I trained on all the fans in Camp Randall Stadium Saturday, but the skies totally opened up on the Nittany Lion football team, which was swamped, 45-7, by the Wisconsin Badgers on their way to the first Big Ten Championship game in Indianapolis next Saturday.

The Penn State offense, which had mustered just enough points to win all but two games this fall and share the Leaders Division title with Wisconsin, could produce only one scoring strike. And the nation’s No. 3 scoring defense wilted, while spending twice as much time on the field as their hosts.

But the Lions’ third 9-3 regular season record since joining the Big Ten is still two wins better than most of the pundits predicted back in August.

It was the first regular season finale in which Penn State played against anyone other than Michigan State since joining the conference in 1993. And the Lions never lost to Michigan State by as wide a margin in the previous 18 years.

Saturday’s contest was the exact opposite of the last time Penn State played in Madison three years ago, when the Lions devoured the Badgers, 48-7, behind the passing and leadership of quarterback Daryll Clark.

This time the Lions encouraged their loyal fans who braved the travel, the weather and the controversy surrounding Penn State over the Sandusky child sex abuse scandal by marching 80 yards on their first possession and taking a 7-0 lead early in the first quarter.

On the Lions’ eighth play of the game, quarterback Matt McGloin sailed a 44-yard touchdown pass to sophomore wide receiver Curtis Drake, who had blown past a busted coverage by Badger safety and co-captain Aaron Henry and waited on the two-yard line for McGloin’s pass to catch up to him, before turning and stepping into the end zone.

Little did anyone suspect that the Badgers would come charging back with 45 unanswered points, while State’s only other offensive spark—a 90-yard run by Stephon Green in the third quarter—would be called back because of a blocking penalty. Six other penalties against Penn State also killed Lion drives or helped sustain those by the home team.

Wisconsin controlled the ball for twice as much time as Penn State and gradually wore down the Lion defense, scoring 28 points in the first half against a unit that had allowed only one team to score more than 24 in an entire game. (And that was Alabama, the No. 2-ranked team in the country, which reached 27.)

A punt at the PS-44 set up a short drive leading to Welch’s 44-yard field goal early in the final frame.

Wisconsin’s two legitimate Heisman Trophy candidates—tailback Montee Ball and quarterback Russell Wilson—were instrumental to the Badgers’ success in their Senior Day triumph.

Ball tallied four touchdowns and Wilson passed for the other two, as the home team outgained the visitors by 217 yards in total offense, while converting nine of 16 third down attempts compared to the Lions’ four of 13.

Ball rushed for 156 yards on 25 carries and raised his TD total to 34—second most in a season in NCAA history, behind Barry Sanders’ 39 for Oklahoma State in 1988.

Ball has scored at least two touchdowns in every game this fall to break Sanders’ record of 11-straight multiple-TD games. His 29 six-pointers in Big Ten contests broke the record set by Indiana’s Anthony Thompson in 1988 and tied by Penn State’s Ki-Jana Carter in 1994.

Wilson has now thrown a touchdown pass in 36 consecutive games to tie the NCAA record held by Texas Tech’s Graham Harrell. Obliterating Wisconsin’s old record of 21 TD passes thrown by John Stocco in 2005, Wilson has now extended his new record to 28.

Wisconsin has had an outstanding rushing attack for several years, but when Coach Bret Bielema snatched Wilson away from North Carolina State, where he had starred for the last three years, the 5-11, 210-lb. grad

As good as the Big Ten’s top-ranked offense was, its job was made easier by the uncharacteristic four turnovers by the Lions that were promptly turned into 24 points by the Badgers.

An interception of a McGloin pass at mid-field on the first play of the Lions’ second possession set up the home team’s go-ahead touchdown on the first play of a three-touchdown second quarter.

Two minutes before halftime, Mike Zordich fumbled a short kickoff by Wisconsin’s Philip Welch at the PS-31, and Badger QB Russell Wilson quickly passed his team to its fourth TD, and a 28-7 lead just 30 seconds before intermission.

Four times before this season, Penn State came from behind to win in the second half, but that prospect quickly disappeared, when Silas Redd fumbled on the third play of the third quarter. That set up a three-play touchdown drive by Wisconsin that sealed the victory and the Badgers’ chance for a rematch with the Legends Division champion Spartans, for the Big Ten title.

In fact, if it weren’t for two highly improbable Hail Mary passes at the end of Wisconsin’s back-to-back games at Michigan State and Ohio State, the 10-2 Badgers would, in all likelihood, be playing in the BCS national championship game in January.

Saturday’s scoring, meanwhile, was completed after Drew Astorino’s fumble of a punt at the PS-44 and taking a 7-0 lead early in the first quarter.
student added two more dimensions to the Badger offense—a great passing attack and a dangerous running quarterback.

In addition to his 186 passing yards on 19 completions in 29 attempts, Wilson scrambled for 20-yard and 19-yard runs that keyed the Badgers’ second touchdown march in the second quarter.

(Under a little known NCAA rule, Wilson was able to play his final year of football eligibility at Wisconsin, because he had completed his bachelor’s degree at N.C. State and transferred, after the Wolfpack coach would not allow him to play professional baseball last summer.)

So the Badgers hung the most lopsided loss on the Lions, since Ohio State administered a 45-6 spanking in Columbus in 2000. In addition to the turnovers and penalties, the Lions missed tackles and open receivers and dropped passes. McGloin completed only nine of 17 attempts for a paltry 97 yards, 44 of which came on his one TD toss to Drake.

State’s rushing leader Silas Redd had a respectable 5.5-yard average on only 12 carries for 66 yards, but fumbled and dropped a promising screen pass.

The Lion defense, which was the third stingiest in the nation in points allowed, was so tired by the second half the lineman and
linebackers were waving arm tackles as Ball and James White ran by, and the secondary couldn’t stop Jar Abbrederis (seven catches, 93 yards, 1 TD) and Nick Toon (five catches, 42 yards, 1 TD).

“We just didn’t play very well today in all phases of the game,” said interim head coach Tom Bradley. “We can’t turn the ball over against that team. We had four of them today at crucial times in crucial situations.”

He noted that the Lions forced the Badgers into many 3rd & longs, but just couldn’t stop them from converting.

Co-captain Drew Astorino, who led his team with a career-high 12 tackles, said, “Wisconsin smacked us around the field the entire game. They just played better than we did.”

Dropping to No. 21 in the BCS rankings, No. 22 in the Coaches poll and No. 23 in the AP poll, the Lions must now wait a week to see whether any bowl will invite them or shy away because of the scandal swirling around campus.

Bradley praised his team for sticking together despite the atmosphere.

“I’m proud of the way they acted in a situation that is unprecedented in the history of college football,” he reiterated. “They didn’t have anything to do with it; they weren’t involved in any way; and I think they deserve the opportunity to play a bowl game.”

He added, “Hopefully, we’ll have one more game in us, and we don’t have to go out like this.”

For the Glory,

John Black

If Penn State is invited to a bowl game this year, the Alumni Association will sponsor the Official Bowl Tour with game tickets, excellent accommodations, charter airfare, a pre-game tailgate and more...Asked what the team would do now, Coach Tom Bradley said he would give the players a week off to rest and focus on academics and go from there, while most of the coaches will go out recruiting...Assistant coach Jay Paterno said, “We have a bunch of kids committed that we have to try to hold on to, whether we’re here or someone else is here. The values we have are still going to be the same.”...Penn State has won at least nine games for the 14th time in 19 years in the Big Ten...The Lions, who rank third in the country with 27 bowl wins are eligible to participate in their 44th bowl...This was State’s first Big Ten game this fall that was not decided by 10 points or less and the first road loss for the Lions...Montee Ball’s four touchdowns were the most by any opposing player this year, and Jar Abbrederis’ seven receptions were the most allowed by State’s secondary...The Lions allowed only 41 first quarter points this fall – an average of 3.4 per game...Sophomore Silas Redd moved into 12th place on State’s season rushing chart with 1,188 yards...Penn State still remains No. 8 in scoring defense (15.7 points per game); 11th in total defense (300.9 yards) and 5th in pass defense (162.2 yards)...Wisconsin had averaged 52 points against its first six opponents at home this year, while compiling an average margin of victory of 41 points...The Badgers have won 16 consecutive games in Camp Randall Stadium – the third longest streak in school history and the second longest current streak in the country behind LSU’s 17...Wisconsin has reached double-digit wins in three straight seasons for the first time in school history...The Badgers lead the nation in red-zone touchdown percentage at 86.2...Their largest margin of victory over the Lions previously was 21 in a 24-3 win in 1998 and their previous high for points scored was 31 in 2002, when Penn State won the game, 34-31. State’s highest point total against the Badgers was 48 and margin of victory 41 points in 2008.
OTHER SPORTS

Penn State’s women’s basketball team, ranked No. 16, won the Nugget Classic in Reno, NV by defeating Iowa State, 66-59, Friday, then trouncing Nevada, 103-65, in the championship contest Sunday to raise its record to 5-1.

Point guard Alex Bentley was selected as the Most Valuable Player in the tournament, and Maggie Lucas was named to the All-Tournament team.

Lucas led the Lions with 18 points against Iowa State and a season-best 26 against Nevada. She also grabbed seven rebounds, and had a career-best five assists and a blocked shot. Bentley had 13 points against the Cyclones and hit 11 of 15 shots for 23 points, six assists and a career-high five steals against the Wolfpack. Zhaque Gray tallied 21 points on 9-of-15 shooting Sunday, after hitting 5-of-7 for 14 points Friday.

The men’s basketball team (5-2) whipped Youngstown State, 82-71, Wednesday, then fell at St. Joe’s, 65-47, Saturday. Tim Frazier posted his third double-double of the young season with 26 points and a career-best 11 assists against YSU, then got a career-high 11 rebounds against St. Joe’s. Freshman Trey Lewis tallied 12 points Wednesday and Cam Woodyard got 10. On Saturday Billy Oliver had a career-high 12 points on a career-best four treys, while freshman Ross Travis tied his career-high with 10 points, including three dunks.

Coach Russ Rose’s women’s volleyball squad closed its regular season with 3-1 wins at Ohio State Wednesday and Michigan State Saturday to finish second in the Big Ten with a 16-4 record (25-7 overall).


The four-time defending national champions have been selected to participate in their 31st NCAA tournament and have garnered a No. 8 seed to host first and second round matches on Friday and Saturday (Dec. 2-3). Penn State and Stanford are the only teams to be selected for every NCAA tournament in history. The Lions will meet Big South champ Liberty (20-12) in Rec Hall Friday at 7:30, while Delaware and American will meet in the other first round contest at 5 p.m. The winners will meet Saturday at 7:30. Eight Big Ten teams were selected among the 64 in the tournament.

The men’s and women’s ice hockey teams announced their first signings of recruits to play in Penn State’s first varsity season of 2012-13.

Men’s coach Guy Gadowsky signed Casey Bailey (Anchorage, AK), Kenny Brooks (Las Vegas, NV), David Glen (Ft. Saskatchewan, Alta.), Reed Linaker (Edmonton, Alta.), Curtis Loik (No. Vancouver, BC), Jonathan Milley (Ottawa, Ont.), Luke Juha (Missionsauga, Ont.), Connor Varley (Lansdale, PA), Mark Yanis (Grosse Pointe Woods, MI) and Mathew Skoff (McKees Rocks, PA).

Women’s coach Josh Brandwene signed Jeannette Bateman (Greeley, CO), Micyala Catanzariti (Rancho Santa Margarita, CA), Hannah Hoenshell (Plano, TX), Jill Holdcroft (PA Furnace, PA), Emily Laurenzi (Townsend, DE), Birdie Shaw (Troy, MI), Shannon Yoxheimer (Jackson, MI), Katie Zinn (Coquitlam, BC), Paige Jahnke (Oakdale, MN), Taylor McGee (Pearl River, NY), Jordin Pardoski (Rochester Hills, MI), Sarah Wilkie (Ashby, MA) and Celine Whitley (Garden Grove CA).

For more information and details on all Nittany Lion varsity sports go to www.GoPSUsports.com.

STATE TOPS GSR RATES

Penn State tied with Stanford for the top graduation rate of all football teams ranked in the Top 25.

State and Stanford graduated 87 per cent of all their players who entered college between the 2001-02 and 2004-05 academic years. That compares to a 67 per cent rate for all NCAA Division I schools.

The Lady Lion basketball team had a perfect 100 per cent graduation rate, compared to 84 per cent nationwide, while the men’s team graduated 90 per cent of its players compared to a 66 per cent Division I average.

Men’s gymnastics, field hockey, men’s and women’s tennis and women’s golf also graduated all of their performers, while eight other Penn State teams had a rate of 90 per cent or above.
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Penn State 41
Alabama 27
Penn State 14
Penn State 34
Penn State 16
Penn State 13
Penn State 23
Penn State 34
Penn State 10
Nebraska 17
Penn State 20
Wisconsin 48
Indiana State 7
Penn State 11
Temple 10
Eastern Michigan 6
Indiana 10
Iowa 3
Purdue 18
Northwestern 24
Illinois 7
Penn State 14
Ohio State 14
Penn State 7

Junior John Urschel, second team offensive guard, has a perfect 4.0 GPA and was selected to the CoSIDA Academic All-District team.

The Nittany Lions have had 11 Academic All-Americans in the past three years. Nine Nittany Lions on this fall’s team had already graduated by the end of summer term. They are: Drew Astorino, Quinn Barham, Eric Latimore, Chima Okoli, Nate Stupar, Joe Suhey, Nick Sukey, Andrew Szczerba and Johnnie Troutman.

CLUB SUPPORTS SMITH

The Football Letterman’s Club has been supporting former Lion and NFL fullback Steve Smith in his on-going battle with ALS (Lou Gehrig’s disease). A member of State’s 1986 National Championship team, Smith has been battling the disease for nine years and is currently bed-ridden, unable to move and able to communicate only through his computer, controlled by his eye movements. Smith has a wife and two children, ages 21 and 20.

Smith’s family financial resources have been drained to keep up with his medical expenses.

Interested individuals may make donations for Steve’s medical expenses by going online to www.stevemithfund.org or by calling 1-800-242-0335.

LETTERS TO JOE BOOK

A book titled “Captains’ Letters to Joe” is on sale to raise funds for the Football Letterman’s Club Scholarships. Captains of the teams Joe Paterno coached since 1966 wrote letters to tell Joe how he impacted their lives.

Some of the 119 football alumni who wrote told stories, others revealed feelings long kept inside. The letters had been put into a book and presented to Paterno at the Senior Banquet in 2010.

Players who wrote comprise a litany of Nittany Lion legends, college and professional Hall of Famers, All-Americans, All-Big Ten performers and Academic All-Americans from John Runnels and Mike Irwin in 1966 to Brett Brackett and Ollie Ogbu in 2010.

Fans can find out more about “Captains’ Letters to Joe” or purchase copies at www.lettersjoe.org. The book may also be purchased at State College retailers.

OFFICIAL PENN STATE BOWL TOUR

Wherever the Nittany Lions are going to play, the Penn State Alumni Association will be going, too, with the Official Penn State Bowl Tour. Don’t miss out on all the blue-and-white fun of traveling with the Official Penn State Bowl Tour, which includes game tickets, first-class accommodations, charter air, a pre-game tailgate, and much more. Check the Alumni Association website for more details in the upcoming week.

RAISING MONEY FOR SEXUAL ABUSE

A group of Penn State alumni began a grassroots effort to raise $500,000 for RAINN: Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, the country’s largest anti-sexual violence organization. Penn Staters have donated nearly $485,000 so far. Help them reach the $500,000 goal by donating at proudtobecapenstater.com.

CITY LIGHTS EVENTS IN EARLY 2012

City Lights, the Alumni Association’s popular series of programs featuring the best and brightest of Penn State faculty and alumni experts, will kick off in Philadelphia on Feb. 23 with “Portrait of an Artist: Exploring the Works of Henry O. Tanner” by Joyce Robinson, curator and affiliate associate professor of art history. City Lights events will also be held in New York City; Washington, D.C.; Altoona, Pa.; Erie, Pa. Check the Alumni Association’s website at www.alumni.psu.edu soon for more information on each presenter and topic.

SAVE THE DATE: PRESIDENT’S CONCERT 2012

The sixth annual President’s Concert, featuring the Penn State Glee Club, Opera Theatre and Philharmonic Orchestra, is set for Tuesday, Feb. 28, at Heinz Hall in Pittsburgh. Admission to the pre-performance alumni and audience members is $25, $20 for members of the Penn State Alumni Association and $15 for students. A benefit for the Nittany Lion Foundation, the concert will feature the best in collegiate music and will include the Penn State Alumni Chorus, Opera Theatre, and the Glee Club. Tickets may be ordered by calling 814-865-7541 or online at www.psu.edu/presconcert2012. For more information about the Grammy award-winning Glee Club, visit their website, www.gleeclub.psu.edu, or call 814-865-7541.

RESERVE PLACE IN HISTORY WITH NEW ALUMNI COURTYARD

Soon construction will begin on the beautiful brick and stone plaza adjacent to theHintz Family Alumni Center, called Alumni Courtyard. Just like the connecting Alumni Walk, the Alumni Courtyard will be inscribed with approximately 1,900 names of dedicated Alumni Association members and will introduce generations of students to the distinguished Penn State family that awaits them upon graduation. Visit Alumni Courtyard website [link to: http://alumnium2.psu.edu/alumnicourtyard/default.html] for more information.

STATISTICS

|          | PSU | WI
|----------|-----|-----
| Total Plays – Yards | 52-233 | 78-450
| Rushes - Net Yards | 27-114 | 49-264
| Passing Yards | 119 | 186
| Passes (Att-Cmp-Int) | 25-11-1 | 29-19-0
| Avg. Gain Per Play | 4.5 | 5.8
| First downs | 12 | 27
| Yards Lost Rushing | 0 | 15
| Intcptr Returns – Yards | 0-0 | 1-0
| Kickoffs – Average | 2-63.5 | 8-57.1
| Kickoff Returns – Avg. | 6-21.3 | 2-24
| Punt Returns – Avg. | 4-8.5 | 2-12
| Punts - Average | 5-46.2 | 5-40.6
| Fumbles - Lost | 4-3 | 1-1
| Penalties - Yards | 7-58 | 4-35
| Sacks by - Yards | 2-12 | 0-0
| 3rd On Conversions | 4 of 13 | 9 of 16
| 4th On Conversions | 0 of 0 | 0 of 0
| Red Zone Scores – Chances | 0 of 1 | 6 of 6
| Time of Possession | 21:43 | 38:17

Attempts/Yards (Longest)
Rushing: Reid 12/66 (12); Dukes 6/25 (12); Belton 3/12 (9); Green 3/4; Drake 1/4; McGloin 1/3; Bolden 1/0.
Passing No. Com. Int. Yds. TD Lg
McGloin 17 9 1 97 1 44 0
Bolden 7 2 0 13 0 0 0
Receiving: Moye 3/22 (13); Drake 2/44 (43); Smith 2/20 (13); Brown 1/14; Beachem, Reid 1/8; Green 1/2.
All Purpose Yards: Powell 87; Reid 75; Brown 48; Drake 47.
Kickoff Returns: Powell 3/87 (34); Amos 1/29; Irvin, Zordich 1/6.
Kickoffs: Fera 2/63.5.
Punt Returns: Brown 3/34 (33); Astorino 1/0.
Punts: Fera 5/46.2.
Fumbles Forced: Carson 1.
Fumbles Recovered: Willis 1/6.
Passes Broken Up: Lynn 1.
Sacks: Crawford 1/9; Still 0.5/2; Stanley 0.5/1.
Tackles for Loss: Crawford 1/9; Hull 1/2; Powell 1/1; Still 0.5/2; Stanley 0.5/1.
Tackles: Astorino 12; Sukey, Carson 8; Hodges 7; Willis; Stupar; Powell, Lynn 5; Fort 3.