



# EARN YOUR STRIPES



## Mike Yurcich proves to be the hire the program needed

By Justin Morganstein  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Following the conclusion of Penn State's "Champions Week" win against Illinois in December 2020, there were a number of questions surrounding James Franklin's program.

One of the biggest was Sean Clifford and the rest of the Nittany Lion offense after a 4-5 season filled with a quarterback battle, turnover problems and a global pandemic that resulted in the first losing campaign since 2004.

Prior to the 2020 campaign, Penn State brought in former Minnesota offensive coordinator Kirk Ciarrocca to solve those offensive problems.

That didn't happen, but most probably didn't expect Ciarrocca to be on his way out after just one season.

Just a month after the win over Illinois, Penn State announced it would not retain Ciarrocca and found yet another new offensive coordinator in Mike Yurcich, the offensive coordinator at Texas the year prior.

Franklin expressed that he'd been interested in the Euclid, Ohio, native years before he finally landed him, and he's been someone who he's always had a tremendous amount of respect for.

He noted they have many of the same offense principles as well, going back to their Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference roots, where Yurcich coached at Shippensburg for two years, and Franklin played and graduated

from East Stroudsburg.

"Philosophically, me and Mike have been talking for a long time, and we're on the same page in what we want to do and how we want to do it," Franklin said following the hire. "I think the things that excite me are the stats that I threw out.

"You better be able to protect the football, and then you better be able to create explosive plays, and those are two areas that we were not successful at in [2020]."

So far in 2021, those two factors have played a huge role in Penn State's success under Yurcich.

The Nittany Lions are 5-1 with a reinvigorated Sean Clifford — prior to his injury against Iowa — and have significantly flipped the script in regard to the turnover issues.

Penn State is on pace to turn the ball over just 14 times in 2021 after giving it away 17 times in 2020 in just nine total games.

Much of that is a credit to Yurcich's ability to adjust to the needs of whoever is under center in his offense.

The perfect person to attest to that? One of the most successful quarterbacks he produced during his time at Oklahoma State: current Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Mason Rudolph.

Rudolph, who was the starter for the Cowboys from 2015-2017 under Yurcich, said his former offensive coordinator has been that way with many of his previous quarterbacks.

"When you earn your accountability, earn your stripes, he will

allow you to have a lot more input as far as game planning goes," Rudolph told The Daily Collegian. "What do you like, what do you hate?" And he'll try to tailor that around each quarterback, so I know he's done a good job with me, and I heard he did a similar thing with [Justin Fields] at Ohio State, [Sam Ehlinger] at Texas and now the Clifford kid."

With Clifford's injury status currently unknown, that philosophy is something that could prove to be interesting in the coming weeks.

Can Yurcich adjust to the style of Ta'Quan Roberson or Christian Veilleux for however long he has to play and put them in a situation to succeed?

Yurcich's involvement of his quarterbacks in the game plan is a strategy that has worked well for him in his past, and it also forces him to put some extremely long hours into crafting his offense.

Rudolph recalled times where he had to remind Yurcich to take a rest every now and then and would even tell his wife Julie to make sure he got his sleep in before big games.

"He's a psychopath. He is a football psychopath in the best way possible," Rudolph said. "He lives, eats, breathes and sleeps football, and sometimes I had to call his wife, Julie, or send her a message and say, 'Hey Julie, make sure Mike gets his eight hours tonight because he's a little wired up this week. We've got a rivalry game. We need to make



Ella Freda/Collegian

**Offensive lineman Mike Miranda (73)** sets up the play during Penn State football's Stripe Out game on Saturday, Oct. 2.

sure he gets his rest."

"He will literally spend the night sometimes at the facility because he just grinds, and he game plans into the wee hours of the morning. So that's Mike."

Following his stint at Oklahoma State, Yurcich made two stops before arriving in Happy Valley this season.

He went to Ohio State in 2019 as the team's passing game coordinator and quarterbacks coach and Texas in 2020 as the offensive coordinator.

The Longhorn staff wasn't brought back following the firing of previous head coach Tom Herman, but Yurcich was able to create a strong relationship with his co-offensive coordinator Herb Hand, who's now the offensive line coach at UCF.

Hand took away a lot from just one year working with the 45-year old coordinator, and like Rudolph stated, he always looked for his scheme to fit the players he had rather than the other way around.

"He's going to fit the offense to the personnel, and that is a lot easier said than done," Hand told the Collegian. "He really adjusts to the personnel he has and plays to their strengths. He does a great job of looking at 'Here's what we got, and here's what we can be good at.'"

Also like Rudolph, Hand said Yurcich has a precision about him that requires laser focus.

Whether he's actually a football madman like the current Steeler says is up for debate, but what is clearly true is the extensive amount of time he puts into his offense and the details that go into it.

"He's very detail oriented, so precision and execution are going to be at a premium," Hand said. "At the end of the day, what he wants to be is a physical offense. He wants to be able to run the football and run the football very effectively, and that in turn is going to help with the passing game. "Then as you get out there and you start throwing the ball around, it's going to help open up your run game. So he's going to take what the defense gives you, not just force the issue."

While Clifford's bounce-back season may be a surprise to some this year, Yurcich's ability to communicate with his starting quarterbacks has clearly been a major point of emphasis throughout his career.

He said the communication between he and Clifford is as strong as it has been with any quarterback and like the ones he's had in the past, the redshirt senior has a chance to continue to develop into something special.

In fact, Yurcich is even learning from his veteran quarterback — just as Clifford is learning from his new coordinator.

"With a guy like [Clifford] you have football conversations. It's not all one-way communication," Yurcich said. "You want to learn from him. 'What did you see? How did you feel about it? Next time think about this. Keep this in your mind.' You're just trying to try to help him out as much as you can and at the end of the day, my man is gonna make some plays."

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Caleb Craig/Collegian

**Offensive Coordinator Mike Yurcich** looks at the playbook during practice at Holuba Hall on Wednesday, Oct. 20 in University Park, Pa.



# Tarburton's drive fuels return

By Alexis Yoder  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Penn State defensive end Nick Tarburton never experienced injuries or much adversity in his football career before college.

According to his father Rick, Nick rarely took a play off throughout his four years at Penndridge High School.

His first two years at Penn State were filled with one injury after another, as Tarburton suffered from back problems during his redshirt-freshman season, which led to hip surgery and limited appearances in 2020.

Despite all of his setbacks, Tarburton never gave up fighting for playing time at his dream school, and he finally earned it in 2021.

The redshirt junior has been tabbed as a starter in each of Penn State's six games so far this season, contributing eight tackles, two pass breakups, one quarterback hurry and a fumble recovery.

The road to Tarburton's success was anything but easy.

Following his redshirt-freshman campaign, Tarburton was still dealing with the lingering effects of his injuries — then the coronavirus pandemic hit.

A forced break from football was exactly what Tarburton needed in order to completely recover and set his return in motion.

"COVID was a tough time for everybody, but from a health standpoint for me, I was able to get the right treatment and time



Mark Selders/Penn State Athletics

**Penn State defensive end Nick Tarburton** celebrates with defensive line coach John Scott Jr. after a win. Tarburton battled through injuries for much of his career before earning a starting job.

off to fully recover my body," Tarburton said. "It was tough. It took a toll on me, but it made me better and stronger."

Rehabbing at home while spending time with his parents Ami and Rick and younger brothers Zack and Jake allowed Nick to realize what he can control in his recovery — while also growing a greater appreciation for the game.

To Nick and Rick, focusing on what the former could dictate while rehabbing was crucial to forming a path back to the

gridiron. "I've tried to control everything, whether that be in the classroom, certain rehabs and just trying to be the best person I can be," Nick said. "I learned that in tough situations, you can't be negative. You've got to be positive — there's no other way to formulate it."

"If you're negative, you're just going to stay in that same spot."

Keeping a positive attitude is something Nick said his parents impressed upon him throughout those tough times, and their support allowed him to stay in touch with the game and his teammates.

Rick concurred with Nick, saying his main focus during Nick's time of struggle was to focus on what was in his son's control, as well as making sure he didn't get down on himself.

"We tried to set a positive mindset," Rick told The Daily Collegian. "We don't look at things pessimistically. He was dealing with the things he obviously didn't want to happen. The thing that came back to me was his love for the game when he was away for that period."

Being away from the game through the pandemic and playing sparingly throughout his first two seasons at Penn State forced Nick to adjust in the face of adversity, which Rick said he believes he accomplished.

According to Rick, one of Nick's strong suits is breaking down

game film, which he did with his two brothers who also play football at the collegiate level — Zack plays at Bucknell, while Jake plays at Clarion.

"He would look at their film and give feedback," Rick said. "They would talk and just watch games, and it just reignited a passion. I think he appreciates the game more now than what he did prior."

"I think he took it for granted — I know I certainly did when I look at when he played in high school and how great it was."

Nick expressed the same feelings as his father, saying he never truly cherished playing football until it was taken away from him.

"I was always a tough person to begin with, but up until that point I've never really faced any adversity when it came to football or life," Nick said. "Without a doubt, it definitely changed me. I cherish the game so much more than I ever have. Just the ability to play is something special, and I'm going to use that to my advantage."

Following the 2020 season, the switch turned on for Nick.

Tarburton committed himself to hard work in offseason camps and workouts to challenge for more playing time.

Rick noticed a positive change in his son's performance through winter and spring practices, saying he improved both on and off the field due to his commitment and hard work.

"He definitely was focused in

the winter workouts, and he was different in the spring — even in the interactions with teammates," Rick said. "I sensed that it was going to be a different season than what we've seen in the past because he was unavailable."

Nick stood out to the coaching staff throughout offseason camps, including defensive line coach John Scott Jr. who admired the determination shown by the defensive end.

"If you watched him any in spring practice and throughout fall camp, you kind of anticipate the guy — that was gonna be who he is for us this year," Scott Jr. said. "He provides leadership on our football team with how he practices and conducts business. It's been incredible to watch him bounce back from the injuries."

Scott Jr. and defensive coordinator Brent Pry noted how motivated Tarburton was to see the field consistently in 2021 following years of injuries.

"He's had some unfortunate circumstances with some injuries over the years," Pry said. "He's not just a very good defensive-end prospect — he's one of the best leaders in our unit."

"You're not going to find a harder worker on this football team than Nick Tarburton," Scott Jr. said. "He prepares the right way and he's a technician at his craft."

Pry and Scott Jr. both expressed how Tarburton leads by example and how he never gave up on the road to recovery — something Tarburton said he believes made him an even stronger player and person than he was before.

"That roller coaster is just an advantage in my opinion," Tarburton said.

Despite the seemingly never-ending road to recovery, Tarburton never allowed himself to think of not returning to play the sport he loves at his dream school.

"I knew I was going to come back no matter what," Tarburton said. "It was just a matter of time when I was going to be fully ready to go. The time is great now, and I'm feeling the best I have since I've gotten up here."

The Green Lane, Pennsylvania, native grew up three hours away from State College and dreamed of donning the blue and white, according to his dad.

Visit [collegian.psu.edu](http://collegian.psu.edu) to read the full story.



Mark Selders/Penn State Athletics

**Nick Tarburton** has started in all six games for Penn State and has tallied eight tackles, one fumble recovery and one quarterback hurry.

## PENN STATE NITTANY LIONS FOOTBALL ROSTER

| No. | Name                  | Position/Elig. | No. | Name                  | Position/Elig. | No. | Name                  | Position/Elig. | No. | Name                 | Position/Elig. |
|-----|-----------------------|----------------|-----|-----------------------|----------------|-----|-----------------------|----------------|-----|----------------------|----------------|
| 0   | Jonathan Sutherland   | S/Sr.          | 21  | Noah Cain             | RB/Jr.         | 48  | Cody Romano           | LB/Jr.         | 82  | Liam Clifford        | WR/Fr.         |
| 1   | Jaquan Brisker        | S/Sr.          | 21  | Tyler Rudolph         | S/So.          | 49  | Ben Chizmar           | LB/Fr.         | 83  | Justin Weller        | WR/Sr.         |
| 2   | Ta'Quan Roberson      | QB/So.         | 23  | Curtis Jacobs         | LB/So.         | 49  | Michael Wright        | SN/Fr.         | 84  | Theo Johnson         | TE/So.         |
| 2   | Keaton Ellis          | S/Jr.          | 24  | Jeffrey Davis Jr.     | CB/Fr.         | 50  | Max Chizmar           | LB/Fr.         | 84  | Han Mahler           | WR/Fr.         |
| 3   | Johnny Dixon          | CB/Jr.         | 24  | Keyvone Lee           | RB/So.         | 50  | Will Knutsson         | OL/Jr.         | 85  | Harrison Wallace III | WR/Fr.         |
| 3   | Parker Washington     | WR/So.         | 25  | Daequan Hardy         | CB/Fr.         | 51  | Hakeem Beamon         | DT/So.         | 86  | Jason Estrella       | WR/Fr.         |
| 4   | Kalen King            | CB/Fr.         | 26  | Caziah Holmes         | RB/So.         | 51  | Jimmy Christ          | OL/Fr.         | 86  | Brandon Strange      | TE/H/So.       |
| 5   | Tariq Castro-Fields   | CB/Sr.         | 26  | Jaden Seider          | S/So.          | 52  | Jordan van den Berg   | DT/So.         | 87  | Ben Knapp            | TE/Fr.         |
| 5   | Jahan Dotson          | WR/Sr.         | 27  | Aeneas Hawkins        | DT/Jr.         | 52  | Blake Zalar           | OL/So.         | 87  | Benjamin Wilson      | WR/Sr.         |
| 6   | Cam Sullivan-Brown    | WR/Sr.         | 27  | Ethan Susen           | CB/Fr.         | 53  | Fred Hansard          | DT/Sr.         | 88  | Norval Black         | WR/Sr.         |
| 6   | Zakee Wheatley        | CB/Fr.         | 27  | Bobby Walchak         | S/Fr.          | 53  | Rasheed Walker        | OL/Jr.         | 89  | Winston Eubanks      | WR/Sr.         |
| 7   | Jaylen Reed           | S/Fr.          | 28  | Devyn Ford            | RB/Jr.         | 54  | Derrick Tangelo       | DT/Sr.         | 89  | Grayson Kline        | TE/H/Jr.       |
| 8   | Marquis Wilson        | ATH/So.        | 29  | Sebastian Constantini | S/So.          | 55  | Fatorma Mulbah        | DT/Fr.         | 90  | Rafael Checa         | K/Jr.          |
| 9   | Joey Porter Jr.       | CB/So.         | 30  | Kaleb Brown           | CB/Fr.         | 55  | Anthony Whigan        | OL/Sr.         | 90  | Rodney McGraw        | DE/Fr.         |
| 9   | Christian Veilleux    | QB/Fr.         | 32  | Dylan Farronato       | S/So.          | 56  | Amin Vanover          | DT/Fr.         | 91  | Chris Stoll          | SN/Sr.         |
| 10  | John Lovett           | RB/Sr.         | 33  | Bryce Mostella        | DE/Fr.         | 57  | Ibrahim Traore        | OL/Fr.         | 92  | Jake Pinegar         | K/Sr.          |
| 11  | Daniel George         | WR/Jr.         | 34  | Dominic DeLuca        | LB/Fr.         | 58  | Landon Tengwall       | OL/Fr.         | 92  | Smith Vilbert        | DE/So.         |
| 12  | Brandon Smith         | LB/Jr.         | 36  | Zuriah Fisher         | LB/Fr.         | 59  | Kaleb Konigus         | OL/Jr.         | 93  | Spencer Perry        | DE/Fr.         |
| 13  | Ellis Brooks          | LB/Sr.         | 37  | Drew Hartlaub         | S/Sr.          | 60  | Seth Nevills          | OL/Jr.         | 93  | Bradley King         | P/Sr.          |
| 13  | KeAndre Lambert-Smith | WR/So.         | 38  | Frederik Leisure      | S/Fr.          | 61  | Ryan Willis           | OL/Fr.         | 94  | Jake Wilson          | DE/Fr.         |
| 14  | Sean Clifford         | QB/Sr.         | 38  | Tank Smith            | RB/So.         | 66  | Nick Dawkins          | OL/Fr.         | 95  | Cole Brevard         | DT/Fr.         |
| 14  | A.J. Lytton           | CB/Jr.         | 39  | Robbie Dwyer          | LB/So.         | 68  | Eric Wilson           | OL/Sr.         | 95  | Vlad Hilling         | K/Jr.          |
| 15  | Evan Clark            | QB/Fr.         | 40  | Jesse Luketa          | LB/Sr.         | 70  | Juice Scruggs         | OL/Jr.         | 96  | Barney Amor          | P/Sr.          |
| 15  | Enzo Jennings         | S/Fr.          | 41  | Kobe King             | LB/Fr.         | 72  | Bryce Effner          | OL/Jr.         | 96  | Mitchell Groh        | K/Fr.          |
| 16  | Ji' Ayir Brown        | S/Sr.          | 42  | Jamari Buddin         | LB/Fr.         | 73  | Mike Miranda          | OL/Sr.         | 97  | PJ Mustipher         | DT/Jr.         |
| 16  | Khalil Dinkins        | TE/Fr.         | 43  | Tyler Elsdon          | LB/Fr.         | 74  | Olumuyiwa Fashanu     | OL/Fr.         | 98  | Jordan Stout         | K/P/Sr.        |
| 17  | Arnold Ebiketie       | DE/Sr.         | 44  | Joseph Appiah Darkwa  | DT/So.         | 75  | Des Holmes            | OL/Sr.         | 98  | Dan Vasey            | DE/Jr.         |
| 17  | Mason Stahl           | QB/Fr.         | 44  | Tyler Warren          | TE/Fr.         | 77  | Sal Wormley           | OL/So.         | 99  | Coziah Izzaed        | DT/Fr.         |
| 18  | Davon Townley Jr.     | DE/Fr.         | 45  | Charlie Katshir       | LB/Jr.         | 78  | Golden Israel-Achumba | OL/Fr.         | 99  | Gabe Nwosu           | P/Fr.          |
| 19  | Jaden Dottin          | WR/Fr.         | 46  | Nick Tarburton        | DE/Jr.         | 79  | Caeden Wallace        | OL/So.         |     |                      |                |
| 19  | Jace Tutty            | CB/Fr.         | 47  | Alex Furmanek         | DT/So.         | 80  | Malick Meiga          | WR/Fr.         |     |                      |                |
| 20  | Adisa Isaac           | DE/Jr.         | 48  | Tyler Duzansky        | SN/Fr.         | 81  | Henry Fessler         | WR/Jr.         |     |                      |                |

## ILLINOIS FIGHTING ILLINI FOOTBALL ROSTER

| No. | Name              | Position/Elig. | No. | Name                | Position/Elig. | No. | Name               | Position/Elig. | No. | Name               | Position/Elig. |
|-----|-------------------|----------------|-----|---------------------|----------------|-----|--------------------|----------------|-----|--------------------|----------------|
| 0   | Joah McCray       | RB/Fr.         | 17  | Ryan Johnson        | QB/Jr.         | 39  | Kenenna Odeluga    | LB/Fr.         | 65  | Doug Kramer        | OL/Sr.         |
| 1   | Kionte Curry      | DB/Fr.         | 17  | James McCourt       | K/Sr.          | 40  | Lucas Althaus      | TE/Fr.         | 66  | Jordyn Slaughter   | OL/So.         |
| 1   | Isaiah Williams   | WR/Fr.         | 18  | Brandon Peters      | QB/Sr.         | 40  | Shammond Cooper    | LB/Fr.         | 67  | Brody Wisecarver   | OL/Fr.         |
| 2   | Chase Brown       | RB/So.         | 19  | Dalevon Campbell    | WR/So.         | 41  | Preston Engel      | TE/So.         | 68  | Zachary Barlev     | OL/Fr.         |
| 2   | Daniel Edwards    | DB/Fr.         | 19  | Hugh Robertson      | P/Fr.          | 41  | Joriell Washington | DB/Fr.         | 69  | Moses Okpala       | OL/Fr.         |
| 3   | Jakari Norwood    | RB/So.         | 20  | Tyler Strain        | DB/Fr.         | 42  | Michael Marchese   | TE/Sr.         | 70  | Tommy Cronin       | OL/Fr.         |
| 3   | DD Snyder II      | DB/Fr.         | 21  | Jartavius Martin    | DB/Jr.         | 42  | Luke Zardzin       | LB/Fr.         | 72  | Jack Badovinac     | OL/Sr.         |
| 4   | Derrick Smith     | DB/Jr.         | 22  | Chase Hayden        | RB/Jr.         | 43  | Griffin Moore      | TE/Fr.         | 73  | Josh Gelsky        | OL/Fr.         |
| 4   | Khmari Thompson   | WR/So.         | 22  | Dylan Thomas        | DB/So.         | 43  | Marko Rajkovic     | LB/Fr.         | 75  | Alex Pihlstrom     | OL/Jr.         |
| 5   | Caleb Griffin     | K/So.          | 23  | Reggie Love III     | RB/Fr.         | 44  | Tarique Barnes     | LB/So.         | 79  | Vederian Lowe      | OL/Sr.         |
| 5   | Calvin Hart Jr.   | LB/So.         | 24  | Nick Fedanzo        | RB/Fr.         | 45  | Khalan Tolson      | LB/Jr.         | 80  | Peyton Vinning     | WR/Jr.         |
| 6   | Tony Adams        | DB/Sr.         | 24  | Prather Hudson      | DB/Sr.         | 46  | Alec McEachern     | LB/Jr.         | 81  | Marquez Beason     | WR/Fr.         |
| 6   | Deuce Spann       | WR/Fr.         | 25  | Kerby Joseph        | DB/Jr.         | 48  | Bryce Barnes       | LB/So.         | 82  | Luke Ford          | TE/Jr.         |
| 7   | Brian Hightower   | WR/Jr.         | 26  | Mike Epstein        | RB/Sr.         | 48  | Mike Cerniglia Jr. | TE/Fr.         | 83  | Keion Battle       | WR/Fr.         |
| 7   | Kendall Smith     | DB/Sr.         | 27  | Matthew Bobak       | RB/Fr.         | 49  | Seth Coleman       | LB/Fr.         | 84  | Owen Hickey        | WR/Fr.         |
| 8   | Eddie Armstrong   | WR/Jr.         | 27  | Mike Manning        | DB/So.         | 49  | Max Rosenthal      | TE/Fr.         | 85  | Miles Scott        | WR/Fr.         |
| 8   | Jaden Smith       | DB/So.         | 28  | Dylan Rosiek        | LB/Fr.         | 51  | Sean Coghlan       | LB/Jr.         | 86  | Donny Navarro III  | WR/Jr.         |
| 9   | Artur Sitkowski   | QB/So.         | 29  | Christian Bobak     | DB/Sr.         | 52  | Verdis Brown       | DL/So.         | 87  | Daniel Barker      | TE/Jr.         |
| 9   | Coran Taylor      | DB/So.         | 30  | Sydney Brown        | DB/Jr.         | 53  | Devlin Hale        | OL/Fr.         | 88  | Keith Randolph Jr. | DL/Fr.         |
| 10  | Desmond Dan Jr.   | WR/Sr.         | 31  | Devon Witherspoon   | DB/So.         | 54  | Julian Pearl       | OL/So.         | 89  | Tip Reiman         | TE/Fr.         |
| 10  | Tahveon Nicholson | DB/Fr.         | 32  | Tailon Leitzsey     | DB/Sr.         | 54  | Kalen Villanueva   | LB/Fr.         | 90  | Alec Bryant        | LB/Fr.         |
| 11  | Carlos Sandy      | WR/So.         | 33  | Ezekiel Holmes      | LB/So.         | 55  | Blake Jeresaty     | OL/Sr.         | 91  | Jamal Woods        | DL/Sr.         |
| 12  | Matt Robinson     | QB/So.         | 34  | Ryan Meed           | LB/Fr.         | 55  | Sed McConnell      | DL/Fr.         | 92  | Isaiah Gay         | LB/Sr.         |
| 13  | Pat Bryant        | WR/Fr.         | 35  | Jake Hansen         | LB/Sr.         | 56  | Ethan Tabel        | LS/Sr.         | 93  | Calvin Avery       | DL/Jr.         |
| 14  | Blake Hayes       | P/Sr.          | 36  | Lane Hansen         | LS/Fr.         | 57  | Evan Kirts         | OL/Fr.         | 94  | Jer'Zhan Newton    | DL/Fr.         |
| 14  | Casey Washington  | WR/So.         | 36  | Ben Schultz         | LB/Fr.         | 59  | Josh Plohr         | OL/Fr.         | 96  | Roderick Perry II  | DL/Sr.         |
| 15  | Prince Green      | DB/Fr.         | 37  | Jaden Jones-Watkins | LB/So.         | 62  | Terry Zapf         | OL/So.         | 98  | Deon Pate          | DL/Jr.         |
| 15  | Ty Lindenman      | WR/Fr.         | 38  | Isaac Darkangelo    | LB/Jr.         | 63  | Alex Palczewski    | OL/Sr.         | 99  | Owen Carney Jr.    | LB/Sr.         |
| 16  | Samari Collier    | QB/Fr.         | 39  | Aidan Hall          | LS/Fr.         | 64  | Josh Kreutz        | OL/Fr.         |     |                    |                |



# Defensive line moves forward

By Seth Engle  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

When Sean Clifford headed to the locker room in the second quarter of Penn State's contest against Iowa, Nittany Lion fans likely forgot all about a sidelined defensive lineman who went down with an injury the quarter prior.

Defensive tackle PJ Mustipher: a team captain and integral leader on a stout blue and white defense.

Just days after the game's conclusion, James Franklin announced Mustipher would remain sidelined for the rest of the 2021-22 campaign, but he has said the two-year starter is handling the situation "extremely well."

"He's been at everything," Franklin said. "He's whipping around at practice, he's at the meetings... I just saw him in the training room. He was on the bike looking great, a huge smile on his face."

While it's promising to hear how well Mustipher has been handling his circumstances, the reality remains that one of Penn State's best defensive players

won't see the field again this season.

For Jesse Luketa, who entered the program the same year as Mustipher and has started beside him for this season and last, Mustipher's injury is disappointing.

"It sucks seeing a guy like PJ go down," Luketa said Wednesday. "Knowing how much he's invested his leadership."

However, Luketa and starting defensive lineman Derrick Tangelo said Mustipher's impact goes much further than just what he's able to do on the gridiron.

"He's such a vocal leader," Tangelo said. "His voice carries so much weight that sometimes he settles you and also motivates you to go out there and do what you got to do."

Even with his injury, Mustipher's leadership has been as strong as ever, using a scooter to roll around the practice facility and make the same vocal impact he did when he was healthy.

"It's great having PJ out there," Luketa said. "He has such a strong presence as far as his leadership and everything, so just his presence being on the



Gianna Galli/Collegian

**PJ Mustipher (97)** celebrates after making a stop against Indiana on Oct. 2. Mustipher, a team-captain, will miss the entirety of the 2021-2022 season with an injury.

sideline with his little scooter is a joy to have."

According to Luketa, Mustipher's injury has also motivated the other defensive leaders to show out in his absence.

"Losing a guy like PJ, it sucks," Luketa said. "But as far as leadership, myself, Ellis Brooks, Tariq Castro-Fields, Jaquan Brisker -- there's no drop off... We've got to play hard for PJ. You know he'd do anything to be out there with [the defense], so we're doing this for him."

If the motivation instilled in the defense following Mustipher's injury can be viewed as a silver lining, the new opportunities for younger players on the defensive line can be viewed the same way.

"It presents so much opportunity for the guys in the room," Luketa said. "We have a standard I feel we're consistent with week to week. It doesn't matter who's going to be in the rotation, the standard is the standard, and we're going to continue to meet it."

But who exactly will replace Mustipher in the rotation?

The most likely replacement in the starting lineup is redshirt sophomore Dvon Ellies, who

came in for the injured Mustipher against Iowa before a brief exit dealing with a minor injury of his own.

"[Ellies] is a very athletic and talented player," Tangelo said. "He brings a lot of energy."

What stands out most to Tangelo about Ellies is his unique competitive nature.

According to Tangelo, he and the Ellies have a "running joke" surrounding who arrives to practice first. If one shows up later than the other, it's likely he'll get hit with "Oh, you don't want to compete today? I got here first."

The "competitive side" to Ellies is what Tangelo said epitomizes him as a football player.

While a new face on the starting defensive line will look different than weeks prior, Tangelo said he doesn't believe the group's confidence has changed.

"I feel like at the start of the year, we all set out to be the best d-line we could possibly be," Tangelo said.

"I feel like PJ set a good example of that and now that he's not here, I feel like the young guys are going to follow that example."

Some other young defensive

lineman Penn State fans should look out for over the second half of the season include Amin Vanover, Jordan van den Berg and Coziah Izzard.

While Izzard has appeared in four out of six games for the Nittany Lions this season, Vanover and van den Berg have seen the field sparingly.

Due to their lack of experience, Franklin has granted both linemen increased opportunities in practice to polish off the depth at the position.

"For [Vanover], we've talked to him about putting some weight on for the last couple weeks. He's done a good job of that," Franklin said. "van den Berg is another guy that we've been amping up their reps and opportunities and meeting times as well."

According to Franklin, Ellies, Izzard, Vanover and van den Berg all have the talent "to do it," it's just a matter of "consistency" to make replacing Mustipher a smooth transition.

"There's a difference between doing it three out of 10 plays compared to eight or nine out of 10 plays," Franklin said.

Visit [collegian.psu.edu](http://collegian.psu.edu) to read the full story.



Aabha Vora/Collegian file photo

**Dvon Ellies (91)** is projected to replace the injured PJ Mustipher as a starter on Penn State's defensive line.

# Evans brings versatility to 2022 class

Seth Engle  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Up until this year, James Franklin had only earned one Penn State commitment from a Texas recruit in Parker Washington. So far through the 2022 recruiting cycle, Franklin has earned commitments from two already.

The latest? Omari Evans, who committed to the Nittany Lions prior to the kickoff of the blue and white's Week 5 matchup with Indiana.

Evans' commitment came just a week after Penn State's White Out win over Auburn, a game which Evans described as having

a "crazy atmosphere."

While over 107,000 is greater than any crowd Evans has played in front of before, everything is bigger in Texas, as they say, and high school football is no different.

"They're just faster and bigger around here," Evans told The Daily Collegian. "[Playing in Texas] got me faster in the moment."

Originally from Ohio, Evans has seen the differences in talent between two states.

While Evans described the talent level in Ohio as "pretty good," his move to Texas in seventh grade brought a new challenge: making his name known.

In Evans' first opportunity to

play in front of coaches, many viewed him as solely a cornerback, according to his mother Dorian Evans.

"When we moved from Ohio, I don't think [the coaches] knew how multi-talented he was," Dorian told the Collegian. "So once they actually saw him throw the ball, run and catch... They were like, 'OK, we can play him anywhere.'"

From that point on, Omari was no longer tied to one position in particular.

As a freshman at Shoemaker High School in Killeen, Texas, Omari primarily played quarterback. When he got bumped to varsity his sophomore year, he played quarterback, wide receiver, cornerback and served as the team's punter.

The next year, Omari played mostly cornerback and kick returner, but he also played his fair share of wide receiver and quarterback.

This season, Omari is all quarterback, but his unique athletic ability allows him to break away from the pocket quite often and showcase his potential skillset as a collegiate playmaker.

When Penn State approached Omari this past summer, it gave him a choice to play either wide receiver or cornerback.

Omari said he wanted to play wide receiver, but he was open to



Courtesy of Dorian Evans

**Omari Evans (left)** poses with his mother, Dorian, on the day of his commitment announcement to Penn State on Oct. 2.

trying out at both.

To determine which skill set Omari would be strongest at, the Nittany Lions offered him an invitation to work out at both positions.

After wide receivers coach Taylor Stubblefield saw Omari work out at receiver, he told him he didn't have to work out at defensive back.

Following his workout, Stubblefield and Franklin sat down with Omari.

"They said they can use me at

a lot of positions," Omari said. "Franklin said he needed someone who could scare the other teams with speed." Speed is another characteristic offensive coordinator Mike Yurcich repeated in his talk with Omari, stating it's what could allow the recruit to "make impact early."

By the end of his workouts and meetings with coaches, Omari walked away from Happy Valley with a scholarship offer.

Visit [collegian.psu.edu](http://collegian.psu.edu) to read the full story.



Jeremiah Hassel/Collegian

**James Franklin** greets recruits prior to kickoff of the 2021 White Out.

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## DEFENSE, DEFENSE, DEFENSE



Lily LaRegina/Collegian

**Curtis Jacobs (23)** and **Arnold Ebiketie (17)** celebrate Jacobs' sack of Iowa quarterback Spencer Petras on Sat., Oct. 9.



## PSU preps for Illinois

By Max Ralph  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Penn State's homecoming opponent hasn't exactly had an ideal start to its 2021 campaign. Illinois' first-year head coach Bret Bielema's squad sits with a 2-5 record, but that doesn't mean Penn State is gearing up for Saturday's contest any differently than it would for a stronger opponent.

In fact, the Fighting Illini have actually been closer in most of their games this season than their record would show. Of their five losses, three have been decided by seven points or less — including a four-point loss to current-No. 25 Purdue.

As he usually does for every opponent, James Franklin iterated the "tremendous respect" he has for Bielema and his program — but it's backed up by a pretty lengthy resume.

Bielema knows the Big Ten well, spending seven seasons as Wisconsin's head coach and winning three Big Ten Championships. He then moved on to the SEC, where he was the head man at Arkansas for five seasons and saw three bowl games.

Despite the slow start, Bielema is backed up by a veteran group this season, too.

The Illini returned 17 starters this season and have the most "super seniors" in the nation, according to Franklin.

On the offensive side of the ball, though, a number of younger players have caught Franklin's attention.

He listed running backs Chase Brown and Josh McCray and wide receiver Isaiah Williams as standout players on film.

Williams has become a bit of a do-it-all player for the Illini, running the ball, passing the ball and receiving the ball.



Lily LaRegina/Collegian

Penn State's Jesse Luketa goes in for a tackle on an Auburn player. The Nittany Lions defeated the Tigers 28-20 in the annual White Out.

The running game has especially stood out to players and coaches alike behind Williams and the "big boy" McCray — affectionately nicknamed by Penn State defensive end Jesse Luketa.

Luketa said Illinois' stretch-run game is something to look out for come kickoff on Saturday.

"They want to give Chase the opportunity to get downhill," Luketa said. "They use him coming out of the backfield in the passing game as well. He's a very versatile back, and he has a lot of things that he does bring to the table."

Luketa also touched on McCray, who is listed at 6-foot-1, 240 pounds.

"[He] runs hard. Had a great game against Purdue," Luketa said. "They're a very talented group."

While Illinois' quarterback room has been a bit of a question mark all season — three different

players have thrown a pass so far this year — Penn State linebacker Charlie Katshir pointed out that the Illini have an overall well-rounded group.

"They're a pretty good team," Katshir said. "[The] quarterback's pretty good. They've got decent, all-around backs [and the] receivers are good. Overall it's a pretty good group."

"We've just got to keep going as we're going. Just focus on getting better every single day in practice."

On the defensive side of the ball, Franklin highlighted defensive tackle Roderick Perry II, outside linebacker Owen Carney, linebacker Jake Hansen and outside linebacker Isaiah Gay.

The Illini defense hasn't been outstanding, but it has been one of the better parts of Bielema's team this season and has kept it in games.

The Illini are allowing just over 24 points per game thus far, but

they're also allowing a not-so-great 427.9 yards per game.

Franklin noted Illinois' special teams units are led by an experienced coordinator in Ben Miller. The punting numbers stand out for the Illini, with an average of 45.5 yards per punt.

No matter the numbers or disappointing start to the season, Penn State is blocking out whatever noise there may be — positive or negative.

"We don't really look at [their performance]. We don't look at the past," Katshir said. "We just focus on right now. That's a good group coming in here. We can't take anyone lightly. Just gotta prepare like how we usually prepare and go from there."

"Everything takes care of itself right there."

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### GAME INFO

ILLINOIS  
VS  
PENN STATE

Place: Beaver Stadium  
Time: Saturday 12:00 EST  
TV: ABC  
Spread: PSU -24.0  
Over/Under: 46.5

### PLAYERS TO WATCH



Keyvone Lee established himself as Penn State's lead ball carrier against Iowa, following Devyn Ford's injury and Noah Cain's continued struggles. Look for the true sophomore running back to break out for big yardage



Dvon Ellies is likely to step into a starting role following PJ Mustipher's season-ending injury. Ellies played well when Mustipher was taken out, so it shouldn't come as a surprise.

### BY THE NUMBERS

4

Saturday will be the fourth time for the "Generations of Greatness" uniforms.

7

The Nittany Lions are ranked No. 7 for the second straight week.

11

Penn State's defense is coming off a season-high 11 tackles for loss against Iowa.

## Who to watch: Illinois

By Justin Morganstein  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Coming off its bye week, Penn State runs into an Illinois team that has struggled in 2021, to say the least.

Led by first-year coach Bret Bielema, the Fighting Illini have just one win in their last six games and appear to be rebuilding after making changes to the program following last year.

But with Penn State trying to get over some key injuries — including one to quarterback Sean Clifford — Bielema's group will try to get a program-shifting road win at Beaver Stadium.

To prevent that from happening, James Franklin and his staff will need to hone in on a few key players who could give

the team some trouble.

Here's who to look out for this Saturday.

### Chase Brown, running back

Sophomore running back Chase Brown has established himself as the lead back for the Illini in 2021 and has put up some solid numbers through seven games.

The Western Michigan transfer has the most scrimmage yards on the team with 414 and 104 yards through the air, and he's tied for the team lead with three touchdowns.

Considering no Illinois receiver has hit the 300-yard mark this season, expect the majority of the offense to come on the ground.

Brown, along with freshman

Joshua McCray, should get a lot of touches for the Illini, considering their quarterback play has been inconsistent this season and in recent years as well.

The Nittany Lions will need to defend the Illinois rushing attack by making up for the loss of PJ Mustipher on the interior after he was ruled out for the remainder of the season due to an injury suffered during the loss to Iowa.

### Daniel Barker Jr., tight end

Despite the Illini passing game being a weak point of the offense, junior tight end Daniel Barker has proved to be a reliable target.

Barker is tied with Brown for the team lead in touchdowns with three and set the tight-end record at Illinois with his 10th

career touchdown earlier this month.

While the Fort Lauderdale, Florida, native has just nine receptions for 100 yards on the season, he's always a threat in the red zone and will be critical if the Illini want to convert deep in Penn State territory.

Barker led the way for Illinois in its loss at Beaver Stadium last year, where he finished the day as the team's leading receiver with 54 yards and a touchdown.

He'll also be critical in the run game this time around, as the Nittany Lion front seven has been dominant at times this season, which forces opponents to bring in extra protection for certain packages.

### Owen Carney Jr., linebacker

On the defensive side of the ball, outside linebacker Owen Carney Jr. has put up some eye-popping numbers this season.

He leads the Illini with 4.5 sacks, five tackles for loss and two quarterback hits while providing some crucial experience as a fifth-year senior.

Carney is just one member of Illinois' veteran-made linebacker corps with multiple other seniors in the group as well.

The Miami, Florida, native was named to Phil Steele's preseason All-Big Ten first team and is coming off of an All-Big Ten second-team selection in 2020.

Penn State was able to keep him in check in its last matchup with the Illini, as he had just three total tackles in his team's 56-21 loss.

To email reporter: [Jum668@psu.edu](mailto:Jum668@psu.edu). Follow him on Twitter: JmoTweets\_.



Lily LaRegina/Collegian

James Franklin pumps up his team before entering the field at Kinnick Stadium. Penn State lost 23-20 against Iowa for its first loss of the season.

### Max Ralph



**What to watch for:** Illinois is struggling as badly as anyone in the Big Ten this year. Regardless of who plays at quarterback, Penn State's defense will shut the Illini

down. Assuming Sean Clifford isn't 100%, Penn State won't have a massive offensive performance but will still win comfortably

Score: Penn State 27, Illinois 10

### Seth Engle

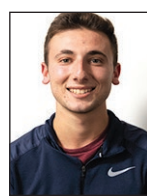


**What to watch for:** Illinois is dead last in the Big Ten in scoring offense, and its defense isn't so great either. Regardless of who

Penn State starts at quarterback on Saturday, it would be hard for the Illini to win a football game they can't score in.

Score: Penn State 30, Illinois 3

### Justin Morganstein



**What to watch for:** Penn State should win comfortably on Saturday, regardless of Sean Clifford's status. Backup Ta'Quan

Roberson had two weeks of preparation in case he takes up the starting role against Illinois. A struggling Illini offense won't present problems for Penn State's dominant defense.

Score: Penn State 34 Illinois 6

### Alexis Yoder



**What to watch for:** During the bye week, Penn State had time to recover from multiple injuries. Should he see more time, expect

Ta'Quan Roberson to play better than he did at Iowa. Despite losing PJ Mustipher, Brent Pry's group remains strong enough to control the game against Illinois.

Score: Penn State 30, Illinois 7

### Guest Picker: Jeremiah Hassel



**What to watch for:** It's Homecoming, which means Penn State is going to really snap and bring home a victory. Jimmy

Franks readied his team during the bye week, and when this lean, mean, football machine rolls up to the Beav, Illinois won't know what hit it.

Score: Penn State 29, Illinois -4



# 'IT WAS A BLESSING'

Former wrestler Brady Berge journeys as star on the mat, conquers tribulations off it

By Ben Serfass  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Injuries are a part of sports, and while they can be healed, sometimes they have the ability of taking athletes' career aspirations with them.

**WRESTLING** Former Penn State Brady Berge's injury-riddled career ultimately forced the talented wrestler to walk away from the sport before he was ready.

The Minnesota native came to Happy Valley as a top prospect and went an impressive 20-5 in his redshirt freshman campaign.

While his career was on an upward trajectory, it would all change in the span of one match at the U23 World Championships in Budapest in October 2019.

After losing his opening bout to Razambek Zhamalov of Russia, Berge took on Gaurav Balian of India. It was in this match that Berge would sustain a concussion that would render him unconscious.

"I don't really have a recollection of exactly what happened, but I believe my head hit the inside of his knee," Berge told The Daily Collegian. "I went out, and it was the first major concussion that I had ever experienced."

"From there, it kind of continued to happen."

Then Nittany Lion Wrestling Club coach Eric Thompson, who has since become a volunteer assistant coach at Arizona State, was close with Berge and watched the injury his friend sustained live.

"Anytime you see a guy you know, especially a kid like Brady, get hurt, and especially anything with the head, it's really scary," Thompson told the Collegian. "You don't know exactly what's going on because the brain is still a little bit of a mystery even for doctors."

The extent of the injury was serious enough that Berge found himself considering a number of possible outcomes. One of those potential outcomes was the possibility of not returning to the mat.

"There were other things outside of the concussion that were happening that just were abnormal, stuff that hadn't happened to me before and things that scared me," Berge said.

The Minnesota native would eventually return to the sport, but not before undergoing a thorough rehabilitation process. This included rigorous testing to "check all the boxes" before returning to the mat.

Mark Hall, a fellow Minnesota native and former teammate of Berge's, also dealt with concussions throughout his career.



Samantha Hendrzak/Collegian file photo

**Penn State's Brady Berge** wrestles Purdue's Kendall Coleman in the 157-pound bout at the Big Ten Wrestling Championship on Saturday, March 6 at the Bryce Jordan Center in University Park, Pa.

Hall understands how head injuries can not only mess with an athlete physically but mentally as well.

"It can play with you for a while," Hall told the Collegian. "He handled that particular injury really well and far better than I know a lot of people could."

Aside from the tests he underwent, Berge also had to make sure he felt physically capable of returning to action.

All told, the recovery process took the now-former Nittany Lion roughly two months to complete.

As a result of his injuries — and what would turn out to be a shortened season due to the coronavirus pandemic — Berge would wrestle in only two bouts in the 2019-2020 season.

"It was hard for me because I was just on the sideline the entire time watching, and I wasn't able to be in the practice room wrestling all the time," Berge said. "I wasn't able to compete with them in some of the biggest matches in college wrestling."

It wasn't until the 2020-21 season that Berge would return to Cael Sanderson's starting lineup fully healthy.

Berge went on to wrestle in all but one of Penn State's meets last season, as he wrestled to a regular-season record of 5-0.

After sustaining the injury he did, the significance of returning to the mat was not lost on Berge.

"It was a blessing to be honest with you," Berge said. "From

where I was a year before, there were a lot of question marks.

"It was awesome for me to be able to compete and put on a singlet again. It was awesome for me to be in the room every day training with my teammates and my coaches again and continuing to build those relationships."

The importance of Berge returning to Penn State wrestling and regaining his health was not lost on Thompson either.

While at the Nittany Lion Wrestling Club, Thompson witnessed what Berge was capable of and was eager to see the Nittany Lion showcase the abilities and talents he knew he possessed.

"Coming into last year he was wrestling really well, and you were seeing the Brady that we'd all seen in the room," Thompson said. "The guy that was really, really talented and had a ton of skills and we were excited to see him compete."

Berge's return to wrestling provided a former four-time All-American in Hall with a sense of admiration for his work ethic and his ability to persevere.

"It was awesome — especially knowing that seeing all the hardships that he's gone through in his career," Hall said. "It's motivating for me. He's a really good example of just putting your nose to the grindstone, doing things right and putting your best foot forward to give yourself the best chance to win. I really look up to Brady."

After going 3-2 at the Big Ten Wrestling Championships, and earning sixth place overall at the 157-pound weight class, Berge traveled to St. Louis, Missouri, with a number of other Penn State wrestlers for the NCAA Wrestling Championships.

Berge proceeded to win his first two bouts, which included an upset victory over No. 5 Kaleb Young of Iowa.

"It was probably the best I've felt since prior to hitting my head for the first time," Berge said. "I just felt like I had finally broken free and was able to compete hard."

Unfortunately for Berge, his next match against the No. 4-ranked Jesse Dellevecchia of Rider would be the last he would ever wrestle at the collegiate level.

Berge suffered a knee injury that prevented him from continuing in a bout that would ultimately result in an injury-default loss.

"I had some tears in there," Berge said. "It was difficult for me. I didn't have the ability to walk for a good period of time after that."

To all those watching, it was just another unfortunate event for a wrestler who worked tirelessly to return to the sport he loved.

"My first thought was just, 'Why, why is this gonna happen again?'" Berge said. "But I think that after that first initial reaction I was able to calm down and real-

ize that I've been through these things before and it isn't the end of the world.

"I have a family that really loves me, and I have teammates and coaches who really love me."

While Berge was the one who actually sustained the injury, his journey back to the mat made the situation almost as difficult for those who know him.

"I was just heartbroken for him because you see a guy who's super talented and worked super hard and does a great job at everything he does," Thompson said. "He's a really nice kid and to see him not have the career that he should have had or have the results that he should have had, you feel for him."

Berge eventually was able to come to terms with the unfortunate situation, but it pushed him to make one of the more difficult decisions he would have to make to that point in his life.

"The decision to be done wasn't easy on me," Berge said. "If it was easy, I would have been done two years ago, but it was the best decision for myself, as far as from a health perspective."

After the series of concussions, and the recent knee injury he sustained, Berge ultimately decided to walk away from the sport.

"You're not going to will yourself to do it, especially if your career injuries told you anything," Thompson said. "Maybe it's that you shouldn't do it or don't want to do it, but you can't be risking head injuries knowing the fallout."

"All the hard work he did to get back and then to have it work out the way it did is disappointing — especially for a guy like Brady, who is right there with those top guys and was ready to win."

While Berge is no longer competing on the wrestling mat, he has managed to stay around the sport he loves.

Following his decision to walk away from the sport, Berge has since accepted a role as a volunteer assistant coach at South Dakota State.

Wrestling has brought him close to influential people, such as coaches and teammates, who have made lasting impacts on his life.

Despite his roller-coaster career, he hopes that those around him can look at him in a similar light.

"I hope that people can look toward me and think the same way, whether that was success on the mat or whether that was an interaction with me off the mat," Berge said. "Wrestling has definitely been a huge part of my life and was able to develop me into the person I've become."

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Follow him on Twitter at [@BenSerfass](https://twitter.com/BenSerfass).

## Penn State uses off week to build chemistry

By Alex Rocco  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

After a six-game homestand which saw Penn State go 2-3-1, the Nittany Lions enjoyed a week off after a tough stretch to open the season. Although the Nittany Lions had the week to rest, the team continued to practice and improve its play.

**WOMEN'S HOCKEY** "We trained for four days, and it was a lot of small games," head coach Jeff Kampersal said. "It was extremely competitive. We tried to keep it light, but it also got intense at certain moments."

The blue and white picked up its first two wins in its last series against Holy Cross where the attack exploded, finding the back of the net 11 times.

Kampersal was pleased with the effort his team showed on offense and wants to see his team continue to play that same way throughout the season.

"We did a good job attacking the net and pulling pucks out of the corners and off the side-walls," Kampersal said. "Most importantly, we did a good job getting screens in front of the goalie and taking away her eyes."

Sophomore forward Olivia Wallin enters this week's series

against Brown with points in her last three games.

Wallin mentioned how the offense was a major focal point in last week's practices.

"We worked on taking quick shots and not stick handling during shots," Wallin said. "We just have to get the puck and shoot it."

Another aspect that the Nittany Lions worked on during the off-week was playing with more discipline.

Penn State committed 23 penalties over the opening six games of the season.

"We do not want to spend time in the box as it wears down some of our players," Kampersal said. "We wanna keep a good rhythm, keep it rolling and stay out of the box."

Even though the blue and white went to the box multiple times, it only surrendered two goals on those opportunities for the opposition.

Despite being on a two-game win streak, the week off came at the right time for Penn State.

Many of the Nittany Lions enjoyed having some free time and not having to play.

"I was getting my mind right and resting my body," Wallin said. "I think everyone was doing that, so we can come back from the off week with fresh legs."

The team prioritized a



Tara Immel/Penn State Athletics

**Penn State women's hockey** enjoys goat yoga at Nittany Meadow Farm during its bye week. "We wanna keep a good rhythm, keep it rolling and stay out of the box," coach Jeff Kampersal said.

multitude of team bonding activities this week.

One of the primary focuses of those group activities was to improve communication within the squad, Wallin said.

"We did an activity that worked on communication where we played music super loud and had

to yell at each other to go through pylons," Wallin said. "We played 'Cotton Eye Joe' really loud and that actually became our victory song."

Another activity that the team is doing to build chemistry is goat yoga. The Nittany Lions went to Boalsburg to do yoga which helps

lower stress levels and blood pressure, while also relieving pain.

Kampersal said that he wished the team had more bonding days as it helps build chemistry among the team.

Visit [collegian.psu.edu](http://collegian.psu.edu) to read the full story.



# Virtual 5K funds Blue Band

By Ayden Mateo Herold  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

This Sunday, Penn State's Alumni Blue Band Association will conclude its second virtual 5K.

Having started on Saturday, this fundraising event allows Blue Band supporters to donate and run for the organization, with the eight-day window of time giving participants the chance to run in their own way and on their own schedule.

Accounting alumnus from 1991 and former Blue Band member Doug Czekaj said he played golf and walked for his version of the 5K.

"Right now we're in the middle of it, people are posting pictures of [their] various races," Czekaj said. "Everybody [is] doing their own little thing, which is then fun to see. People have their dogs on [leashes] and [things] like that."

An agricultural graduate of the class of 2000, Julia Stack is a former member of Blue Band and the head organizer of the virtual 5K.

Describing herself as "an avid runner," having run several 5Ks and 10Ks, Stack said she wondered why Blue Band did not yet have a fundraising marathon while other Penn State organizations like THON did.

"When I was on the Board of

Directors for the Alumni Blue Band Association a couple years ago... I had this idea of, 'Why isn't there a Blue Band 5K? We have them to support every other group on campus,'" Stack said. "So we talked about doing one in person, and we talked about doing it [during] We Are Weekend because a lot of alums come back, it's a great time to run."

With the spread of the coronavirus, however, Stack said the costs of organizing a safe marathon exceeded the estimated profit.

"Penn State charges a lot of money to run a 5K on campus, and the conservative part of me wasn't sure whether the means were [worth it]," Stack said.

She and the ABBA were expecting around 100 to 125 total participants to sign up. With an entrance fee of \$35, their initial goal was \$5,000, according to Stack.

To Stack's surprise, they "hit [their participant goal] last year in the first 48 hours of it being open."

"This was a brand new event that nobody knew was coming, and we just started posting about it on social media with the Alumni Association and through all the contacts we could find. Then the Blue Band picked up on it, and they started posting..." Stack said. "The next thing we knew last year, we had 514 people sign



Jeremiah Hassel/Collegian

The Penn State Blue Band marches toward Beaver Stadium ahead of the White Out game against Auburn on Saturday, Sept. 18.

up for this brand new event in 12 weeks."

In total, the first virtual 5K raised over \$23,000, according to a release.

Czekaj said the virtual 5K also recovered some of the money the ABBA did not make last year, as there was no Homecoming event or football tickets to sell to Blue Band alumni.

"Literally every dollar that we got from the event went back to the band, especially because we didn't have Homecoming, which is another one of our major fundraisers for the Blue Band. So we felt last year [the 5K] was the right thing to do," Czekaj said. "This year, I think we're going to do the same thing, but on top of that, we'll have Homecoming. So it'll be great."

Blue Band President Gabriel Newvine said people participating in last year's and this year's 5K received a packet with a T-shirt and a letter of thanks from the Blue Band Director Gregory Drane, displaying the organization's "attitude of gratitude."

Newvine said he and the Blue Band Officer Board aided the event by packing and mailing the participant packets.

"So what we did was we just set up like a production line, and some people folded the shirts,

some people put the letter in [the packet], and then we packed them all up and got them sent out," Newvine said.

Stack said the Blue Band mask offered for \$10 last year is still a hot item for this year's event.

"Everybody wanted a mask last year that said 'Penn State Blue Band' on it. I mean, where else are you going to get one?" Stack said. "And people were asking for it afterwards. So we offered it again this year, and we sold more."

The virtual aspect of this year's and last year's 5K has been an asset in bringing the Blue Band community together, according to Czekaj.

"[The event] unites the Blue Band extended family and the campus family in a way that we can share pictures and videos and other things that allow people to know we're in touch," Czekaj said.

Stack said she believes the involvement of Blue Band parents was integral to spreading the word about the event and gaining participants, describing them as being "very, very, very passionate" in their support.

While Newvine is not participating in the 5K due to his own time commitment to Blue Band, he said "quite a few" Blue Band members are running, as well as his

mother. "I'm rooting her on, she's carrying the torch for our family," Newvine said.

Since anyone from the public is able to donate and join the 5K, the wide variety of participants in the event helped the 5K gain support, Stack said.

"It's not just the people that were in the Blue Band trying to relive the glory days," Stack said.

"It's people that love the Blue Band and want to support them and help them out and let them know that they're not alone."

Newvine said all of the money donated to the ABBA and the 5K goes to the Blue Band Legacy Fund, which helps the band purchase important items like new instruments and uniforms.

Growing the fund is "really important as an alum," and the 5K was "a really good way" to do so, Stack said.

Czekaj said he was pleased with both raising money for the Legacy Fund and how the fundraiser was a way "for people to unite the community of the Blue Band family."

"Overall, the entire thing is a success, and then on top of it, to be able to give money back to the band is just icing on the cake."

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Ella Freda/Collegian


Blue Band silk Ashley Paschl (senior-health policy and administration policy) performs in Beaver Stadium for the Villanova game Sept. 25.

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# State College still needs to treat the pandemic seriously

After experiencing “unprecedented pandemic strains,” Mount Nittany Medical Center announced it will begin rescheduling surgeries due to a lowered bed capacity in a release on Oct. 14.

At the time of the release, the medical center said it was caring for 30 coronavirus inpatients, with the daily average increasing from 27 in September to 32 in October. Out of the 30 hospitalized for coronavirus, six are vaccinated, while the remaining 24 are unvaccinated.

According to Dr. Upendra Thaker, chief medical officer at Mount Nittany, other medical centers and systems within the region are also rescheduling surgeries.

Thaker encourages the State College community to not only get vaccinated and continue to wear a mask, but also abide by social distancing guidelines and abstain from attending large gatherings.

Surgery in itself is an already demanding and taxing specialty from a physical, mental and financial perspective. It's

## OUR VIEW

### As hospitalizations rise, Penn State community must consider the needs of others

saddening to see something as stressful as surgery become more difficult before the procedure takes place.

There's nothing more Mount Nittany Medical Center can do as it clearly is trying to provide the best care possible within its current state. While exceptions most likely will be made for emergency cases, it still is disappointing for those who are in pain to not be able to receive the care necessary for an improved life.

If anything should be taken away from the situation at Mount Nittany, it should be a sense of urgency for members of the Centre County community to make a better effort in combating the coronavirus — not just for themselves, but for everyone.

The notion surrounding State

College is that it's a town meant only for college students, but in reality, people of all ages call it their home. Just because coronavirus cases on campus are coming to a halt, it doesn't mean State College is on the tail end of the pandemic.

Mount Nittany reported it has seen seven time more inpatients for coronavirus than last year since Sept. 1. In September 2020, the medical center treated 15 coronavirus cases. For September 2021, that figure increased to 106 cases.

As the temperature begins to drop, it's only a matter of time before winter hits Centre County. And with some medical experts believing a major influx of coronavirus cases is possible as the weather gets colder, is State

College prepared for this?

If medical centers are already being forced to reschedule surgeries due to positive cases in the middle of October, it doesn't look promising for what's to come in January and February.

With few medical facilities present in Centre County, the lack of awareness toward the coronavirus is costing a small medical facility in a somewhat isolated area.

It's the only hospital in Centre that serves a total of six counties. The pandemic is far from finished, yet people are treating it as if the summer did away with it entirely.

After being given the green light to no longer have to wear masks, it seems as if State College and the state as a whole

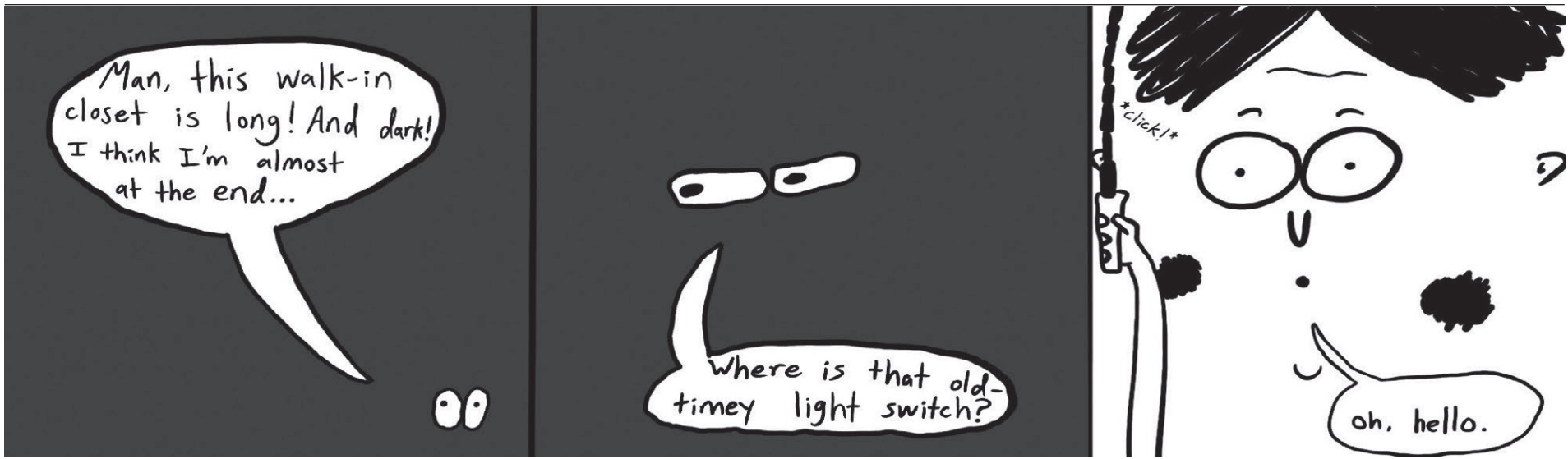
has moved on. At this point, the majority of people are exhausted from the pandemic. Because of the mass coverage of coronavirus, many are becoming desensitized and, in turn, become less concerned as well.

Even with a mask mandate in place there is very little mask wearing present downtown and indoors.

Whether it be because of not knowing or not caring, State College needs to do a better job of enforcing the mandate.

Regardless of the personal accounts and staggering mortality total, there will still be those unaffected by the coronavirus until it affects them. There are plenty of people in the community unable to receive the vaccine, leaving them more at risk.

Why not help out those who are at higher risk? If you put yourself in their shoes, maybe there'd be a change of heart. Going through the pandemic with a selfish outlook is the wrong way of doing so, as countless people have already put aside what's best for them, and asked “what's best for everyone?”



Comics by Davis Huth

MY VIEW | Kyle Hutchinson

## Jon Gruden ‘canceled’ himself, deserves backlash

As kids, we're told nothing goes away on the internet. Once it's put on there, it's in place for good. Perhaps some were never taught this valuable lesson.

Perhaps, however, it's better for some things to never go away and have the ability to be uncovered.

Enter Jon Gruden.

Gruden, who coached college and professional football for over 20 years, won the first Super Bowl in the Tampa Bay Buccaneers' history and was recently in his second stint with the Raiders franchise, resigned amid controversy after eight years worth of offensive emails including homophobic, misogynistic and racist language were uncovered by The New York Times.

In an email from 2011, Gruden used racist language referring to NFL Players Association Executive Director DeMaurice Smith, a Black man.

Just when it looked as if it

couldn't get worse, it most definitely did. Later emails showed Gruden referring to NFL commissioner Roger Goodell as homophobic slurs, as well as using slurs to describe other NFL figures such as coaches and owners.

He also claimed Goodell pressured the then-St. Louis Rams to draft Michael Sam, who came out as gay before the draft, using more homophobic slurs.

Gruden additionally shared photos of topless cheerleaders with football executives and made negative comments against the NFL's hiring of female referees.

After the leaks and through the process of his resignation, the response was quick to denounce Gruden from NFL players, analysts, coaches and the sports world in general. A small but vocal minority have gone to the defense of Gruden,

claiming this is another example of “cancel culture,” as well as stating what was said wasn't offensive or enough for removal.

Make no mistake, Gruden deserved every bit of the repercussions for his actions. His

quick resignation makes it clear he knows what he did was wrong and he lost control of his team.

This language has no place on a football team, in the league or, frankly, anywhere. In a sport in which the majority of players are Black, how can Gruden command the respect of his team and the NFL when he invoked an age-old stereotype about Black Americans?

How are closeted gay players supposed to feel comfortable playing in a league in which a coach used hateful and homophobic rhetoric? How would former Penn State player and current Las Vegas Raider Carl

Nassib feel if he had to continue playing for Gruden as the only openly gay player in the NFL?

How should cheerleaders feel safe in a job in which they already likely have to deal with unwanted advances from fans, or female referees and coaches who are joining the NFL's ranks year after year?

Gruden burned every bridge there is, lost the respect of anyone with self-respect and respect for others and was unfit to coach anymore — he had to go.

I can only imagine what's hiding in other coaches' or general managers' emails to one another. There's probably a decent chance some in the league are mass deleting emails right now, using the virtual shredder to hide their racist, sexist or homophobic language.

Will they get what they deserve? Only time will tell.

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DAILY COLLEGIAN

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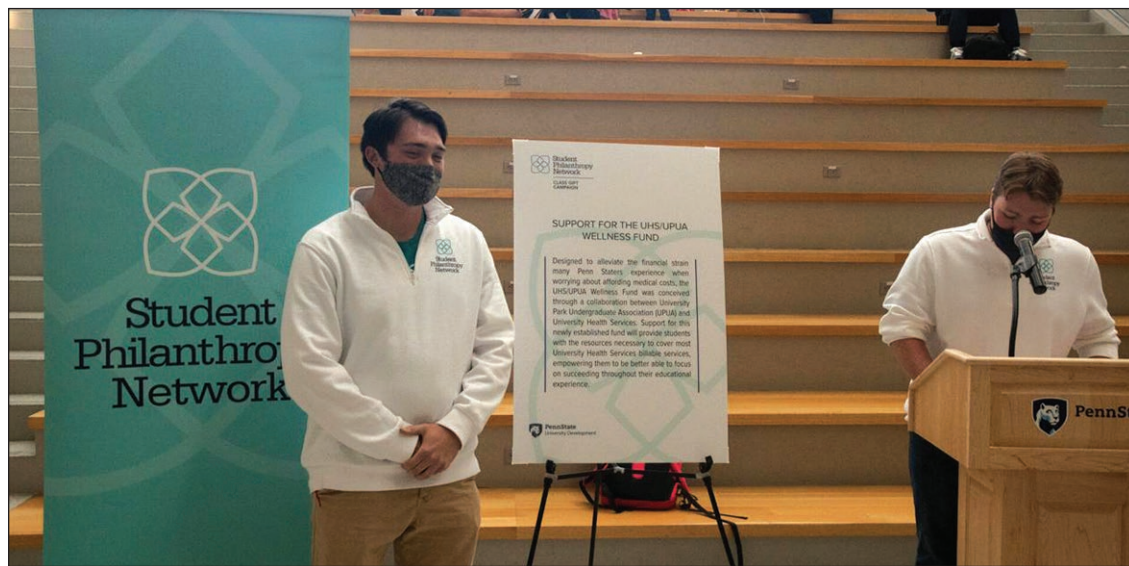
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# ‘A NEW CHAPTER OF EQUITY’

## Wellness fund seeks to provide accessible student healthcare

By Catey Ackerman  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN



Ella Castronuovo/Collegian

**Jacob Reynolds (senior-supply chain management) and Connor Cook (senior-security and risk analysis)** unveil support for the UHS/UPUA wellness fund as the 2022 Class Gift HUB-Robeson Center on Oct. 19.

care, Rodriguez turned to UPUA and UHS to advocate for students in similar situations and create the Wellness Fund to help them, he said.

Originally, UPUA proposed creating the fund to only cover physicals, which was inspired by a Harvard prescription program that gives prescription discounts to students.

“We wanted to think small because we wanted to be realistic with everything, so we thought of the idea of doing physicals and covering a wellness checkup,” Rodriguez said.

However, this idea presented problems from the perspective of UHS, Natasha Baumgartner, student insurance advocate at UHS, said.

Baumgartner said other health issues could be found during physicals, leaving students unable to pay for further necessary services.

As a result, UHS pushed to create the Wellness Fund to finance all services students may need.

“That was really the most important piece,” Baumgartner said. “UPUA and UHS both came to the table and really worked out something that would work for both of us.”

Rodriguez and UPUA said a program like this is unique to Penn State.

“There’s no other university in the Big Ten that’s doing a program like this,” Rodriguez said.

“This is completely all new and original, so it’s really exciting that Penn State is able to pedal this as something.”

Kara Krebs, case manager at UHS, agreed the need for medical services is present for more than just physical exams because through “the Affordable Care Act, a physical is something that is [already] covered at 100% as preventative care.”

“We weren’t sure that [only covering physicals] was really going to hit where the need was, so we came to the idea that why don’t we open it up for all services and use that as a point to educate students on insurance that they might qualify for, help them navigate how to use their insurance and provide them with immediate access to health care,” Krebs said.

Baumgartner also emphasized insurance education as a key point to the Wellness Fund.

“Some students just didn’t understand how their health insurance [works] or how the student health insurance [works],” Baumgartner said. “That’s been a really neat part of it — we’ve identified and been able to use this process as a means to educate students about their insurance.”

According to Baumgartner and the statistics UHS has collected from the Wellness Fund, about 47% of the UPUA Wellness Fund Case Manager visits have been

for insurance education thus far.

The Wellness Fund is also used to treat students who might be insured but cannot afford assistance due to high insurance deductibles or other financial reasons, Baumgartner said. Krebs added there are “several uninsured” people on Penn State’s University Park campus.

“When a student is uninsured but maybe still on their parent’s tax return, they won’t qualify for medical assistance programs either, so they might not have access to the health care that they need,” Krebs said. “There’s always going to be really high deductible plans and plans that don’t cover the services that students need, so we’re really capturing both sides of it.”

Baumgartner said the Wellness Fund was “two-pronged” — to meet both equity and privacy needs of students at Penn State with the main purpose of “health equity.”

“Some students don’t seek health care because they are covered under their parents insurance, and they don’t want their parents to know that they’re seeking health care for a certain need or circumstance,” Baumgartner said.

The Wellness Fund continues to fund the treatment of issues such as women’s health, with 18% of cases that have used the fund, general medical coverage with 12%, vaccines with 9% and

psychological concerns with 9%.

Insurance profiles of students who have used the fund thus far consist of 38% of students with Medicaid, 25% uninsured, 16% with high deductible plans and 9% with privacy concerns using their parent’s insurance, according to Baumgartner.

As of Oct. 8, \$4,123 has been allocated from the UPUA Wellness Fund to cover students in need, and 35 students have been scheduled with UHS Case Managers on myUHS through the UPUA Wellness Fund Visit Type.

Funding in the future will come from Penn State’s Student Fee Board and through UHS, but for this year, UPUA and UHS said they are hoping to set up a donation link for students, parents, alumni and others to make contributions toward the fund.

“I’m not sure to what extent the UPUA can provide additional funding, so we need to come to the table again now that we’ve gotten this launched,” Baumgartner said. “I do fear that probably by the end of October, we will be at the end of the fund.”

The replenishing of the Wellness Fund further emphasizes the present need “a lot of people just don’t know about,” Baumgartner said.

Rodriguez echoed Baumgartner’s sentiment and said there has been a need for the Wellness Fund for years at Penn State.

“I think it’s important to acknowledge that there are students that can afford the baseline cost of tuition, but there are deficits in their overall wellness and care,” Rodriguez said. “Whether it comes from food, housing or medical care... we have the ability to close those gaps.”

However, the Wellness Fund, with the collaboration of UPUA and UHS, is working to reconcile this long-standing discrepancy in affordability of health care services, Rodriguez said.

“It’s really reaffirming to me that there’s a new chapter ahead, with care given to these students who need it the most,” Rodriguez said. “I think that the future is extremely bright, and I think it’s a new chapter for equity on campus as a whole.”

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Ella Castronuovo/Collegian

**Mask-wearing** has become a normal part of Penn State student life since the beginning of the pandemic. Some students think it has changed the way they interact.

# Have masks caused social changes at PSU?

By Maggie McGovern  
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

Since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, masks have become a part of daily life. Some Penn State students said they have noticed behavior changes in anonymity, communication and recognition because of mask-wearing on campus.

Dikshita Kejriwal said in terms of comfortability, she “doesn’t think there’s a problem with or without masks.”

“We can’t see the lip movements of others, so it is sometimes difficult to understand with masks,” Kejriwal (junior-computer science) said. “We also have to speak a lot louder than before — that’s all.”

Some students like Leigh Stern noted another change masks created is the ability to base perceptions of others off limited facial expressions.

“I think [masks] make people look apathetic,” Stern (freshman-division of undergraduate studies) said. “Most expression, I’ve found out over the last year and a half, is apparently your eyes and eyebrows, but I do think that when people want to look expressionless, it’s a lot easier.”

completely different social skill” she didn’t ever think she “would have to learn.”

“It adds a sense of anxiety,” Stern said. “Can I or can I not remove my mask? What is the social etiquette here — because we’re in this gray zone of social etiquette that is still being established.”

On the other hand, students like Peter Schulman said they think masks are not “a factor you take into account while talking to someone.”

Schulman said he gets his understanding of others from “tone, not a facial expression,” and he uses “more hand motions” because of masks.

Alex Bi said for him, recognition is the “major difficulty while you’re wearing a mask.”

Bi (sophomore-health policy and administration) said mask-wearing is important, and Penn Staters “cannot take this pandemic as a joke or lightly.”

“We should feel more appreciative that we have less restrictions,” Bi said. “We can finally not wear masks outdoors versus last year — where you had to wear a mask everywhere, including outdoors, and the only place you could take them off was in your dorm room.”

mediate indoor mask mandate Aug. 4 for all students, faculty, staff and visitors on all campuses — regardless of vaccination status.

Another student, Hannah Chop, described her experiences with masking in classrooms.

“I have a professor that wears a microphone in a small classroom. It’s hard to hear her with her mask on, so I feel, in that aspect, some things have changed,” Chop (junior-environmental systems engineering) said. “You have to learn to emote with your eyes rather than the bottom half of your face.”

While many noted the change in overemphasizing expressions while wearing a mask, Maram Elmanzawi explained some problems that arise because of the new facewear.

“I have a professor that wears a microphone in a small classroom. It’s hard to hear her with her mask on, so I feel, in that aspect, some things have changed,” Chop (junior-environmental systems engineering) said.

Visit [collegian.psu.edu](http://collegian.psu.edu) to read the full story.

# Tussey Mountain: Outdoor Oasis

By Ava Leone  
THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Snuggled next to the dense thicket of trees in Rothrock State Forest with the backdrop of Beaver Stadium in the distance, Tussey Mountain pulls the State College community together from above.

“It’s more than just a ski mountain,” Marketing Director of Tussey Mountain Aaron Weyman said. “It started that way, and it’s evolved into something much bigger.”

Originally opening in the 1960s as a public ski area, the mountain has transformed into a hub for local snowsports, concerts, festivals, marathons and more. Just a 10-minute drive from downtown State College, the all-seasons resort offers year-round activities every day for Penn State students and community members.

During the snowy seasons, Tussey Mountain provides space for skiing, snowboarding and snow tubing on its 50-acre slopes for all skill levels.

The resort offers a variety of student specials and discounts to bring more visitors to the mountain.

On Mondays, college students with valid school IDs can get a buy-one-get-one-free deal for all-day or five-hour ski lift tickets. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, ski lift tickets cost \$20 (cash only) from 7-9 p.m. On Sundays, Tussey’s beginner lift, lesson and rental package costs \$60.

For students who do not know how to ski, they can sign up for a Penn State kinesiology class that teaches beginners how to ski and snowboard.

According to Penn State Kinesiology Director Laura Gilham, it’s an “amazing opportunity” to learn, since she said via email that Tussey offers the cheapest rates compared to anywhere else in the state, including more than a 50% discount on the course fee.

Meeting with the same on-snow coach weekly with a small group of five to 10 students in each class leads to lots of personal attention from the in-

structor and close relationships, Gilham said.

“The bonds people get with others in their class many times last beyond their time at Penn State — I still get updates from students who have invited me to their weddings where the wedding party consists of people from their on-snow class even five to 10 years later,” Gilham said via email. “There’s something magical that happens spending time on the slopes. It’s relaxing, fun and challenging.”

Nevertheless, for people who don’t have an interest in learning how to ski or snowboard, they can hang out in the resort’s lodge for food, drinks and entertainment. Resting at the foot of Rothrock State Forest with views of Happy Valley, The Lodge serves as a gathering place for people to listen to local live music every Thursday and Saturday during the winter season.

Stacked with food specials and a full bar, The Lodge delivers a great opportunity for students to enjoy live entertainment away from downtown State College, Lodge Manager Patrick Donaghy said.

“Let’s say you want to go out and see live music, but you don’t want to deal with downtown,” Donaghy said. “Thursdays and Saturdays at the Lodge are fantastic because we get a lot of the same groups that play downtown — we get them out here.”

In the summer months, the Tussey Mountain Amphitheater turns into a popular outdoor music venue.

The Amphitheater overlooks Happy Valley sunsets while musicians perform for the State College community. The performing artists range from local bands like My Hero Zero to global artists like Post Malone.

Throughout the summer season, Tussey Mountain offers specific events that feature live music. For 20 years, the resort has hosted WingFest, a contest where Tussey showcases up to 30 local restaurants that compete for the annual Tussey Mountain Wing King title, according to Tussey’s website.

Visit [collegian.psu.edu](http://collegian.psu.edu) to read the full story.