

CHEERS TO  
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## ‘KESEM IS MAGIC’

*Students support children of parents with cancer through Camp Kesem*By Paloma Munoz  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

When a parent is diagnosed with cancer, one of the first thoughts that goes through their mind may be their young children and how they will cope. Nationwide, 5 million children are coping with a parent's cancer diagnosis — a concern that Penn State students are working to address locally through Central Pennsylvania's chapter of Kesem.

Every summer, the organization offers a free week-long summer camp to children affected by a parent's cancer diagnosis.

“Kesem is magic,” Dominic Russo said. “That’s the only way to describe it.”

Russo, a second-year in the division of undergraduate studies, is one of the two directors. He said the nonprofit organization is completely run by volunteers, who put in the time because they love the mission.

“It truly changed my life. I wouldn’t be here now without Kesem,” Russo said.

Together with Nick Sabo, the second director, the two work to fundraise and plan a summer of fun for children who have not been able to have that in a while.

“The second you enter camp, or anytime you’re with these campers, an immediate smile goes on your face,” Sabo, a second-year student studying supply chain and information systems, said. “Everyone coming together is just so much fun for me.”

According to Sophia Ketner, the operations manager, Kesem hopes to provide an extra home for children with parents who have cancer.

“You come to camp to just embrace who you are and have that good week throughout the year of not having to worry about what’s going on at home, just being with people who care about you and are there to listen and



Courtesy of Keely Reese and Magill Mae

**Campers at Camp Kesem** gather for a group picture. The nonprofit organization is completely run by volunteers, including Penn State students, at its Central Pennsylvania chapter.

who understand what you’re going through too,” Ketner, a third-year studying elementary and early childhood education, said.

Russo said Kesem also shows participants that they aren’t alone and gives them the opportunity to build relationships with children having similar experiences.

“Maybe they’re the only ones whose parents have cancer. They feel isolated and alone. They have no one to talk about it with. No one knows what they’re going through,” he said.

Both Russo and Sabo were previously campers at Kesem, and now work to give the same experiences they had as children to campers.

“When my parent passed

away, they were so supportive of me,” Russo said. “They were able to send gifts, they were able to come to their funeral, even though it was five hours away, and they were able to continue to be that support.”

Russo considers the Penn State students part of Kesem “the best people on campus,” and he said they grow as people through their work with

the organization.

Ketner joined Kesem after receiving an email during her first year at Penn State.

“I found out about it at Penn State and just fell in love with the people and the mission,” Ketner said. “It means family, giving the campers support outside of their home life and giving them that

childhood that maybe they lost on the way.”

Together with the Penn State community, Kesem continues to provide a week of fun and enjoyment for children that are processing a difficult situation.

“Just being able to give back to these kids means a lot to me,” Sabo said. “And knowing that I’m doing my job well and that they’re having the best time that they can.”

Kesem also has clubs that continue the support year-round, allowing for events like Friends and Family Days to be held that allow campers to remain connected outside of the summer.

“It’s all year-round support and love from us,” Ketner said. “I’ve heard the kids say themselves that they have their family at Kesem.”

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Courtesy of Keely Reese and Magill Mae

**A camper at Camp Kesem** places handprints on a “Cancer Sucks” banner.



# How to support wildfire victims

By Sienna Pinney

THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

My first time visiting Penn State was move-in weekend my freshman year. The sky was orange with smoke as I drove to the Sacramento airport with my parents while several fires raged across the West Coast.

Landing in Pittsburgh, I was awed by the clean air and rain falling in August.

I'm a senior now, but it felt like déjà vu flying back to school while wildfires spread across Los Angeles.

A series of wildfires began in southern California on Jan. 7 and they have since spread more than 62 square miles, destroying thousands of structures and killing at least 24 people as of Tuesday. Strong winds and dry conditions have resulted in little to no containment as the flames spread. For live updates, you can visit the live updates page from the Associated Press.

Here's how Penn State students can support victims of the L.A. wildfires from 2,500 miles away.

## Support charity efforts

While most students don't have the means to make hefty donations, donations of all sizes make an impact.

Do research on who and what you are donating to and what the funds are being used for to avoid potential scammers taking advantage of the crisis.

The New York Times listed Charity Navigator and GuideStar as reputable sources for information on nonprofit groups and aid agencies, as well as directories for trustworthy organizations.

The following charities have been vetted by various news organizations:

The American Red Cross of Greater Los Angeles is providing emergency shelter, food, water, health and emotional support



Noah Berger/AP

A helicopter drops water while fighting the Auto Fire in Ventura County, Calif., on Monday, Jan. 13, 2025. The fires have spread over 62 square miles since they began Jan. 7.

services. The free Red Cross Emergency app is also providing real-time alerts and open shelter locations with support in English and Spanish.

Direct Relief has focused its efforts on providing free N95 respirators in addition to other essentials. Donations go toward procuring these items to distribute. Wildfire smoke is not the same as campfire smoke — dangerous chemicals, asbestos and other small particles can lead to long-term health effects, even from inhalation several miles from the source.

Save the Children is accepting donations to support its efforts on procuring child-focused supplies for children and families with children.

California Community Foundation is accepting funds for immediate relief, as well as long-term needs of neighborhoods as they rebuild from the wildfires' effects. The foundation also works on rebuilding essential infrastructure, providing labor law education and immigration services.

Los Angeles Regional Food

Bank is accepting financial donations, essential items and volunteers.

The Pasadena Humane Society is an animal resource center and shelter working to serve animals in need in the disaster-affected areas. Search and rescue teams are looking for displaced animals in areas safe to enter and log every animal to provide medical attention and reunite lost pets with their owners. Updates can be found on the website to find information on pet supply pickups, donation drop-offs and other urgent announcements.

The Ventura County Community Foundation is accepting donations to support the needs of victims of the wildfires.

The Center for Disaster Philanthropy awards grants to nonprofits and community groups across California to help with medium- to long-term disaster recovery. The fund also supports preparedness and mitigation efforts and recovery from wildfires.

World Central Kitchen was founded by chef José Andrés and is organizing efforts with food

trucks and restaurants to provide meals for emergency workers and victims of the wildfires.

GoFundMe.org has started a 2025 Wildfire Relief Fund, as well as a centralized hub where donors can find verified pages related to the wildfires.

Several charity organizations and shelters have also encouraged specific donations, as many shelters do not have the resources to store miscellaneous items. Direct donations to individuals or families in need have also been encouraged.

## Support first responders

Firefighters, emergency medical services, police officers and other first responders have been on scene since the wildfires began and are providing critical services to aid victims and work towards containment.

While Penn State students may not be able to drop off donations at shelters or donation centers, they can support the first responders directly.

The Los Angeles Fire Department has listed the following

organizations on its website for those looking to make monetary donations:

The Los Angeles Fire Department Foundation is accepting donations to equip firefighters with tools and supplies to contain the fire. Specific equipment may include emergency fire shelters, hydration backpacks and wildland brush tools to protect firefighters while they work to contain the blaze.

Contributions to California Community Foundation's Wildfire Recovery help provide immediate relief and long-term needs to neighborhoods affected by the disaster.

The American Red Cross provides disaster relief response. Donors can make one-time or monthly donations.

Donations to the Salvation Army help provide aid, shelter, food and support to victims and first responders.

California Fire Foundation provides support to the families of firefighters and their communities. Donations are used to fund scholarships for the children of fallen firefighters, aid for the victims of fire and other natural disasters and to provide fire safety resources to communities across California.

The California First Responder Support Team (CFRST) is a nonprofit association dedicated to supporting first responders in California.

This support goes beyond the current wildfires: training, equipment and other essential services are provided to volunteer and small-paid fire departments who may not have the finances to otherwise afford them. CFRST also provides training to first responders experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder and training for therapy dogs.

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Courtesy of Kourtney Pryor

Kourtney Pryor founded Eminence Modeling Troupe as a student. EMT blends runway modeling and choreographed stage routines.

# From classroom to runway

## Penn State student models leadership

By Gabrielle Marston

THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

For Kourtney Pryor, balancing a rigorous academic schedule with her passion for fashion was only the beginning.

As the co-founder and president of Eminence Modeling Troupe, Pryor, a third-year studying management information systems, created the first and only modeling organization on campus.

EMT isn't just about fashion; it's a dynamic blend of runway modeling and choreographed stage routines. It's a platform for students to "express themselves and develop valuable skills in the fashion industry," Pryor said.

One of Pryor's goals for EMT is to foster students' personal growth while preparing them to navigate and thrive in professional environments post-graduation. "I've been modeling from a young age," Pryor said. "It's always been a part of my life, and when I arrived at Penn State, I knew I wanted to start something that could bring this passion to campus."

With the help of supportive upperclassmen and university faculty, Pryor launched EMT in January 2023. The organization quickly gained traction, recruiting students interested in various aspects of fashion, from modeling and makeup to photography and dance.

Pryor encountered challenges in being taken seriously when she became president because she said she tended to be overly nice and lenient.

"I learned to balance friendliness with professionalism," Pryor said.

Among the new recruits was

Taree Dawson, who said her first love was modeling. Despite initial plans to attend a renowned fashion school in Chicago, Dawson was persuaded by family to enroll at Penn State.

EMT provided Dawson the opportunity to further develop her modeling skills.

"At first, I didn't have much experience with incorporating dance and routines into modeling," Dawson, a third-year studying criminology, said. "Kourtney was a big help in training us, focusing on posture and techniques to build our confidence."

Dawson found more than just a resume booster with EMT.

"The best thing about being part of EMT is the friendships I've made," Dawson said. "Our bonding events, like game nights and potlucks, really help us become comfortable with one another."

Another addition to the EMT team is Julia Bing. Bing has taken photos for EMT at events such as the PRCC Pep Rally and the NAACP Block Party.

"The best part of being a photographer for EMT is capturing those special moments," Bing, a third-year studying broadcast journalism, said. "Using my pictures to bring more awareness to EMT and help build the club up is incredibly rewarding."

The organization provides students with a bigger platform to express their identities.

"We're creating a home for those who share our passion and want to showcase their talents," Pryor said.

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# IECP, ROTC collaborate

By Paloma Munoz

THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

In February 2023, the Penn State Intensive English Communication Program (IECP) had its classrooms and offices moved into the Wagner Building, where the ROTC also has its respective classrooms and offices.

Professor and coordinator for the IECP, Nikki Mattson, experienced firsthand how tensions changed in the classroom and the general environment of Wagner.

"I felt sort of the tension that seemed to be existing from the students in my class asking me questions," Mattson said. "Why are they wearing uniforms? Why are they marching? Why are they doing this?" There's relationships, there's feelings happening."

Mattson, who's worked for the IECP since December 2017, had a new idea after seeing this tension. She thought a collaboration with the ROTC could help bring educational experiences to both parties and make the environment more friendly.

"I cold emailed lots of people I found on the ROTC website and said, 'Hey, I'm a teacher here. This is a situation where we share space,'" Mattson said. "Put a human face to these very different populations right? Break down those walls."

IECP students are primarily from Gulf countries and the Middle East, according to Mattson, where the interaction with the military is far more different than it is in the U.S.

"When I came, they used to do

drills in the hallways recruiting," Aziz Alqahtani, a Saudi Arabian student from the city of Al-Khobar studying in the IECP program, said. "So they were shouting, and we didn't know what to do. We thought that they didn't want anything to do with us."

Mattson started bringing ROTC cadets into her classroom for shared activities with the IECP students. These activities included learning about differences in day schedules and learning what different hand gestures and phrases mean in diverse cultures.

"We got offered extra credit, and I was like, 'sure, I'll go do it for the extra credit,' and then I really liked it," Mission Support Deputy Commander for the ROTC Ashley Burney said. "I think it benefits them as much as it benefits us."

Burney helped with the collaboration last spring alongside Dean Woods, the data support division commander for the ROTC. Both returned to assist with the program last fall.

"You basically just go get to meet these people from different countries, which I've never met before and don't really have a good solid understanding of," Woods, a third-year studying security and risk analysis, said. "I think it's good to expand your knowledge and understanding of other cultures and then also have them understand our culture, especially being in uniform."

Mattson, Alqahtani, Woods and Burney, a fourth-year studying electrical engineering, all agreed that the collaboration was successful at bringing down the barriers in Wagner and offering a

great opportunity for students to learn about different cultures.

"When they joined us in the activities, I realized that they're not bad," Alqahtani said. "Overall, the ROTC experience with us has been very great, considering how they have crazy stories to tell."

Similarly, Burney and Woods agreed that the experience helped them prepare for future deployments, where they may end up in the countries of origin of the IECP students.

"You get to know them and you remember their names, and so it's more personal each week," Woods said.

After seeing its success, Mattson hopes to continue the collaboration and make it an official program at Penn State to offer during her classes. Both Woods and Burney said that they would also continue to participate in the program and learn alongside the IECP students.

"Each population has something to offer. Each student has a different life experience," Mattson said. "I've never heard of another similar program where you're bringing the military together with international students."

The collaboration, which started with a teacher spotting a problem, has blossomed into multiple friendships and helped students learn about new cultures in a new way.

"We just share our experiences," Alqahtani said. "And we're from different backgrounds, so we have a lot of different stories to tell."

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Courtesy of Nikki Mattson

The IECP program meets with students in ROTC in the Wagner Building. "I've never heard of another similar program where you're bringing the military together with international students," Nikki Mattson said.







MY VIEW | KAHLE WRAY

# Be a responsible tourist

My face is floating around in the camera rolls of people I've never met. In some instances, I was mistakenly caught in the background of another's photo op, and in others, my presence there was more intentional on the photographer's part.

Maybe they liked my outfit (I have some cool jeans), maybe I was doing something odd (I've been known to mumble to myself) or maybe they were on vacation in Jamaica and wanted a picture of "locals" to post on their Instagram. I have my qualms with the latter.

Long before I migrated to the United States, I was a little girl frolicking in Montego Bay, one of Jamaica's top tourist destinations.

Needless to say, I'm very familiar with tourists and their antics. I've taken pictures for them, shared suggestions, offered directions and it's quite

likely I've sometimes been the example of misfortune they share with their children.

Let's be honest, you and I have both seen the posts from influencers, missionaries and the average Joes alike with unsuspecting children from "third-world countries" and a caption professing how grateful they are to not live in squalor and poverty like these malnourished, uneducated children. Never mind that more often than not, they know nothing about these children or their circumstances.

Sometimes the kids have obviously been posed, and other times, the kids seemed as though they were happy to smile.

When I was in third grade, I happily posed for a group of tourists, and I even asked to see the picture afterward.

I'm not losing sleep over that particular interaction. As I recall it, we were both on display. They prodded and poked at me, and I prodded and poked at them.

Of course, they objectively

took advantage of my innocence. No one sold them a sightseeing package to see an 8-year-old Kahlie.

Sure, I posed, but snapping multiple pictures of a random child you saw on vacation is a bit strange. Children aren't photo props.

This strange pastime isn't the only odd activity of many tourists. As I prepare to study abroad in Brno, Czech Republic, I find myself mulling over how to be a responsible tourist.

While foreign students may not be tourists in the most traditional and stereotypical sense, we're liable to commit some of the same offenses traditional tourists are bashed for.

I've been increasingly seeing videos of students who've just completed their program claiming to be experts in the country they studied in. Yes, I understand hyperbole, but let's just be clear: It doesn't matter if by week three of your program you feel like a local — you're not.

I'm not saying you shouldn't be proud of your adjustment — believe me, the second I'm able

to get around Brno without help I'll be overcome with joy. I'm saying you shouldn't go toe-to-toe with a true local over the intricacies of their home.

There's no world in which you know more than a local after three weeks or even six months.

This seems obvious, but I've been in arguments with individuals who've visited Jamaica for a week and now swear they know more about the island than me — the born and bred Jamaican.

Many of these individuals also had a habit of projecting an identity on me based on the Jamaicans they interacted with during their trip. I'm just as guilty of making generalizations about a group of people as the next person, but we should all make a demonstrated effort to remember each individual person is unique. Furthermore, it doesn't matter that stereotypes are often rooted in truth; they're often hurtful.

Every Jamaican isn't a pot-head. We don't even call it pot.

As time passes, you'll naturally begin to develop a sense of the behavior of locals, and when

relaying that to others, be intentional about your language. Try to stray away from bold claims, especially when they're negative.

There's always a chance we'll meet people who are just downright rude when abroad, but just as how we don't judge everyone at home based on the actions of a single individual, let's not do the same when abroad.

Whether you're embarking on a family vacation, Maymester or a semester abroad, it's important to remember you're a guest in those spaces. Treat the locals and their homes with the same dignity and respect you'd want them to extend to you and your home country.

The world is your oyster, but you're not the only pearl. For 2025, let's vow to be more ethical and responsible travelers.

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Cartoon by Ethan Capitano

MY VIEW | TERESA PHELAN

# Penn State women's athletics deserve recognition

Penn State's women's volleyball secured its eighth national title on Dec. 22, as a historic powerhouse in female athletics continued to show its dominance.

Last season, the women's soccer team reached the Elite Eight of the NCAA Tournament. Women's gymnastics is ranked No. 16 in the country.

With 15 varsity sports, Penn State's women's athletics are making a name for themselves through weekly accolades, national championships and more.

Unfortunately, they often take second place to their male counterparts.

Women's ice hockey is 19-4-1, while the men's team is 8-10-2. Women's cross country recorded better finishes than the men in their four coed meets. Women's volleyball plays in a packed Rec Hall every match.

Just like the 16 men's varsity teams, these are student-athletes competing at the Division I level and deserve the same amount of praise.

This isn't to downplay the accomplishments of all teams and athletes, but it's time we start recognizing the national

success of women's sports on campus.

Male-dominated sports are consistently the face of athletics, but when it's the women's team bringing trophies and records home, we need to shift the narrative.

I'm going to go out on a whim and say if the football team won the national championship, there would be some sort of parade once they returned to campus, yet there was only a small celebration for the women's volleyball team that did capture the title.

Granted, students were on break for the team's return in Rec Hall, but there's no excuse not to plan something for when students came back for the spring semester.

It's not going to be a switch that's flipped overnight; it's going to take years to put women's sports on the pedestal that men's athletics sit on, but it needs to start somewhere.

Unlike football, men's basketball and men's hockey, every single women's sport is free to attend, meaning there's no reason why students shouldn't be making their presence known.

Being a fan of Penn State sports typically just means football, and sometimes wrestling, but it's up to alumni, students and community members to create an environment where supporting Penn State athletics truly does encompass all teams.

Channel the pent-up frustration about the football team into a sport currently in season, possibly engaging in a sport you wouldn't have watched otherwise.

Just like how this problem isn't solved overnight, the problem wasn't created in a day. It's everything from lack of media coverage to stereotypes.

There are still residual effects of the adequate mindset that downplays women's athletic abilities when we're witnessing firsthand that isn't the case. These are students who are winning games, conferences, championships and making their mark on Penn State history.

I would be remiss to acknowledge the pace and style of play do vary between women and men, but different doesn't automatically mean bad.

An underestimated challenge

that women's athletics faces is the idea that there's often not an "after college" route for many athletes to take.

Football, basketball, hockey and baseball all have large professional leagues that allow fans to follow an athlete from college to the NFL, NBA, NHL or MLB.

With the introduction of women's leagues such as League One Volleyball, the Women's Lacrosse League and the Professional Women's Hockey League, there's a way that fans can interact with the athlete post-graduation.

Big names like Sophia Gladieux and Jess Mruzik are making moves in the sports world, representing Penn State at the Olympics and in League One Volleyball, respectively. Just because their games aren't aired on ESPN, doesn't mean they're less important.

Supporting women's athletics doesn't mean fans have to sacrifice their beloved male sports.

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Phelan

“Supporting women’s athletics doesn’t mean fans have to sacrifice their beloved male sports.”

Teresa Phelan  
Columnist

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# Built for battle vs. Big Red

By Evan Smith  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

With the Big Ten slate in full swing, the Nittany Lions will visit Lincoln, Nebraska, for their first conference road trip of the season. The match will take place at 7 p.m. Friday at the Devaney Center.

Penn State is 7-0 and coming off a sweep of Michigan State — a match where it faced zero ranked wrestlers.

Nebraska enters the contest with momentum after ending Minnesota's 10-dual winning streak, defeating the Golden Gophers 21-13.

Last year, the national talk was that Nebraska could be the team to defeat the Nittany Lions in a dual meet. This year, even with a deep lineup, there hasn't been any expectation of an upset in Lincoln.

Friday's match could feature up to 10 ranked matchups.

## 125: No. 6 Caleb Smith vs. No. 12 Luke Lilledahl

"Lightning Luke" remains undefeated in his true freshman campaign, but Smith — Lilledahl's highest-ranked opponent to date — presents a new challenge.

The All-American is coming off a top-10 win over Cooper Flynn of Minnesota but has suffered three defeats this season.

A victory for Lilledahl would likely push him into the top 10 as we reach the midpoint of the campaign.

## 133: No. 16 Jacob Van Dee vs No. 5 Braeden Davis

Davis' physical style, which Van Dee hasn't been shown to match, will have him favored in this contest.

Van Dee is known for upset victories since defeating Michigan's Dylan Ragusin last season, but 2024-25 hasn't been nice to him, as he holds a 7-5 record. The



Chloe Trieff/Collegian file photo

**Penn State's Greg Kerkvliet** takes on Nebraska's Christian Lance during the 2022 NCAA Wrestling Tournament. Kerkvliet defeated Lance 7-1.

Union City, Pennsylvania, native has won both of his matches in the new year.

## 141: No. 6 Brock Hardy vs No. 3 Beau Bartlett

This match is the first of a highly anticipated stretch of matchups on Friday.

Since being spladled at the NCAA Tournament last year, Hardy has been solid for Nebraska. However, he was upset at the start of the month by Cael Happel of Northern Iowa.

Bartlett will look to help his coach become the second Cael to take down the Cornhusker this year.

## 149: No. 4 Ridge Lovett vs No. 2 Shayne Van Ness

On paper, this is the match of the night in Lincoln.

Lovett and Van Ness are two of the most publicly confident wrestlers at 149 and haven't been quiet about their goal to dominate every match they're in.

Lovett's only loss of the season came to No. 1 Caleb Henson. He enters with a 10-1 record with three pins.

Van Ness is undefeated entering this match and consistently gains extra points for the Nittany Lions.

The winner of this one will be the favorite to face Henson in the national championship, and the bout should feature aggressive offense from both competitors.

## 157: No. 5 Antrell Taylor vs No. 3 Tyler Kasak

Taylor was an All-American at 165 pounds last season, so his experience against larger wrestlers could help counter the strength and power Kasak has shown while frustrating opponents this year.

Taylor suffered a major-decision loss against Ryder Downey of Northern Iowa but recovered with a top-10 victory against Minnesota. He sits at 14-1 on the year.

Kasak is undefeated and performing more consistently than Taylor: If Taylor performs up to his ability, this will be a physical, entertaining bout. However, if Kasak can catch Taylor off guard as Downey did, he could take a shockingly fast decision.

## 165: No. 7 Bubba Wilson

## vs No. 1 Mitchell Mesenbrink

Bubba Wilson has shot up the rankings this season after starting outside of the top 20.

The senior has earned multiple upset victories against top-10 opponents this year, but none of them have been on Mesenbrink's level.

Wilson missed the Minnesota match due to an injury suffered in December, but he looks to return against Penn State.

## 174: No. 15 Lenny Pinto vs No. 2 Levi Haines

Pinto's stock has fallen considerably from when he was ranked No. 3 at 184 pounds a year ago. That will be motivation to take on Levi Haines, who moved up to 174, as opposed to Pinto, who dropped into the weight class.

Pinto won his match against Minnesota to bring his record to 13-3. Haines' only loss was to No. 1 Keegan O'Toole, so he will be expected to handle a competitor of Pinto's caliber.

## 184: No. 7 Silas Allred vs

## No. 1 Carter Starocci

Allred is Starocci's toughest challenge since facing Parker Keckeisen to open his run at 184 pounds.

The Husker is 11-2 on the year but coming off a loss to No. 4 Max McEnelly at Minnesota.

Starocci has continued his career of dominance at his new weight class. Against Michigan State, he showed some struggles completing a pin when his opponent flattened himself to the mat. That may be a new weakness Allred can attempt to exploit against the top-ranked Nittany Lion.

## 197: No. 22 Camden

## McDanel vs No. 4 Josh Barr

McDanel was a successful U20 competitor before coming to the Big Ten, but the freshman hasn't translated quite as well as Barr, sitting with a 12-5 record.

Barr, a freshman for Penn State, is 10-0 on the season and has won conference awards for his performances on the mat.

This match will likely be a perennial tournament match, with Friday showing off the future of 197 for two of the conference's top programs.

## 285: No. 24 Harley

## Andrews vs No. 2 Greg Kerkvliet

This contest shouldn't be much of a question for those predicting the match results for Friday.

Andrews is 8-7 in his sophomore season, while Kerkvliet is undefeated, touting his goals of winning the 285-pound title in the spring.

Andrews fell to No. 1 Gable Steveson, 19-4, last week. Kerkvliet will look to top Steveson's score when he faces Andrews on Friday.

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# State superlatives

## Penn State football team awards for 2024 season

By Avery Hill  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

The curtain has closed on Penn State's extended 2024 season, so it's time to give out some awards.

The Nittany Lions went 13-3 on the year, reaching the College Football Playoff semifinals, where they were knocked out by Notre Dame. There was success on both sides of the ball, scoring 34.4 points a game and allowing just 294.7 yards per game.

Here are my picks for team awards.

## MVP and Offensive Player of the Year: Tyler Warren, tight end

No surprise here. Tyler Warren established himself as an unstoppable force in 2024.

Warren had 104 catches, 1,223 receiving yards and eight receiving touchdowns in 2024. He also rushed for 218 yards and four touchdowns. He's been a match-up nightmare and a fierce blocker to go with it.

Playing receiver, running back, quarterback and center, the 2024 Mackey Award winner was Mr. Do It All for the Nittany Lions.

He shredded tons of Penn State and Big Ten records, with his highlight game being 17 catches for 224 yards in the road win over USC. He's now headed to the NFL, but with one big season,

he established himself as one of the best to ever don the blue and white.

## Defensive Player of the Year: Abdul Carter, defensive end

Abdul Carter would easily be MVP on 99% of FBS teams, but Tyler Warren exists in Happy Valley.

Carter moved to defensive end in the offseason, citing a chance to be closer to the ball, and he dominated.

He finished the year with 68 tackles, 12 sacks and 24 tackles for loss — all career highs. Carter adjusted to the position as the year went, getting eight sacks and 14 tackles for loss in the last nine games. He was unstoppable, even with one arm.

## Freshman of the Year: Luke Reynolds, tight end

Another tight end. Luke Reynolds played 265 snaps in 2024, serving as Penn State TE3, a big part in the offense that runs tons of 12 personnel. He mainly flashed as a skilled run blocker, but accumulated nine catches for 111 yards and a touchdown.

Center Cooper Cousins could've won the award, making a few key blocks across the season, but Reynold's 32-yard fake punt

run against Minnesota gives him the edge.

## Most Improved Player: Jaylen Reed, safety

Plenty of players improved in 2024, so we're going to throw out honorable mentions for safety Zakee Wheatley and defensive tackle Zane Durant, but Jaylen Reed's case is the strongest. Warren is also an option, but that's just boring.

Reed was an impact player last season, but went from 46 tackles in 2023 to 98 in 2024. He also notches 2.5 sacks and three picks.

Reed not only came up in clutch moments, but was a force all game, playing nickel and safety. He caught fire in the four games between Oct. 12 and Nov. 9, collecting his three picks. Reed was already strong as a run defender, but his improvement as an impactful playmaker won him this one.

## Assistant of the Year:

## Deion Barnes, defensive line coach

This award could be shared between Deion Barnes and offensive line coach Phil Trautwein, but I'm going with Barnes.

Penn State's defensive line kept the team in games week after week, specifically in the run game where the team allowed just 101.9 rushing yards per game. When the defensive line was needed most, it delivered, stuffing Boise State's Ashton Jeanty for a season-low of 104 yards on 3.5 yards per carry.

With a plethora of defensive tackles returning, including Durant, Barnes was able to rotate his defensive linemen and keep them fresh. Even when injuries arose, his bunch worked fine with the uptick in snaps.

Barnes' focus for his defensive line was simple: fundamentals, technique and effort. It was shown play after play, and Barnes deserves huge credit for Penn State's season.



Noah Aberegg/Collegian

**The Penn State men's hockey team** celebrates its win over Michigan State at the Pegula Ice Arena on Jan. 11, 2025.

# Split vs. Sparty

By Chase Fisher  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Penn State returned to Pegula Ice Arena for the first time in over a month, looking to continue its impressive play out of the break.

In a series where the blue and white could've added a convincing win to its resume, Penn State didn't disappoint, going 0-1-1 in the series versus the Spartans, earning a shootout win in the finale Saturday night.

## Leaning on the netminders

Following a tough 6-4 loss on Friday night where Penn State held a 2-0 lead early in the first period, Guy Gadowsky and the team entered Saturday in dire need of a win.

After a game where Penn State netminder Arsenii Sergeev faced a whopping 45 shots and recorded a 0.867 save percentage, below his season average, the Russian goaltender needed to perform at a higher level Saturday evening if the Nittany Lions wanted an opportunity to win.

Sergeev stopped 35 shots, recorded a 0.946 save percentage and staved off all four shootout opportunities in Penn State's shootout victory.

A week after winning Big Ten First Star of the Week, Sergeev put the blue and white on his back with a strong performance between the pipes.

Michigan State goaltender and 2023 second-round pick of the Detroit Red Wings, Trey Augustine, mirrored his competition on the other side of the ice.

Augustine allowed an early goal to Penn State's leading

scorer, Aiden Fink, then buckled down, fighting away 29 of the next 30 shots by the blue and white before a late power-play deflection goal by Ben Schoen knotted up the game at two.

The Spartans goaltender recorded a 0.941 save percentage and stopped three out of four shots in the shootout.

## Trouble in the box

A constant struggle in the first half of Penn State's season was how undisciplined the team was — sitting at fourth in the Big Ten in penalty minutes with at least two fewer games than the other six programs.

The battle the blue and white faced through its first 18 games returned in Friday night's contest. The Nittany Lions fell 6-4 to Michigan State with the deciding factor being the Spartans' two power-play goals in the second and third periods.

Penn State jumped out to a quick 2-0 lead in the first 13 minutes, holding the momentum in the game. With less than two minutes remaining in the first frame, Schoen committed one of his two penalties, giving the Spartans the momentum back.

In its 20 games this season, Penn State has served 210 minutes in the box — averaging 10.5 minutes and five penalties a game. Despite ranking fourth in the conference in penalty minutes, the Nittany Lions rank second in the Big Ten in penalty minutes per game — trailing only Michigan's 10.86.

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Sienna Pinney/Collegian

**Tight end Tyler Warren (44)** celebrates scoring a touchdown at the Fiesta Bowl between Penn State and Boise State on Dec. 31, 2024.

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Linebacker **Dominic DeLuca** scores a pick-six during the first-ever home playoff game at Beaver Stadium on Dec. 21, 2024.



Quarterback **Drew Allar** celebrates with running back Kaytron Allen. Penn State beat SMU 38-10 to advance to the quarterfinal.

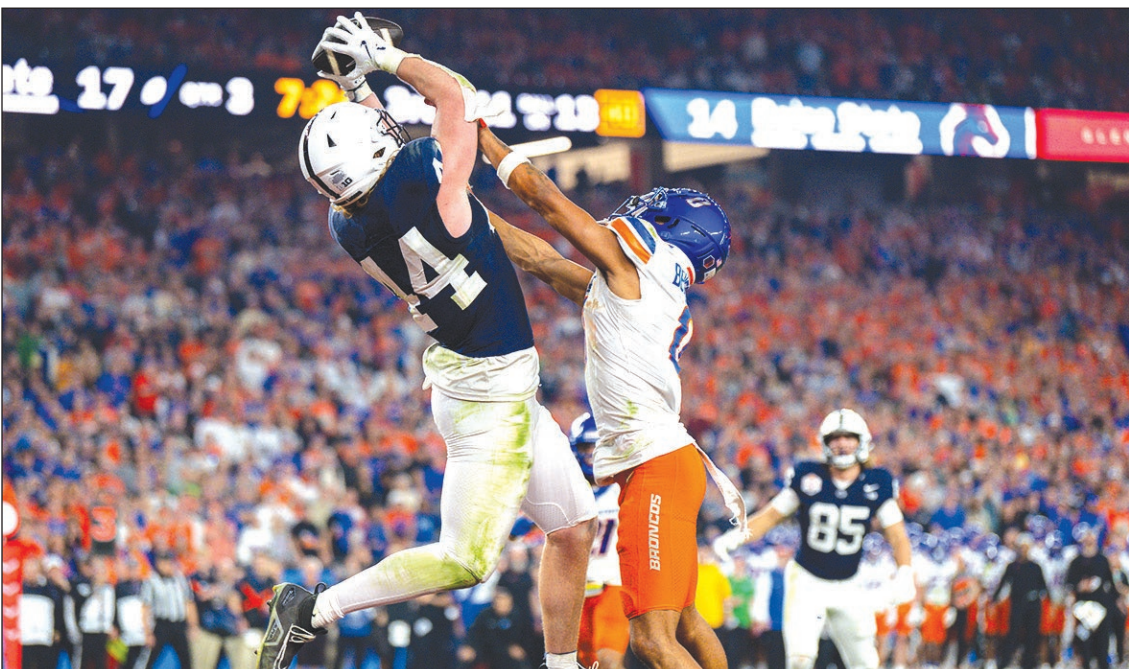


**Kaytron Allen** and **Nicholas Singleton** hype each other up.

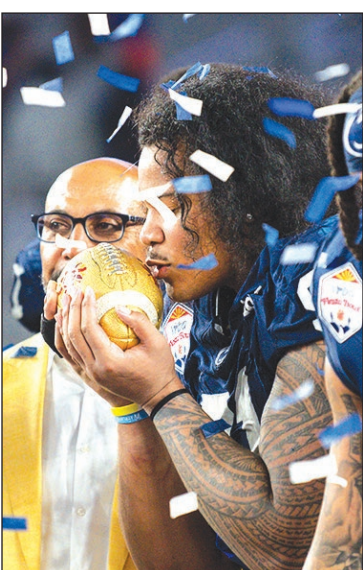
# CAPTURING HISTORY



**Abdul Carter** motions to the crowd during the Fiesta Bowl. Carter left the game with an injury in the second quarter and did not return.



**Tight end Tyler Warren** catches a touchdown pass during the Fiesta Bowl in Glendale, Ariz. on Dec. 31, 2024. Warren recorded 104 receptions on the season and won the John Mackey Award.



**Dvon J-Thomas** kisses the Fiesta Bowl trophy after Penn State's 31-14 win over Boise State to advance to the Orange Bowl.



**Head coach James Franklin** wipes confetti off his head after winning the Fiesta Bowl. Penn State has a spotless 8-0 record in the bowl game.



**Notre Dame head coach Marcus Freeman** looks up at the confetti after beating Penn State 27-24 in the Orange Bowl. Freeman will be the first Black head coach to compete for a national championship.



Quarterback **Drew Allar** walks off the field at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami after losing to Notre Dame in the College Football Playoff semifinal at the Orange Bowl.

Recapping Penn State football's first-ever College Football Playoff run in new 12-team model



Running back **Nicholas Singleton** stiff arms a defender during the Orange Bowl. Both Singleton and Kaytron Allen recorded over 1,000 yards rushing over 16 games during the 2024 season.



Cornerback **A.J. Harris** and linebacker **DaKaari Nelson** shake hands before the College Football Playoff semifinal at the Orange Bowl.