



THE FRIENDS OF PENN STATE MEN'S HOCKEY, Inc. NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2020

## FROM PRESIDENT WENDY JO HARTSOCK

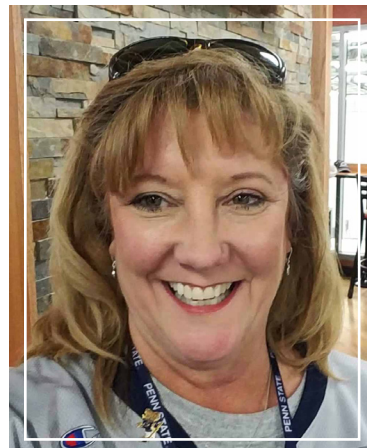
As the 2019-2020 hockey season comes to a close, it is bittersweet as we say goodbye to 10 super seniors. We have watched these young men grow and become incredible ambassadors for Penn State Hockey and the University. Whether they choose to further their careers in hockey or in business management, supply chain, communications, labor & employment relations, or hospitality management, any company would be lucky to have them as they have proven over and over their work ethic and dedication to getting the job done. These young men will carry great memories and friendships that will inevitably take them far in life.

We honored the 10 seniors and their families at the 2020 Senior Celebration after the last Minnesota game. Each graduating senior received a Waterford Crystal hockey puck engraved with his name, years of play, and uniform number as a small keepsake from the FOPSMH Club (see picture). The heartwarming and emotional speeches our seniors gave made us all Penn State Proud.

I want to thank all of our members who have been so generous and supportive throughout the season. It takes many individuals to get everything accomplished, from 50/50 sales to game-watching parties to annual events and meetings. Although we didn't sponsor a bus trip this year, many fans traveled individually to away games, and I know the players and coaches appreciate seeing the blue and white in the stands in "enemy territory." It's also great fun to occasionally see our friends on TV!

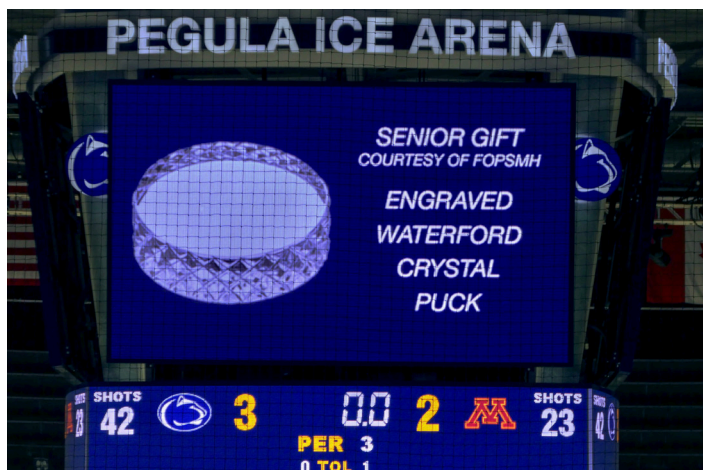
Many of you have noticed major changes in our 50/50 fundraising program, which we instituted under the direction

of Penn State Athletics. We have now entered the technological world long familiar to many of you. No more "hand counting" and "ripping" tickets. Instead, we print them using a handheld printer, and accept cash and credit/debit card transactions. These changes help us move forward in our mission of supporting the hockey program and increasing fan involvement. Using our share of the 50/50 proceeds, we hope to pay off the final installment of our second \$50K scholarship endowment at the end of this season. Thanks to everyone who has participated over the years.



I hope many of you have been able to join us throughout the season and will continue to do so next season. If you are interested in becoming more involved by serving on the Board or a committee, selling 50/50 tickets, or attending our meetings, we are continually looking for help. Please reach out to me directly and we can talk in-depth. Thank you again for an outstanding year and an exceptional club!

Respectfully, Wendy Jo Hartsock ([wjh21@psu.edu](mailto:wjh21@psu.edu)), President, Friends of Penn State Men's Hockey



The FOPSMH gift to each senior is highlighted on the Pegula scoreboard during the Senior Celebration.

### IN MEMORIAM

We were all saddened to learn of the passing of Dr. Billie Willits in December. Billie was one of the last Presidents of the Icers' Booster club (for several of those years with her late husband), was a coach on 3 of the Lady Icers National Tournament teams, and her son played for the Icers. At Penn State, she served as an Associate Vice President for Human Resources, and taught classes as well. She was a great friend to those of us who knew her, and we will miss her.

## ASK COACH GADOWSKY

**Question:** With the emphasis on player safety, have you noticed any changes in the way college hockey players are playing now?

## NATIONAL TREASURE

Since starting play as an NCAA Division I program for the 2012-2013 season, Penn State has played regular season games at Pegula against each of the 11 teams representing the Atlantic Hockey Conference. The Nittany Lions have faced 5 of the 12 teams in the Eastern Collegiate Athletic Conference (ECAC), 5 of the 11 teams in Hockey East, and 4 of the 10 teams in the Western Collegiate Hockey Association (WCHA), though not all of these teams have made the trip to Hockey Valley. Penn State has played no regular season games either at home or on the road against any of the 8 teams in the National Collegiate Hockey Conference (NCHC), although it has played Denver twice in the NCAA Tournament, and will play North Dakota in Nashville next season. Penn State has taken on Arizona State, the nation's only independent team, both at home and in the desert.

**Coach Gadowsky:** I remember when anything from behind was a big point of emphasis, and then in recent years contact with the head has been a big point of emphasis. In both these areas, I think specifically the officiating and the players have done a really good job of minimizing that. There are still going to be certain issues, but I think in recent years they've done very well.

**Question:** How have the teams in the Big Ten changed since the league's inception in 2013?

**Coach Gadowsky:** Before Big Ten play commenced, when the teams now in the Big Ten were in two different conferences, each with a much larger number of teams than now, there was a large disparity between better and lesser teams in any given year. The better teams had many games where the chances for success were quite good. Now you have fewer teams, and every point, every single game is crucial. I have never been in a league that is as competitive night-in and night-out, and as intense, as the Big Ten is now. That's a fact, 100%. How many times in college hockey has an entire league been in the top half of the pairwise? It



PSU Athletic Communications

doesn't seem possible, but that's what we have. That forces you to approach things differently.

**Question:** With back to back games, how difficult is it to make adjustments from Friday night to Saturday night?

**Coach Gadowsky:** It's actually easier than when you play a different team, certainly easier on the coaching staff. You know what to expect, the adjustments normally are based on what you've done the previous night, and you usually don't have to adjust to what they do.

*continued on page 5*

## EXCERPTS FROM COACH GADOWSKY'S WEEKLY MEDIA SESSIONS

**On Sam Sternschein:** He plays so well with guys who kill penalties, so he sometimes gets shuffled to the back. I guarantee he scores more goals per minute than anyone in the NCAA, and I don't think anyone on our team is surprised by this. He's such a nice guy, I think he has something in the back of his mind saying "I should help others and maybe I should pass it off." When he has a very focused mentality, he is awesome, and that goes for his defensive game as well.

**On playing against Notre Dame star goalie Cale Morris:** It's not a matter of treating goaltenders differently. It's possible we've tried to be a little too

cute against him, a little too perfect, because he's had a lot of success against us. When we had success against him, it was not that we focused on him and his game and making a perfect play, it was just us playing a good team game.

**On Nikita Pavlychev's return from an injury:** We noticed a big difference on the penalty kill. He and Aarne (Talvitie) do seem to have a synergy between them. He brings a different mentality to the team – I think his line will always be able to score, but with him they bring a little bit of an edge. There's not a player on the other team who, when he hops over the boards, doesn't take a quick look to see if Nikita's out there.

**On Nate Sucec becoming the team's all-time scorer:** He'll do whatever it takes to produce in whatever situation he's in. I really admire that. And it's not that he catches fire in a few games; he's been doing this since day 1. The mental strength it takes to do this game after game is really impressive.

**On series sweeps:** There are some issues that we identified in the summer. We felt some of these were related to mental toughness. One was closing out games in the 3<sup>rd</sup> period, another was sweeping series after winning the first night.

## ASK THE LIONS

**Question:** When did you first start skating and playing hockey?

**Denis Smirnov (Moscow, Russia):** My parents told me I was 3 ½ years old when I first got on the ice, and my first game was when I was about 5. A long time ago! (Laughs.) Obviously, when I was growing up, we didn't get to see NHL action, so I was focused on Russian players. I liked Kharlamov (legendary Russian winger Valeri Kharlamov). My dad bought me tapes and I used to watch how super-seriously he played. He was smaller than most of the other players, like me. I still watch the highlights. Then when (Evgeni) Malkin started playing for the Penguins, I liked him and tried to do the stuff he did. He's kind of a different player, a little bigger, but very skillful for such a big player, so I tried to copy him a bit.

**Kevin Wall (Penfield, New York):** I was about 5 or 6 years old. I had a cousin who played hockey, he was a teenager at the time. I went to a hockey game, I couldn't keep my eyes off of the game. Some kids would be running around the rink, but I was just so focused on the game. I remember my parents telling me that, after that, I kept watching hockey. I asked my parents for a hockey stick, I messed around with it, and one day I said I'm going to do the whole thing. I tried to get on the ice to skate, which didn't start out too well, I couldn't really keep my balance. I watched certain players to see their tendencies, but when I was growing up I just tried to do my own thing. I was still learning about the game, getting tips from coaches, and taking lessons.

**Kris Myllari (Kanata, Ontario):** I started skating when I was 2 or 3 years old. My dad built a rink in our back yard, and he helped me to skate, he kind of held me up by my pants. I was probably about 5 or 6 when I started playing organized hockey.

**Mason Snell (Courtice, Ontario):** I started skating when I was 2 years old when my dad was still playing in Germany. My first organized season of hockey was when I was 4.

**Nate Sucece (Fairport, New York):** I was on skates when I was 18 months old, in my backyard, holding my dad's hands, or maybe he even plopped me on a bucket.

**Question:** Which is your favorite/toughest Big Ten arena (other than Pegula) to play in?

**Denis Smirnov:** Favorite? Probably Notre Dame, but Michigan is the toughest. Their fans, the rink, the atmosphere is just so different. It's similar to ours, to be on the other side of that is really hard, with thousands of people booing you. I think they play differently there, with more confidence.

**Kris Myllari:** That's tough. Statistically, Yost (Michigan) would be the answer for the toughest. Yeah, it IS the toughest; statistics aside, they have a tremendous history and culture there, and they have great, passionate fans. Every rink brings a challenge, the Big Ten teams are so well coached, so talented, wherever you play you will get a great game, you're never going to have an easy night. That's something we take pride in, we relish the challenge. We enjoy ALL the road games, but I'd have to say Yost.

**Peyton Jones:** Every place in the Big Ten is nice, but I like playing at Wisconsin a lot. It (Kohl Center) is a really cool arena, I also like the hotel we stay at (all the hotels we stay in are great, but the one in Wisconsin is particularly appealing to me), I like the area. They draw big crowds and the students are right there. I also like Michigan, the fans are really loud and they're on you all night. I like playing everywhere, but yeah, I like to play at Wisconsin.

**Nate Sucece:** My favorite place to play is Wisconsin. We've been fortunate to play a few weekends there where they've held special nights. The atmosphere there is great, the crowds are large, the matchups are always feisty. Ohio State is a difficult place to play, it's not as raucous and you have to create your own energy.

*Editor's note: This same question and resultant answers appeared in the Fall 2015 edition of the FOPSMH Newsletter; goalies Matthew Skoff and Eamon McAdam chose Michigan, while defenseman Connor Varley selected Minnesota. Only Denis Smirnov and Nate Sucece distinguished between toughest and favorite; Sucece's assessment of Ohio State was an acknowledgement of the cavernous Schottenstein Center in Columbus rather than the fans.*

## OFFICERS — FRIENDS OF PENN STATE MEN'S HOCKEY, Inc.

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## ANATOMY OF A GOAL

photos by Stephanie Corcino



Niagara goalie Brian Wilson stops Evan Barrat's incoming shot with Nikita Pavlychev (13) on the doorstep.



Pavlychev goes for the loose puck as Wilson recovers.



Pavlychev tries to knock it in despite the efforts of Eagle defenseman Jack Zielinski (28).



Undeterred by Zielinski, Pavlychev keeps poking away, and ...



It's now 2-0 Penn State!!!



All is well.





## )) ON THE AIR WITH BRIAN TRIPP ((

There is nothing quite like gameday at Pegula Ice Arena. In many respects, just like for the players, coaches, and staff, it is the culmination of a week of hard work and preparation for our broadcast team as well. I love the challenge of broadcasting the fastest game on

Earth. A hockey player's tempo, skill, tenacity and grit are unmatched. I feel it is my personal responsibility to translate and depict the speed, energy, intensity, and passion of the game to our audience every night. As the play-by-play broadcaster, it is also my duty to incorporate the expert opinion of my analyst, Eric Ohlson, and provide him the space needed to articulate his impressions of the game's action.

Simply put, I tell you "WHAT" and he tells you "WHY!"

I begin preparing for each week's broadcast on Sunday night. I put together my game chart with updated rosters, background information, records, and statistics for both teams. On Monday, I attend Penn State's afternoon practice and media availability to get the pulse of the team and hear from the players and coaches. Then, throughout the week, I'll search the internet for articles, videos, and other

sources of information to gain perspective on our team, the opponent, and other intriguing storylines in college hockey. I take roughly an hour on Wednesday and Thursday nights to memorize the opposing team's roster with names and numbers for each player. Additionally, on Thursday, each team's sports information director releases a game note packet with other relevant information, so leading up to the game I flip through pages and add additional items to my game chart. We are very fortunate at Penn State to have John Hanna as a part of the team's staff handling media relations duties. He is a valuable resource who is committed to the program and his profession.

Needless to say, by Friday, I can't wait to get to the arena. Typically, Eric and I spend a few minutes identifying key storylines and topics we are excited to discuss that night. I also chat with Coach Gadowsky for a few minutes and record our pregame interview. For home games, Bob Taylor is our broadcast engineer; he ensures that all the gear is working properly and our broadcast is at top quality.

Once the puck is dropped, the fun begins! As a broadcaster, I take immense pride in my preparation, and trust that my hard work during the week pays off. It also allows me to think instinctively and react to what occurs on the ice. And let me tell you, there's nothing better than saying "Penn State .... SCORES!!"

## ASK COACH GADOWSKY

*continued from page 2*

**Question:** Have you gotten into metrics/ advanced metrics much?

**Coach Gadowsky:** Yes, a lot. That's something that's getting to be more prevalent in all sports, hockey's quite a bit behind other sports in terms of more advanced analytics, but we're learning. I do see the benefit in it. I still believe very much in the "eye test," and you usually do get numbers to back up what you think, but then sometimes you'll also get some that make you look at things differently. We have a great staff, Alex Dawes in particular has helped us look at analytics. So, for example, we look at data per zone and not just per game; the percentages for success in certain zones are very telling.

We are into advanced metrics. As one example, we grade each player per zone that takes into account how they've done. If you take, for instance, the number of points or

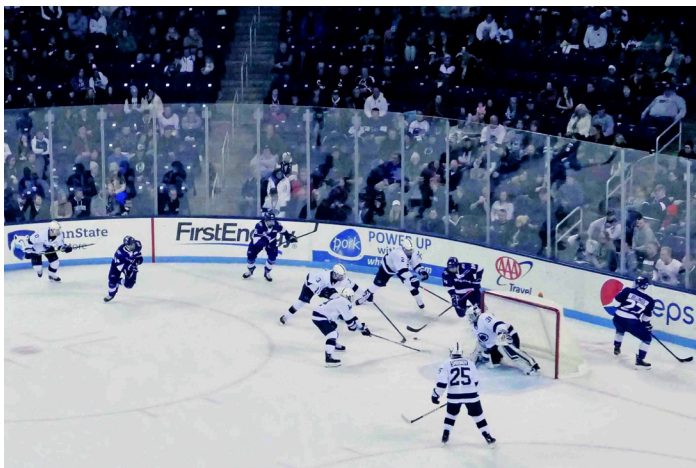
shots, then someone who has more ice time will likely have more points or shots. Our system evens out ice time, and it's actually quite telling, sometimes things that you think you're seeing you really aren't. These numbers have helped us be more efficient with our roster selection.

**Question:** Is it easier to prepare during the week when there are mistakes from the previous game(s) that must be corrected?

**Coach Gadowsky:** We coaches would prefer to point out the things the players did really well, and hope that motivates the players to keep improving going forward. It's not hard to motivate when you get your butt kicked because it's obvious that changes have to be made. But as coaches we'd rather have the opposite scenario – look at the things we've done really well and try to build on them. Those are nice weeks, but they don't happen all the time.

# GAME ACTION

photos by Stephanie Corcino



Back from break, Niagara falls as five Lion skaters and goalie Peyton Jones hold off the Purple Eagles in the closing moments of a 3-2 victory.



Don't worry baby, Niagara goalie Brian Wilson gets around on Saturday night.



The night after being shut out by Michigan, Nate Sucec (center) puts the Lions up by 2 over the Wolverines off the rebound of a shot by Kris Myllari (4).



With a 6<sup>th</sup> attacker on the ice, Evan Barratt (17) gets in position to tie the score with 1:22 left. The Lions lost in the 2<sup>nd</sup> OT period.



Notre Dame goalie Cale Morris stones Nate Sucec's bid for a sudden death winner on Friday night.



Peyton Jones stopped 6 shots in the shootout, including this one by the Irish's Tory Dello.



# GAME ACTION

Continued from Page 6



Alex Limoges (9) starts the Lion comeback on "White Rush" night vs. Notre Dame.



In Friday night's crucial opener against Minnesota, Nate Sucece puts the Lions back in front 7 minutes into the 3<sup>rd</sup> period.



Alex Limoges nails the winner on the Lions' 57<sup>th</sup> shot with 24 seconds left in the 3-on-3 OT.



It's another must-win game vs. the Gophers on Saturday as Evan Barratt (17) pokes in the rebound after Liam Folkes' (26) shot to get the Lions within one midway through period 2.



Screaming down the left side, Nikita Pavlychev ties it 9 minutes into the 3<sup>rd</sup> period after taking a perfect cross-ice pass from Tyler Gratton (not shown).



Thirty-one seconds later, Kevin Wall (21) pounces on Pavlychev's pass to score the game-winner.





*Editor's note: Roar Zone Secretary Taylor Somers' latest contribution illustrates the passion of many students in Hockey Valley.*

The roar of the best student section in college hockey is evident in Pegula every home weekend. Although we are a powerful wall of noise that is a force to be reckoned with, perhaps many folks are not aware that we continue to be a force even outside of our home arena.

The Roar Zone as a group has traveled to at least one road game in each of the last several seasons. This past January, we were on hand at PPG Paints Arena as the Lions handed Robert Morris a 6-2 thumping. (To be fair, we had plenty of support from many other Penn State alumni and fans in attendance.) But that was just the start of our travels. A month later, we reclaimed the Schottenstein Center in Columbus as our own (having defeated Ohio State 5-1 last season on their home ice in the Big Ten Tournament semi-final game, we were ready to show the Buckeyes that we could do it again). The morning after Penn State's Friday

loss to OSU in the second round of a shootout, twenty-seven members of the Roar Zone made the trip from State College to Ohio. We wanted to show "our" guys that we had their backs, even hundreds of miles away from Pegula's friendly confines.

We were loud and we were proud, from the announcement of the starting lineup to the final horn. After Denis Smirnov's first period score, our roar only got louder (if that's possible). The Ohio State fans in our section began vacating their seats, to be replaced by scores of Penn State fans who flocked to join us. In no time, we had a section of blue and white cheering on our Lions. The Roar Zone never let up, and neither did the team. Leading 4-3 with 2:18 left in the third period, those of us in the stands were anxious, but the team knew what to do. Captain Brandon Biro hit an empty netter and Cole Hults followed suit to put the final nail in the coffin for the game.

Once again, the Roar Zone and company celebrated a road victory at "The Schott" before departing for State College after the game, all of us on a post-game high (some travelers even stopped along the way for a post-win celebratory dinner). The season isn't over yet, and one thing remains constant: the power of the Roar Zone and traveling Penn State fans is a force that is hard to beat when on the road. We can't wait to bring our (in)famous wall of noise back home!

**Looking for The Friends of Penn State Men's Hockey on the web?**

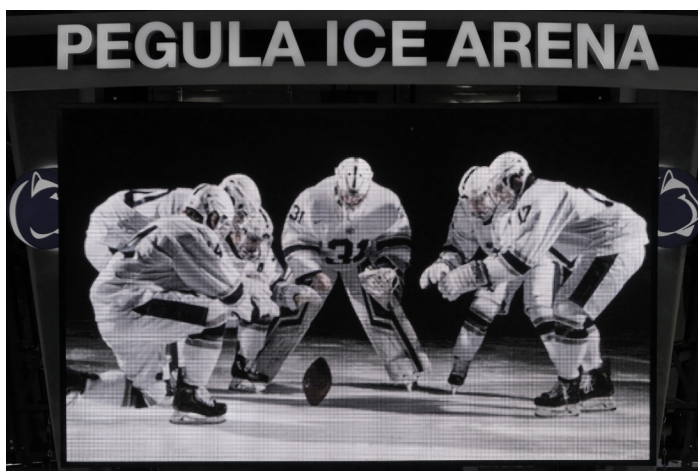
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Stephanie Corcino



On "White Rush" night, Penn State hockey honors Penn State football with "vanilla" unis.



Coach James Franklin gets on the ice to show his stuff. Result? He buries it from center ice. Does he have any eligibility left?

Stephanie Corcino