that moment is the perfect descriptor for the 12-time national champions and eight-time Big Ten Champions.

However, despite the team’s history of success, it doesn’t have varsity status.

The program has been classified as a Team Sport since 2005. This means it receives greater university support than a club sport, but less than a varsity sport.

Over the past two decades, the team has petitioned to elevate the program to varsity status but has been continuously met with denial. The most recent rejection came from Penn State Athletics’ administration around a year ago, according to members of the rugby program.

Though team members said they’re “frustrated” with the decision, just as they did in 2022, they’re dancing through the defeat.

“We do try not to focus on it, but it is pretty surprising and disappointing,” Miller said. “We would love to be a varsity sport, and we think it would be a great step for the university to equalize.”

When Miller says “equalize,” she’s referring to the gap between men’s varsity programs and women’s varsity programs.

Penn State Athletics has 31 varsity programs — 16 men’s teams and 15 women’s teams. This makes Penn State the only Big Ten institution to have more men’s varsity programs than women’s.

As a recipient of federal funding, Penn State has a legal obligation to remain in compliance with Title IX — the federal law that prohibits gender-based discrimination in educational programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance.

Athletic programs’ adherence to Title IX is measured by the Office for Civil Rights using a three-prong test. One of the following prongs must be fulfilled for a university to be labeled compliant:

1. Substantial Proportionality: This prong requires the school’s ratio of female athlete participation to be close to the institution’s ratio of female enrollment.
2. Expansion: If the first prong can’t be met, universities can demonstrate compliance by demonstrating a history and ongoing pattern of adding and improving participation opportunities for women’s sports. The OCR and courts typically define “history” as within the last three to five years.
3. Accommodating Interests: The final option for institutions is to prove they are effectively accommodating the interests and abilities of existing female athletes.

In accordance with the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act, Penn State is required to submit an annual report disclosing athletic participant numbers, monetary allocation, revenue and staffing.

In the 2023 report, Penn State reported 548 male participants and 416 female participants. However, these numbers include individuals who were counted more than once due to participation on several teams and male practice players who are featured on the women’s team roster.

The unduplicated numbers are 516 male participants and 388 female participants. The number of female participants decreases to 380 when the male practice players are removed. This means 42.4% of Penn State’s varsity athletes are female, when counting individual athletes.

According to 2023 Penn State student enrollment data, female undergraduate enrollment is 46.6%, meaning there is a 4.2% gap between the percentage of female athletes and female students at University Park.

The OCR and courts typically accept differences less than 5%, which would fall within the “safe harbor” of proportionality.

In the team’s most recent proposal to the athletic department, it referenced how the addition of another female varsity program would mend this gap.

Though the petition was denied, the team was informed an internal Title IX evaluation would be conducted, according to alumna Kelsey Harris.



Alexandra Antoniono/Collegian

The Penn State women’s rugby team meets at the end of a practice. Captain Jaida Beshears said every person who has laced up their cleats for Penn State is “part of this family and will always be a part of the family.”

Harris, a paid consultant to the board of the Penn State Rugby Foundation, said she isn’t aware whether that investigation has concluded. With the shifting landscape of collegiate athletics, Harris said when it comes to varsity status, she doesn’t “see anything changing realistically in the foreseeable future.”

The NCAA and its Power Five conferences agreed to pay \$2.8 billion over the next 10 years to former and current college athletes who alleged in a class action lawsuit they were barred from profiting off their name, image and likeness (NIL) prior to 2021 when the NCAA first permitted NIL payments.

The settlement also includes an optional revenue-sharing model that would distribute 22% of a school’s annual revenue directly to its student athletes.

Though full settlement details have not yet been approved, Harris said she predicts athletic departments “are going to be switching up revenue share” to contend with this.

“It’s going to be much harder to convince athletic departments to bring on additional teams,” Harris said.

In the meantime, Harris and her colleagues at the Penn State Rugby Foundation are committed to establishing an endowment fund for the program.

The Penn State Rugby Foundation was founded in 2018 to provide support for both the men’s and women’s team alongside its elder sister organization, the Penn State Rugby Booster Club. While the booster club finances the immediate operations of the teams, the foundation focuses on ensuring the longevity of rugby at Penn State.

“Our first year of fundraising, (the foundation) raised nearly \$2 million from around 90 individuals within our alumni network,” Harris said.

The organization is working toward endowing the salaries of full-time assistant coaches, as well as gaining the ability to provide additional funding for expenditures outside the annual operating budget, which is financed largely by the booster club.

According to the booster club’s website, the organization provides 55% of the program’s operating budget yearly. The remaining 45% is financed by players’ dues (30%) and university financing (15%).

Former women’s head coach Pete Steinberg said he founded the Penn State Rugby Foundation because he realized “the ecosystem around the women’s team, but also the men’s team, was changing” and they “needed to do something to be able to change the game.”

During Steinberg’s 19 years of coaching, he said Penn State had the advantage of being “the best team in the country.”

However, when Steinberg left Penn State in 2014, other universities across the United States began to develop varsity programs, which he said meant the Penn State program was less desirable for many new recruits.

“It was better for them to go somewhere else,” Steinberg said. “We were standing still when everyone else was moving forward. Rugby has grown, but

Penn State hasn’t grown with it.”

Still, the former head coach of both the Penn State women’s team and the U.S. women’s national team isn’t giving up on Penn State rugby.

“My hope is that Penn State can be a pioneer in women’s rugby by becoming the first big sports school to elevate the sport,” Steinberg said. “If we can elevate college rugby now or shortly, then we can have an impact on the upcoming World Cups ... elevating the Penn State women to varsity would change women’s sports.”

Both the 2031 Men’s Rugby World Cup and the 2033 Women’s Rugby World Cup will be hosted in the United States for the first time.

“Winning a World Cup for the men isn’t going to happen, but winning the World Cup for the women could,” Steinberg said. “But, for that to happen, the traditional American athlete development arm — which is college — has to step up.”

Steinberg was one of many spectators in the stands during the 2024 Summer Olympics, when the U.S. women’s team won bronze for the first time in its history.

Kayla Canett, one of the players on the Olympic team, is a Penn State rugby alumna.

Former Penn State women’s assistant coach Jim Mathias said he’s uncertain if the success of the U.S. women’s team will trickle down to Penn State.

“I think (the bronze medal) is going to have a very positive effect on the development of the game in the United States on the women’s side,” Mathias said. “Whether that translates specifically to Penn State? I’m less optimistic.”

Mathias said his doubt stems from his belief that there’s no current “pathway to success” for the women’s rugby team due to its current competitive structure.

According to Mathias, the team’s lack of a recruiting budget makes it difficult for it to compete with teams that recruit heavily from rugby-playing countries. He said those teams go on to beat Penn State “by wide, wide margins.”

“You don’t learn anything in those games,” Mathias said. “It’s hard to get better.”

The women’s team competes at the D1A level, formerly known as D1 Elite.

“There’s nowhere for the Penn State women to go,” Mathias said. “They’re not varsity, so they’re not allowed to play in the league with other varsity teams, even though they might qualify in a number of key areas.”

Mathias, like Harris, said he’s curious about the ramifications of the NCAA’s recent settlement and how it affects the varsity realm.

Regardless of the outcome, Mathias said the alumni are “committed to doing whatever is needed to support our men’s and women’s teams to rebuild and regain our place as the best collegiate program in the nation.”

“I think that we have identified that if we want to succeed, we’re largely going to have to be a self-funded program,” Mathias said.

Though Mathias doesn’t hold an active position on the Penn

State Rugby Foundation or the booster club, he said he’s working toward “preserving the legacy of Penn State rugby.”

“I’m still actively involved in the rugby hall of fame, which I started,” Matthias said. “It really honors all aspects, the coaches, the alumni and all the players at various levels that have contributed to the success.”

According to the booster club website, The Kabala Family Rugby Hall was dedicated in 2008 and “made possible by a generous donation from Ed and Gail Kabala and their family.” The display used to be in the East Area Locker Room, but it’s since been removed due to renovations, according to Mathias.

“That entire display, which probably without question is the most unique and best rugby hall of fame in the country right now, is sitting on a racquetball floor in Rec Hall waiting to be reinstalled,” Mathias said. “So I’m trying to get that back up.”

Mathias said he’s remained “involved with the team” since retiring from active coaching. In 1997, he and his wife, Susan Mathias, created an endowment to benefit both the men’s and women’s program.

Mathias said his decision to retire was influenced by the growing difficulty to commute. Mathias said in his day, the team only received access to the indoor training facilities for practice at midnight on Saturdays.

“That trip back and forth at 2:30 in the morning on Sundays just got a little too much,” Mathias said.

Kerrigan Fenstermaker, a member of the team, said she thinks Penn State puts “women’s sports a little bit on the backburner.”

“We were told (Penn State) didn’t have the funds,” Fenstermaker, a fifth-year studying architectural engineering, said. “But then they announced that they’re going to renovate the football stadium, and it was millions of millions of dollars ... where does it add up?”

Penn State spokesperson Kristina Petersen said, “given the revenue projections for all of Penn State Athletics and the 31 sports it currently supports, we would not be able to add a new sport and support it effectively. Launching any new sport without the necessary resources could be detrimental to our student-athletes, and we would not want to offer something that we can’t fully sustain, develop and grow.”

A desire for more university support is one of the primary reasons the team has been eyeing varsity status. While the team receives certain benefits, which include the usage of athletic facilities and academic support, there’s still a discrepancy between the amount of support it receives compared to the varsity programs.

“We have to work really hard to get a lot of accommodations,” Fenstermaker said. “It’s almost like for us it’s a privilege and for them it’s a right.”

The team practices and plays at West Campus Turf Fields, which Kerrigan said needs more “development.”

“On one side of Penn State, there’s a humongous stadium,” Fenstermaker said. “We don’t even have bleachers.”

She said she recalls playing at Brown University, which had more amenities, and wishing “everybody could have that.”

“They even had I think ESPN videoing it and streaming it,” Fenstermaker said. “You know my parents could see it and watch it so easily.”

Penn State Women’s Rugby President Amber Bigler said she wants more academic and mental health support.

She said varsity athletes get priority class registration, but the rugby team doesn’t.

“So that’s always kind of hard on us because we have to schedule around a time block and try to figure that out,” Bigler said. “Some people have to do different lift times or practice on Wednesday for 10 minutes or show up late ... so that kind of sucks.”

Bigler said she thinks more academic support would also be helpful for the team. Last semester, the team introduced “academic mentors” as a way for players to help each other academically.

“We enforce study hall hours to really get people motivated,” Bigler said.

In addition to academic support, Bigler said she wants to see an increase in mental health support.

“It’s kind of draining on you to be a student-athlete,” Bigler, a fourth-year studying computer science, said. “I’ve personally been very overwhelmed.”

In the past, Kate Daley, the team’s former head coach, assisted Bigler through personal mental health issues. Daley joined the team as head coach in the fall of 2014 and remained in that position until earlier this year, when she left to join Dartmouth College’s varsity women’s rugby program as an assistant coach.

Around the same time, Justin Hundley, the men’s rugby head coach, stepped down, leaving both teams coachless. Zac Mizell and Lauren Shissler have now joined both the men’s and women’s teams, respectively, as head coaches.

Bigler said the acquisition process for the head coaches was very “hush-hush.”

“We didn’t hear anything for a long time ... the job wasn’t posted for a long time for a men’s or women’s coach,” Bigler said.

In the absence of a coach, head captain Jaida Beshears took on the challenge of planning a preseason.

“It was a weird situation,” Beshears, a fourth-year studying kinesiology, said. “We weren’t sure that we were going to have a coach, so we were planning for the worst.”

With help from her teammates and volunteer coaches, Beshears held a shortened preseason, but said it wasn’t without hurdles.

Beshears said she doesn’t recall who within Penn State administration she spoke with, but communication was slow.

“I don’t think they like us very much,” Beshears said. “There’s been staff that I feel look down on us.”

Regardless, Beshears said she’s “proud” to be a part of the Penn State rugby legacy.

“I know a big phrase at Penn State is ‘We Are,’ but it’s really true for this club,” Beshears said. “Every person who has put on a pair of cleats and stepped out on the field in a Penn State rugby jersey is a part of this family and will always be a part of this family.”

Collegian concerned about censorship

OUR VIEW

How can we fulfill our journalistic responsibilities when faced with an administration that treats us as an afterthought rather than an essential part of the campus community?

In an unexpected and disheartening move, Penn State removed 35 of The Daily Collegian’s newsstands from indoor locations on campus without prior warning to Collegian leadership. This sudden action has sparked concerns about censorship, transparency and the university’s relationship with independent student media. The removal was a heavy-handed approach that reflected poorly on Penn State’s commitment to fostering a free and open campus for student journalism. The university justified its decision by citing violations of campus advertising policy, which governs the distribution and display of materials on university property. It claimed that certain advertisements on nine of the newsstands did not comply with guidelines for third-party advertising featuring political or commercial content. However, it raises a critical question: why remove all 35 newsstands when less than a third were in violation? Such an extreme response not only appears disproportionate but also suggests an underlying desire to control rather than support student journalism.

The absence of communication from the university was equally concerning. The Collegian staff only discovered the removal when the stands were missing on Thursday. This lack of notice forced the Collegian staff to scramble across campus in confusion and frustration, spending hours attempting to locate the Collegian’s property as we waited for an explanation from the university. The decision to act unilaterally — without notifying The Daily Collegian — indicates a troubling disregard for our role as student journalists. It dismisses our right to report and disseminate news freely, eroding the trust that should define the newspaper’s

relationship with the university. This incident occurs in the context of a recent statement from Penn State’s administration about the importance of free speech. Penn State President Neeli Bendapudi recently released a video highlighting the university’s commitment to supporting First Amendment rights, emphasizing the role of public institutions in promoting open expression. However, the university’s rash decision to remove the student press starkly contrasts her words. Just over a week after announcing a new initiative to safeguard free speech, the university’s decision to remove the newsstands undermines the very principles of openness and

inquiry that it professes to uphold. It is essential to clarify: not a single copy of The Daily Collegian’s newspaper violated university policy. The issue at hand was solely related to advertisements. If there were concerns about specific ads, the logical solution would have been to address those directly rather than resorting to a sweeping removal of not only our stands, but also our paper. This act of censorship highlights a troubling misunderstanding of the role of student media on campus. The Daily Collegian is not a student organization — it is a vital institution that provides news, scrutiny and a platform for student voices.

Ultimately, this incident is about much more than advertisements; it raises fundamental questions about the relationship between the university and its student journalists. How can we fulfill our journalistic responsibilities when faced with an administration that treats us as an afterthought rather than an essential part of the campus community? The Daily Collegian has served as the voice of Penn State students for over 137 years. Our commitment to independent journalism is rooted in the belief that we must report on the issues that matter, hold those in power accountable and foster a culture of informed dialogue. This responsibility is not taken lightly, and we will not be deterred by actions that seek to limit our efforts. Student journalism is the foundation of free speech on the Penn State campus, and it is essential that it be protected and supported. Without a robust and independent press, we all stand to lose the critical dialogue that is necessary for a thriving academic community.

MY VIEW | JADZIA SANTIAGO

My journey with eczema

Fun fact about me: I’ve never felt comfortable in my own skin. When people say that, they’re normally talking about insecurities, and I guess that’s true to an extent.



But what if I told you that it’s possible to be physically uncomfortable in your own skin, because just existing in it is painful? That’s what people with eczema experience every day, and it’s what I’ve been dealing with my entire life. Last week, the United Kingdom finished up its National Eczema Week, and Eczema Awareness Month in the United States is coming up in October. With about 7.3% of adults living with eczema in the U.S. in 2021, I figured I should share my story.

If anything, I hope it makes someone feel less alone. Let’s start at the beginning. I was diagnosed with eczema when I was about 1 year old — atopic dermatitis, to be exact. For years after that, my parents followed doctors’ orders closely, but the recommendations didn’t seem to work. My eczema consisted of itching and dryness on my arms and legs, and the prescription ointments and lotions would set it all on fire. It got to a point where my parents started trying to man-

age my eczema at home. I remember many nights spent awake, in pain and believing that nobody could help me. I started to think I was alone. There must have been something wrong with me, because other kids said they had eczema and it wasn’t like mine. Did it make me bad or ugly? I wanted to take a break from being inside my skin, to stand outside on my balcony and feel the cold, nighttime wind. More than anything, I wanted the pain to stop. Even when my eczema went dormant on my arms and legs, I carried those nights with me, both in my mind and in patches of discoloration on my skin that I hid with my sleeves. Over time, my eczema mostly confined itself to my hands, so I found ways to cope. I wrapped myself up in bandages, answered and dodged questions and dealt with unwarranted comments and the insecurities they caused. Last year, I had a stress-induced flare-up so bad that I could barely move my fingers. None of my rings fit, and the splitting skin and pain were enough to disrupt my functioning. Finally, I went to a dermatologist who gave me a prescrip-

“We need to be accepted as we are, because the first step in healing our wounds is feeling like we belong.”

Jadzia Santiago

tion and a new routine to try. When it worked, more than just my skin healed. The little girl inside me cried. I can’t believe it took until I was 19 years old to believe it, but nothing was wrong with me. My eczema didn’t make me bad or ugly. In fact, it said nothing about me. Since then, I’ve been managing, but I’m sorry to say the insecurity stuck around. Eczema has aged my hands, and even when I’m not coping with a flare-up, they look older than the rest of me. I told my partner that I was insecure about my hands early on in our relationship, not long after I healed that massive flare-up. I said I didn’t think they were pretty or soft enough to hold. In response, my partner took my hands in theirs and said, “I like your hands because they’re yours.” This is the type of empathy those of us living with eczema need. We don’t need to deal with judgment, preconceived notions of how our condition should look or feel, or anyone else’s dismissal of how it affects our lives. We need to be accepted as we are, because the first step in healing our wounds is feeling

like we belong. To any other young person living with eczema, I know you may think there’s something inherently wrong with you because of your condition. I know you may feel hopeless if treatments don’t work for you, and I know you may feel unsightly — especially during flare-ups. I’m not going to try to be inspirational and tell you that your condition “doesn’t define you.” For me and many others, eczema has shaped who we are and how we see the world. It’s a part of me, and it took a lot of work to accept it. But I can promise you that no matter how your eczema shows up for you, you are not alone. You aren’t inherently bad or ugly, and your eczema has no moral value. I want you to know that your pain, both emotional and physical, is real and valid. I hope that one day it can ease for all of us, because we deserve that. And trust me, if there’s anything I’ve learned after nearly 20 years of living with eczema, it’s that my skin doesn’t have to be smooth or blemish-free to be acceptable. All it has to be is mine.

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Who we are
The Daily Collegian’s editorial opinion is determined by its

Board of Opinion, which is made up of members of its Board of Editors, with the editor in chief holding final responsibility for content. The opinions expressed on the editorial page are not necessarily those of Collegian Inc., a separate institution from Penn State.
About the Collegian
The Daily Collegian is published by Collegian Inc., an independent, nonprofit corporation with a board of directors composed of students, faculty and professionals. Penn State students write and edit both papers

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BRINGING THE TALENT

By Michelle Diamond
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Penn State’s annual For The Glory Talent Show was held Tuesday night in Schwab Auditorium as Homecoming Week continued to progress.

Twelve of Penn State’s musical groups competed for the grand prize — the opportunity to perform on the mainstage at THON 2025.

The night started with a performance by Volé Dance Company, followed by The Statesmen, Penn State’s all-male a cappella group. “My favorite act was The Statesmen, but we love them — they’re awesome,” Lauren Mauer said.

Mauer, a fourth-year studying elementary and early childhood education, came to the show to see the talent and find out who the winner would be.

Following The Statesmen, four dance groups performed in a row, each showcasing their own style. Urban Dance Troupe delivered hip-hop moves that had everyone in the crowd cheering, followed by Réve Dance Company, who brought their own unique style to the stage.

Rince na Leon, Penn State’s Irish dance club, performed a variety of songs, including “Zombie Nation,” as known by many Penn Staters. They were followed by Orchesis, which focused on jazz and contemporary dance.

“This is such a welcoming environment — everyone is cheering each other on,” Emmerson Piacine, a member of Savoir Faire, Penn State’s all-female a cappella group, said.



Megan Miller/Collegian

Whiplash competes at the 2024 For the Glory Talent Show, held on Tuesday, Sept. 25, 2024 in the Schwab Auditorium, for the chance to perform on the mainstage during THON weekend.

Piacine, a fourth-year studying animal science, performed “Runaway Baby” by Bruno Mars alongside her a cappella group mates.

“Urban Dance Troupe always kills it, and we’re good friends with The Statesmen, so we always like to cheer them on,” Piacine said. “Honestly, all the dance groups kill it — it’s just fun to watch their choreography.”

Following Savoir Faire were three more dance groups —

Penn State Dance Alliance, Nit-tany Dance Project and Tapestry, Penn State’s tap dance company.

As the night approached its end, two more acts showed off their talents before the judges chose a winner.

Atlas, a student organization that focuses on THON year-round, performed a dance for the crowd. The last competing act of the night was Blue in the Face, one of Penn State’s largest a cappella groups.

As the judges deliberated, the winner of the Allen Street Jam on Monday, Whiplash Dance Team, performed. Following this dance group, the 2024 Homecoming Court brought the show home.

Orchesis won third place and The Statesmen won second. Urban Dance Troupe won first place, earning a spot to perform on the mainstage during THON 2025.

Emily Dias, who was the talent show captain last year, wanted to

come and see the event from a different perspective.

“[The crowd’s energy] speaks for itself. It represents Penn State pride,” Dias, a fourth-year studying biobehavioral health, said. “A lot of times I don’t think that people get the chance to see so many different kinds of groups all at the same time, so that’s really special.”

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Noah Aberegg/Collegian

James “Jim” Dugan serves as a part-time professor of field shooting, production editing and TV broadcast studio production courses.

The ‘go-to guy’

By Steven Kister
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Hawaiian shirt, no shoes and a cup of coffee in hand is typically how Professor Jim Dugan greets his students.

The Penn State alum joined the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications in 1996 as a lab coordinator for the school’s TV studios, and is now a part-time professor of field shooting, production editing and TV broadcast studio production courses.

Dugan spent two years in Altoona and originally studied engineering, but he made the switch to communications when he came to University Park.

“I got into the math, and I was like, ‘I don’t want to do this for the rest of my life,’” Dugan said. “So I got into communications. I was interested in video editing, we were in a studio in Boucke (that) was just a classroom that was turned into a studio.”

Dugan got a job with Fox News in Altoona after graduation, where he spent two years before moving onto his current position at Penn State.

“Multi-journalism wasn’t a thing. When you were a journalism reporter, you basically were the reporter on-air and had a photographer with you who did all of your shooting and editing,” Dugan said.

Karen Mozley-Bryan, the College of Communications’ manager of facilities and Dugan’s current supervisor, knew Dugan liked the studio and spent a lot of time there for clubs and campus weather when he was a student.

“When the lab position came open, she let me know, and I applied and ended up back here in the same lab that I learned in,” Dugan said.

Mozley-Bryan has been involved with Penn State’s College of Communications for 35 years and knows Dugan very well.

“He is dramatic and funny, no bars held,” Mozley-Bryan said. “He is who he is. He makes no

excuse for who he is and what he likes and what he doesn’t like.”

According to Mozley-Bryan, Dugan brings a sense of approachability to the job that he learned from being a parent. He has the patience, knowledge, skill and ability to help students learn production.

“You find that a lot of people who have a desire to be in production have never been submerged in production’s different aspects,” Mozley-Bryan said. “You find that they are hesitant to push any buttons (out of) fear that they’re going to break something.”

Above all, she said Dugan is a larger-than-life, energetic presence in the classroom who always brightens a room with his jokes and love for Disney.

College of Communications Dean Marie Hardin said Dugan’s warm and engaging teaching style makes him inviting to students.

Hardin said she recalled once going to Innovation Park, the former home of the Bellisario Media Center, to learn more about what was going on and to spend time with students and faculty. Here, she interacted with Dugan while he worked with PSNtv.

“His work with helping students, understanding the equipment, how to do the in-studio reporting, studio work, field reporting — he brings a great deal of expertise to us,” Hardin said.

According to Hardin, Dugan has been remarkably effective in helping students use the Media Center studios to their full capacity — helping students conceptualize, as well as create content that’s fun and exciting.

“He’s been that go-to guy, a real help to us in (making) the Media Center a real, inviting, exciting place for students,” Hardin said.

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Rallying and Roaring

By Sadie Harvey
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Penn State Homecoming hosted the 2024 Rally and Roar kickoff event in collaboration with the Student Programming Association (SPA) on the Hub-Robeson Center lawn from 5 - 9 p.m. on Sunday.

This is the third year Rally and Roar has kicked off Homecoming week at Penn State. Paige Myers, executive director of Penn State Homecoming, said because the event is relatively new, they’re still experimenting with different aspects of its execution.

“It’s looked different every year. We’re still trying to find what works best,” Myers, a fourth-year studying health policy and administration and a master’s in public policy, said. “It’s been held at Medlar Field, on Curtin Road up by the stadium and now on the Hub Lawn.”

SPA brings in different activities for students and community members, and SPA Special Events Chair Emma Colón said there’s something for everyone.

“We have two obstacle courses, lawn games and a field goal kick competition,” Colón, a third-year studying human development and family studies, said. “For people who maybe can’t do that for accessibility or whatever reason that they decide, we also have a photo frame decorating competition so everyone can be included.”

These competitions weren’t just for bragging rights — Myers said the person with the fastest time on the inflatable race

would be awarded a set of tickets to the Homecoming football game on Saturday.

Another set of football tickets was given to the decorator of the frame with the most votes on Penn State Homecoming’s Instagram, and the field goal kick got a game day gift bag.

“We’re gonna collect all the crafts and post the top five on our Instagram story and whoever gets the most votes also wins a set of football tickets,” Myers said.

Prize or no prize, Rally and Roar attendees said they enjoyed the games and competitions.

Michael Spotts brought his friend group to the event.

“I loved all the inflatables. We had a great time, the four of us. We were running around racing each other,” Spotts, a first-year studying hospitality management, said. “We went through the wipeout course and wiped out

completely. But two of us made it through, so I had lots of fun.”

The wipeout inflatable, called “lava flow,” was a hit with others too. Anya Precil said she had just as much fun on the inflatable as she did watching others.

“You go in there and think you got it. You don’t (get) it, but it is funny watching people try,” Precil, a first-year studying health policy and administration, said.

Another first-year drawn to the event was George Mann, who said he loved Rally and Roar and was excited to experience the rest of his first Homecoming week.

“Well, if this is the kickoff we are excited to see what comes to follow,” Mann, a first-year studying psychology, said. “The fact that we have an entire week for events, I’m very excited to see what can happen.”

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Joel Haas/Collegian

A banner displays the logo for Penn State’s homecoming during the Homecoming Legacy Celebration on April 17, 2024, at the HUB.

Purple Tour ‘parties to polls’

By Tyler Nolt
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

The Purple Tour, described as a “party to the polls,” made a stop in State College on Sunday from 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. at The Basement Nightspot.

The event was sponsored by DAYBREAKER, a company that brings traditional nightlife to the morning in a healthy and energizing way, while also spreading awareness about voting.

Timothy Patch, chief operating officer of DAYBREAKER, discussed the non-profit initiative that aims to bring positivity and celebration to the voting process.

“We call it the Purple Tour because it’s a nonpartisan project,” Patch said. “The goal is just to get people out to vote, and help spread the awareness of early voting dates and deadlines and make it fun.”

Patch also said that The Purple Tour is a healthier alternative to a night out in the city.

“We started in Brooklyn, New

York, and the idea was to be able to bring some positivity to nightlife,” Patch said. “It’s usually a horrible experience, where you want to go out dancing, you’re getting drinks poured on you. It’s the only place you could go, where every step of the user experience is really terrible, but everyone keeps doing it.”

To get attendees ready for the party, the event kicked off with a yoga class led by Alexandra Blok, who also goes by her yogi name, Anandini.

As an instructor for the Bhakti Yoga Center in State College, Blok said she was excited to have received the email asking her to lead the class.

“I was really happy, because I want to see more yogis in State College and people who are interested in a healthy lifestyle,” Blok said.

A less than expected number of attendees showed, with three total participating in the class. This led to numerous times when the dancefloor was empty.

DAYBREAKER brought their performers outside, lining the

sidewalk with two jugglers, a band of four musicians and two pole dancers.

Some passerby found their way down the stairs to The Basement after seeing the performers.

It’s unclear the exact reason for the event’s low turnout, with one theory by organizers being Penn State students not wanting to wake up early after a football game.

However, this wasn’t the case for Ian Wisdom, one of DAYBREAKER’s performers.

“Once you go, it’s a better way to wake up,” Wisdom said. “You wake up when you get out of your bed, but for some reason you don’t feel fully ready for those days, go to the party, get the good vibes and whatnot.”

Purple Tour organizers said they look forward to paying State College another visit in either late October or early November and urge others to “party to the polls.”

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SPORTS

Men’s hoops matchups

By Joe Tuman
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

The scene has been set for Penn State’s upcoming season. Following the finalization of the Big Ten’s 2024-25 schedule, the Nittany Lions now know when and where they’ll face each of their opponents.

After posting a 16-17 record during Mike Rhoades’ debut season in Happy Valley, Penn State will surely be hungry to improve. While Rhoades would welcome a win on any given night, there are some key dates that could help push Penn State toward increased success.

Here are six games that stand out from the pack on the Nittany Lions’ agenda.

Dec. 5 – vs. Purdue

Coming off a national championship appearance, Purdue will return to the Bryce Jordan Center for the first time since Jan. 8, 2022, to open conference play.

Of course, the Boilermakers will be returning without 7-foot-4 phenom Zach Edey, who was drafted by the Memphis Grizzlies last summer.

Despite Edey’s departure, a win over Matt Painter’s squad would be a huge deal for Penn State due to its eight-game losing streak against Purdue.

The Boilermakers have long been the pride of the Big Ten, so Penn State will be the underdog coming into this one. However, if the Nittany Lions exploit Purdue’s potential lack of a clear top option, they could start off Big Ten play with a bang.



Katelyn Supancik/Collegian

Guard Ace Baldwin Jr. passes the ball during the Penn State men’s basketball game vs Indiana on Saturday, Feb. 24, 2024, in the Bryce Jordan Center in University Park, Pa. Penn State defeats Indiana 83-74.

Dec. 21 – at Drexel

The holiday season will see Penn State travel to the Wells Fargo Center for a road tilt against Drexel.

The Dragons are coming off a strong 20-12 season inside the CAA and are led by coach Zach Spiker, who has guided them to four straight winning campaigns.

Notably, Drexel will return zero starters this season, creating a clear contrast with the blue and white’s four returning starters.

This continuity will pay dividends for Penn State all season long and could allow it to lock all windows and doors en route to a win inside the home of the 76ers.

Jan. 5 – vs. Indiana

Revenge will be on Penn State’s mind when it faces Indiana inside the historic Palestra this winter.

The Hoosiers narrowly eliminated the Nittany Lions from the Big Ten Tournament last spring, 61-59, providing Rhoades’ group with some extra motivation heading into this battle.

“The Cathedral of College Basketball” has provided a home away from home for Penn State in recent years, as the team has won four of its last five contests in the arena. After earning a comeback victory over Michigan there last season, Penn State will now play at the Palestra for the third straight season.

Having defeated Indiana twice in the regular season prior to the eventual postseason loss, the program could earn another win in front of the Philly faithful soon.

Jan. 20 – vs. Rutgers

The Scarlet Knights are arguably the Big Ten team carrying the most hype right now.

The addition of two elite recruits in freshmen Ace Bailey and Dylan Harper has heaped lofty expectations onto Steve Pikiell’s team, despite Rutgers’ 12th-place finish in the Big Ten last season.

In addition to Bailey and Harper, the Scarlet Knights roster six other freshmen. As such, their matchup with Penn State could prove quite interesting.

Will the elite talent be too much

for the blue and white, or will veteran instincts allow Penn State to take home the win?

These two will face off twice this season, so this question may have a clear answer by season’s end.

Feb. 8 – at UCLA and Feb. 11 – at USC

The Big Ten will welcome four newcomers in 2024-25, meaning the Nittany Lions will embark on their first-ever in-conference West Coast road trip to face UCLA and USC.

After a few very successful postseason runs, UCLA took a step back last season by mirroring Penn State with a 16-17 record.

The conference realignment, coupled with the departure of Pac-12 Defensive Player of the Year Adem Bona, could cause the Bruins to keep faltering in 2025.

Conversely, USC could be in store for a bounce-back season under new coach Eric Musselman. Musselman ended his tenure at Arkansas with a 111-59 record and will now look to point the Trojans in the right direction following their uneven previous outing.

USC will resemble last year’s Penn State team with the amount of transfer portal additions who’ll play key roles this season. Therefore, it could be that aforementioned sense of continuity which allows the Nittany Lions to find success during their long journey away from State College.

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Emma Lessick/Collegian

Simon Mack (4), Carson Dyck (7) and Dylan Gratton (25) communicate during Men’s Ice Hockey game against Notre Dame on Nov. 4, 2023

Building culture

By Evan Smith
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

On Monday, Penn State announced its newest leadership group — a trio led by senior defenseman and 2024-25 captain, Simon Mack.

“It’s an unbelievable honor to be recognized amongst my team,” Mack said.

The defenseman spent his summer working hard to increase his athleticism and improve the on-ice results for Penn State’s defense. During that stretch, Mack met with some of the newcomers to the blue and white, his interactions with these freshmen a priority for this new leadership group.

“I know when I was in their shoes, I looked up to the senior class,” Mack said. “It’s important that we instill our culture values into them.”

Mack is the 11th captain in team history and the fourth-straight defenseman voted into the role.

Senior forward Carson Dyck and fifth-year defenseman Jimmy Dowd Jr. round out the crew as alternate captains.

“I can’t say enough about those guys. They’re some of my closest friends,” Mack said of Dyck and Dowd.

Dyck has skated in 61 games throughout his Penn State career. The Lethbridge, Alberta, native looks to share the experience he had with former captains to the younger players in the room.

“It’s a massive opportunity to follow along with the initiatives that have been set before,” Dyck said.

“Christian Berger, Adam Pilewicz are guys we learned from that we can build off of.”

Dowd took the role of the fun leader, jabbing transfer goaltender Arsenii Sergeev for his ping pong skills and emphasizing the love the players have for each other. In his new role as alternate captain, Dowd is excited for the opportunity to mentor Penn State’s underclassmen.

“I’ve been here for five years now. It’s my job to put (the freshman) under my wing,” Dowd said.

On top of on-ice responsibilities, Dowd is excited to be there for his teammates on a deeper level.

“If I ever see them struggling with something, they can come to me with anything,” Dowd said.

Dowd held a higher energy than his two stoic partners. The range of personalities amongst this leadership group could prove useful on a roster with eleven new faces from differing backgrounds.

Coach Guy Gadowsky stated the decision on captains was finalized recently after taking input from the roster.

“We asked for a couple guys the team felt were leading the right way this summer,” Gadowsky said. “It was an important summer and I think they picked well.”

Gadowsky emphasized the importance of the summer as a time to improve as a unit, both on and off the ice. With a large-scale roster turnover, the team needed to work hard to hit the ground running this fall.

Gadowsky’s message to his captains was to instill more toughness into the team this season and invite the new recruits into the Penn State culture and play style.

“They have an experience of what Penn State hockey is,” Gadowsky said. “It’s difficult, but we feel we have guys who can add to that identity.”

On top of hockey-specific traits, Gadowsky left one more note about the new leadership group: They all are passionate about Penn State University.

“... One thing you can take from (our captains is) they’re great Penn Staters. They love everything about Penn State,” Gadowsky said.

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Park Avenue pride

By Maggie Hardy
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

A struggling Penn State unit desperately needed a spark going into yet another Big Ten matchup riding a three-game losing streak.

The Park Avenue Army were the ones holding the matches Friday night as the Nittany Lions downed Michigan State 2-1.

The Penn State faithful showed up and showed out for the teams’ annual THON game and propelled the blue and white to break its losing spell.

“For fans to come out the way they did tonight, for a team that’s struggling ... We needed them and they drove us,” Coach Jeff Cook said.

From the moment the starting lineup was announced, the Park Avenue Army was chanting, jeering, and celebrating loud enough to energize just about anyone. Behind that support, the Nittany Lions started out much stronger than they did on Tuesday, recording four shots in the first half compared to just one in the first 45 against the Buckeyes.

Play was very much a back-and-forth battle for most of the first half, but it was the Spartans that broke the ice first. With the first half winding down, junior midfielder Jonathan Stout fired one bar-down on Penn State goalie Andrew Cooke that he had little hope of saving.

Despite letting up a goal with

just over seven minutes left in the half, the Park Avenue Army did not lose its energy, cheering the Nittany Lions on to the sounds of drums and plastic trumpets until the buzzer sounded.

The blue and white marched out of the locker room after the half with its heads held high, and you could feel the energy shift. After maintaining possession for the beginning minutes of the half, the crowd at Jeffrey Field could feel something brewing.

Just over three minutes in, the Nittany Lions finally put a score on the board.

Graduate student Aboubacar Camara broke the ice, scoring Penn State’s first goal in over a game and a half.

After standout junior Christian Dionne battled past a Michigan State defender to set up a perfect pass right in front of the Spartan goalie Zac Kelly, Camara buried the shot in the bottom right of the goal to equalize.

The Park Avenue Army was shaking.

Now a tie game, the Nittany Lions kept the momentum through the rest of the half. The defense was a brick wall and the offense generated chance after chance.

The anticipation grew with each passing second and missed opportunity to pull ahead.

With just four minutes to go, the hero of the night presented himself in the form of freshman midfielder Malick Daouda.

Off a set piece, Matthew Hen-

derson sent a free kick into the center of the box, where Daouda buried it right past Kelly to give the Nittany Lions their first lead of the night and his first collegiate goal.

“Honestly, I don’t remember it,” Daouda said on his go-ahead goal. “We knew we had to bounce back at the end. It just felt amazing to win today.”

As the crowd exploded, Daouda was swarmed, but instead of celebrating on the field with his teammates, he led the team straight to the Park Avenue Army.

The blue and white jumped in the stands and into the arms of its most loyal fans, celebrating a goal that seemed to mean a lot more.

“In a Big Ten game like that, to be able to celebrate with them, it’s amazing,” Daouda said.

After the celebration, the Nittany Lions jumped back onto the field and ran out the clock, capturing their first win in four games.

“I can’t express how much (the Park Avenue Army) added fuel to our guys throughout the night,” Cook said. “So very grateful for the great fan support tonight.”

The Nittany Lions needed a spark to break their losing spell and capture their first conference win, and the Park Avenue Army provided just that.

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Megan Miller/Collegian

Students cheer on the Nittany Lions during the Penn State men’s soccer game against Pitt at Jeffrey Field on Friday, Aug. 30, 2024 in University Park, Pa. Pitt beat Penn State 2-1.



VERSUS

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No. 19 ILLINOIS (4-0)
FIGHTING ILLINI

(3-0) No. 9 PENN STATE
NITTANY LIONS



White Out Energy



Graphic by: Isabella Viteri

Photos by: Jackson Ranger, Sienna Pinney, Bonnie Ryan/AP



Hope Green/Collegian

Penn State head coach James Franklin speaks with reporters at a press conference at Beaver Stadium on March 12, 2024 in University Park, Pa.

State of the program

By Avery Hill
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

There was football weather when Penn State hit the practice field Wednesday. The Nittany Lions sit at 3-0 and are preparing for their biggest game so far ahead of a Saturday matchup with No. 19 Illinois, James Franklin gave injury updates, talked about headset communications and looked ahead to the Fighting Illini.

Injury updates

Against Kent State, linebacker Dom DeLuca and running back Cam Wallace went down with injury. Though Franklin didn't have updates on either player, he said the team "plans on" using freshmen backer Anthony Specca in case DeLuca isn't ready to go. "He would get green-lighted for this game," Franklin said. "We're preparing him to be ready to go this week." Specca saw some snaps last Saturday, and his performance granted him a potential spot in the green-club, at least against Illinois. Captain linebacker Kobe King added that Specca "picked up things fast," and didn't surprise King with his performance. Franklin also mentioned safety-turned-linebacker DaKaari Nelson and sophomore linebacker Ta'Mere Robinson as potential players to step up.

Franklin gave an update on redshirt freshman quarterback Jaxon Smolik, too. Smolik was announced to be missing a "significant amount of time" during spring ball, but has been practicing with the team. According to Franklin, Smolik has been cleared to run "pat-and-go" along with other pregame drills, but that's about it.

Headset communication

With Franklin calling for "White Out energy" for Saturday's game, a point of concern has come up about headset communication. Through the season, Penn State — like the rest of the country — has been attempting to adjust the new in-helmet communication and will be playing in an environment like nothing it's had so far this season. Yesterday, the defense practiced in the indoor facility with crowd noise blasting to get comfortable. Franklin said they've worked through some kinks. "We've cleaned some things up," Franklin said. "Just kind of how we're operating and how dependent we are on the headset communication." King has the green dot when he's on the field, and said he's had struggles with hearing calls through the mic since the headset was installed. They have signals for when they can't hear the call, though, so he said there was

"never really panic."

Taking on Illinois

Penn State is facing a very different team than it faced last year, and though Franklin said there's "some value" in watching last year's film, he made it clear this is a new Fighting Illini squad. "They have new coaches. We have new coaches. You have different personnel," Franklin said. For them it's game five, for us it's game four. There's enough for us to look at based on this year rather than last year." Sitting at 4-0, the Fighting Illini have nearly eclipsed the five-win mark they hit last season. Wide receiver Liam Clifford brought in a 33-yard pass last year, but acknowledged the changes in the program. "Great secondary, bunch of good dudes, they've got a couple of transfers," Clifford said. "Great team, going to be a good challenge — excited for that challenge." On the other side of the ball, King has seen the progression quarterback Luke Altmyer has made. Last season, Altmyer threw four interceptions but is up to 10 touchdowns and no interceptions in 2024. "We want to make him quit," King said.

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A TOUGH TEST

By Lexie Linderman
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

The last time Illinois played in Beaver Stadium, it took Penn State to the first nine-overtime game in NCAA history and pulled off one of the biggest upsets in the Illini's recent history. Two years later, Illinois will have another chance to take down a top-10 Nittany Lion team under the lights in Happy Valley, but the Illini are entering as a top-20 team this time. "It's going to be a heck of a game," James Franklin said. "Their win on the road at Nebraska was a really big win for them, so they're coming in here confident."

A big reason for Illinois' confidence coming into Saturday's game is the play it's had from its secondary — the Illini have seven interceptions in four games after having seven total in 2023. While Penn State's wide receivers seem improved from last season, Illinois' secondary will be the receiving corps' first real test of the season, and the coaching staff knows that. "I think our wide receivers have taken a really nice step and made some really good strides since last season, but we will be challenged," Franklin said. "These guys do a really good job. They play a decent amount of man coverage, and they're extremely competitive." Illinois' offense can't be overlooked either. Quarterback Luke Altmyer, who the Nittany Lions picked off four times in 2023, is yet to throw an interception this season and was recently added to the official Davey O'Brien Award watch list for his play so far in 2024.

Despite the success Penn State had against Altmyer last season, its defense knows it can't dwell on the past and the Illinois quarterback is a serious threat. "He knows how to extend the plays out of the pocket, and he just takes care of the ball," cornerback Jalen Kimber said. "We're gonna have to create havoc, try to cause some disruption up front so that we could probably potentially cause some problems in the back end. He's a good, good quarterback, though." Defensive end Zane Durant knows his position group must have success this week if the Nittany Lions want to remain

undefeated, especially considering the numbers on the stat sheet have been low for Penn State's defensive linemen so far this season. "That's one of our biggest goals, is getting home to the quarterback," Durant said. "So we'll work on that this week and get ready for the game." Bringing the quarterback to the grass is also big for the defensive line mentally, as it boosts their confidence and adds some competition to the room. "It's like a competition for the D-line," Durant said. "Once one guy gets it, everybody else is trying to get there. We kind of compete to get home, and that's what we do as our D-line at Penn State." Saturday's fixture is not only the Nittany Lions' first Big Ten matchup, it's the toughest game Penn State has had this season, resulting in a call from Franklin and Co. for the Happy Valley faithful to bring "White Out energy." "We need this place rocking," Franklin said following the Kent State game. "That's going to be big." Regardless, Penn State is sticking to its 1-0 mentality as it prepares to take on the No. 19 team in the country. "We respect all our opponents, and we don't think anybody's bigger than anybody," Kimber said. "At the end of the day, it's about us, and we focus on us. So we're just going to approach this week the same, put our head down to work ... It's just another game for us."

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Jackson Ranger/Collegian file photo

Defensive tackle Zane Durant runs with the football after picking up a fumble against Illinois on Sept. 15, 2023 in Champaign, Ill. The Nittany Lions won 30-13.

ILLINOIS FIGHTING ILLINI

No.	Name	Position/Elig.	No.	Name	Position/Elig.	No.	Name	Position/Elig.	No.	Name	Position/Elig.
0	Chase Canada	DB/So.	16	Cal Swanson	QB/Fr.	34	Ryan Meed	LB/Sr.	60	Joep Engbers	OL/Fr.
0	Trey Petty	QB/Fr.	17	Collin Dixon	WR/Fr.	35	Grayson Griffin	DB/Jr.	62	Sam Tsagalis	OL/So.
1	Demetrius Hill	DB/Jr.	17	Gabe Jacas	LB/Jr.	36	Lane Hansen	SN/Jr.	63	Dezmond Schuster	OL/Jr.
1	Mario Sanders II	WR/So.	18	Michael Bartolotta	WR/Jr.	36	Blayne Sisson	DB/Fr.	64	Josh Kruetz	OL/Jr.
2	Ashton Hollins	WR/So.	18	Mason Muragin	LB/Fr.	37	Sage Luther	DB/Sr.	65	Kellen Francis	OL/So.
2	Saboor Karriem	DB/So.	19	Hugh Robertson	P/Jr.	39	Jake Furtney	TE/Fr.	66	Braondon Hensen	OL/Fr.
3	Alec Bryant	LB/Jr.	19	Tyson Rooks	WR/So.	39	Kenenna Odeluga	LB/Jr.	67	Steven Scott III	OL/Fr.
3	Kaden Feagin	RB/So.	20	Morrison Giggetts	WR/Fr.	40	Ronan Poynton	LB/Fr.	70	Zach Aamland	OL/Fr.
4	Daniel Brown	LB/Jr.	20	Tyler Strain	WR/So.	41	James Kreutz	LB/So.	71	Hunter Whitenack	OL/Jr.
4	Zakhari Franklin	WR/Sr.	21	Ben Clawson	DB/So.	41	Clayton Leonard	TE/So.	72	Zy Crisler	OL/Sr.
5	Torrie Cox Jr.	DB/Jr.	21	Aidan Laughery	RB/So.	42	Jake Petrow	TE/Fr.	73	Josh Gesky	OL/Jr.
5	Ca'Lil Valentin	RB/Fr.	22	Petey Olaleye	RB/Fr.	42	Luke Zardzin	LB/Jr.	74	J.C. Davis	OL/Sr.
6	Dennis Briggs Jr.	DL/Sr.	22	Kaleb Patterson	DB/So.	43	Joe Barna	LB/Fr.	75	Brandon Henderson	OL/So.
6	Josh McCray	RB/Jr.	23	Jordan Anderson	RB/So.	43	Nick True	TE/Fr.	78	Eddie Tuerk	DL/Fr.
7	Matthew Bailey	DB/So.	23	Terah Edwards	DL/Sr.	44	Patrick Mahoney III	SN/Fr.	78	Kevin Wigenton II	OL/Jr.
7	Kenari Wilcher	WR/So.	24	David Olano	K/So.	44	Angelo McCollom	DL/Fr.	79	Zafir Stewart	OL/Fr.
8	Terrance Brooks	DB/Jr.	24	Vernon Woodward III	DB/Fr.	45	Malachi Hood	LB/So.	80	Hank Beatty	WR/Jr.
8	Malik Elzy	WR/So.	25	Aaron Bell	RB/Fr.	47	Easton Baker	LB/Fr.	81	Carlos Orr-Gillespie	WR/Fr.
9	Luke Altmyer	QB/Jr.	25	Jaheim Clarke	DB/So.	48	Carter Smith	LB/Fr.	83	Tysean Griffin	WR/Fr.
9	Seth Coleman	LB/Sr.	26	Mac Resetich	DB/So.	49	Harrysson Ngassa	LB/Fr.	84	Carson Goda	TE/Sr.
10	Donovan Leary	QB/So.	27	Ethan Moczulski	K/So.	51	Aidan Hall	SN/Sr.	85	Tanner Arkin	TE/Jr.
10	Miles Scott	DB/Jr.	27	Corey Rashad	RB/Fr.	52	Pat Farrell	DL/Fr.	86	Weston Adams	WR/So.
11	Alex Bray	DL/So.	27	Enyce Sledge	DL/So.	53	Devin Hale	OL/Jr.	87	Tyler McClure	WR/Jr.
11	Jacob Huber	QB/Jr.	28	Karson Kaiser	WR/Fr.	54	Demetrius John	LB/Fr.	88	Henry Boyer	TE/So.
12	Amar Reynolds	DB/Fr.	28	Dylan Rosiek	LB/Jr.	55	TJ McMillen	OL/Fr.	89	Tanner Hollinger	TE/Fr.
13	Pat Bryant	WR/Sr.	29	TJ Griffin	LB/So.	55	Jeremiah Warren	DL/Fr.	92	Gentle Hunt	DL/Sr.
14	Cole Rusk	TE/Jr.	30	Jojo Hayden	LB/Fr.	56	Guillermo Gallardo	DL/Jr.	93	Henry Engel	DL/Fr.
14	Xavier Scott	DB/Sr.	31	Declan Duley	P/Fr.	56	Magnus Möller	OL/So.	98	Fabrizio Pinton	K/P/Jr.
15	Alexander Capka-Jones	WR/Jr.	32	CJ Bufkin	DB/Sr.	57	Zach Barrett	OL/Fr.			
16	Tanner Heckel	DB/Fr.	33	Ezekiel Holmes	DL/Sr.	58	Melvin Priestly	OL/Jr.			

PENN STATE NITTANY LIONS

No.	Name	Position/Elig.	No.	Name	Position/Elig.	No.	Name	Position/Elig.	No.	Name	Position/Elig.
0	Dominic DeLuca	LB/Jr.	18	Joey Schlaffer	TE/Fr.	42	Mason Robinson	DE/Fr.	74	J'ven Williams	OL/Fr.
1	Jaylen Reed	S/Sr.	18	Max Granville	DE/Fr.	43	Tyler Elsdon	LB/Sr.	75	Matt Detisch	OL/So.
2	Liam Clifford	WR/Jr.	19	Josiah Brown	WR/Fr.	44	Jaylen Harvey	DE/Fr.	76	Mason Carlan	OL/Sr.
2	Kevin Winston Jr.	S/Jr.	19	Jack Lambart	QB/Fr.	44	Tyler Warren	TE/Sr.	77	Sal Wormley	OL/Sr.
3	Julian Fleming	WR/Sr.	20	Mylachi Williams	DE/Fr.	45	Jackson Pryts	LB/So.	79	Addison Penn	OL/Sr.
3	Jalen Kimber	CB/Sr.	21	Vaboue Toure	S/Fr.	47	Will Patton	SN/Fr.	80	Mehki Flowers	WR/So.
4	Tyseer Denmark	WR/Fr.	23	Antoine Belgrave-Shorter	CB/Fr.	47	Aidan Probst	DE/Fr.	82	Ethan Black	WR/Fr.
4	A.J. Harris	CB/So.	24	Ta'Mere Robinson	LB/Fr.	48	Tyler Duzansky	SN/So.	83	Jake Spencer	WR/Sr.
5	Omari Evans	WR/Jr.	24	Corey Smith	RB/Fr.	49	Ben Chizmar	LB/Jr.	84	Peter Gonzalez	WR/Fr.
5	Cam Miller	CB/Jr.	25	Quinton Martin Jr.	RB/Fr.	50	Cooper Cousins	OL/Fr.	85	Luke Reynolds	TE/Fr.
6	Harrison Wallace III	WR/Jr.	26	Cam Wallace	RB/Fr.	50	Alonzo Ford Jr.	DT/Sr.	86	Jason Estrella	WR/Jr.
6	Zakee Wheatley	S/Jr.	27	Lamont Payne Jr.	CB/Fr.	51	Hakeem Beamon	DT/Sr.	86	Aaron Enterline	WR/Fr.
7	Kaden Saunders	WR/So.	28	Zane Durant	DT/Jr.	52	Dominic Rulli	OL/So.	87	Andrew Rappleyea	WR/Fr.
7	Zion Tracy	CB/So.	28	Karson Kiesewetter	QB/Fr.	53	Nick Dawkins	OL/Sr.	88	Jerry Cross	TE/So.
8	Tyler Johnson	WR/So.	29	Audavion Collins	CB/So.	54	Xavier Gilliam	DT/Fr.	88	Sam Siafa	DT/So.
8	DaKaari Nelson	S/Fr.	30	Amiel Davis	RB/So.	54	Ian Harvie	OL/So.	89	Finn Furmanek	TE/Fr.
9	Beau Pribula	QB/So.	30	Kari Jackson	LB/Fr.	55	Chimdy Onoh	OL/Fr.	90	Liam Andrews	DT/Fr.
10	Nick Singleton	RB/So.	31	Logan Cunningham	WR/So.	56	Joseph Mupoyi	DT/Fr.	91	Dvon J-Thomas	DT/Sr.
10	Dejuan Lane	S/Fr.	31	Kolin Dinkins	CB/So.	56	JB Nelson	OL/Sr.	91	Chase Meyer	K/Jr.
11	Abdul Carter	DE/Jr.	32	Keon Wylie	LB/So.	57	Donnie Harbour	OL/Fr.	92	Andrew Dufault	SN/Fr.
12	Anthony Ivey	WR/So.	33	Dani Dennis-Sutton	DE/Jr.	58	Kaleb Artis	DT/So.	92	Smith Vilbert	DE/Sr.
12	Jon Mitchell	CB/Fr.	34	Tyler Holzworth	RB/Jr.	60	Logan Bahn	OL/Fr.	93	Bobby Mears	DE/Fr.
13	Kaytron Allen	RB/Jr.	35	Blaise Sokach-Minnick	SN/So.	61	Liam Horan	OL/Fr.	93	Sander Sahaydak	K/Jr.
13	Tony Rojas	LB/So.	35	Tyler Armstead	CB/Fr.	63	Alex Birchmeier	OL/Fr.	94	Ryan Barker	K/Fr.
14	Tyrece Mills	S/Jr.	36	Zuriah Fisher	DE/Jr.	64	Eagan Boyer	OL/Fr.	94	De'Andre Cook	DT/Fr.
14	Jaxon Smolik	QB/Fr.	36	Feyisayo Oluleye	WR/Sr.	65	Jim Fitzgerald	OL/So.	95	Jordan Mayer	DE/Fr.
15	Drew Allar	QB/So.	37	Beckham Dee	LB/Fr.	66	Drew Shelton	OL/Jr.	95	Riley Thompson	P/Jr.
15	Amin Vanover	DE/Sr.	38	Winston Yates	LB/Fr.	67	Henry Boehme	OL/Fr.	96	Mitchell Groh	P/Jr.
16	Khalil Dinkins	TE/So.	39	Ty Blanding	DT/Fr.	68	Anthony Donkoh	OL/Fr.	97	T.A. Cunningham	DT/Fr.
16	Elliot Washington II	CB/Fr.	39	Jashaun Green	S/So.	70	Garrett Sexton	OL/Fr.	99	Coziah Izzard	DT/So.
17	Karson Kiesewetter	QB/Fr.	40	Anthony Specca	LB/Fr.	71	Vega Ioane	OL/So.			
17	Ethan Grunkemeyer	QB/Fr.	40	Patrick Williams	S/So.	72	Nolan Rucci	OL/Jr.			
17	Kenny Woseley Jr.	CB/Fr.	41	Kobe King	LB/Jr.	73	Caleb Brewer	OL/Fr.			

UNOFFICIAL WHITE OUT

By Lyle Alenstein
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Prior to the Week 1 tilt against West Virginia in 2023, James Franklin called the 7:30 p.m. helmet stripe game against the Mountaineers at Beaver Stadium a “sneaky White Out.”

“Penn State is one of the great venues for primetime football,” former Penn State quarterback and NBC sports analyst Todd Blackledge told The Daily Collegian last year. “This is not the official White Out game, but I don’t think it will be much less energetic than it would be for that.”

The production of the helmet stripe game resulted in a similar atmosphere — one that had Drew Allar “hearing and feeling the explosion of Beaver Stadium” on his 72-yard touchdown pass to wide receiver KeAndre-Lambert Smith on the opening drive. It was something the gunslinger “won’t forget.”

Flash forward to 2024, Penn State has its first night game of the year, a 7:30 kick time Saturday against Illinois. The matchup will be Penn State’s first Big Ten and ranked tilt of the year, with a top-20 showdown between the No. 9 Nittany Lions and the No. 19 Fighting Illini.

In preparation for the toughest task to date, Franklin made a request to the Happy Valley faithful.

“We need this place rocking. Next week, I’m calling for White Out ... energy,” Franklin said to end his opening statement postgame against Kent State. “Everybody got me? That could be all your headlines. I’m writing your headlines. I’m the editor. White Out energy next week.”

The postgame comments immediately caused the Penn State fans to go into a frenzy, and it didn’t stop there. Franklin, offensive line coach Phil Trautwein, running backs coach Ja’Juan Seider and recruiting coordinator Khalil Ahmad took to X to emphasize the notion of “White Out energy.”

This year the White Out opponent wasn’t released until July — in 2023 the theme was revealed in May. The 2024 White Out will welcome Washington on Nov. 9 for its Happy Valley debut — it’ll be the second time the spectacle has



Sienna Pinney/Collegian

The sun sets behind Beaver Stadium as Penn State prepares to take on Minnesota in the annual White Out Game on Saturday, Oct. 22, 2022. The Nittany Lions beat the Golden Golphers 45-17.

taken place outside of September or October since its induction in 2004.

“This year became a little more difficult because of three networks and the draft process,” athletic director Pat Kraft said during Big Ten Media Days. “They picked the first slate of games that came out, and then it was to a 12-day window. That became a problem for us because of how big the White Out game is. It is the best, I believe, sporting event of the year.”

The game will either be a 3:30 or 7:00 kickoff, much to the dismay of those who believe the nighttime kickoff is the most important part. While the sun is likely to set over Beaver Stadium by halftime for a 3:30 kick, Kraft said the “night piece is critical.”

So with the 2024 White Out not a guarantee to be a night game, it’s clear Franklin and Co. have something up their sleeve, though this potential “unofficial White Out” might have been a change of heart.

“We feel very strongly that there should be one White Out a year,” Franklin said in June.

“We’re able to create some really cool environments with a stripe out, a helmet stripe, which is very close to a White Out... I think it’s up for discussion with myself, Pat and others.”

That discussion might have happened, but the upcoming matchup isn’t going to be labeled as a White Out. It’s a matter of what the fans pull off, but it’s seeming like a wave of white will crash down in Happy Valley — team captain Nick Dawkins posted on X to “wear white,” not leaving anything up to interpretation.

But this isn’t the first time that the Nittany Lions have had an unofficial White Out.

In 2007 Penn State held the White Out against Notre Dame, though Beaver Stadium was doused completely in white against Ohio State. A similar situation happened in 2016, with the White Out against the Buckeyes. The stadium was once again covered in white against Iowa, and Franklin didn’t try to shy away from the spectacle showing up for the second time that year.

“We need Beaver Stadium solid out & rocking next wk against Iowa! TOGETHER we are tough

to beat! Who says we can only have 1 whiteout a yr,” Franklin wrote on X, then twitter, in 2016.

Regardless of what the fans are wearing, Illinois coach Bret Bielema knows State College will be rocking.

He first traveled to Happy Valley as a coach in 1994 as a graduate assistant for Iowa, and knows how hard it is to play in Beaver Stadium.

“It’s kind of like a spaceship out in the middle of nowhere,” Bielema said.”I don’t know if they’re going to be in blue and white or whatever they’re going to be in this weekend. They’re going to be dressed, right? It’s probably going to be one or the other. I know they’re calling for a White Out energy, whatever the hell that means.”

The Penn State atmosphere is one of the best in the nation. Between the 110,000 screaming fans, pregame fireworks and Zombie Nation, it’s hard to replicate the production that the Nittany Lions put on — Franklin does his best by blasting music at practice, but nothing is close to when players step out on the gridiron.

“I think just the environment is super special in general,” Allar said. “Every home game we get is an opportunity for us to cherish and take in all the moments that we get in Beaver Stadium because I think it’s unmatched in college football.”

The game will have Penn State ready to go to war, as it tries to avenge the 9-overtime loss to Illinois in 2021. It’ll be a matter of wait and see if the “White Out energy” results in an “unofficial White Out,” but with the contest from two years ago in the back of the players minds and the frenzy that Franklin has created, Saturday is bound to be a show both on and off the field.

“If you check your closet and maybe too much blue in the laundry, maybe got a stain on your favorite gray hoodie, you know, maybe just take a peek in the closet,” Dawkins said. “You got something white, just put it on for the game and just show some support. That’s all, just a recommendation, just to suggest, you don’t have to follow me.”

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KIMBER BRINGS POISE

By Lyle Alenstein
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

James Franklin said during the offseason he has six cornerbacks that he feels comfortable rolling out onto the field — Jalen Kimber, A.J. Harris, Cam Miller, Elliot Washington II, Zion Tracy and Audavion Collins.

Of the six, Kimber has a trait that the rest of the cornerbacks lack — experience. The 2024 squad had to replace the success of three starters from last year in Kalen King, Daequan Hardy and Johnny Dixon, so the seasoned veteran was a necessary addition for Penn State.

“I feel like I’ve done a pretty good job, but, you know, the job’s not done. I just try to be 1-0 every Saturday,” Kimber said. “Throughout the week, just fine tune all the techniques and little things that I need to do so I can perform my best on Saturday.”

Through three games, Kimber has recorded seven tackles and a pass break up, including time as a starter.

The fifth-year senior spent two seasons at Georgia and two years at Florida prior to heading to Happy Valley at the conclusion of the 2023 campaign. His veteran demeanor has provided a steady presence toward the younger defensive backs.

“He is the older guy, so I believe that him having that advantage of seeing it all has helped this room just stay calm, collected and level headed as well, because that’s just a personality he has,” Harris said. “I believe that it kind of rubs off on our room as well ... when



Kate Hildebrand/Collegian

Cornerback Jalen Kimber takes a selfie with fans after the Penn State football game against West Virginia at Mountaineer Field at Milan Puskar Stadium on August 31, 2024 in Morgantown, W. Va.

Jalen needs to talk, he talks, and he doesn’t say much, so when he does say something, everybody listens.”

The Merrillville, Indiana, native has seen and played a lot of football during his collegiate career.

After hardly seeing the field at Georgia, he’s coming off of a season at Florida where he started 11 of 12 games and tallied 23 total tackles, five pass break ups, a fumble recovery and a quar-

terback hurry. The year prior, he played in all 13 games and netted 13 tackles, a pass break up and an interception.

“He just brings that experience, that veteran leadership. He’s not a very talkative guy, but you can see how he plays with the confidence, plays with aura about him,” safeties coach Anthony Poindexter said. “He’s not a panicky kid. He’s very calm and collected at corner.”

With safety Kevin Winston Jr.

out for the foreseeable future with a “long-term” injury, Kimber’s leadership has kicked in to instill confidence in the secondary that everyone is a capable player and needs the “next man up mentality.”

Despite the 3-0 start to the season and the improved performance against Kent State, Kimber knows the team needs to take everything one day at a time in order to “keep the standard.”

“Just being more locked in. We

respect all our opponents, but just being more locked in on the little things and not trying to be Superman,” Kimber said. “I feel like we came out a little sluggish (against Bowling Green) but this week we emphasized not doing that. Just coming out fast, starting fast and doing what we got to do to get the job done.”

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Sienna Pinney/Collegian

Penn State defensive tackle Zane Durant celebrates a tackle during the game against West Virginia on Aug. 31, 2024 in Morgantown, W. Va. The Nittany Lions beat the Mountaineers 34-12.

Durant’s impact beyond box score

By Lyle Alenstein
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Zane Durant came screaming up the middle and rocked Northwestern quarterback Ben Bryant in the win over the Wildcats last year, putting his impressive speed and strength on display in a thunderous hit.

This season the defensive tackle was put on Bruce Feldman’s 2024 Freaks list, and for good reason with his 6-foot-1, 288-pound frame. The junior has been efficient through three games and has been an instrumental part of the defense.

“My confidence has grown the most, my knowledge for the game, also my IQ for the game, they’re growing the most,” Durant said.

In a defensive line group headlined by defensive ends in Abdul Carter and Dani Dennis-Sutton, Durant is a guy that doesn’t immediately get his name mentioned in Tom Allen’s unit.

Through three games, he’s to-

taled six total tackles, though the work he’s doing on the defensive front isn’t necessarily reflected in the stat sheet.

“I’ve never really been a big stat guy,” Durant said. “I just want to play football and have fun — dominating at every point. That’s all I do. That’s all I really worry about when I step on the field.”

Having fun and loving football is a big part of who Durant is and why he does what he does.

James Franklin said Durant is one of those guys that “loves ball,” and as simple as that phrase might sound, it correlates to his success on the gridiron.

“He loves football, like, I think that’s one of the things that’s so important in today’s day and age,” Franklin said. “Day in day out — staying consistent and punching his ticket.”

Franklin reinforced the notion that Durant’s impact goes far beyond the stat sheet.

His presence forces tons of

pressure on opposing quarterbacks, which was evident against Kent State when he rocked JD Sherrod in the back-field.

Durant’s play comes with a ton of efficiency when he’s on the field. Through three games, he’s been one of the highest graded defensive players for Penn State.

“Zane Durant has been as impactful on the QB as anybody, if you’re just strictly looking at a stat sheet, it wouldn’t tell you that,” Franklin said. “But real football people, they know that. The NFL scouts know that. Our coaching staff knows it. Our players know that.”

Durant has grown over his three years at Penn State, and has taken the lessons and pointers to help enhance his game. Tom Allen’s defense has benefited tremendously from his improvement.

“I feel like I’m doing pretty good at this point in time, but I still feel like I got errors I need to improve,” Durant said. “So I’m never satisfied with what I’m doing right now. I just got to keep improving.”

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‘Best group in the country’

Clifford, wide receivers hard at work

By Lexie Linderman
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

After four years at Penn State, Liam Clifford’s breakout year might be here.

The redshirt junior found the endzone for the first time as a Nittany Lion and recorded his first catch of the season against Kent State after James Franklin and Co. praised Clifford all off-season.

Clifford allowed himself a brief moment to take in the occasion after Drew Allar found him in the middle of the endzone, but he didn’t let himself spend too much time thinking about his career highlight.

“It was fun. It was awesome, obviously soaked in the moment,” Clifford said. “But again, just all about looking to get better, get better any way I can, whether I have a game that I have zero catches, zero yards, or a game that I have 150-200 yards, I’m gonna come back in this building and prepare the same way.”

The wideout mentioned that his brother, former Penn State quarterback Sean Clifford, gave him a call immediately following the game. Sean was excited for his little brother but also knew it was only a matter of time until Liam put up six.

“(Sean and I) both knew it was something I’ve been working toward, preparing for,” Clifford said. “So cool moment, but time to go back to work.”

Clifford wasn’t the only Penn State wide receiver to have a coming out party against the Golden Flashes — transfer Julian Fleming also recorded his best game as a Nittany Lion.

Fleming has impacted the receiver room ever since his arrival, but he’s especially helped Clifford, who said the duo “clicked immediately.”

“(Julian is) a guy that is always looking to get extra work, always get extra catches,” Clifford said. “Again, we talk about the run game, he’s a big part of

the run game. He’s a very selfless player. He’s played a lot of ball, so he’s been able to kind of give us some tips here and there on certain things, but he’s been another voice in the room, which has been awesome.”

As another voice in the room, Fleming helped the receiving corps grow closer, not just as players, but as leaders and friends.

With the wide receivers acting more as a family this season, Clifford said their mindsets have improved greatly and propel them to work hard every day.

“The biggest thing that I’ve seen is just the way we’ve come together as a group every single day,” Clifford said. “We’ve come into the facility with the mindset that we want to be the best group in the country, and we work towards that every single day, day by day, step by step.”

Clifford said a major part of that mindset stems from wide receivers coach Marques Hagans, who is always encouraging his group throughout practice and in-game.

“Coach Hagans always says ‘stay together, stay connected,’” Clifford said. “He constantly says that throughout practice, and I think that helps us a ton ... I think we’ve kind of taken that as a culture and really kind of just gotten on that bandwagon with it and made it our own.”

The Nittany Lions’ receivers have their biggest challenge yet up ahead, as they prepare to take on an Illinois secondary that’s had a monster start to the year. However, Clifford and his fellow wideouts feel ready and excited for the challenge.

“We go against man every day, against our own defense, so it’s not anything we haven’t seen before,” Clifford said. “I think we go against some of the best DBs in the country every day, so we’ve been challenged ... Just honing in on the little details that we know, and just doing our jobs is what it comes down to.”

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Joel Haas

What to watch for: Illinois will follow its typical gameplan of limiting possessions and playing good defense, attempting to drag Penn State into the mud for a slugfest. However, the Fighting Illini won’t be able to fully contain the Nittany Lions’ talented and explosive offense, dropping their first game of the season in Beaver Stadium.

Score: Penn State 31, Illinois 17

Lyle Alenstein

What to watch for: Penn State is calling for “White Out” energy this weekend, and the Happy Valley faithful should bring it with the 7:30 p.m. start time. Illinois’ quarterback Luke Altmyer has been dominant so far this year, but the Nittany Lions controlled him last year and should do it again.

Score: Penn State 34, Illinois 20

Avery Hill

What to watch for: This Illinois team is nothing like last year’s squad. It dominated even the best of defenses, as Altmyer wheeled and dealt against a tough, Nebraska environment on Saturday. The Fighting Illni will put up a fight, but the “White Out” energy environment will play to Penn State’s advantage, and the Nittany Lions will get a late go-ahead touchdown to remain unbeaten.

Score: Penn State 28, Illinois 24

Lexie Linderman

What to watch for: Illinois’ secondary is going to cause some serious problems for Penn State’s offense, but the Illini won’t be able to stop the Nittany Lions’ ground game, or Tyler Warren, resulting in a close win for Penn State in front of a packed crowd bringing serious “White Out energy,” that will rattle the Illini offense.

Score: Penn State 21, Illinois 17

Guest Picker: Matt Fortuna

What to watch for: For all of Illinois’ strengths defensively, the Illini have been vulnerable against the big play. And for the first time in a long time, Penn State appears to have a big-play offense. White Out or not, the energy in Beaver Stadium should be off the charts. The Nits cover an unusually high spread.

Score: Penn State 35, Illinois 17

Nine overtimes later...

Penn State reflects on marathon loss to Illinois

By Avery Hill
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

The last time Illinois came into Beaver Stadium, it walked out with not only victory, but a piece of history. The game didn't feel real for center Nick Dawkins.

"It's like back in the day, you play NCAA, and it be like ESPN Instant Classic," Dawkins said. "That was one of those — We just weren't on the right end of it."

On Oct. 23, 2021, the Fighting Illini left the Nittany Lions stunned after taking Penn State to nine overtimes and coming out on top after Sean Clifford's pass to Parker Washington was batted down and Illinois quarterback Brandon Peters sealed the deal with a ball to receiver Casey Washington, marking the longest game in college football history.

Though most of the team has departed, 20 current Penn State players were on the roster for that moment. Dawkins saw reps on special teams and said he's never experienced "anything like that."

Penn State was ranked No. 7 while Illinois entered at 2-5. Despite that, the Fighting Illini ran for 357 yards on the ground, with

lead-back Chase Brown running all over the Nittany Lions for 223 yards and a touchdown. Josh McCray followed behind with 142 yards.

In 2021, the Nittany Lions allowed 153.2 rushing yards per game, but have vastly improved, allowing 84.7 yards per game so far and 75.5 last season.

Unlike Dawkins, linebacker Kobe King didn't see the field in the fateful matchup, but guaranteed that Saturday will not be a repeat performance on the defensive end.

"I remember how much they ran the ball on us," King said. "This week is going to be the total opposite of that."

On the other side, the Fighting Illini's run game remains respectable. Though there's no star back, Illinois is up to 156.5 rushing yards per contest with four backs already over the 100-yard mark.

The program is also completely different from where it was in 2021 — it was coach Bret Bielema's first season with the team. Now, he's gotten a chance to add identity to his team, and it was evident even in his premiere season.

James Franklin has watched



Lily LaRegina/Collegian file photo

The Illinois football team celebrates its victory over Penn State. The Fighting Illini bested the Nittany Lions 20-18 in nine periods of overtime.

Bielema going back to his playing days as a team captain at Iowa in 1992, and said he's acquired

a style where Bielema's teams won't beat themselves.

"He's done a really good job of winning those close games, those one possession games," Franklin said. "They're going to come in here confident, not only as a team, but also how to handle the environment."

In 2021, an Illinois team devoid of talent turned the ball over three times in the first half, but still rallied to keep the Penn State offense in check and hit the field goal in the fourth quarter to get the game to overtime.

Wide receiver Liam Clifford didn't see action in the game, but with his brother Sean quarterbacking, he was locked in and paced up and down the sideline through the heart of the contest.

"I was like, 'when is this going to end?'" Clifford said.

The contest nearly ended when an end-around pass from a young Tyler Warren just missed Sean in the third overtime — the first of

the game's two-point conversion-style overtime periods.

By the end, the Nittany Lions had fallen flat, and Clifford described it as a draining loss.

In a loss like that, lessons typically fly through the room, even indirectly.

Franklin and the coaching staff have used it as motivation over the years.

Through their preparation, effort and conditioning, Penn State hopes to be on the other end of the scale if a similar game happens again.

Dawkins was given a lesson he'd never forget, and the team continues to use it heading into its bout with Illinois Saturday.

"Football is not boxing," Dawkins said. "You can't knock somebody out one round and it's over. You got to play a full four quarters — one play at a time."

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Lily LaRegina/Collegian file photo

Wide receiver KeAndre Lambert-Smith (13) signals that he's open to quarterback Sean Clifford (14) during Penn State football's Homecoming game against Illinois

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HARRIS WALZ

As the school year begins, I would like to take this special moment to welcome you back to campus.

It feels like yesterday that I was a student at Howard University. I found forever friends, people who shaped me and supported me. I found my beloved Alpha Kappa Alpha sisters. Like many, college is when I started to become politically engaged. Together, we learned that progress happens in our country when young people fight for it.

Throughout my travels as Vice President, I love talking to young leaders. I am continually amazed by your grit, your perseverance, your intellect, and your deep passion for making our world better.

It is because of the record turnout among college students in 2020 that I am Vice President today. And to win this election, I need your support.

This November, so many of our fundamental freedoms are at stake. The freedom to vote. The freedom to live safe from gun violence. The freedom to love who you love, openly and with pride. The freedom to breathe clean air and drink clean water. And the freedom to make decisions about your own body.

Later this semester, you will have the opportunity to vote in an election that will decide the future of our country. You will have the power to shape our future. To continue to build the country you want to live in—one where your fundamental rights are protected—by taking to the ballot box and making your voice heard.

Your vote has never mattered more. When young people fight for progress, it changes the course of our nation. I believe in you. I am inspired by you. And I am rooting for your success.

Sincerely,



Vice President Kamala Harris



PAID FOR BY HARRIS FOR PRESIDENT