



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

SPRING 2021

## FROM PRESIDENT WENDY JO HARTSOCK

I hope this new year finds all of you safe, healthy, and enjoying these winter months. As our 2021 season comes to a slow end with the Arizona State, Ohio State, and Minnesota series all being canceled due to COVID-19 and a slim possibility of rescheduling, I am sure many feel like we are reliving the end of last season. Our players, coaches, and staff are doing their best to establish some level of normalcy over this season, and while we are still disappointed by not being in Pegula to cheer them on, we appreciate their efforts. It seems like forever since the last home game that was open to the public, that was such a good time (see photo below).

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

**WEBSITE:** <http://fopsmh.org>

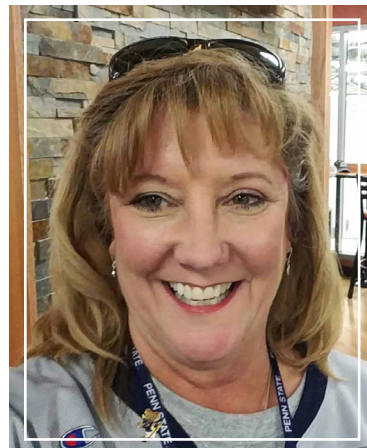
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Brian Tripp's radio calls continue to bring the flavor and excitement of the games to us, but watching and listening over the TV or radio doesn't replace being there in person, and I am sure it isn't the same for the players either. I'm encouraged seeing all of the individual "cut-outs" of fans at Pegula in our absence, but let's not kid ourselves, they are a quiet crowd, and for the real fans and players, that's not what gameday is all about. We'll just have to be louder than ever once we get back together. I'm sure the team is as anxious as we are to let loose.

I am excited to announce that sophomore forward Connor MacEachern (#29) is the 2020-21 recipient of the FOPSMH Scholarship (Brandon Biro, last year's captain, was the scholarship recipient each year of his four year career with the Nittany Lions). Connor is from Brooklin, Ontario, and played in 2018-19 with the Youngstown Phantoms (USHL) and before that two seasons with the Cobourg Cougars; his younger sister Margaret plays hockey for Colgate.



Connor is considering a major either in Business or in Labor Employment Relations. In spite of the pandemic, he is very excited about his sophomore season and his academic pursuits, and naturally is very grateful for the generosity of you, the FOPSMH members.

As we try to settle into some sort of routine, whatever that means for each of us, I hope you will continue to take good care of yourselves and those around you until we can be together again in Pegula; stay safe and healthy.

Wendy Jo

Stephanie Corsino



*Kevin Wall (21) scores the game-winner vs. Minnesota in the last game at Pegula in the 2019-20 season. That victory eventually clinched the Nittany Lions' first regular-season Big Ten championship.*



*The 2020 Big Ten championship banner hangs proudly from Pegula's rafters, anxiously awaiting the return of college hockey's most raucous crowd.*

PSU Men's Hockey Office

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



**Question:** *What was your pre-pandemic gameday routine for games at Pegula and how has it changed this season?*

**BT:** In past seasons, I typically arrived at Pegula roughly 90 minutes prior to puck drop. First, I would head to the press box, grab the night's line charts, and make sure our radio equipment was functioning. (Fortunately, we were almost always working with our engineer, Bob Taylor, who assisted in producing the broadcast. Unfortunately, with capacity and space restrictions this season, we no longer have Bob at our side.) Then, about one hour prior to the start of the game, I would head down to Coach Gadow's office to record our pregame interview. After our quick chat, I would stop in the media room, grab a cookie and drink, and converse with the other broadcasters and reporters covering the game. Finally, I'd head back upstairs to watch warmups and familiarize myself with the players one final time before going on the air for the pregame show. Throughout all of this, I always enjoyed seeing familiar faces while walking around the arena. I really miss the infectious energy of gameday and the interaction throughout the concourse with friends, fans, and arena staff members.

**Question:** *What was your pre-pandemic gameday routine for away games and how has it changed this season?*

**BT:** Away games are completely different. Typically, we travel with the team to all road games. This season, we are broadcasting the games remotely from Pegula. We are watching the same video from BTN or BTN+ that fans are at home and adding our own commentary. Fortunately, some schools have supplied additional camera angles and audio from within the arena during the games. This helps us identify what is going on during the game and makes the broadcast feel authentic. We have one or two television moni-

tors and a computer inside a quiet room inside Pegula (see photo below). This allows us to watch and broadcast the game and receive live stats from wherever that week's game is being played.



Photo courtesy of Brian Tripp

*This is the command center (aka the "quiet room") for the broadcasts of away Penn State hockey games. The large monitor at the top left shows a private YouTube live stream of the different cameras at the game site and is accompanied by audio from the arena. The large monitor on the right is tuned to the Big Ten Network. The laptops in the foreground are used by Brian, radio analyst Eric Ohlson, and associate communications director John Hanna for their broadcast duties.*

**Question:** *Is the Big Ten restricting attendance completely, or are you seeing players' families at any of the games?*

**BT:** The Big Ten allows each participant and coach to have a limited number of tickets to distribute to family members. However, due to certain state regulations, there have been games without any fans in attendance, including at Pegula. Each school must follow Conference and government protocols when determining if a limited number of guests will be permitted.

**Question:** *What is it like to broadcast from an empty Pegula Ice Arena?*

**BT:** Surreal. It is particularly noticeable prior to the start of the game. I miss the buzz and excitement of fans in the concourse and the pregame pageantry of

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## THE VOICE OF PEGULA, RODNEY MARTIN

**Question:** Take us on a tour of Pegula if you can. What's open, what's not, what people are present (and so forth)?

**RM:** Honestly, my view of Pegula is pretty much the same each game. I try to stay on a fixed path to get in and out of the rink now to minimize the chance of interaction with other groups there on game day. The media entrance is now where the community rink entrance is located. I enter there, get my bag inspected, temperature taken, and credentials checked. From there, I get in the elevator to go straight to the club level and walk around to the control booth and luxury box area.

From what I understand, there is only one concession stand that is open (by Gate A) and that's it. There are some ushers for the players' families that are permitted to attend. It is quite eerie knowing how busy and raucous Pegula can get. I really, really miss the fans being there.



*Rodney's view for the 2020-21 season.  
Not much public to address.*

**Question:** How has your job as rink announcer changed this season – what are you doing now that you didn't do previously, and vice versa?

**RM:** We have DRASTICALLY cut down on the number of scripted reads and promotions with only family members in attendance. Typically, we would have three or four reads slated before warm-ups alone. Now, we can fit all the needed announcements in after warm-ups and before "lights out" for team introductions. The reduced "workload" (if you can call it work) is a bit odd, but it has allowed me to be able to pay much more attention to the game and be more of a fan.

One HUGE difference is being separated from the goal horn button – a huge perk of the job is getting to press that. Our setup is more spread out and I sit in the luxury box next to the control booth where I would normally be (see photo). They were able to move my controller and headset, but the cord to the goal horn just wasn't long enough to reach. We are using a pre-recorded goal horn this year but staying "on-brand" in using a recording of the Buffalo Sabres' horn. It may be for the best – hitting the horn with that few people in the building could cause some serious damage.

**Question:** In past seasons did you interact much with the players, coaches, and staff, and has this changed this season?

**RM:** Not much has changed this year with respect to my interactions with the players and coaches in that I really didn't do much of that in the first place. If I see one of the coaches, I will normally say "hello" and usually don't in-

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## FROM THE EDITOR

*Editor's note: After our son enrolled at University Park in 1998, my wife and I became reacquainted with The Collegian. Over time, I began reading more and more about the Penn State Nittany Lion Icers, and during one particular week in March, 2000, my reading turned into a mini-obsession. The Icers were playing for the ACHA National Championship, and each day I couldn't wait to see if they were still alive.*

Fast-forward to 2020 and the cancellation of post-season play. Like all of you, I really missed the excitement of play-off hockey. Sadly, instead of experiencing new thrills and celebrations, I could only think back enviously to the past, to the most exciting games in Penn State hockey history. Not all of these games were pretty, but the drama was unrelenting and the results often glorious. Penn State either won and advanced, or lost and went home.

The 2020-21 season is the eighth season of Big Ten men's ice hockey. Penn State has played in 15 conference or national championship elimination games and holds a 9-6 record in these contests. The Nittany Lions are undefeated in overtime playoff games, having defeated Michigan in double OT in the first ever Big Ten Tournament game in 2014, then winning the Conference Tournament in 2017 with consecutive double-OT victories over Minnesota and Wisconsin respectively, and then prevailing at Pegula vs. Wisconsin in 2019. Zack Saar in 2014, Erik Autio in 2017, and Badger-killer Liam Folkes in 2017 and again in 2019 (see photos below) scored the winners, and they will never have to pay for a meal in State College for the rest of their lives.

But that's not the complete picture of Penn State hockey in

elimination games. Not at all. Because before there were Nittany Lions, there were Icers, and the Icers' accomplishments, especially under legendary head coach Joe Battista, rival those of their alma mater's other well-known sports dynasties. Seven national championships (6 under Battista, including 4 in a row from 2000 to 2003) and an astounding 10 consecutive appearances in the ACHA national championship game are testament to the ice water in the Icers' veins.

One of the championships, though, deserves special recognition. If you think the Nittany Lions' consecutive overtime heroics to capture the 2017 Big Ten Tournament title are the stuff of legends, you are correct, but if you think things couldn't have been more dramatic, then you probably are not aware of the "Magic City Miracle." This is when Penn State hockey first grabbed me over 20 years ago.

The "Magic City" is none other than Minot, North Dakota, on the frozen, wind-whipped plains, host to the 2000 ACHA National Championship Tournament. Twelve teams, broken into 4 groups of 3 teams each, played a group round-robin schedule, with the winner of each group advancing to the single-elimination semi-final and final games. Unlike the 2017 Nittany Lions, the 2000 Icers were not big underdogs, having won the title in 1998 and finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> in 1999. But they were young, and the road to the top soon became a lot tougher than they might have thought going in.

After defeating Illinois in the opener, the Icers faced powerful Tournament host Minot State. One can only imagine the frenzy of the home crowd as, with a berth in the

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Stephanie Corcino



*There's pandemonium in Pegula after Liam Folke's OT winner in 2019 vs. Wisconsin sent the Lions to the Big Ten semis.*



*"Folkiesy" is introduced as the game's number 1 star as his teammates applaud in the background.*

Stephanie Corcino

## ON THE AIR WITH BRIAN TRIPP

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all college sports. Then, of course, I really miss the roar of the crowd when there is a big play or I can feel momentum shift. It's incredible how much impact the Roar Zone and fans really have! There are times during the game when I am so locked into what's occurring on the ice that I forget the arena is empty. However, once that concentration lapses for a moment, my first thought is always about the fans and how much I wish they could be in the arena as well.

**Question:** *How well can you hear the communications of the players on the ice with each other and with the bench and does this affect how you call a game?*

**BT:** I really don't notice it much. Our microphones pick up some of the on-ice chatter, but it's mainly inaudible. There is still music and a computer-generated crowd murmur playing inside the arena, so it's not entirely silent. It hasn't impacted how I've called a game yet this season.

**Question:** *How has the pandemic altered your interactions with Penn State hockey staff and players?*

**BT:** This is the part of the job that I miss the most. I still haven't met any of the newcomers on this year's team. I always enjoy talking to the players and coaches, learning about their backgrounds, and gathering useful tidbits from our interactions for the broadcasts. Coach Gadowsky and his staff recruit high character

student-athletes. They are great representatives of Penn State, so I wish I had a chance to share more of each player's unique story.

**Question:** *How have you compensated for these differences?*

**BT:** A lot more phone calls and texts! However, you can't replace face-to-face interaction or even just observing a practice in person. I've been fortunate to develop a great relationship with the staff. They have been incredibly accommodating.

**Question:** *What do you think is the net impact of these differences on your ability to call a game?*

**BT:** Away games are incredibly challenging. I feel mentally and physically drained after following the action on a monitor for two hours. It can take a while to notice penalties, injuries, and lineup changes when not in the arena. For both home and away games, I've tried to be more energetic than in previous seasons because I can't rely on the crowd to provide that added enthusiasm. However, I think the overall quality of the broadcasts has been solid. I replay every game I broadcast, and I have not noticed a difference in my ability to call the game. Internally, I know I am missing details that I could add without COVID restrictions. However, I don't think it's noticeable to the casual listener.

## FROM THE EDITOR

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national semi-finals at stake, their team held a seemingly insurmountable 2-goal lead with under 4 minutes to play. Staring down the face of elimination, the Icercs scored twice in a 1-minute span, with Todd Dakan getting the equalizer. Dakan then netted the game winner in OT; it would not be his last moment of Tournament glory.

On to the semis, and a typically bruising Michigan-Dearborn team. With less than 2 minutes remaining, Penn State again trailed. This time it was another legendary Icer, Elon Eizenman, who tied it up, and then Ryan Wick won it in OT.

Physically and emotionally drained, the Icercs had to dig

deep one more time. As the clock wound down in the final minute of the championship game, Eastern Michigan was up by a goal and on victory's doorstep. But big-time players make big-time plays in big-time games, and Dakan and Eizenman came through when it counted the most. Dakan tied it, and Eizenman won it all in the first sudden-death period.

Three nights, three late-game comebacks, three OT victories. The first of four consecutive championships. Al Michaels' words from 1980 ("Do you believe in miracles? Yes!!!") were once again appropriate.

I can't wait for the next elimination game.



## RODNEY MARTIN

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teract with the players - they have enough on their minds.

I still do get to interact with some of the staff as some have been rotating through as my spotters for the men's and women's games. In that respect, I still have a bit of interaction with some of the folks I would talk with on my pre-game "walk-about" at the rink. Still, I just really miss seeing fans – especially fans that are making their first trip to Hockey Valley – and talking with some of them before the game starts.

**Question:** Have you noticed a difference in play with no fans present?

**RM:** Surprisingly, I really haven't. I'd imagine that at this level, players need to have the ability to focus and push all of that aside. I know that there are moments where having fans would definitely add to the game's intensity - post-goal celebrations and the momentum that can come from that, for example. However, the players know that they have a job to do and push themselves just as hard without fans.

**Question:** Do you hear much trash talk on the ice or is it mostly just communications among teammates and with the benches?

**RM:** Oh yeah – in fact, if there is anything I would keep about this season it would be this. I would pay for a separate broadcast audio stream with ambient microphones at ice level, but we would have to have a disclaimer to go along with it. It takes me back to the days of being between the penalty boxes in Greenberg Ice Pavillion and hearing some of the chirping back and forth on the ice and in the boxes.

And yes, you can definitely hear the players communicating as well. Perhaps when they are on the ice – inside the boards and glass – the players can communicate better than when there is a large crowd. With respect to the benches, the players and coaches are usually below the top of the glass. So, unless one of the coaches is standing on the bench or leaning out, I usually can't hear too much from there.

**Question:** Similarly, how much of the officials' interactions with the players can you hear?

**RM:** This is very similar to the situation with the players. When there is a scrum along the boards, you can hear the referee telling them to play the puck. There are fewer dust-

ups after the whistle, but when there are, you can hear the warnings being given.

**Question:** Can you describe some of the more memorable plays you've seen this season?

**RM:** The run of overtime wins we had was memorable. Going straight to 3-on-3 this season (following the NHL model) has made for some exciting hockey – constant back-and-forth and odd-man rushes. The "Connors" (MacEachern and McMenamin) with nearly identical game-winning goals in those games was something to see and for Alex Limoges to get his 50<sup>th</sup> goal on another OT winner was very special.

I would also have to include the play of Oskar Autio. He has really bounced back from a shaky start and has been playing great with some very memorable saves while keeping us in games.

Finally, I know this newsletter is for the men's program, but I would be remiss if I didn't comment on just how incredible the women's program has been this season. Coach Kampersal's recruiting class was ranked second nationally coming into this season and the team is playing lights-out. They just completed an unbeaten home slate (9-0-1) this season and have clinched their first regular-season College Hockey America championship. The future is bright.

### HOME SWEET HOME

Beginning with the 2012-13 season (the first as an NCAA team), the Penn State men's hockey rosters have included players from 16 different states, 4 Canadian provinces, and 4 European countries.

Pennsylvania leads all states with 21 players (surprised?), followed by Michigan, Minnesota, and New York with 7 each. Missouri claims 5 natives, New Jersey 4, and California, Illinois, and Massachusetts 2 each. Alaska, Nevada, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Texas, Virginia, and Wisconsin are each the home state of 1 current or former Nittany Lion.

Ontario is home to the most Canadian players (10), while Alberta has contributed 5, British Columbia 2, and Quebec 1. Finland is the home of 3 players, Russia 2, and Sweden and England 1 each.