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FRANKLIN FIRED

Get a more in-depth look from our special section, starting on B1

By Lyle Alenstein
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

James Franklin's job security at Penn State has always been questioned and now there's an answer. After years of sticking around despite his lack of success against top-10 teams, he's finally on the way out, as Penn State announced his firing on Sunday. Cornerbacks coach Terry Smith will take over as the interim head coach.

Penn State started the season ranked No. 2 in the AP Poll with expectations as high as they've ever been in his 12-year tenure in State College. A double-overtime loss to Oregon, a defeat to a then 0-4 UCLA team that featured severe coaching turnover and a loss to an inferior Northwestern team has his time in Happy Valley come to a close.

Franklin will wrap up his time at Penn State with the second-most wins in program history, tied with Rip Engle at 104 victories. He boasted a 4-21 record against AP Poll top-10 squads and a 104-44 cumulative record.

He took over for Bill O'Brien in 2014 following three seasons as the head coach at Vanderbilt. Franklin led Penn State to a Big Ten championship win over Wisconsin in 2016, but other than that has his postseason accolades limited to a Big Ten championship loss to Oregon and a College Football Playoff defeat to Notre Dame in the semifinal last year.

The financial component

The reason as to why many thought James Franklin wouldn't be fired in the past was due to the buyout it would take.

Former Penn State vice president for intercollegiate athletics Sandy Barbour inked a 10-year deal for Franklin in 2021 worth up to $85 million. Then, Barbour announced her retirement in March 2022, which ensued with Pat Kraft taking over in July of that year.

In turn, the decision to fire Franklin was undoubtedly a costly one, though Kraft wouldn't comment on the structure of the buyout when asked. He did say that Penn State Athletics would be the one paying it though and not the university.

"I'm not gonna get into the financials. What I will tell you about the buyout — this is an Athletics issue. This is not the institution's issue," Kraft said. "So we in Athletics are covering all the costs. I want that to be known. So we are absorbing all the costs associated with this. As it gets too structural, how it's paid, I'm not going to get into the details of that and I'm not going to get into the financials either."

Multiple reports have indicated the buyout fluctuating between $45-50 million. ESPN's Pete Thamel said the buyout will be upwards of $49 million, Nicole Auerbach of CBS reported that Penn State is expected to spend $45 million and Pete Nakos of On3 reported the buyout will be $48 million.

Nakos said the payout will consist of yearly payments of $8 million and conclude in 2030.

A report from Front Office Sports said that Franklin's extension states he's required to look for another job in either coaching or in broadcasting, and if the job pays less than $8 million, Penn State only owes him the difference between his new salary and the amount of the buyout.

While the numbers haven't been clearly made known, the fact that Penn State Athletics is willing to pay the buyout proves how important the football program is.

In turn, Kraft and company have proven one thing — they're more afraid of losing football games than spending money.

Based on how Kraft outlined his expectations for the program, it makes sense.

"We're capable of greatness, and we're going to do it the right way and we are the best program in the country," Kraft said. "We have made significant investments in this program. We compete in the best conference in the country, and we have the best fans and alums in the country — with a renovated stadium on the horizon. I have nothing but confidence in our future and in our ability."

With the new era of college football, Franklin isn't the only one who agreed to a 10-year deal. In recent years, Brian Kelly at LSU, Lincoln Riley at USC, Kirby Smart at Georgia, Jimbo Fisher at Texas A&M and Mel Tucker at Michigan State have all inked contracts of that length.

Kelly, Riley and Smart are still around at their respective programs. On the other hand, just like what Penn State had to do for Franklin, the Aggies and Spartans had to pay the hefty sum of money following the firings of Fisher and Tucker.

As a result of the firing of Franklin, the Nittany Lions proved they're willing to not fall behind in the times — other schools have done the same.

Football is the most lucrative sport at the collegiate level, and Penn State proved with the firing of Franklin that it cares about where the program stacks up nationally, willing to do whatever it takes financially to get there.

'More than just football' | Students react

By Emma Naysmith
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

After three consecutive losses, Penn State football head coach James Franklin was fired on Sunday. The announcement was met with mixed reactions from fans, with many asserting it was time for Franklin's tenure to come to an end.

Makenna Steffens grew up tailgating and attending football games in Beaver Stadium with her family. She first heard about the news in a text from her father and was shocked.

"I will continue going to games," Steffens, a first-year studying in the division of undergraduate studies, said. "I'm definitely interested to see what it will be like now, and how it's different, especially since Drew's out too."

While she said she's enjoying her game day experiences with friends, she's noticed the morale isn't what it was at the beginning of the season.

"Every week you're expecting something, and then you're not getting what you're expecting," Steffens said.

After seeing the White Out on TV, Vedant Mistry said he knew he had to enroll at Penn State.

Alex Fischer/Collegian

Members of the student section react to the play during the Penn State Homecoming football game against Northwestern in Beaver Stadium on Oct. 11, 2025 in University Park, Pa.

While he knew the team underperformed in the "big games," Mistry, a fourth-year studying cybersecurity analytics and operations, said the welcoming community and atmosphere was something he loved.

Mistry said he was excited going into this season, since the team started the season ranked No.2 in the Associated Press Top-25 poll. "This is for the betterment of Penn State football; (Franklin) did help and change this program when he came, but his efforts have slowly diminished," he said. "Obviously, he's a dad, he's a coach. He's a person at heart, but I was not a fan of his work ethic."

Former associate head coach Terry Smith will serve as the interim head coach and Mistry said he thinks this could be good for the team.

> "It's weird coming here now knowing that Franklin's not the head coach, because I feel like that's always how I've seen Penn State football.
>
> **Nicole Mattei**

"Terry Smith, he's been with James Franklin for the past 12 years … working alongside him," Mistry said. "You never know the different style of playing, different playing levels. So I'm excited to see what he could do and what our backup QB can do."

Vishnu Kalvala said the loss against Oregon was a pivotal moment in the season.

"As soon as the game ended, it was just so quiet, everyone was just so defeated," Kalvala, a third-year studying finance, said. "Me and my friend stood there for five minutes, like, 'All right we're just gonna walk back home.' It just sucked the energy out of my soul."

Kalvala, rather than attending the remainder of home games, said he will likely spend his Saturdays tailgating with friends.

"I don't really know what to look forward to for this season," Kalvala said.

Nicole Mattei said she hopes this change will bring a new sense of optimism.

Mattei, a second-year studying biology, said she's always loved the environment and family community, but has sensed the frustration growing.

"More posts are going around and people are mad," Mattei said. "I've noticed a lot more people selling their tickets, or not wanting to go to the games now because why are we gonna watch us lose?"

After hearing about Franklin's firing, Mattei said she initially felt shocked, but thinks things will be different and hopes people will be more excited.

"It's weird coming here now knowing that Franklin's not the head coach, because I feel like that's always how I've seen Penn State football," Mattei said.

Giosue Pagan said being in the student section is unreal and can't be compared to anything else. Despite this, he said he's noticed fans beginning to leave early when there's a losing score.

"Penn State has grown as a program in the past couple years, and the fans want a little more," Pagan, a third-year studying biochemistry and molecular biology, said.

Despite not looking forward to any remaining home games, Pagan said he's eagerly awaiting to see the program rebuild and "find that character again."

"Penn State is still so much more than just football," Pagan said. "Yes, it'll be hurtful to not see our football team do well potentially, but I don't think that's gonna ever change my image of Penn State."

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Samantha Oropeza/ Collegian

A fan leans over the railing after the Penn State White Out football game against Oregon in Beaver Stadium on Sept. 27, 2025.

Take a look

You might also like these:

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Penn State notebook | Guy Gadowsky speaks on lines, metrics, new assistant coach

Penn State men's basketball unveils 2025-26 promotional schedule

Penn State right-side hitter Kennedy Martin earns Big Ten Player of the Week

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‘WE NEED MORE VARIETY’

State College residents discuss impact of chains on local businesses

By Jonathon Chiu
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

State College is sometimes described as having a “small-town character” with its array of small businesses within the downtown area. Over the years there’s been an increase in residential developments and corporate chains, calling into question whether that view still holds merit.

Kendra Kielbasa, the retail and commercial business advocate for the Downtown State College Improvement District (DSCID), said the inclusion of chains into downtown State College allows for small businesses to also receive customers.

“They bring brand recognition (and) they're recognizable, and I think those are good things because they bring standardization that people know and trust,” Kielbasa said. “When people are going to those chains, be it restaurants or physical retail, they also bring foot traffic, which comes by all of the small businesses, and that is also equally good.”

Kielbasa said both consumer preferences and the retail industry have changed significantly, especially prior to, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Small businesses have had to adapt to meet new market trends, like the rise of online shopping, but also allow for more in-person shopping experiences.

She said small businesses would stand to benefit from the increase in residential developments into the downtown area through being more in tune with their customers compared to chains.

“I think our retailers, to a large extent, are savvy enough that they are very in tune with their customers,” Kielbasa said. “Whether it's the student market or the visitor market or driven by events in the area, they are aware of what that market demand is, and they are catering to that.”

> “You can’t move back here and find an opportunity; a lot of people move back here not for pay rates, but because of the lifestyle.”
>
> **Geoff Brugler**
> Owner, Appalachain Outdoors

Mayor Ezra Nanes, who sits on the DSCID’s board of directors, said small businesses will continue to see customers because “they offer an exceptional level of service and a high quality product.”

“You have shops like Harpers or Growing Tree Toys or Appalachian Outdoors … that are iconic in downtown (State College),” Nanes said. “These businesses are thriving in an age where there are plenty of competitors and they’re thriving because they’re exceptional stores and they offer something that is very unique.”

Nanes said he thinks that, while State College will continue to change over time, many will continue to see the borough as having a small-town character.

“I think the character of State College (and) the heart and soul of the community will continue to endure, but there is an evolution that you will see, inevitably, because the town is growing,” Nanes said. “There’s an interest in people to live here and businesses to locate in State College, so that necessarily drives an additional development and a need for housing and so you’re going to see some change, but I think that the essential character of this place will remain.”

Geoff Brugler, the owner of Appalachian Outdoors, said small businesses are more engaged with local affairs than chains, even if they have physical locations.

“Certainly if they don’t have a brick-and-mortar presence here, you don’t even hear from them, but even the big chains that have (that) presence aren’t very involved in the community,” Brugler said. “They don’t serve on volunteer boards, they’re not involved in fundraising (and) they don’t contribute a lot back to the local community because they have their national causes that they promote.”

Brugler said some consider there to be an “authentic” feel to State College that causes people to return to the borough after they have left for some time, given they are able to.

“The people who want to come back can’t find a way to do it (because) they get really established where they are,” Brugler said. “You can’t move back here and find an opportunity; a lot of people move back here not for pay rates, but because of the lifestyle.”

Elaine Meder-Wilgus, owner of Webster’s Bookstore Cafe, said the idea of State College having a small-town character is more about the unique experiences rather than who is living in the borough.

Alex Fischer/Collegian

A person on a bike waits for a green light at the corner of South Allen Street and College Avenue on Tuesday, July 15, 2025 in State College, Pa.

State College has become more of a destination for not only the sports scene but also the arts in the area, said Meder-Wilgus.

“The small town feel, to me, means knowing someone by their first name, perhaps, or having a conversation or remembering a conversation that you had previously, and that ability to visit a place more than once,” Meder-Wilgus said. “I know lots of my customers (and) I see them maybe twice a year, but they’re just escaping from New York City and this is one of the places they come to.”

Meder-Wilgus said, while she has gotten to know many of the residents of State College, there is a “transient nature” to some relationships within the area as people move away or graduate from Penn State, something that she considers a “bittersweet part of living here.”

She said State College should remain open to welcoming newcomers who choose to enter into the borough’s community.

“What I love about this town is the diversity and the inclusion and we have a borough that’s committed to that and sometimes when people miss that small town feel, what they really mean is, ‘Oh, there’s no one from the outside. It’s just us.’” Meder-Wilgus said. “One thing I’ve said about this town is, ‘We need choices; we need more variety.’”

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CATA announces new executive director, CEO

Sawyer Hadlum/Collegian

The Centre Area Transportation Authority (CATA) logo is displayed on the side of a bus on Wednesday, June 18, 2025 in State College, Pa.

By Jonathon Chiu
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Todd Horsley was announced as Centre Area Transportation Authority's (CATA) new executive director and CEO on Monday at a State College Borough Council meeting.

David Rishel, former CATA interim executive director and CEO, announced the decision.

During the meeting, Horsley, who has spent over 25 years working in several public transit organizations, announced several CATA projects to the council such as the drafting of a new strategic plan, improving operator recruitment and retention initiatives and considering the expansion of services to State College Regional Airport and Amtrak stations in Tyrone, Lewiston and Altoona.

Horsley laid out his long-term goals for CATA, among them being transforming CATA into an “employer of choice” within the Centre Region and maintaining relations in areas where CATA operates.

Horsley also announced his plans to reform CATA to be “an organization that works” for its customers and employees and inspire a return of the organization’s innovative spirit.

“Everybody has a lot of pain points during their day where something doesn't work (and) I don't want CATA to be one of those,” Horsley said. “We want to be well respected in the community as part of your day and your ride (and) want CATA to be an afterthought because we want our equipment to work, we want our schedules to work, we want to be an organization that pays our bills on time (and) we just want to be responsive to the community.”

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THON announces 2026 theme

By Jocelyn Bilker
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Penn State THON announced “Love Leads Forward” as its theme for 2026 on Friday during the annual Homecoming parade. THON 2026 will take place from Feb. 20–22.

“Beyond the numbers, THON™ is powered by the love of students, families and supporters who come together to spread hope and create lasting impact,” the release said. “It is this spirit that leads us to unite year after year, ensuring no child or family is ever alone in the fight against childhood cancer.”

THON is the world’s largest student-run philanthropy that aims to provide emotional and financial support to Four Diamonds families who have been impacted by childhood cancer. In 2025, THON raised a record-breaking $17.7 million For The Kids®.

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Megan Miller/Collegian

The total money raised for the year is revealed at the end of the 53rd THON in the Bryce Jordan Center on Sunday, Feb. 23, 2024 in University Park, Pa.

AAUP, AFT denounce Trump “loyalty” compact

By Anisa Daniel-Oniko
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Penn State’s American Association of University Professors (AAUP) has voted unanimously to endorse a joint statement from the national AAUP and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). The statement opposes the Trump administration’s “loyalty compact” sent to nine universities on Oct. 1, according to a press release from the Penn State chapter.

The Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education stipulates that universities who comply with governmental expectations will be offered preferential treatment, like funding.

The schools that received this offer are: Vanderbilt University, Dartmouth College, the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Southern California, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the University of Texas at Austin, the University of Arizona, Brown University and the University of Virginia.

On Oct. 10, MIT became the first university to officially reject the compact. So far, they are the only university to reach a public decision.

The AAUP and AFT joint statement criticizes governmental interference in academic affairs, and calls on the governing boards and presidents of the targeted universities to “reject such collusion with the Trump administration and to stand firmly on the side of free expression and higher education as the anchor of opportunity for all.”

“The federal government should not, under any circumstances, dictate who goes to college, what can be researched, or learned, and what can or can’t be the subject of critical academic inquiry. A (White House policy strategist May) Mailman “compact” would turn a university administration into a weapon of the executive branch,” the statement said.

Penn State’s AAUP chapter has emphasized inter-university solidarity in rejection of the compact, and has urged President Neeli Bendapudi and the Penn State Board of Trustees to “recognize the threat to academic freedom, free expression, civil rights and colleagues and students in Pennsylvania and across the globe that this directive poses.”

Andrea Lara-Marcial/Collegian

Trees surround Old Main on Wednesday, Sep. 3, 2025 in University Park, Pa.

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THIS WEEK IN HAPPY VALLEY

MONDAY, OCT. 20

- World’s Greatest Meal: 11 a.m. at The Field Tap and Burger at Toftrees
- State College Photo Club Meeting: 7 p.m. at Patton Plaza
- Men’s Soccer vs. #21 Washington: 6 p.m. at Jeffery Field

TUESDAY, OCT. 21

- Tales for Twos, Session 2: 9:30 a.m. at Schlow Centre Region Library
- 3s, 4s, and 5s Storytime, Session 2: 10:30 a.m. at Schlow Centre Region Libraby

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 22

- Accessibility Resource Fair: 3 p.m. at Schlow Library, Community Room
- Nutrition Links: 5 p.m. at Centre County Library

THURSDAY, OCT. 23

- Open House and Food Truck Festival: 8 a.m. at Central Pennsylvania Institute
- Storytime at the Park: 10:30 a.m. at Orchard Park
- Reception | Jenee Mateer: 4 p.m. at Art Alley, HUB-Robeson Center

FRIDAY, OCT. 24

- Women’s Hockey vs. Lindenwood: 2 p.m. at Pegula Ice Arena
- Lynd Ward Graphic Novel Prize Author Talk: 4 p.m. at Foster Auditorium in Paterno Library
- Ethan Eckenroad + Farmstead Fusion: 5 p.m. at Mount Nittany

UNCLE ELI'S COLORS OUTSIDE THE LINES

Jayden Rhoney/Collegian

Two people sit outside Uncle Eli's Artist Marketplace and Frame Shop on Sept. 19, 2025 in State College, Pa.

By Emma Strickling
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

There are plenty of storefronts that line Beaver Avenue, but one stands out among the rest — Uncle Eli's Artist Marketplace and Frame Shop, with its blue and white doorway and large display window acting as come in attractions.

Uncle Eli's has been a staple in the State College community since 1970, when Douglas Albert, an art student at the university, opened the store originally at a much smaller location on South Allen Street.

The store's location changed about 5 times before it ended up at Beaver Avenue in 1975, which was formerly the office for Bell Telephone Company.

"I knew the guy who ran the Bell office and I asked him jokingly if he was planning on disconnecting any commercial phone lines, and he goes, 'yeah, we're moving in July.'" Albert said." So, I went up and talked to the person who owned the building and he said, 'this is what the rent is, if you can pay the rent, you can have the space.'"

The store's name Uncle Eli's is a "long story" and one that Albert would like to keep a mystery.

Albert originally opened to provide the State College community a place where art supplies were sold. Over time, it has become a place that goes against the grain of the typical State College store by "coloring outside of the lines," and being artsy as well as edgy.

With the increase in size of its current location, Albert said it allowed for the expansion and diversification of any merchandise as long as it has a creative or decorative slant to it.

Ambrose Lewis, a senior crew member at Uncle Eli's, is also involved with art and said that being able to collaborate with people or give them advice about their projects has been a fun experience.

"I just like the environment," Lewis said. "I enjoy the customer base and working with people on their projects. It's a lot of fun."

Lewis said that although Uncle Eli's is an art supplies store, it caters to more than just artists.

"I feel like a lot of people think that art is a difficult hobby to get into, but really the hardest part is getting over that hurdle," Lewis said. "We always encourage new artists, so I think it is a place for everybody — whether you're a beginner with your art, you've been doing it for a long time or you're just looking for something quirky to get your friend."

Isabella Bassett has been the manager of Uncle Eli's since the COVID-19 pandemic, and said that she enjoys working at a store like Uncle Eli's because it allows her to interact with artists of all ages, whether it be through giving advice on their latest project or asking about certain materials.

"I was originally going to school for art education, and stepping into the world of art business made me realize you don't need to be teaching in a classroom," Bassett said. "You can keep your horizons open and kind of see what the art industry is going to give you because it really could be anything."

Bassett said that Uncle Eli's provides value in the State College community because it lets people know that they are not limited in their creative endeavours.

"Creativity is one of the most important things that you could carry into any field," Bassett said. "I think it just lets people expand what they see, what they know, how to use materials and what to use materials with. We're here to help our customers and make sure that their project or art is how they envisioned it."

Bassett said that although its existence might not be well known to some within the State College area, Uncle Eli's is still an important part of the community.

"There's a lot of people who are like 'I can't believe I've lived here for five years and I've never come here.' That's alright, you're here now and that's all that really matters," Bassett said. "As long as you know about us, we're here for you."

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Students of S.H.I.E.L.D assemble

By Katie Herron
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Courtesy of Evan Cutler

Students play board games at a Students of S.H.I.E.L.D. club meeting.

Penn State has its own elite team of agents dedicated to investigating everything to do with Marvel, DC, and nerd culture: the Students of S.H.I.E.L.D.

The Students of S.H.I.E.L.D. has been active on campus since 2015, and the club recently celebrated its 10 year anniversary.

The club meets in 62 Willard Building at 7:30 p.m. every Thursday, and they occasionally meet on weekends for activities like movie screenings, mini golf, laser tag and more.

President Evan Cutler has been a member since the second semester of his first year at Penn State. Cutler was first drawn to the club by his love for superheroes and comics, but he stuck around because of the community he built.

"We really enjoy each other's company, and we want to spend time with each other," Cutler, a fourth-year studying history, said. "We want to talk to each other and see how we're doing."

According to Cutler, a typical meeting starts with presentations on the topic selected for that night, along with trivia, games, crafts or other group activities. The meeting may also conclude with a watch party of episodes from a superhero show.

The club recently held a "wheelie bad" movie night that consisted of spinning a wheel to select a poorly rated movie to watch. The wheel chose "Howard the Duck," a 1980s film about a humanoid-alien duck.

"It is genuinely one of the worst movies I've ever seen, but it was so fun watching it," Cutler said. "All of us who were there just could not believe what was happening on screen."

Helena Engeron, vice president, sees the Students of S.H.I.E.L.D. as a welcoming and safe place for new students to meet people.

"I struggled a lot to make friends," Engeron, a second-year studying electrical engineering, said. "Coming here, I met people and now my closest friends are because of this club."

In her position as vice president, Engeron focuses on planning trips to Comic-Con and other excursions she thinks members would enjoy. Some of her favorite club memories are from past events she's gone to, like a not-so-friendly match of laser tag.

"I wasn't very good at laser tag, but it was still fun," Engeron said. "Our president at the time basically soloed all of us even though she was on a team, girl was working it."

Molly Katzman, Dungeons & Dragons chair, joined the club her first year at Penn State, but she didn't get involved in meetings until her second year.

As the Dungeons & Dragons chair, Katzman, a third-year studying plant sciences, plans campaigns for club members to participate in. She is currently mapping out two campaigns where the players work together as villains fighting Batman and Spider-Man.

Members of the club are encouraged to suggest their own ideas and interests at meetings. Even though it is not related to superheroes, Katzman hosts a "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" watch party for club members on Friday nights.

Katzman knows no matter what issue she is having, whether it is club or school related, there will be someone in the Students of S.H.I.E.L.D. who can help.

"We love having new people who are passionate," Katzman said. "We have a new person this year who could tell me every single issue of a specific Batman series and it's so cool, and I'm excited to get to know her more."

Katzman believes the club is a great place to be a "total nerd," but it's open to its members having any level of interest in comics or superheroes.

"Even if you're not interested in comics or if you're interested in learning about comics," Katzman said. "Even if you don't care about comics at all and you just watch superhero movies, we love all of it."

Jason Wexler was the head of the club's podcast last year where he dove into the scripts of recent superhero movie releases, like "Superman" directed by James Gunn, with other members of the club.

The podcast currently uploads on Spotify and the club's website bi-monthly, but Wexler, a second-year studying kinesiology, hopes the new podcast chair is able to produce episodes more frequently.

"We just meet up, pull out a laptop, set up a mic, go through the script and ask a bunch of questions," Wexler said. "It's really a comfortable environment."

Wexler looks forward to the club potentially getting more involved with THON in the future, continuing to grow its members. He hopes when the current board members graduate and step down from their roles, new superhero fans will fill their shoes, or leotards.

"The people are what makes the club the club," Engeron said. "You wouldn't have the club without the people."

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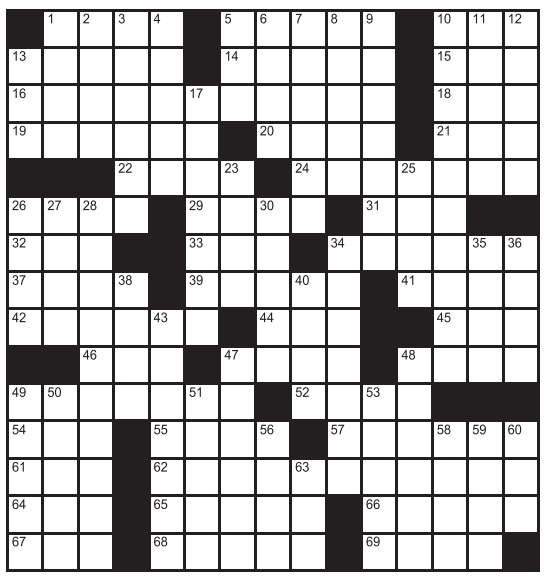
Crossword



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Across
1 Aardvark's fare
5 Nimbuses
10 Farm butter
13 Kind of cheese
14 Pink-legged bird
15 Pilot's announcement, briefly
16 Like a runaway train
18 Poker prize
19 Vichyssoise ingredient
20 Rime
21 Final (Abbr.)
22 Difficult situation
24 Laugh derisively
26 When repeated, a fish
29 Memo starter
31 Author Deighton
32 Friend in France
33 Father's Day gift
34 Renter
37 Safecracker
39 Standard of living?
41 "The Dukes of Hazzard" spinoff
42 Listening to Muzak, maybe
44 Aladdin's monkey
45 The Company
46 Rough stuff
47 Shade of black
48 München mister
49 Proof of purchase
52 Mollify
54 Jackie's "Honeymooners" foil
55 Music category
57 Optical illusion
61 Author Levin
62 Not easily put into words
64 Rep.'s counterpart
65 Witherspoon of "Vanity Fair"
66 Extraterrestrial
67 Dutch city
68 Big Bertha's birthplace
69 ___ fixe (obsession)

Down
1 River of Tuscany
2 Twiggy digs
3 Japanese floor covering
4 Clobbered
5 Egyptian cobra
6 Kings Peak locale
7 Saccharide
8 Poe's middle name
9 Germless
10 Intense aversion
11 Lagoon surrounder
12 Photo finish
13 Trophy
17 Put forth
23 Fit of pique
25 Mutation target
26 ___ Clinic
27 Call from the flock
28 Vigorously energetic
30 Doctor's order
34 Salt shaker?
35 Roulette bet
36 Abdicator of 1917
38 Horror film staple
40 Reed section member
43 Relaxation
47 Short compositions for a solo instrument
48 Common newspaper name
49 Poker ploy
50 Missed the mark
51 Cornbreads
53 Egyptian peninsula
56 ___-majesté
58 "___ Baby" (Song from "Hair:)
59 High spirits
60 Bard's nightfall
63 Boggy lowland

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R Y E K C O H J T A S T Y A I K S B
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Cheers
Cream Pie
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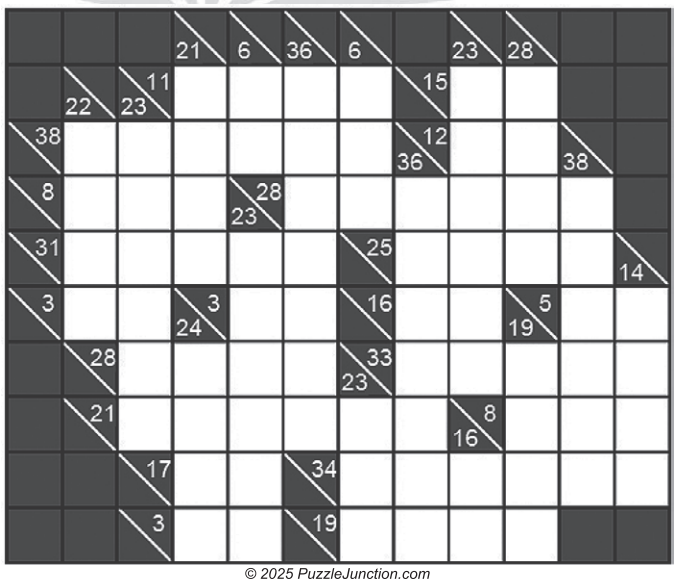
Fine Arts
Harbor
Harvard
Hockey
Ivy
Kennedys
Lobster
M I T
Marathon
Massachusetts
New England
Patriots
Puritans
Red Sox
Revolution
Tea
Tea Party
The Globe
University

Kakuro (Cross Sums)

The rules are easy to learn: A number above the diagonal line in a black square is the sum of the white squares to the right of it. A number below the diagonal line is the sum of the white squares in the sequence below it. You may only use the digits 1 to 9, and a digit may be used only once in any sequence.



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Memoirs provide diverse outlooks on life

Though I'm an English major, I hardly read anymore.

As a child, I inhaled books. Sadly, this lust for literature has taken a hit since starting college. I do read a lot for my major, but there's a huge difference between reading academic texts and novels.

Frederick

At the end of a day full of going to class, attending meetings and doing homework, I just want to collapse in bed. Often, I don't even think about opening a book, opting to mindlessly scroll on Instagram instead.

That's all changing this semester.

I'm taking not one, but two memoir classes.

Beyond expanding the titles listed under "Read" on Goodreads (Letterboxd for readers), reading and discussing memoirs has expanded my understanding of not only writing but also human compassion.

In my English 487W class, a senior seminar for English majors, with Professor Paul Kellermann, we are engaged in the practice of "empathetic reading."

In a class focused on writing, our group discussions cover topics relating to social justice, our relationships with others and what from the text resonates with our own lived experiences.

While sometimes the conversation drifts to the strategies of prose, we are focused on the who and why not necessarily the how.

We always tell each other to put ourselves in someone else's shoes, but memoirs actually accomplish that.

We are often quick to jump to conclusions or judge without knowing the full story. With memoirs, we do know the story. The reader accompanies the author through their trials and tribulations.

By reading the words of others, we recognize aspects of ourselves.

We notice similarities that otherwise we might not put the time or effort into seeing.

Preconceptions are overturned. World views are broadened. Critical thinking thrives. We are able to achieve a level of empathy that is sorely needed today.

In a class with the goal to have students write their own memoir, we are also able to apply that empathy to ourselves.

Weekly writing prompts help students get at the core of who they are and what they care about. Due dates on Canvas become a welcome time for self-reflection.

It reminds us that what we have to say does matter. We all have stories to tell and the world wants to hear them. There is value in sharing our perspectives and experiences.

In my Human Development and Family Studies 254N class, Professor Molly Countermine has students approach memoirs through the lens of the social sciences.

We learned about the stages of development, attachment styles and identity development theory before even reading the first memoir. It really is fascinating stuff.

This background in psychology and human behavior lends itself to approaching both memoirs and our fellow man in a new way.

We are a product of our surroundings.

As I mentioned earlier, we never fully know what someone else is going through.

This class has taught me that who we are goes far deeper than what meets the eye. So much influences the person we become and the story that we ultimately tell. There's a profound strength and beauty in that.

Thus, I urge you to stop by your nearest bookstore or the local library and pick up a memoir.

Try selecting one that might not initially jump out at you or one written by someone with a different viewpoint.

More likely than not, when you finish the last page, you'll have gained new insights and an appreciation for diverse outlooks on life. You just might learn something about yourself, too.

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Cartoon by Nate Campbell

MY VIEW | **Alli Satterfield**

Tea, crumpets and British misconceptions

I was eight years old the last time I visited the United Kingdom. I remember that trip somewhat, and it occasionally comes back to me in flashes — I'll be walking around London, and recognize something that unlocks a foggy memory from that family vacation.

Satterfield

Because I'd visited before, I had certain expectations for my semester abroad. Living in a foreign country is far more different from just visiting it.

It makes sense that my day-to-day agenda would be different from that of a tourist, since I'm going to school here, but I underestimated how much some stereotypes are reinforced through the typical tourist to-do list.

For me, the things I did as a tourist reinforced certain expectations I had about English life, but, as time passes, I'm learning more and more about what it's actually like to live here.

Firstly, I thought afternoon tea was an important daily ritual. When Americans come to visit, they usually make sure to have a "proper" afternoon tea, with scones, clotted cream and crumpets at least once, but I have not seen a single soul drink tea since I've crossed the pond.

Although one of my flatmates does have a box of Twinings English Breakfast tea in his cabinet, I haven't seen him drink it. What I thought was a cultural staple because of movies, TV shows and Tripadvisor advertisements, is apparently not that important. Not everyone wants a "cuppa."

The second expectation I had for life in London was that the food would be bland.

To be fair, last time I visited, I was here with my cousin Savannah and, although she is three years my senior, she (still) is the pickiest eater I've ever met.

My dining choices were limited to establishments that served mac and cheese, and we frequented the Garfunkels across the street from our hotel. My experience was the equivalent of eating at a random Denny's along the highway during a trip to America, and thinking you've tried American cuisine.

This time, I'm doing more grocery shopping than restaurant hopping, but even within the first few weeks I've been here, I've eaten more flavorful food than I ever have in the Pollock Dining Commons I would argue that the recognizable, traditional British dishes like fish and chips and baked beans don't help the bland allegations, but thus far, I've carved into the juiciest roast of my life, indulged in some amazing pancakes and tried Nando's sauces out the wazoo — so, we might need to drop the bland food charges.

> "I've indulged in some amazing pancakes and tried Nando's sauces out the wazoo — so, we might need to drop the bland food charges."
>
> **Alli Satterfield**

I've been disappointed in other ways. I had great expectations for London's nightlife scene because of how many pubs and bars there are in the city, but I've been let down.

I've yet to have a good experience clubbing in the city, which I can admit may be because I'm not cool enough to know where the good spots are, but as a girl who likes to dance with her friends more so than stand in the corner of a loud pub, I'm distraught.

A few weeks ago, I walked into a DJ event I'd bought tickets for to find four other people standing awkwardly in front of the turntable. I felt like I walked into a silent disco and forgot my headphones, as I listened to the squeaks of the eight other shoes on the dark, empty dance floor. More people arrived as the night went on, but I still wasn't impressed.

Can someone in this city please play some Lady Gaga and go easy on the strobe lights?

Lastly, British people definitely have a reputation for their dry, and sometimes stoic, sense of humor. Last time I was here, I recognized and was slightly put off by that.

Growing up in South Carolina, I was used to the adults around me usually adopting me as one of their own, but always being extremely kind to me. It was disorienting to fly to London and experience the dryness associated with both city and British cultures.

I specifically remember a Yeoman Warder telling me I couldn't leave the Tower of London "because it's a prison," when I asked her where the exit was. My scarce eight years of life flashed before my eyes. I didn't think her joke was funny.

Now that I'm older I would really appreciate running into more people like that. But, of course, now that I'm ready for the wise guys, every single Londoner I've met has been so earnest and kind towards me. The detached and dry reputation hasn't been my experience this time.

Even though my expectations were set by my own memories, not Downton Abbey and the Harry Potter franchise, the realities of living in London are very different from what I expected. The immersion into British culture has already given me so many insights into my own preferences, and, so far, I would recommend living in a different country to anyone. It's good to get out of your comfort zone.

Alli Satterfield is the abroad columnist for The Daily Collegian. She is a second-year studying journalism. Email her at **ams1258@psu.edu** or follow her on X **@amsatterfield8**

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Daily Collegian

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Navigating new limits with NIL

By Noah Aberegg
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

TRACK & FIELD

Penn State sprinted to the center of the track and lifted coach John Gondak in the air in 2017, celebrating its first men's outdoor Big Ten Championship in school history.

The Nittany Lions have aspirations to return to that position this year with the help of strong depth in most events, as Gondak said "the indoor men's team is really set up for some great success this year."

Things will look a little different this time around following the recent House v. NCAA settlement over the summer, which effectively limited roster sizes to 45 athletes on both the men's and women's teams.

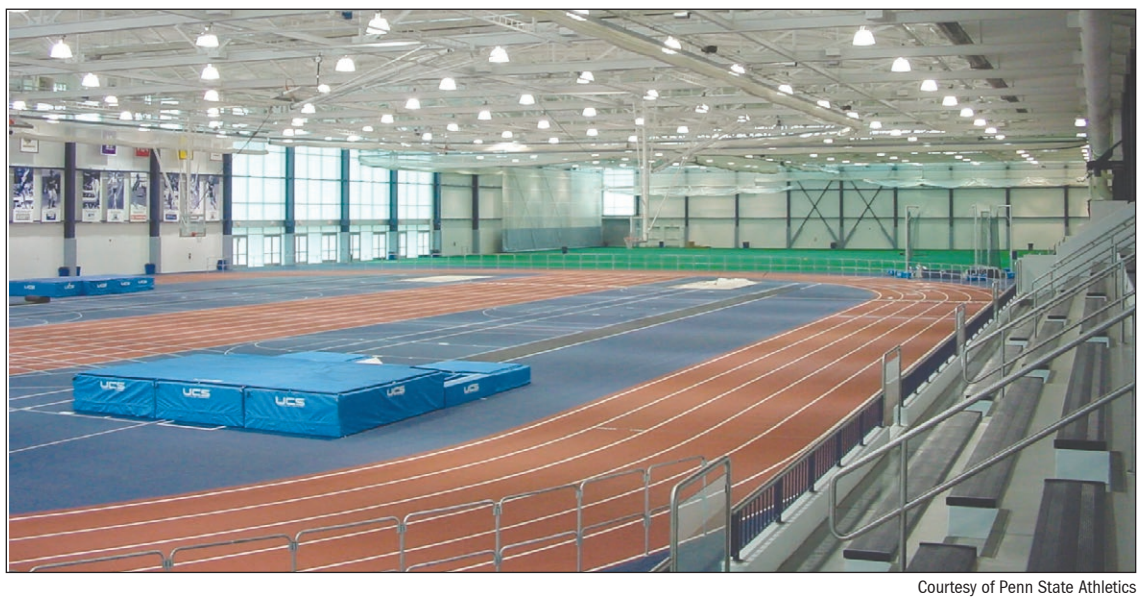
In addition to cutting down the overall roster size, the agreement also eliminated any scholarship caps. Prior to the settlement, the men's teams had 12.6 scholarships to hand out, and the women's team had 18.

"You have even more of a business due to NIL and the growth of athletes being paid," Joe Phifer, a former walk-on to the track and field team, said. "It definitely seems like a tighter, more high pressure scenario due to the fact that they are actually being paid (in return)."

As these limited roster spots are filled up by more higher-profile athletes who were recruited at a tougher standard, the traditional walk-on role that Phifer had, an "under-dog" type grit and determination, are being phased out nationwide.

In a world where everyone has the opportunity to be paid and colleges want the best of the best, they will likely fill those 45 roster spots with those top-tier athletes.

"Every year at every level, the dial gets turned up a little bit more," Artie Gilkes, the State College Area High School track and field coach and former Nittany Lion, said. "Even at the high school level, a jumper that might have been our top jumper five or six years ago wouldn't even make our district lineup this past year. I think that's a similar case at the collegiate level, regardless of these roster limits."



Courtesy of Penn State Athletics

The Horace Ashenfelter III Indoor Track sits in the Multi-Sport Indoor Facility in University Park, Pa.

Over the past several years at Penn State, Gondak and his staff have committed to building deep, talented rosters which have had its fair share of walk-on athletes.

Two such athletes, Zoey Goldstein and Jake Palermo, have catapulted their way into the record book even with that title and stigma attached.

"I was able to surround myself with the best of the best," Will Ashenfelter, a former Penn State walk-on, said. "If you're trying to work your way up the ladder on the team, you want to surround yourself, especially as you're working your way (up)."

During Goldstein's senior year, she recorded the ninth-fastest 200-meter time, the eighth-fastest 400-meter time and helped break the school record in the sprint medley relay. As she entered her graduate season, she was awarded a full-ride scholarship following her successful year.

"I wish I could have a conversation with my freshman self and tell her, 'Just keep grinding, just keep working. You can accomplish more than you ever thought you could have,'" Goldstein said. "If I told my 18-year-old self, 'Hey, you're going to go from being a walk-on to a full-ride athlete and break school records and be an All-American,' she would be like, 'Yeah, right.'"

Palermo broke onto the scene his freshman year as he broke the indoor 400m record in his second collegiate race.

> "I never felt a risk of getting removed or cut from a roster. But I think if there was a roster cap when I was there, there would've been additional pressure."
>
> **Joe Phifer**

Stories like Goldstein's and Palermo's may no longer be possible as athletes won't have the ability to establish themselves as collegiate-level athletes. Instead, they'll have to be at that level beforehand, fighting to make that 45-person cut.

"It adds more pressure to maintain a certain standard and quality," Phifer said. "I never felt at risk of getting removed or cut from a roster. But I think if there was a roster cap when I was there, there would've been additional pressure and intensity to make sure that I meet certain standards and run faster times."

As a result of these changes, some schools have announced alterations to their track and field programs, including cutting down some events to prioritize others.

Washington State announced shortly after the House v. NCAA settlement its plans to eliminate all field events and even some sprinting and hurdling events to focus primarily on its distance program.

"(If this continues), I think the entire sport and the culture of the sport would just shift too much to where it's become detrimental," Phifer said.

Fortunately for those interested in Penn State track and field as athletes or fans, the Nittany Lions have no plans on eliminating groups as they continue to recruit for every event with its goals of becoming a conference frontrunner.

"Penn State's a pretty unique program," Gilkes said. "Penn State isn't doing (what Washington State is doing), so there's still this opportunity that with the new conference alignment, things are more competitive than ever."

Whether it's Penn State keeping a full squad or teams across the country picking their strong suits, "All the coaches and teams are just trying to win the conference championship, so whatever they think their best suit is to make it there, then so be it," according to Ashenfelter.

While many are upset about the limitations on track and field athletes making the tighter roster spots, Gilkes offers a potential upside to the changes.

"One way to look at it is, if the finances hold up and everything, maybe there's some people getting scholarships that didn't get or wouldn't have gotten a scholarship before," Gilkes said.

As these changes are being made, schools are still continuing to compete at the highest level, and regardless of whether coaches are recruiting for just distance events or entire teams, recruiting is still being done and the sport continues to move forward.

"As far as I know, the coaches are still recruiting," Gilkes said. "These coaches still have the same mission. They want to have the best teams they can possibly have."

Even five months after the settlement, questions continue to arise regarding the future of collegiate athletics, with lawsuits being presented frequently as administrators, coaches, athletes and fans try to figure out what's next.

"There's uncertainty on every front," Gilkes said. "This is a new ball game for the coaches, for the administrators and for everybody. I think everybody's trying the best they can to keep this shift going."

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Undefeated weekend

By Andrew Mercer
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

VOLLEYBALL

When No. 17 Penn State fell to top-ranked Nebraska in front of a sold-out Rec Hall, it left the volleyball world questioning its ability to handle highly-ranked programs. Although the Nittany Lions bounced back with the 3-2 win over Maryland on the road, they nearly allowed the Terrapins to crawl back for a reverse sweep.

However, the energy was palpable heading into the following weekend. With the homecoming parade outside, the blue and white hosted its annual White Out against then-No. 7 Wisconsin on Friday. The White Out energy assisted the Nittany Lions in upsetting the Badgers 3-0, their first ranked victory since then-No. 17 USC on Sept. 26.

The turnaround was quick, and Penn State prepared to face Northwestern the following day. Despite the quick turnaround, the blue and white handled the Wildcats in four sets, going undefeated on the weekend for the first time in three weeks, improving to 10-6 on the season.

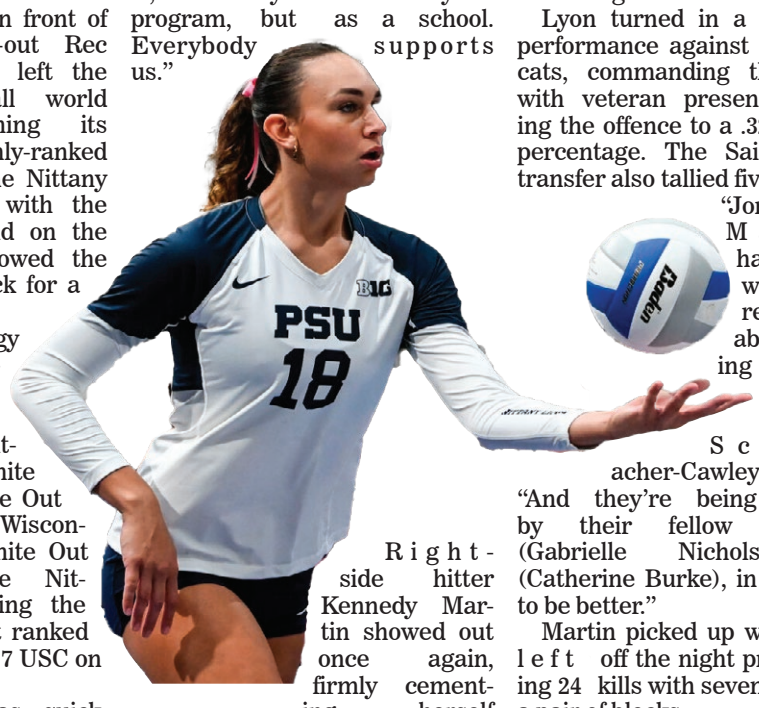
"The Big Ten is no joke every night," setter Addie Lyon said. "Going from Wisconsin to Northwestern, even though they play a different style of volleyball, it's the same gameplan. You can't take a night off in the Big Ten."

Get out the brooms

Penn State hadn't swept a team since Sept. 21., when it played a 3-7 Central Michigan team at home in the Penn State Classic. When the blue and white beat USC, it had previously led the match 2-0, but was forced to play a fifth set.

Now, Penn State has proven that it can play a complete game in the Big Ten from start to finish. The Nittany Lions have benefited from their home crowds as they work through their schedule.

"Rec Hall is just a super special place and it's really cool that people are here to show up for us," middle blocker Maggie Mendelson said post-game. "It says a lot about what Penn State is, not only as a volleyball program, but as a school. Everybody supports us."



Right-side hitter Kennedy Martin showed out once again, firmly cementing herself as one of the top hitters in the Big Ten. With Wisconsin outside hitter Mimi Colyer hitting only .057 in their matchup, the battle for Big Ten Player of the Year is trending Martin's way.

The Fort Mill, South Carolina, native finished the weekend with back-to-back 20+ kill games, hitting .443.

The middle blocking unit of Mendelson and Jordan Hopp neutralized Wisconsin's top hitters, Colyer and Una Vajagic, forcing the Badgers to seek out freshman Madison Quest's hand. As a team, Wisconsin hit .151, suffering 18 attacking errors.

Make it double

Despite a delay, the blue and white claimed a 3-1 victory over the Wildcats.

Mendelson and Hopp continued their reign of terror at the net, combining for seven blocks to get Rec Hall on its feet. The two blockers blazed a trail forward as the momentum swung back-and-forth. The duo added 11 and six kills of their own, respectively.

Libero Gillian Grimes and defensive specialist Ava Falduto each recorded 15 digs, tying a season high for Falduto. Following their lead, Hopp reached a career-high six digs on the night.

Lyon turned in a 51 assist performance against the Wildcats, commanding the court with veteran presence, leading the offence to a .326 hitting percentage. The Saint Louis transfer also tallied five digs.

"Jordan and Maggie have been working really hard about being available and in the air," Schumacher-Cawley said. "And they're being pushed by their fellow middles, (Gabrielle Nichols) and (Catherine Burke), in practice, to be better."

Martin picked up where she left off the night prior, posting 24 kills with seven digs and a pair of blocks.

Jurevicius on fire

Outside hitter Caroline Jurevicius played a more active role in Penn State's offense, putting up a total of 20 kills between both matches — four of which were set-winning points.

With Northwestern's defense learning Penn State's patterns, Lyon adjusted, finding the 6-foot-2 redshirt sophomore on the left-side more often, while finding Martin from the back row. The solution worked, as Jurevicius found success and propelled the Nittany Lions to victory in the fourth set.

"(Caroline's) being a lot smarter with her attacks," Schumacher-Cawley said. "She's not afraid to tip and push the ball deep."

The Cleveland native fell one short of her season high of 14 kills — against Kansas on Aug. 25 — with 13 kills on Saturday.

Penn State will kick off a two-game road trip to the west coast, facing Washington at 10 p.m., Friday, before taking on Oregon the next day at 10:30 p.m.

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Back in Pegula

By Maggie Hardy
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

HOCKEY

After No. 6 Penn State opened its 2025-26 season with a dominant sweep over Arizona State, its first pair of games back in Hockey Valley weren't as strong, splitting its home opening series with Clarkson.

The Nittany Lions continue their non-conference homestand this weekend, welcoming LIU to Pegula Ice Arena at 7:30 p.m. Friday and 6 p.m. Saturday.

After an upset loss last weekend and a two-place drop in the polls, the blue and white have another tough task ahead if it wants to build some early season momentum.

A Look at Penn State

Last season, the line of Matt DiMarsico, Charlie Cerrato and JJ Wiebusch dominated, most notably during the team's NCAA Tournament run, and the trio has picked up right where it left off.

Cerrato and Wiebusch are currently No. 1 and No. 2 in the country in points, with both forwards averaging over 2.5 points per game.

Wiebusch is coming off a program record four-goal game on Thursday, and Cerrato has registered eight assists and three goals for 11 points. Their linemate, DiMarsico, is not far behind, tallying five points through four games.

"The big thing for them is, they absolutely have a blast playing together," coach Guy Gadowsky said. "Whether it's in front of a packed house at Pegula, or if it's a 3-on-3 game after practice with no one in the stands, they just have a blast playing together and scoring together."

Another talking point of the Nittany Lions' season has been their physicality, which has always been a common theme for the program, but has been even more evident this year.

The blue and white currently lead all NCAA Division I teams with 121 penalty minutes. While many of those came from a late-game scrum Friday night against Clarkson — which resulted in 11 game misconducts between the two teams— the blue and white have spent its fair share of time in the penalty box throughout its short season.

While taking excessive penalties is rarely a good thing, the Nittany Lions' penalty kill has been a bright spot in these situations. Through its opponents' 21 power play attempts, the Nittany Lions have let up just one power play goal.

"I think we've gained momentum, and we've also gained confidence out of those (penalty kill) situations," Gadowsky said. "We've had to kill in very important times of the game, and done well, and I think that gives you a lot of confidence."

Scouting LIU

LIU has shown some strong performances early on this season, and will not be an easy task for the Nittany Lions to defeat this weekend.

"(LIU) is a big, strong, tough team," Gadowsky said. "That's what their identity was going to be, they stuck to it, and it's been paying off, so this is going to be a very physically tough weekend."

The Sharks are 1-2 on the season, narrowly dropping their first game to then-No. 2 Boston University, and registering a 6-1 win over Canisius, a team that already beat Clarkson, the blue and white's last opponent.

Sophomore forward J.R. Perdion currently tops LIU's scoring, tallying two goals and two assists, followed by senior Brett Rylance and sophomore Sixten Jennersjö with three points a piece.

Similar to the Nittany Lions, the Sharks have started both their goaltenders this season, and both have put up solid numbers, but sophomore Daniel Duris has the edge with two starts and a .909 save percentage.

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Pennsylvania State University-Main Campus

Penn State football after James Franklin

By Lexie Linderman
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Matt Cropp/Collegiajn

James Franklin stands during the Homecoming football game against Northwestern in Beaver Stadium on Saturday, Oct. 11, 2025 in University Park, Pa. The Wildcats beat the Nittany Lions 22-21.

James Franklin had every camera on the field following him as he walked off the Beaver Stadium grass after losing to Northwestern. There were boos and expletives being yelled from everywhere and anywhere as he went to hug his daughter next to his locker.

It felt as though it was the last time Franklin would coach a game for Penn State. He gave the shortest opening statement of his career, didn't answer a question about whether or not he wanted to be in Happy Valley anymore and seemed overall dejected.

It ended up as the final chance for Franklin to coach the Nittany Lions, as Pat Kraft and the program pulled the plug Sunday afternoon after nearly 12 years. Franklin's firing marked the first time Penn State fired a head coach for football performance in the middle of the season.

One thing was clear — it was time for everyone involved to part ways. The fanbase had turned on Franklin, the players seemed checked out and a season with national championship hopes has resulted in Penn State being the worst team in the Big Ten.

But there will be a multitude of consequences to follow, whether they're positive or negative. Here's an early look at a few.

Recruiting implications

In the minutes since Franklin's firing was announced, Penn State lost three recruits in its once-highly regarded 2027 class. The first was safety Gabriel Jenkins, who had been committed to the Nittany Lions since August and is ranked as the No. 11 player in Pennsylvania, per 247Sports composite.

The second, however, was the more notable. Layton Von Brandt announced his decommitment on X, leaving just one recruit left in the 2027 class. Von Brandt is a 5-star ranked as the No. 1 player in Delaware and No. 36 player nationally.

5-star running back Kemon Spell was the only commitment left in the Class of 2027 before he too decommitted. Spell said Friday night he's not fully committed to Penn State anymore after 4-star wide receiver Khalil Taylor decommitted, so this doesn't come as a surprise.

It was hard to imagine Spell staying on board with Franklin gone, especially considering he wasn't happy with Penn State even while Franklin was the head coach. Spell has offers from Georgia, Notre Dame and Ohio State, just to name a few, and all look like more attractive destinations than Happy Valley currently.

As of now, only one player from the 2026 recruiting class has decommitted in Lavar Keys, but it's a very serious possibility some more players do.

The money

Franklin is owed a lot of money. Like, a lot of money. He's set to earn more than $49 million, which is how much is left on his fully-guaranteed contract that runs through 2031.

This lump sum of money could set the athletic department back for a while, which could impact recruiting, the Beaver Stadium renovations and other programs at Penn State. But Kraft wouldn't have fired Franklin if he didn't know the Nittany Lions could pay him this money.

It does call into question, however, how much Penn State has left to hire a new head coach. If it wants a proven, elite coach, the athletic department might have to pay another school millions of dollars.

In short, Franklin's buyout could set this program back years if it's not paid annually and if external factors, such as team donors, weren't a part of the decision.

Roster retention

There's plenty of talent left on Penn State's roster. From Tony Rojas to Cooper Cousins to Chaz Coleman to Max Granville, there are a lot of guys who were recruited under Franklin.

Franklin is likely going to be coaching somewhere else next season, and it's possible his loyal players follow him.

Rojas, Granville and Cousins all posted in support of Franklin, so it's not out of the question that they pledge their loyalty to him this offseason rather than to Penn State.

Outside of those four listed, there's other players like Amare Campbell, Ethan Grunkemeyer, Tyseer Denmark, Koby Howard, Luke Reynolds, Andrew Rappleyea, Daryus Dixson, LaVar Arrington II, Dejuan Lane, King Mack and Jaylen Harvey with eligibility left that are set to have roles next season if Campbell and Mack don't declare for the draft.

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Who is Terry Smith?

By Avery Hill
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

After first making himself known at Penn State as a player, long-time cornerbacks coach Terry Smith has got his shot.

On Sunday, Penn State fired James Franklin. In turn, Smith is in the seat as interim head coach. He, alongside Vice President for Intercollegiate Athletics Pat Kraft will take the stage Monday at noon, but here's what you need to know about the temporary man in charge beforehand.

Ex-Nittany Lion receiver

Well before Smith was commanding one of the premier rooms on the Nittany Lions, he was suited in pads and a helmet.

Smith, an Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, native was a wide receiver that started from 1988-91, totaling 1,825 yards in the air and 12 touchdowns in his tenure. He was a part of a Joe Paterno squad that played in three consecutive bowl games and won 33 games in Smith's tenure.

From there, he went to be drafted in the 11th round of the 1992 NFL draft by the Washington Redskins, but only made it a season in the big leagues. He then had stints in the Arena and Canadian Football League before starting his coaching journey in 1996 as an assistant at Hempfield Area High School in Pennsylvania.

Experienced coach

Hempfield was just the beginning of Smith's coaching journey. After one season with the school, he went to Duquesne where he was a passing coordinator from 1997-2000.

After that, he became an offensive coordinator at Gateway High School in Monroeville, Pennsylvania, before becoming head coach, and eventually and simultaneously an athletic director, serving in both roles from 2003-12.

Smith has learned a lot in his previous roles, helping him transition into a coach worthy enough to earn the reins of the program today.

"I think I'm a better teacher," Smith told The Daily Collegian in December. "Twenty years ago I was coaching a room and coaching them all the same — and they're not the same."

Smith continued, "Having my daughter, Haley, helped me to develop that as well. She has down syndrome, so she can learn everything, she just learns differently than everyone else."

For reference, that meant Smith adapting his methods to the individual needs of players, coaching former cornerback Jalen Kimber, who he described as "cerebral" differently than guys like Elliot Washington ll, who he said is a "mixture" of personality styles.

His growth helped him come back to the college scene, going to Temple as a wide receiver coach in 2013 before joining the Nittany Lions as a member of Franklin's new staff. That was when he made his name known on the other side of the ball, starting as cornerbacks coach and defensive recruiting coordinator before adding the associate head coach tag in 2021.

Throughout his career, he's coached many big-time players, including wide receiver Robbie Chosen, formerly known as Robby Anderson, at Temple. Joey Porter Jr., Kalen King, Grant Haley and A.J. Harris highlights some of the best talent he's helped produce on the other side of the ball.

"I know he has a good history with corners in Penn State," cornerback Kenny Woseley Jr. said in Feb. "I was just ready to go in the room and just learn and soak up all the information I can and do my best to learn from coach T."

Loved in Happy Valley

Smith became a household name at Penn State due to his playing days, but his connection to the area didn't start there. Smith's dad, Harvey, graduated from the school in 1968. His family ties don't stop there, as he's the stepfather of former Nittany Lion cornerback Justin King, who he coached at Gateway High School.

Fast forward to his coaching tenure, and his love for the Nittany Lions, and the love the community has for him is still there. It's evident in the fact that Franklin picked him to be on his staff and continued to go on recruiting trips with Smith until the end of his tenure.

"(Franklin) felt like he needed a Pennsylvania guy that was connected and tied to Penn State, and I fit the bill," Smith said in 2023.

His aforementioned rap sheet of players coached and his role in the Nittany Lions' recruiting class that has been at least top-20 in each season since 2020 is an endorsement in itself.

"Terry is the one who got me in the room," now-safety Antoine Belgrave-Shorter said in Feb.

As an in-state guy, he's helped Penn State keep the "best in PA in PA," a mantra Franklin always harped on in recruiting.

Even further, Smith has been able to gain the love of his current and former players. It's what has helped the Nittany Lions secure all-conference players year after year and the program's highest-drafted cornerback in Porter with pick No. 32 of the 2023 NFL draft.

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Franklin's Legacy

By Will Horstman
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Following Northwestern's win over Penn State, there was a feeling in Beaver Stadium that James Franklin's time as head coach was coming to an end.

Here's a look back at the Franklin era by the numbers.

$49 million

According to ESPN, Penn State is set to owe Franklin more than $49 million for the buyout of his contract. It's the second-largest buyout in the history of college football, behind Texas A&M's buyout of Jimbo Fisher for $76 million in 2023.

The buyout comes from the 10-year contract then-athletic director Sandy Barbour and Franklin agreed to in 2021, when the Nittany Lions were amid a 7-6 season. Now just four years into the deal, Franklin is out in Happy Valley.

104 wins

Kicker Sam Ficken lined up for a field goal late during Penn State's game against UCF in 2014. Ficken knocked the kick through the uprights, giving Franklin his first win of his Penn State career.

The victory ended up becoming the first of 104 wins for Franklin, which ties him for second all time with Rip Engle. The last victory came about a month ago during the Nittany Lions' matchup against Villanova.

Franklin accomplished six 10-plus win seasons with Penn State, with the first coming in 2016. His highest win total came last season with 13 victories en route to a College Football Playoff semifinal appearance.

59 NFL draft picks

During his time in Happy Valley, Franklin helped produce 59 NFL draft picks.

Running back Saquon Barkley going second overall to the New York Giants in 2018 was the highest a Nittany Lion went in Franklin's tenure. Defensive end Abdul Carter is close behind by getting drafted No. 3 overall in 2025 also to the Giants.

Had Franklin finished out this season, he would've had more players to add to this list. Drew Allar, Dani Dennis-Sutton and others returned for their senior season and are projected picks in the upcoming 2026 NFL draft.

21 top-10 losses

Franklin's performance against top-10 teams earned him the sarcastic nickname of "big game James" on social media. He went 4-21 versus those opponents during his time in Happy Valley.

A lot of those games came against Ohio State, which defeated Franklin 10 times. Michigan was also a common top-10 opponent, and the most recent loss to the Wolverines came in 2023.

Then-No. 6 Oregon defeating the Nittany Lions 30-24 on Sept. 27 proved to be Franklin's last top-10 loss at Penn State. His last top-10 win was Boise State in the 2024 College Football Playoff.

5 3-plus losing streaks

Penn State has been on five losing streaks of three games or more during Franklin's tenure. Of course, this season includes one of them with the three losses to Oregon, UCLA and Northwestern.

Penn State had a four-game losing streak in 2014, and it also lost three in a row in 2015. Franklin and company had its worst start to a season in 2020 by losing five-straight matchups.

The Nittany Lions then had a three-game skid in 2021, which came to losses against Iowa, Illinois and Ohio State.

4 New Year's Six bowls

Franklin won four New Year's Six bowl games throughout seven appearances.

Penn State went 1-1 in the Rose Bowl with Franklin. He won in 2022 during quarterback Sean Clifford's last collegiate game and lost in a thriller against USC in 2016.

The Nittany Lions had a pair of wins in the Fiesta Bowl with Franklin, coming in 2017 and 2024. Penn State was also undefeated in the Cotton Bowl, defeating Memphis in 2019 during its lone appearance in the Franklin era.

The two other New Year's Six bowl games made by Franklin were the 2023 Peach Bowl against Ole Miss and the 2024 Orange Bowl versus Notre Dame, which was the semifinal of the College Football Playoff.

3 Northwestern losses

Franklin lost to Northwestern three times in his career, and the Wildcats marked his first and last loss as Penn State's coach.

The Nittany Lions began 2014 with a 4-0 record before welcoming Northwestern to Beaver Stadium in Week 5. Quarterback Trevor Siemian had three rushing touchdowns as the Wildcats won, 29-6.

This past weekend, Franklin lost 22-21 to Northwestern at home again, which ended up becoming his last game. The other loss to the Wildcats came in 2015, 23-21.

2 Big Ten championships

Franklin reached the Big Ten championship game twice as Penn State's coach.

The Nittany Lions ended the 2016 season on a winning streak, finishing first in the Big Ten East Division to make the conference title game. Penn State faced Wisconsin for the championship and came back from a 28-7 deficit to win 38-31.

Franklin's squad also made the title game last season against Oregon. The Nittany Lions fell behind early but couldn't complete a comeback before losing 45-37.

1 block six

Marcus Allen jumped over the line of scrimmage against Ohio State in 2016, blocking a field goal before Grant Haley returned the loose ball for a touchdown. It's possibly the highlight of the Franklin era as it's one of the main reasons why the Nittany Lions managed their lone win versus the Buckeyes since 2014.

The upset win also propelled Franklin to his first 10-win season at Penn State.

It was the team's resurgence to the national stage.

Without the block six, Penn State's recent history might look different. The Franklin era could've ended earlier, and the team would still not have a Big Ten championship since 2008.

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Max Petrosky/Collegian

James Franklin walks off the field after the Big Ten Football Championship Game at Lucas Oil Stadium on Saturday, Dec. 3, 2016 in Indianapolis.

"This is my dream job" — James Franklin formally introduced as Penn State's next head coach

By John McGonigal | Collegian Sports Chief

A herd of photographers crowded the entrance to the media room in Beaver Stadium.

First, the family of James Franklin — his wife, Fumi, along with their two young daughters — took a seat among the throngs of media on hand.

Moments later, Franklin himself, flanked by President Rodney Erickson and Athletic Director Dave Joyner, walked up to the microphone table, sat down and was formally announced early Saturday evening as Penn State's 16th head coach in program history.

"We feel that we had a great pool of candidates, but coach Franklin is the right choice for us," Joyner said. "He's the next phase with us at Penn State football...We're very much looking forward to the future."

"We ran a careful and deliberate search process, and I believe we have found the right person to lead our program," Erickson said.

After multiple reports pegged Franklin as Bill O'Brien's successor, Penn State confirmed Franklin's hiring Saturday morning via a press release.

Media notebook: Franklin takes over

Coach James Franklin is taking over in any way he sees fit.

After practice on Wednesday, the Penn State coach said he will expand his role as head coach into all facets of the program, including administration, special teams, defense and offensive play calling.

"I'm going to get a lot more involved than I've been," Franklin said.

Franklin did not elaborate on the amount of control he will take over each part of the game, saying he will intervene as needed.

Do the shuffle

The Nittany Lions had a tough time stopping the pass rush last weekend, allowing Temple to sack quarterback Christian Hackenberg 10 times.

Linsey Fagan/Collegian

Head coach James Franklin walks through the tunnel of fans during team arrival prior to the game against Georgia State at Beaver Stadium on Saturday, Sept. 16.

Let's be Frank: Penn State needs a challenge

LET'S BE FRANK

Win over Auburn answers questions within Penn State's roster

By Max Ralph
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Let's be Frank, Penn State's win over Auburn was a major step forward in erasing the question marks that were present on the 2022 Nittany Lion roster — and it might have even turned them into exclamation points.

Coming into the year, three things stood out as question marks above all else: the run game, the linebacking corps and the offensive line as a whole.

The run game, led by the lightning bolt that is Nick Singleton, showed signs of life against Ohio last week. But, that's Ohio, and you should run it ...

Chloe Trieff/Collegian

...n State head coach James Franklin gazes toward the Auburn crowd during the Nittany Lions's 41-... 17 in Alabama.

The Nittany Lions have given up six sacks through three games so far, but five of them came against Ohio. Sean Clifford was kept nice and clean against Auburn, a stark contrast to his experience in 2020 and 2021. He made good on it, too, playing an efficient game and doing well to extend plays when necessary.

Fashanu has been a revelation at left tackle for ... ...mer has been similarly solid but not awesome while rotating at the spot.

Overall, though, early returns say that the Penn State offensive line has finally made an important jump.

Success in 2022 for Penn State was always categorized by seeing improvement in key areas and finding out that young pieces could be legitimate contributors, ...t by winning 11 games and a ...

Franklin reflects

By Benjamin Ferree
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Franklin could only describe ... "heartbreaking."

James Franklin is more than just a coach

REDEMPTION

Penn State's blowout win over Pitt was a little bit sweeter for Trace McSorley, who bad memories with him from his last trip to Heinz Field

Linsey Fagan/Collegian

Head coach James Franklin and safety Nick Scott (4) walk onto the field at Ohio Stadium on Saturday, Oct. 28.

Why Franklin does not set goals

Let's Be Frank: Penn State barely passed

Next wave of 'Linebacker U' at Penn State

By Tyler King
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Pro Football Hall of Fame linebacker Jack Ham told the Collegian in 2015 that Penn State's "Linebacker U" tradition began with Dennis Onkotz — an All-American linebacker in the late 1960s.

From Lavar Arrington and Shane Conlan to current NFL players like Paul Posluszny, Sean Lee and Navorro Bowman, the tradition has remained intact ever since.

While senior Jason Cabinda appears to be the one linebacker on the current team who could make his way to the NFL next season, it remains uncertain who will be the next wave of players to come through "Linebacker U" beyond 2017.

However, Penn State fans might not have to wait for very long for the next core of linebackers as James Franklin has al... secured three linebacker re...

in the coming years.

With Luketa and Katshir filling a more prototypical outside linebacker role, Tarburton is left to fill the middle ...

Unlike Pitt, Penn State football stays consistent

... other.

"We're tight," Tarburton said. "We check in on how we're doing all the time. I can't wait to get on the field with [Luketa and Katshir]."

Tarburton also said the entire 2018 class is a very close group.

... not only talented players ... great people, which makes being around them much more enjoyable."

The aura of "Linebacker U" can be intimidating to some recruits because it brings high ex...

... things will ...

"It's going to be tough," Tarburton said. "But my attitude is to give 110 percent as soon as I get on campus and see how things play out."

... Bowen ...

With the only linebacker recruit from the class of 2017 being Ellis Brooks, there will be plenty of playing time available

Vol. 118 No. 11 Friday, Sept. 1, 2017 @DailyCollegian

PERENNIAL POWER?

This season could be the one that confirms Penn State is once again a top college football program.

Linse...

Head coach James Franklin speaks with the media during his weekly press conference at Beaver ... Tuesday, Sept. 12.

Franklin explains science of non-conference schedu...

Let's be Frank

The Ohio State Buckeyes gave Penn State every chance to win

By Collegian Football Staff
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Let's be Frank, by every statistical measure, Saturday's game shouldn't even have been close.

FOOTBALL

Ohio State mistakes and Penn State opportunism made sure it wasn't close most of the day either. The Nittany Lions led for 57 minutes and 57 seconds, and only 14 minutes and 16 seconds of that time saw the Buckeyes come within a possession of tying the game or taking the lead.

But, Penn State, the team that was being dominated in every statistical category, was racing ahead for much of the afternoon. The Nittany Lions were outgained 529 yards to 283. J.T. Barrett and the Buckeyes offense averaged 6.8 yards per play while Trace McSorley and the Nittany Lions were held to 4.4. The Buckeyes picked up 10 more first downs and had the ball for 14 more offensive plays across the 60 minutes, as well.

Yet, at various points throughout the contest, the Nittany Lions led by scores of 21-3, 28-10 and 35-20. In the end, the game came right down to the wire with the Buckeyes prevailing 39-38.

So, why was the team that was getting badly beaten statistically still threatening to run away with it on the scoreboard?

Because frankly, Ohio State easily could have taken the lead a lot sooner after the Nittany Lions' usual early flurry. One could easily make the argument that the Nittany Lions were out schemed for most of the day. The Buckeyes found an answer for Penn State's lockdown secondary, and on the other side of the ball, Saquon Barkley was neutralized.

However, when it came down to being ready to play out of the gate and being more disciplined, Penn State's coaching staff did a far better job.

The fact of the matter is, that over the early part of the game, the Nittany Lions didn't waste a single opportunity. The only time Barkley got the ball cleanly kicked to him, he took it to the house. The Nittany Lions turned Ohio State's lone first-half turnover into a touchdown after taking over deep in Buckeyes territory at the 23-yard line.

Koa Farmer returned a kickoff to the Ohio State 23 after the Buckeyes found the end zone for the first time. Two plays later, Trace McSorley was diving over the goal line and the Nittany Lions had their 28 first-half points.

In that period, Penn State had put one real drive together. A 7-play, 81-yard march that was finished off by a 36-yard run from Barkley. Penn State was being opportunistic and put up a lot of points, but it still hadn't shown the ability to string drives together.

On the Nittany Lions first drive of the second half, they put together a 70-yard drive that resulted in a touchdown after DeAndre Thompkins won a 50-50 ball in the end zone. It looked like the Nittany Lions were going to be able to keep scoring without Ohio State help. However, that was the last time the Nittany Lions got the ball over the goal line.

To read full story, visit collegian.psu.edu.

Camille Stefani/Collegian

James Franklin celebrates as DaeSean Hamilton (5) comes off the field after scoring during the game against Ohio State on Saturday, Oct. 28.

'I wouldn't change anything'

Camille Stefani/Collegian

Head coach James Franklin enters Beaver Stadium at team arrival before the Penn State homecoming game on Saturday, Nov. 11.

Let's be Frank: Lions set to cruise

Who does Pat Kraft want for Penn State?

By Lexie Linderman
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Sawyer Hadlum/Collegian

Vice President for Intercollegiate Athletics Pat Kraft speaks during a press conference in Beaver Stadium on Monday, Oct. 13, 2025 in University Park, Pa.

Pat Kraft fired James Franklin because while Penn State had reached "great" status, it's not "elite" yet. Kraft wants to win a national championship, and he thought a different coach was needed to do so.

Kraft laid out exactly what he's looking for as he begins the nationwide search for the Nittany Lions next leader. It starts with what Penn State stands for as a program: "integrity, accountability, toughness and an elite motivator," and ends with someone who will bring the fanbase back together after the past three games have divided it.

"We'll find a coach who can achieve excellence at the highest level, doing it with confidence and conviction. Recruiting will always be a pillar here. We want someone who will attract elite talent, retain players in the NIL era, and make Penn State a destination," Kraft said Monday. "This person has to fit Penn State. They need to represent the toughness, the blue collar work ethic and the class that defines this institution. We want someone who honors our tradition but isn't afraid to evolve, someone who understands the weight of 'We Are' and leads us forward with a vision of championships."

What coaches fit that bill? Here's four that Kraft could be looking long and hard at.

Matt Campbell, Iowa State head coach

Matt Campbell has been very adamant that he doesn't want to leave Iowa State. He is focused on making the Cyclones an elite program, and so far, he's been doing a great job in getting them on the map and consistently winning.

Campbell has an excellent track record of noticing talent with lower-ranked players while recruiting, and he's been consistently churning out NFL talent since becoming the head coach at Iowa State, which is key at a program like Penn State.

He simply doesn't have the resources at Iowa State to make it an elite team year after year. But the Nittany Lions have money and prestige, which Campbell could certainly make the most of.

Campbell has very little Pennsylvania ties, but he did play one season of college football at Pitt. He does have every trait Kraft wants, though, he's remained a Cyclone despite his name floating around head coach openings and holds his players accountable.

The real question is if he would finally leave Iowa State, but Penn State's resources will certainly turn his head just a bit.

Matt Rhule, Nebraska head coach

Matt Rhule fits the bill almost perfectly. Key word being almost.

Rhule is more of a coach that thrives in rebuilding programs, not winning at the highest level. He found success at Temple, Baylor and Nebraska by bringing winning seasons back to each program, but he's 2-23 against ranked opponents.

Penn State doesn't need a rebuild. It needs someone who can win the games that matter, and Rhule hasn't shown he can do that.

He does, however, embody the "toughness, the blue collar work ethic and the class" that Kraft wants. Rhule understands and loves Penn State more than anyone after growing up in State College, attending State High and playing for Joe Paterno as a walk-on linebacker.

Manny Diaz, Duke head coach

Manny Diaz is beloved by the Penn State community, and he loves it back after spending the 2022 and 2023 seasons as the Nittany Lions' defensive coordinator.

Like Rhule and Campbell, he embodies what Kraft wants in a leader, and he has enough head coaching experience to believe he understands the NIL era and the importance of recruiting. Diaz has also done a solid job utilizing the transfer portal, bringing in nine guys in 2025.

But is the guy to lead Penn State to the promised land? That's a bit of a question mark.

Diaz is 34-21 overall as an FBS head coach, and was fired from his head coaching position at Miami before taking the Nittany Lions' defensive coordinator job.

At Duke, he's found success, as the Blue Devils are currently tied atop the ACC standings and went 9-3 in the regular season in 2024 after Duke was 7-5 in 2023. However, it's unclear whether he's at the coaching pedigree that Penn State needs and Kraft wants.

Curt Cignetti, Indiana head coach

Kraft wants a winner? Well, then he should Google Curt Cignetti.

Cignetti has turned Indiana into a winning program in just under two years on the job. He's been aggressive in the transfer portal and has proven to be a solid recruiter with an eye for talent in both instances.

His personality is interesting, to say the least, but there's no denying he has built a culture the Hoosiers have bought into. Cignetti has said in the past he not only looks for talent, but also character when recruiting, which is the exact philosophy Penn State has always had.

Cignetti would be a pretty perfect fit for the Nittany Lions. It's just a matter of if he wants to leave Indiana.

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College football head coaches on Franklin's firing

By Lyle Alenstein
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

James Franklin has been a steady presence in the college football world before he was the head coach at Penn State for 12 years.

He had stints in various roles at schools such as Vanderbilt, Maryland, Kansas State, Idaho State, Washington State, James Madison, East Stroudsburg and Kutztown University.

He also spent a year with the Green Bay Packers and has built many relationships throughout his many stops, so in turn many coaches around the country were asked about his firing.

Here's what coaches have had to say.

Matt Rhule

Matt Rhule, the head coach at Nebraska, has his ties to Penn State. He's a State College native, who walked on and played for the Nittany Lions as a linebacker.

Since the firing of James Franklin, many have linked Rhule as one of, if not the favorite to be next in line for Penn State.

"I love Penn State – met my wife there. It's my alma mater. Fan since I was born. I think I probably had a Penn State shirt when I was born," Rhule said via a video from 10/11 News. "I love Pat Kraft. I'm really sad to see coach Franklin go. When you think about what he did for my alma mater, that program was in peril. People remember the historic sanctions, Bill O'Brien comes in and stabilizes it for two years. James takes over a program in disarray and gives stability, excellence, and to see videos of people yelling at his kids. I don't understand why in our country now coaches are villains."

> "It's a shame because he's a great coach. We all know that. He's won a lot of football games."
>
> **Pat Narduzzi**
> Head Coach, Pitt

Rhule was the head coach at Temple when Kraft was the athletic director for the Owls. Rhule held his role from 2013-16 while Kraft was there from 2013-20.

Kraft was the one who hired Rhule and then later on gave him an extension.

"People say, 'Well, you make a lot of money.' Making a lot of money doesn't make your kids feel good when they're hearing that," Rhule said. "Making a lot of money – it's nice to make a lot of money, don't get me wrong – but we're still people. So I really respect James Franklin."

While he spoke highly of his alma mater, Rhule affirmed his commitment to winning football games at Nebraska.

"I absolutely love it here. I just want us to continue to take the steps needed for us to turn this thing into a beast," Rhule said. "Players all across the country want to come here. We have the best facilities. We have elite fans. I'm just looking at the future."

Manny Diaz

Like Rhule, Manny Diaz is another candidate that many are pointing to as another likely option to take over for Franklin.

Diaz was the Penn State defensive coordinator starting in 2022, and departed ahead of the 2023 Peach Bowl against Ole Miss to take the head coaching gig at Duke.

In his second campaign leading the Blue Devils, Diaz has the program at 4-2 coming off his first year with a 9-4 record.

"There's three things you go through when you're a coach," Diaz said when asked about the Penn State job, per Blue Devil Nation. "The honeymoon phase, the please don't leave phase and the please leave phase. And it can change in three weeks."

Dabo Swinney

Clemson is another team like Penn State that was viewed as national championship contenders entering the season, but also boast a 3-3 record in 2025.

"It's sad to see," Dabo Swinney said, via Chapel Fowler of The State. "We all understand that it's part of the business."

Most people are quick to not care about Franklin's situation due to the amount of money he's receiving as part of his buyout, but Swinney didn't subscribe to that talking point.

"I know everyone will say, 'well, he's getting the buyout.' Coach Franklin didn't get into coaching to make money — I promise you," Swinney said.

Steve Sarkisian

Like Clemson and Penn State, Texas has failed to meet expectations this year, starting as the preseason No. 3 team in the country. Now, the Longhorns are unranked just like the Nittany Lions.

Steve Sarkisian is aware just how quickly programs can fall from where they were supposed to be at the start of the year. His job security is also being questioned by the national media, even drawing comparisons to Franklin.

"A year ago, they're a final four team, and they're in a dogfight to go play for a championship," Sarkisian said, according to David Eckert of the Statesman.

The firing of Franklin made Sarkisian acknowledge the state of the college football world and the reality of it being a business.

"Five days ago, they're a play away from being a top two team in the country," Sarkisian said. "Today, he's no longer the head coach. That should just tell you about the business we're in."

Pat Narduzzi

Pat Narduzzi has long spoken about wanting to renew the Penn State vs. Pitt rivalry. Franklin, on the other hand, has been hesitant in that regard.

With uncertainty about where Penn State turns to next leadership wise at the end of the year, who knows if the in-state matchup makes its return.

In the meantime, Narduzzi offered his thoughts on the firing of Franklin.

"James Franklin is a great coach. It's the business we're in. I say business. It's business. The place have got to do what they've got to do," Narduzzi said, according to 937thefan. "I'm not concerned about that. We don't play them and James will be OK. I've got a lot of respect for him."

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Column | The dangers of 'rat poison' in college football

By Avery Hill
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

On Saturday, James Franklin trotted through the most ruckus home tunnel of his tenure at Penn State, stopped and told his family to get ahead of him before taking it all: the boos, the curses, the tossed objects.

Fans berated Franklin on his walk through the Beaver Stadium tunnel. Just a day later, the nearly 12-year marriage between him and Happy Valley was over. It could have ended differently if the Nittany Lions had been able to avoid the" rat poison," as Nick Saban put it.

"I'm trying to get our players to listen to me, instead of listening to you guys," Saban told the media in 2017. "All that stuff you write about how good we are, and all that stuff they hear on ESPN. It's like poison, it's like taking poison, it's like rat poison."

With the legendary coach, Alabama was able to manage and win the national title during that season, but national championships are the standard for the Crimson Tide.

The Nittany Lions, on the other hand, haven't seen hype like this in decades.

Penn State was expected to be ridiculously good with the returns of Drew Allar, Nick Singleton, Dani Dennis-Sutton and more. The squad was ranked No. 2 in the preseason AP Poll — its highest preseason mark since 1997 — and Franklin brought in what he said was the "best combined personnel" in his time at Penn State.

Vice President of Intercollegiate Athletics Pat Kraft added to this sentiment when he told ROAR+ he wants four championships out of Penn State sports, football was clearly one of those sports.

It was fair to be confident, but the year quickly became a "natty or bust" campaign. The bust part of it meant it could get messy and it did. That started with Franklin, who was forced to eat his words a week before getting fired.

"Obviously I felt that way or I wouldn't have said it," Franklin said of his personnel after losing to UCLA. "But after two losses, it's hard for me to answer that question and say that's the case."

Penn State's first six games were defined by not living up to the hype. They were constantly chasing a standard and "blocking out the noise" and it got to the point where both expectations were nearly impossible, thus the team lost its identity.

Players like Allar and Singleton were clearly overthinking. It's their last year and hopes are high, but it's been clear that the two weren't able to let go and play freely. That extended to the defensive side, as external pressure added onto learning Jim Knowles' scheme stopped them from reaching their full potential.

It didn't just get to them, it got to Franklin too. After the Oregon loss, he acknowledged his 4-21 mark against top 10 teams, calling it "factual" and not a narrative.

He's correct, but he fed into the sentiment and went against what he preached in blocking out the outside noise.

The buzz, the hope and the hate drained Franklin and effectively ended his era at Penn State.

In nearly 12 years, Franklin took the program out of a sanctions-ridden struggle and brought consistency and stability. Six 10-win seasons, yearly postseason play, a roster retention rate up with the best of programs and 104 wins.

There's no question he's one of the best coaches to ever come through Happy Valley, regardless of sport.

But all of that will be overshadowed by his final walk off the Beaver Stadium playing surface. The heckling fans embodied the exact thing Franklin and company tried to make a point of not feeding into — rat poison.

If it didn't do so, maybe things could've been different. Maybe the team's rolling at 5-1 headed into the toughest stretch of the season and maybe its stars are still considered among the nation's best.

But that didn't happen.

Instead, Penn State got caught up in its expectations and like a messy divorce, Franklin's last memory of the program and vice versa is full of expletives, anger and tears.

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Cartoon by Nate Campbell

How should the Drew Allar era be remembered at Penn State?

By Will Horstman
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Alex Fischer/Collegian

Quarterback Drew Allar (15) holds the ball during the Penn State Homecoming football game against Northwestern in Beaver Stadium on Oct. 11, 2025 in University Park, Pa. The Wildcats beat the Nittany Lions 22-21.

Drew Allar dropped back to pass early in the first quarter against West Virginia in 2023. He found KeAndre Lambert-Smith downfield for a touchdown and NBC commentator Noah Eagle exclaimed "welcome to the Drew Allar era."

Now, the Allar era has come to a close with his season-ending injury versus Northwestern last Saturday.

"One of his last memories in Beaver Stadium will be getting cheered off in an injury cart," center Nick Dawkins said Tuesday via Zoom. "I just think it's so interesting, given what he's done for this school, what he's done for this team and this program, and the places that he's taken us. He's taken Penn State to (its) first College Football Playoff within one drive going to a national championship."

So after 35 games and a 26-9 record as Penn State's starting quarterback, how should the Allar era be remembered?

In Penn State's record books

Allar ends his Penn State career as the program's all-time completion percentage leader at 63.2%, accounting for players who have at least 200 attempts. He also ranks third in touchdown passes with 61 and fourth in passing yards with 7,402.

While he just had one against Northwestern, the former 5-star prospect didn't throw many picks, tossing an interception on 1.3% of his passes, the best in program history by a considerable margin. Again only including qualifying quarterbacks, the next lowest is Wally Richardson's 2% interception rate.

For what it's worth, Allar has played in 45 games, dating back to when he typically saw action during garbage time as Sean Clifford's backup his freshman year. That mark is tied for third most all time among Penn State quarterbacks.

Allar began his starting career with 25 touchdowns in 2023. He then had 3,327 passing yards while completing 66.5% of his throws a year later. All three of those numbers rank third in their respective single-season categories for Penn State all time.

Allar's wins

Allar "won a lot of games for Penn State," as Dawkins put it. While this year was off to a 3-3 start, Allar helped lead the Nittany Lions to double-digit-win seasons in the last two campaigns.

The Nittany Lions won a program-best 13 games with Allar at the helm in 2024, reaching the College Football Playoff semifinal.

Amid the run, Allar had his highest-ranked victory — the 2024 Fiesta Bowl against No. 3-seed Boise State. The gunslinger threw for 171 yards and three touchdowns, including scoring passes to tight end Tyler Warren and wide receiver Omari Evans.

During Allar's first year as starter in 2023, he contributed 2,631 passing yards while throwing just two interceptions as the team made an appearance in the Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl.

Performances vs. top-10 teams

Allar has the win over Boise State, but he lost his other six games that came against top-10 opponents.

The Medina High School product had two chances versus Ohio State and dropped both games. Combining the two matchups, Allar completed 48.4% of his throws for 337 yards, a touchdown and an interception.

Allar squared off against Michigan in 2023, tallying 10-of-22 passing, 70 yards and a score as the Nittany Lions lost.

The quarterback had a shot at the Big Ten championship in a faceoff with Oregon last season, and he almost completed a comeback after throwing for 226 yards and three touchdowns. However, Allar tossed an interception late that effectively ended Penn State's chances.

Allar had a similar ending in the Notre Dame game later that season, throwing back across the middle of the field and getting picked off late. He ended the night with 135 passing yards on 12-of-23 passing.

Then there's the more recent loss to the Ducks coming in the White Out on Sept. 27. Allar, who threw for 137 yards and two touchdowns, again almost led a comeback but threw into triple coverage for an interception in overtime.

Beloved within program

Allar was seemingly well liked in the locker room and behind the scenes at Penn State. Teammates offered kind words to him after they learned of his season-ending injury postgame, such as offensive lineman TJ Shanahan Jr. saying "we're gonna be there for him."

Vice President of Intercollegiate Athletics Pat Kraft was also emotional during his presser Monday when talking about Allar.

"Anyone who ever doubts that young man's commitment to Penn State and Penn State football, you don't know what the hell you're talking about," Kraft said. "Drew's one hell of a young man. He puts up with a lot of crap, and I get it in the NIL era. He's still a kid, and there's not a negative word that comes up when I think of Drew."

Allar was a two-time captain for the Nittany Lions, taking on the role both this season and last. He had the option to enter the 2025 NFL draft but remained with Penn State, which Kraft described as "pretty awesome."

Teammates noticed what Allar does everyday within the Lasch Building, so linebacker Dom DeLuca said it was "hard to see" the injury happen to the gunslinger.

"I see how hard he works every day and his routine," DeLuca said Tuesday via Zoom. "How he goes about his day to day process and his preparation, it's incredible."

While Allar's playing days at Penn State are up, Kraft doesn't think the quarterback's impacts on Penn State are done just yet.

"He's going to be an incredible pro football player," Kraft said. "He's going to be an incredible ambassador for this program."

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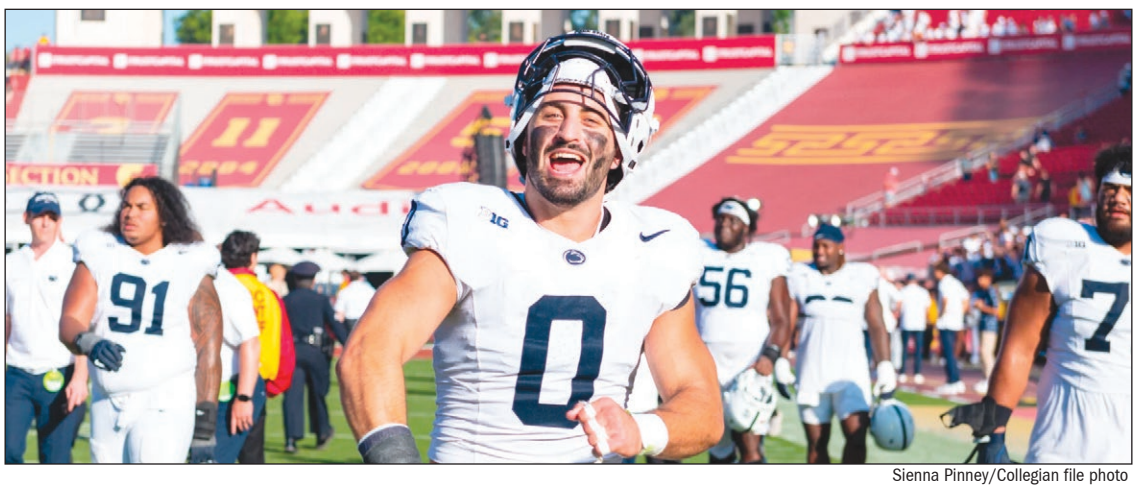
DeLuca left 'emotional'



Sienna Pinney/Collegian file photo

Linebacker Dominic DeLuca (0) celebrates the win at the Penn State football game at USC in the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum on Oct. 12, 2024 in Los Angeles. The Nittany Lions beat the Trojans 33-30.

By Lexie Linderman
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

After tearing his ACL during the state championship in 2019 at Wyoming Area High School, Dom DeLuca called James Franklin crying. He thought everything was lost and had no idea where he would end up at that point. Would he enlist in the military? Play at a junior college? Perhaps trade school?

But Franklin told him DeLuca had a plan for him. He was the only one who believed in the linebacker, and soon after, DeLuca accepted a preferred walk-on offer from Penn State.

Now, Franklin's no longer the head coach at Penn State. Naturally, it's hitting the players hard, but especially DeLuca, who wouldn't be one of the Nittany Lions' starting linebackers if Franklin didn't have confidence in him when he hit rock bottom.

"He was able to settle me down, get my head straight and (told) me what we're going to do and how we're going to go about it," DeLuca said Tuesday via Zoom. "I trusted the process. I just lived it to the fullest."

When DeLuca first arrived in Happy Valley in 2021, he had just finished rehabbing from his knee injury. Franklin told him — and everyone — the way to make an impact early was to hone in on special teams.

So DeLuca did that, and along the way, he showed Franklin and the staff they made the right choice by trusting him with a roster spot. He eventually earned a scholarship and is now a three-time captain.

"Coach Franklin was one of the coaches, one of the only coaches to believe in me and give me an opportunity to play at my dream school and to chase my dreams of playing at Penn State," DeLuca said. "So, I mean, it's a very emotional time right now."

It's not just DeLuca who Franklin has made an impact on, either.

His entire family was beloved by Franklin and loved him just as much back.

"Coach Franklin is always going to be a big name in my family, definitely for the DeLuca family," DeLuca said. "Just the connection he's made with my parents, my siblings, my nephew, everyone in my family he's touched and has been a great role model and great person to everyone in my family."

As expected, the last 48 hours have been emotional for DeLuca after losing the guy who picked up the phone without hesitation six years ago during the most fragile state of his football career.

Everyone copes and handles sudden losses differently. For DeLuca, what's helped during this emotional time has been simply talking with those who he holds near and dear to his heart.

"(I) talked to a lot of family, friends, just to get some stuff off my chest, just be able to talk and be able to get their point of view and get some advice from them as well," DeLuca said. "It's a hard time now. Everyone's emotional, everyone's surprised. (We're) just trying to do our best to keep the legacy of coach Franklin here, and keep everything going that he's worked on with us and as a family."

Although Franklin is gone, he still made a huge impact on DeLuca and Penn State.

The redshirt senior is going to use the things he learned from Franklin every day of his life moving forward. And so is everyone else in the Lasch Building as they look to snap a three-game skid.

"I would say his leadership and just like his attention to detail. I mean, that's biggest thing he's really preached my five years here," DeLuca said. "We're gonna have other people to have to step up and be able to take what he's taught us the last five years, or even more coaches and staff. Just be able to apply that to the program now, while he's not with us, and be able to hold everyone accountable when needed, and be able to do our job."

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Get to know new QB Ethan Grunkemeyer

By Will Horstman
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Late in the fourth quarter against Northwestern, quarterback Ethan Grunkemeyer was warming up along the sideline. Drew Allar was down with an injury, so Grunkemeyer was about to enter the game with Penn State in a fourth-and-3 situation.

Grunkemeyer came in and ran for no gain, effectively ending the Nittany Lions' chances. Allar's now out for the season, so that wasn't even close to time Grunkemeyer will see the field this season. Allar's injuries are the latest blow to Penn State's three game skid but teammates have faith in the redshirt freshman quarterback.

"He handled it great," wide receiver Devonte Ross said of Grunkemeyer's relief appearance. "He came in there hyping us up. He called the play with confidence. Grunk is somebody who has confidence, so that instills confidence in us, and we got 100% belief in him."

Grunkemeyer was a 2024 247Sports composite 4-star prospect coming out of Olentangy High School in Ohio. He spent his freshman campaign behind Allar and backup quarterback Beau Pribula.

When Pribula transferred to Missouri, Grunkemeyer was propelled to the second-string spot during the 2024 College Football Playoff. He made one appearance, coming in during garbage time against SMU and completing 1-of-2 passes for 9 yards and an interception.

This past offseason, Grunkemeyer competed with quarterback Jaxon Smolik for the No. 2 role behind Allar. It was said to be a close competition between the two gunslingers, but Grunkemeyer won the job ahead of the season opener.

Ross was impressed with what he saw from Grunkemeyer behind the scenes.

"He's somebody who takes his role seriously on this team," Ross said. "He's always getting extra reps doing whatever he has to do to make sure he's in the best position possible to be successful."

During Penn State's nonconference schedule, Grunkemeyer saw more garbage time reps. In the opener against Nevada, he led a 15-play, 94-yard drive that was capped off by his first career touchdown — a scramble from 6 yards out.

The score highlighted an overall productive outing as a backup quarterback for Grunkemeyer, who completed 7-of-9 passes for 86 yards.

Earlier this season, Grunkemeyer said he learned "how to be a big-time QB" while being behind Allar.

"Looking at him coming in, he started his second year, all eyes on him," Grunkemeyer said via Zoom on Sept. 2. "And then how he's had to tone that in and how to prepare to be one of the best, if not the best, qbs in the country."

Grunkemeyer saw action in the following two games as well, but not as much as the Nevada game. He still threw a pass versus Villanova to tight end Joey Schlaffer for a 19-yard score.

"I've always been a fan of Grunk," defensive end Dani Dennis-Sutton said. "Tough guy, not scared of anything. He's always getting ready, like I always see him in the building preparing like he's a starter. So that right there has me have faith in him."

With Grunkemeyer now the likely starter, offensive lineman TJ Shanahan Jr. said "no" when asked if the offense has to change dramatically. Ross said the receivers don't have as many in-game reps with Grunkemeyer but still reiterated his belief in the quarterback.

The Nittany Lions will head to Iowa for a night game next Saturday for Grunkemeyer's first career start. There's a lot of other hurdles for the program to overcome, including sticking together in the tough stretch, but regardless, the team has Grunkemeyer's back.

"If I'm being honest, I don't think we need to do a whole lot, just kind of tell him that we're there for him," Shanahan said. "He's a competitor. He's a fighter. I have full faith in him getting the job done for us and kind of exceeding expectations."

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