



The Pennsylvania
State University

Paw Print

Issue I
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The Return of Pawprint!

Student-Athletes:

Some of you may already be familiar with *Pawprint*. Originated in 1994 by Past President John Amaechi (Men's Basketball) and Editor Leah Foreman (Women's Swimming), *Pawprint* is a student-athlete newsletter written for athletes, by athletes. It provides student-athletes an opportunity to hear what is going on in the athletic community, and give them a newspaper of their own. Over the past year and a half, *Pawprint* has been somewhat nonexistent (other than a special edition capturing the excitement of THON 2004). This year, however, SAAB has decided to resurrect it. A solid group of us has been brainstorming and working on articles that we think will be of interest to you. We have come up with a ton of ideas and are excited to get the ball rolling on this new era of *Pawprint*. What you are about to read is only the first issue, and we are hoping to improve and work out all of the kinks as time goes on. *Pawprint* is going to be a really exciting and interesting newsletter for student-athletes. Each month, we will come out with a new issue that contains updates on former student-athletes, interviews with staff and faculty related to the athletic community, important updates and news on teams, etc. We also welcome any suggestions or comments you may have, and they can be emailed to me at rma151@psu.edu. *Pawprint* truly relies on the feedback and involvement of *all* student athletes, so please don't hesitate to give us your ideas. For the next issue,

we are asking for your help. If you have any funny sports stories or bloopers regarding your team or teammates, we want to know. I hope you enjoy this first issue.

-Rachel Ahrenhold, Editor,
Women's Swimming

An Inspirational Addition to the Women's Gymnastics Team

By Meredith Hoover and
Jennifer Orlando -
Women's Gymnastics

Walking onto the floor of the World Championships in Indianapolis in 1991, Aladine Naamou, a Syrian gymnast, experienced "a feeling beyond any expression" he could say. As his name was announced, the entire crowd burst into a chant of his name. The foreigner could not believe his eyes and ears. The American audience did not even welcome the reigning World Champion, United States citizen Scott Keswick, with as much enthusiasm. An overwhelming sense of pride and joy filled his heart, and he began to cry. This type of welcome is befitting for a man like Aladine, and his tears of joy mark a triumph in all that he has overcome.

The Penn State Women's Gymnastics team welcomes Naamou as the new assistant coach. "This is the best thing that has ever happened to me besides maybe the opportunity to become a United States citizen," Naamou stated about his position. Born and raised in Syria until the age of 23, he

lived with his parents and eleven siblings. He began gymnastics at an early age and was the Syrian Junior National Champion at the age of seven. He then moved on to be the Senior National Champion from 1983 until 1992. The highlight of his career came in 1987 when he became the first Syrian ever to win a gold medal at the Mediterranean Games on the floor exercise. This is an incredible feat for any gymnast but especially for one who had recently overcome paralysis.

At the age of 16, while helping a friend in a water pump factory, a 6-foot tall water pump struck Naamou. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw that the pump was not secure and was about to fall on his friend. He courageously pushed his friend out of danger and took the blow himself. After spending two years in bed, he never lost hope and used that time to educate himself on every subject possible. Although doctors believed he would never walk again, Naamou says "I believe I was not really completely paralyzed and I had the choice to walk again." He began to have feeling in his legs again and taught himself not only to walk, but amazingly, to do gymnastics again.

As soon as he began walking again, the Syrian army drafted him for the secret service. He served for three and a half years, defending the president and teaching paratroopers to gain air awareness when jumping from a plane. He also continued his own gymnastics training during this time and finally left the army to compete in the Mediterranean Games.

Since Naamou's own gymnastics career has ended, he has devoted his energy into coaching the sport. He moved to the United States in 1988 and has coached in various locations in the country, including Woodward Gymnastics Camp. Most recently, he left the gym he owned in Florida to join our Penn State Gymnastics family. "My first goal is to help us be the best at NCAA's and make everyone feel good about themselves." His future personal goals include getting his Master's degree in Political Science and to become an ambassador for the United States.

The Women's Gymnastics team feels fortunate to have such an inspiring and experienced individual as our new coach.

Welcome to Our White House

Richard Kornacki – Men's Swimming

With the football team struggling to find its niche and the upcoming big game against undefeated Big Ten rival Purdue, the students offered some much needed support. Throughout the week before the game, students experienced ads calling for the entire student section to participate in a "white-out." The mission: try to get everybody in the student section to wear white t-shirts to increase fan support at the football game.

Motivation from the Student Book Store, the *Collegian*, and others helped pass the word along to all 40,000 students in just under a week. Needless to say, the white out was a complete success in almost every intended aspect. The entire student section appeared to be entirely made of white clothes excluding the large blue "S" spelled out by those students who were given blue jerseys to create the effect.

Student spirit was at an all time high for the football game. The crowd roared to a noise comparable to any 100,000 plus football stadium in the nation. Unfortunately, the spirit felt its first loss of the night when the Lions faced a heartbreaking defeat of 20-13 by the Boilermakers. While the Lions may not have come out with a victory, the students were pleased with the heart and determination the team showed.

Because of the success seen during the Purdue game, the University decided to host another "white out" during Homecoming Weekend's match up against Iowa. Advertisements during the homecoming parade and other events helped to spread the word quickly.

Success struck again on Saturday when the student section showed up in all white. Not only did the students participate, but also every alumni player and blue band member joined in by wearing white shirts.

With the success of these "white-outs", you must ask if this should become a permanent tradition at home football games.

On the Road With...Field Hockey

By Margy Keefe –
Women's Swimming

Not only does the field hockey team stay busy with practices, it also does a fair amount of traveling. Senior Michele Rigby says the team has traveled about ten times this season. The team has missed seven days of school this semester, and the season is not over yet. While she says missing classes can be stressful, the many hours spent on the bus are a good opportunity for team bonding. Tradition has it that the freshmen sit in the back of the bus, and the seniors sit in the front. The entire team travels, including any players who may be red shirting for the year. Many players will study or sleep during the trips, but movies are always playing. Michele said the longest drive the team has is about eight hours to play Big Ten rival Michigan State. The girls will only fly when Northwestern appears on the schedule. When Michele was asked to share a funny travel story, she did not hesitate in sharing a story from two years ago. She said the team is very close, so they always joke around. A student athletic trainer was walking to the front of the bus after using the restroom in the rear. One of the girls

thought it was a player on the team and was egged-on by teammates to grab his butt. Michele said it was not just a little pinch but a big grab. Both the athletic trainer and field hockey player were very embarrassed. It seems the team does not mind all the traveling despite missing classes. The time spent together has made the team like a family, resulting in one fabulous field hockey team.

Interview with Nutritionist Dr. Kristine Clark

By Megan Palera –
Women's Swimming

Always having a strong interest in dieting and weight loss since a child, Dr. Kristine Clark has spent the past 25 years sharing her knowledge about nutrition with others.

Since graduating with a Ph.D. in Nutrition Science from the Pennsylvania State University, Dr. Clark has spent the past 15 years as the Director of Sports Nutrition at Penn State University. She is responsible for counseling all varsity athletes daily and researching new aspects of nutrition. Because nutrition is such a young science, Dr. Clark says she has to constantly educate herself on new methods of weight loss or gain and new supplemental discoveries.

Besides working with student-athletes at Penn State, Dr. Clark is also a nutritionist for the United States Soccer Federation as well as the United States Olympic Team Nutritionist. Yet her most challenging job - working with student-athletes at Penn State University - is also her most rewarding.

"Student-athletes are impressionable," said Dr. Clark. "They are young enough to create new habits and behaviors."

Dr. Clark's main goal as a sports nutritionist is to create a positive outcome. Because young people are interested in learning and trying to be the best, they realize that nutrition is an important part of sports.

Her most rewarding experience comes from athletes who follow her advice and tell her they feel better about themselves.

Body image is an important aspect known to plague athletes. Among the total number of female athletes that are counseled by Dr. Clark, 80% of them use her knowledge to discuss different ways of improving their appearance. The exact opposite stands for males; about 80% of male athletes ask Dr. Clark for ways to improve overall athletic performance.

While all varsity athletes are welcome to speak to Dr. Clark about any concerns they have about nutrition, she says the goal is to eat a balanced but enjoyable meal.

"I am very appreciative that Penn State has allowed me to volunteer my services," said Dr. Clark.

Where Are They Now?

By Claire Hawley –
Women's Swimming

Former PSU star athlete Kelly Mazzante--Where is she now??

Closer than you might think. The Charlotte Sting guard is actually training with the Penn State women's basketball team while she finishes up her last semester of classes at University Park. Mazzante will graduate in December and then possibly play in Europe before heading back to Charlotte, NC, for the WNBA season in April.

Mazzante made her professional debut earlier this year after signing a three-year contract with the Sting. She says professional basketball differs from college level because, "It's more intense---you are fighting for your spot to play. That's your job." Kelly admits it was weird at first to be playing against 36-year-olds and also against some of her former teammates, like Jess Brungo of the Connecticut Sun. But she is adapting and thoroughly enjoys playing for the Sting. "I love to play," she declares of the sport she's been involved with since age

seven. "And now I get paid to do it," she adds with a smile.

The Penn State star held a Kelly Mazzante Shooting Camp last weekend and has been doing some public speaking. Although undecided on how long she would like to play, she knows she wants to make an impact on her team. After her athletic career is over, Kelly may do something with her Public Relations degree or possibly coach. She advises current PSU student-athletes, "Make the most of your four years here. It goes so quickly."

Where Are They Now?

By Chad Buczek – Men's Gymnastics

Kai Wen (Kevin) Tan the 2003-04 Penn State Male Athlete of the Year

Kevin Tan was voted Penn State's Male Athlete of the Year after becoming a two-time NCAA Rings Champion. Kevin was ranked the best rings competitor in the country last year in Las Vegas, after beating out three-time Olympian, Blaine Wilson. "Kevin is not only one of the best rings guys in our country but in the world," says Penn State Men's Gymnastics head coach, Randy Jepson.

Kevin is a true all-around gymnast. Most gymnasts, when they enter college, pick a couple of events to focus on and specialize in. Not Kevin. He chose the road less traveled. With nagging injuries, Kevin pressed on and earned his team and himself many accolades. Kevin is a three-time Big Ten First Team All-Conference team member and a six-time NCAA All-American. With all his success in collegiate gymnastics, he was chosen to represent not only Penn State but also the United States at the 2003 World University Games in Daegu, Korea.

But Kevin doesn't stop there. He has been an outstanding student at the University too. Kevin is a Finance major with a minor in Economics. Kevin has earned the Big Ten Conference Scholar Award, Outstanding Student Honor Society, and Dean's List. And to top it all off, Kevin is a well-rounded human being. He participates in the Penn State Lifelink program, which is an organization to aid

high school students with disabilities in achieving a college social life.

So I decided to follow up with Kevin:

When did you first find out that you were the 2003-04 Penn State's Men's Athlete of the Year, and what was your reaction?

I first found out that I was the Penn State Athlete of the Year by email. People were congratulating me, and my initial reaction was is this for real because the email I got was so informal, and it wasn't announced anywhere. Then later, I asked Randy (Penn State Men's Gymnastics Head Coach) if it was legit, and he confirmed. Then I was very impressed and honored for being considered the athlete of the year because you're talking about two athletes out of the whole school, and to be up there with Kelly Mazzante, who you know is going to aspire to greater things especially now that she plays in the WNBA, was extremely exciting.

What were some of your highlights as you look back at your NCAA career? What was your most memorable moment of them all? How did it feel finishing off your collegiate career with an NCAA title especially since your team wasn't even expected to win?

When I look back at my NCAA career, a lot of great things happened to me. When I was a freshman, I became an All-American on rings, which was great because not many freshmen are All-Americans. The year after that, I was an All-American on parallel bars and was runner up on rings, which was a little disappointing, but at the same time, I was just happy to be an All-American, and the next year I would come back stronger. I won it the next two times, which was great. I also was a part of the first Big Ten Championship team for Penn State and then ended with the most memorable moment, winning the NCAA Championship my last year. To see it finally come together and all the hard work pay off was a relief. And now I can say I went out on the highest

note possible. I did all I could possibly do!

So what's the next step for you?

Well, I am still going to school right now, and I plan on graduating this May with a degree in Finance. I plan on staying around so I can train for a World Championship or even an Olympic Games. But as for right now, I'm just concentrating on school and gymnastics. As for after school, I'll see how the finances work, and if I need to get a job in my field, whether it be banking or working at in an accounting firm in the area, I will. However, it's very limiting because I need to stay close to State College so I can train. As soon as I graduate, I'm going to focus on my gymnastics career and not worry about grad school because it will take a lot out of me. I feel that I have a good chance of making the team down the line, and if that means making some sacrifices with school and a career, I'm going to do that so I don't look back and regret not having the heart to put into it.

Are you looking towards a possible shot at 2008?

As far as that, four years is a long time, but it goes fast. If I'm able to stay focused and healthy, I believe I have a good chance. I want to make sure I do everything I can so I have the best chance to make that team and give it my all.

A Day in the Life of the Nittany Lion

By Matt Gaines - Cheerleading

It's 7:00 A.M. on the Saturday of a big a game. Where are you? If you're like most college students, you're probably sleeping or getting up to tailgate, but that is, of course, if you're like most typical students. Well if you're the Nittany Lion, chances are you've been up till 2:00 A.M. the previous night working on props for your skit that day and are already getting up for what could be an eight to thirteen hour day of keeping spirits up and smiles on the faces of those around you. By 8:00 A.M., you're at President Spanier's house doing a mini-pep rally for important alumni and faculty heads. You're then rushed along to hop in the back of a truck and drive around campus in the routine parade to the Bryce Jordan Center waiving to all the people making their way up to Beaver Stadium. 10:00 A.M. rolls around, and you're out on the floor of the BJC doing your second set of one-arm push-ups for the day and jumping around to rock 'n roll music. Within minutes, you've already been whisked away again and are briskly walking over to Beaver Stadium stopping every few feet to take a picture or slap hands with an eager fan. It's a little after 11:00 A.M. You're finally able to put your bag down, work things out

with the opposing mascot, and get a quick sip of water before you make your way up to the Mt. Nittany Club for yet another private performance and more one-arm push-ups. 12:00 P.M. hits. You're adrenaline is pumping through your body while waving the Penn State flag in front of 110,000 roaring fans. By third quarter, you're up in the Mt. Nittany Club again doing another private performance and taking pictures with diehard alumni. When the game finally ends, you'll have led "We Are...Penn State" several times, have done more than your fair share of one-arm push-ups, have surfed over the crowd, and had your name chanted by several thousand students. Before you realize it, it's 4:00 P.M., and you're still in the stadium, even though most fans have left, signing autographs and taking pictures. Finally, nine and half hours later, you can call it a day, that is unless there's a Women's Volleyball game...



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