

# PENN ST NITTANY LIONS



DB GRANT HALEY

## POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2016

**QUARTERBACKS** - In '13 Christian Hackenberg (PS#2) became just the 2nd true frosh to start an opener here s/1911! He set a schl record for passing yds by a frosh (2955, 59%, 20-10). In '14 Hackenberg lost HC Bill O'Brien, had a poor O-line (44 sks), and threw for 2,977 (56%, 12-15). True frosh Trace McSorley (Franklin recruit) was his bkp but RS. LY they added 6'4" Tommy Stevens (PS#42, IFS). Hackenberg was the #1 rated QB for the draft heading into '15 but with a poor O-line again, he threw for just 2,525 (53.5%, 16-6, -80 rush). Their OC the last 2 years had an offense that worked best with a mobile QB (not a good fit). Hackenberg (all-time leading passer here) left early for the NFL (took 103 sks in 3 yrs) so the mobile McSorley (looked good in bowl w/2 4Q TD passes) and Stevens will battle true frosh Jake Zembiac (PS#25, IFS). While they go from a 3-year starter (#2DC NYJ) to a group with 40 career pass att, the numbers could improve as the new Oregon type system now fits the QB's strengths.

**RUNNING BACKS** - Penn St had an 8 year streak of 1,000 yard backs narrowly end in '13 (989, 4.7). In Franklin's first year the top 3 were back (comb 2,150 yds '13). Akeel Lynch (PS#40, 358, 6.0 '13) led in '14 with 678 (4.6). Two of the top 3 were gone LY but they added in a trio of rFr in Johnathan Thomas (PS#58), Nick Scott (PS#61) and Mark Allen (PS#83) along with PS#22 & #24 true frosh. Lynch had 244 yds the first 3 gms but got injured vs SDSt and had just 5 more att's. True frosh Saquon Barkley (PS#24) had 115 vs Buff and 195 vs Rut but he was inj'd vs SDSt and missed 2. When he ret'd he had 194 vs Ohio St and broke the Penn St frosh rush record with 1,076 (5.9, 1st Tm FWAA Frosh AA). Scott had 54 vs Army and 57 vs Ind with the top 2 out. Lynch transferred to Nevada (Scott to DB) but Barkley (4.38, 490 squat 7x) is one of the Big Ten's best and they add in PS#38 RB Miles Sanders.

**RECEIVERS** - In '13 Allen Robinson set a Nittany Lion record for rec yds (1432, 14.8) and was a 1st Tm AA (#2DC). In '14 they had to replace 2 of their top 3 rec's with TE Jesse James (333, 13.3) being the leading returnee. RFr DaeSean Hamilton (PS#62) led w/899 (11.0) while Eugene Lewis (#4 '13, 234, 13.0) was #2 (751, 13.7). LY they only had to replace #3 rec James (13 st, #5DC) and added in 3 VHT frosh. Soph Chris Godwin (PS#29, 338, 13.0 tpe) became just the 3rd Lion WR in history to top 1,000 yds (1101, 16.0) while Hamilton was #2 (580, 12.9). Those 2 accounted for 60% of the teams rec yds. Saeed Blacknall (PS#22) avg 31.0 on his 8 grabs (deep threat). This year they lose TE Kyle Carter (3 st, 135, 9.6) and WR Geno Lewis (3 st, 196, 11.5) but have their best unit in Franklin's 3 years.

**OFFENSIVE LINE** - In '14 PSU had just 1 ret st'r and the inexp'd O-line struggled all ssn in a brand-new system. PSU's

102 ypg rush (2.9) was a modern era low (44 sks most ever). LY they lost a #2DC but ret'd 4 st'rs, added 2 VHT's for spring (incl a JUCO), and the car sts climbed to 51. They allowed 10 sks to Temple but just 29 after that and did improve to 134 ypg rush (4.1). TY they add a new OL coach in Mike Limegrover from Minnesota (OC/OL cch). They lose C Angelo Mangiro (12/25) and bkp Kevin Reiher. The units career starts climb to 91 and with more of a move to the spread offense, I look for big improvement in the rush/sack numbers.

**DEFENSIVE LINE** - Penn St is known for its solid defensive front 7 and rush D. In '14 they had to replace 2 st'rs incl a 1st Tm B10 DT (Tm MVP, #4DC). Anthony Zettel (2 st DE) moved inside to DT and led with 8 sks and 9 tfl (1st Tm B10). He formed an excellent duo with NT Austin Johnson (327 lb, athletic) and they improved (100, 2.9, 31 sk). LY they lost both DE's (9 sk, 87 tkl). Former walk-on Carl Nassib had bulked up to 6'7" 276 and took home 3 national awards leading the FBS with 15.5 sks and 6 FF's (1st Penn St player to lead nation in a category s/Larry Johnson, #1 rusher '02). PSU surprisingly all'd 151 ypg (3.8) but their 46 sks were 3rd most in the FBS. This year they lose Nassib (13 st, 1st Tm AA, #3DC CLE), their great DT duo of Johnson (13 st, 78 tkl, 15 tfl, #2DC TEN) and Zettel (13 st, 47 tkl, 11 tfl, 2nd Tm B10, #6DC DET) as well as bkp DT Tarow Barney (1 st, 9 tkl). While they go from 2 ret st'rs to 1, this unit goes from one of the best in FBS to an inexp'd group.

**LINEBACKERS** - "Linebacker U" has had 9 LB's drafted in the last 9 yrs. In '14 Mike Hull earned B10 LB POY and helped the D improve (26.2 ppg to 18.6) as he almost doubled the tkl's of the #2 man (140 to 75). LY they lost 3rd Tm AA Hull but ret'd their #2 (PS#56) and #6 (PS#82) tkl'rs. Nyem Wartman-White (#2 tkl'r '14) took over at MLB and looked like their top LB, but was OFY in the opener. Hard-hitting soph Jason Cabinda (245 lbs) slid to MLB (#1 tkl'r). SLB Brandon Bell (#5 tkl'r) had 5.5 sks & 7 tfl while rFr Troy Reeder (PS#42) started the last 11 (#4 tkl'r). This year Reeder transfers to Delaware but everyone else returns.

**DEFENSIVE BACKS** - In '14, I called for their best finish in my PDR s/'11 (#21) and they exceeded that at #4 (53%, 10-16). LY they lost 1 starter. Six of the top 8 ret'd from the end of '14 (4 were true). It was surprising that they slipped to #56 (57.4%, 14-10). This year they lose CB Trevor Williams (13 st, 33 tkl, 4 pbu) and S Jordan Lucas (9 st til inj, #6 tkl'r, #6DC MIA). They return 6 of the top 8 and should make a large climb after '15's unexpectedly low finish.

**SPECIAL TEAMS** - Penn St was just #121 in my ST rankings in '13. Franklin's first group finished #108. They lost a solid K (24-29 FG) and replaced him with Joey "Big Toe" Julius (10-12 FG's, long 40). After 2 missed xp's vs Ind and again vs Illinois, Tyler Davis got some action (8-8 FG's, long 42). Chris Gulla (37.7) and Daniel Pasquariello (39.9) both struggled early with Franklin talking about open tryouts for a Pr after Ohio St. The team's net was 35.7. The return game was avg (PR Thompson 7.7, 2 fmbil lost) but they managed to move up to #58. TY everyone is back including Academic AA LS Tyler Yazujian (400 bench) so I look for a continued climb.

**COACHES** - James Franklin begins his 3rd ssn as HC in Happy Valley, looking to continue his 'Dominate the State' mantra for Nittany Lions football. A pair of 7-6 ssns ('14-15) show the effects of the program having 4 diff HC over a 29 gm span ('11-'14). This after JoePa held the job for 46 ssns. Franklin (Penn native) landed his dream job at Penn St after turning around Vanderbilt (3 bowls, 3 yrs, only 4 all-time prior) and he benefits from the sanctions being lifted early. Franklin was the OC/HC-in-waiting at Maryland ('08-'10) and the OC at K-St ('06-'07). Joe Moorehead is the new OC (Fordham HC '12-'15) and was an OC at UConn & Akron prior. DC Bob Shoop left for Auburn so Brent Pry (LB cch

here '14-15, Vandy co-DC '11-'13, GSthrn, ULM DC prior) and Tim Banks (Illinois Co-DC '12-15, Cincy co-DC '10-11, CMich DC '07-'09) are the new co-DC's. 3rd year ST coach Charles Huff was also at Maryland in '11 (asst ST), the NFL in '12 (BUF, RB) and WM in '13 (RB).

**THIS DECADE 45-31 (59.2%) #47** - Bill O'Brien did a fantastic job in his 2 years at Penn St. In '12, he incredibly guided the Nittany Lions to an 8-4 mark, despite crushing NCAA sanctions, just 6 ret st'rs, very little depth and a walk-on QB who threw for 1,571 (54%, 8-5) in '11. In his 2nd season with just 65 schlp players they went 7-5, despite no chance of getting to a bowl. In '14 O'Brien left for the NFL (Houston 2-14 to 9-7). Franklin did a tremendous job at Vandy and inherited 12 ret st'rs incl QB Hackenberg and some reduced sanctions. Things got even better as PSU was made eligible for a bowl (only 64 schlp ply'rs in '14). The Franklin era got off to a solid start (won 1st 4). In the Pinstripe Bowl vs BC, Franklin said he was down to 41 schlp ply'rs but PSU still prevailed 31-30 in OT to finish 7-5. LY they opened 7-2 but finished 7-6 and are 45-31 for the decade.

**2015 ANALYSIS 7-6** - LY they had 15 ret st'rs incl Hackenberg and while they were just 2-6 in the B10 in '14, they were only -7.5 ypg in conf play (7th best) and now had DEPTH (83 schlp players). Penn St dominated the 1Q vs Temple (led 10-0) but were overrun with 10 sks and lost by 17. They then won 5 in a row beating bowl bound SDSt and Indiana (Indy was w/o their QB & top RB). They trailed Ohio St in Columbus 21-10 in the 4Q and lost by 28. Penn St got past Maryland by 1 on the road, then shut out Illinois 39-0 to move to 7-2 and were very much alive in the B10 Title chase. NW got a 35 yd FG w/0:09 left to beat the Lions 23-21. PSU led Mich 10-7 2Q but lost by 12. They were only outgained by 18 yds vs Mich St but a myriad of big plays tuned a 20-10 HT game into a 39 point rout. Trailing by 7, their last drive came up short as they lost to Georgia in the TaxSlayer Bowl.

<b>ALSO ON ROSTER:</b>	RB Joe Dumard 6'1" 235 F	LS Kyle Vasey 6'2" 241 So
QB Michael Shuster 6'3" 200 Fr	FB Isaac Lutz 5'11" 165 Fr	LS Zach Ladonis 6'2" 224 Jr
RB Irvine Payne 5'8" 169 Jr	TE Tom Pancost 6'3" 231 Jr	LB Will Blair 6'0" 195 Fr

## PHIL'S FORECAST

**OFFENSE** - Saquon Barkley and Chris Godwin became the 3rd duo in school history to top 1,000 yards rushing (Barkley) and receiving (Godwin). In just 2 years Godwin owns the school career record for bowl rec yds with 274 (Engram 272). New OC Joe Moorehead has 9 st'rs back on offense but they do lose QB Hackenberg. Moorehead is installing a more offensive line friendly Oregon style spread offense. They will have their best offense overall under Franklin (20.6, 23.2 ppg 1st 2 yrs) as the production should improve.

**DEFENSE** - Penn St led the nation in 4th down conv rate stops at 15.4% and only allowed 38 points in the 1Q (13 yrs). They led the nation in sacks per game (3.54) and FF's (24). TY only 5 st'rs are back on D and they figure to be a notch or two weaker after allowing just 18.6 & 21.8 ppg the 1st 2 yrs under Franklin. **2016** - Penn St only loses 18 left and the depth continues to improve. They could be a dog in 3 HG's (Ohio St, Iowa, Mich St) and play Pitt & Michigan on the road. Penn St got to 7-2 in 2015 but the year ended with a thud, losing their last 4. They now have a QB that fits the system Franklin wants to run and I like the overall talent. Penn St ranks in the top 6 of the Big 10 (14 teams) in 7 of the 9 categories I list on page 82. Penn St is 54-17 at home the last 10 years and get those 3 big games I mentioned there. If they take care of business in Happy Valley they could be a surprise contender in the East. I will call for Penn St to have its first winning year in Big Ten play since 2012 and top their 7 win total of last year.

## OFFENSE

**JERSEY # IN BLUE**

## 2016 PROJECTED STARTING LINEUP

**JERSEY # IN BLUE**

## DEFENSE

**QB 9 Trace McSorley So.** 6-0 196 PS#42.7 gm, 185 (50%) LY. 4 Tommy Stevens (6'4" 219 rFr) PS#42. RS LY. Jake Zembiac (6'3" 205 Fr) PS#25. IFS. 16 Billy Fessler (5'11" 184 So). RS '14. DNP LY. Lefty.  
**RB 26 SAQUON BARKLEY SO.** 5-11 222 PS#24. L/6 st, 1076 (5.9), 1st Tm Fr AA true. Miles Sanders is PS#3.  
**8 Mark Allen (5'6" 181 So) PS#83.** 1 st, 98 (3.6) LY. Andre Robinson (5'9" 209 Fr) PS#22. Johnathan Thomas (5'11" 221 So).  
**WR 5 DAESEAN HAMILTON JR.** 6-1 206 PS#62. 13 st, 899 (11.0), 2nd Tm B10 '14. 12 st, 580 (12.9) LY.  
**3 DeAndre Thompkins (5'11" 185 So) PS#38.** 13 gm, 3 rec, 178 PR (7.7) LY. 10 Brandon Polk (6'5" 270 So) PS#58.  
**12 CHRIS GODWIN JR.** 6-1 208 PS#29. 3 st, 13 gm, 338 (13.0) '14. 11 st, 1101 (16.0), 2nd Tm B10 LY.  
**BR 14 JUAN JOHNSON (6'4" 213 Jr) PS#17.** Daelun Darien is PS#232. Tyler Shoop (5'11" 171 rFr). Gregg Garrity (5'10" 158 Sr).  
**WR 13 SAEED BLACKNALL JR.** 6-2 211 PS#22. 1 st, 95 (9.5) true. 3 st, 248 (13.1) LY. 4.3 spd, 2nd fastest.  
**55 Irvin Charles (6'4" 213 Jr) PS#52.** 39 Josh McPhearson (5'10" 196 Jr) PS#154. Gordon Bentley (6'0" 203 Jr).  
**TE 88 MIKE GESICKI JR.** 6-6 255 PS#14. 1 st, 114 (10.4) '14. 8 st, 125 (9.6) LY. 83 Nick Bowers (6'4" 255 rFr) PS#42. 11 Brent Wilkerson (6'3" 251 Sr) PS#15. 9 gm, 6 rec LY. Supt spg. Jonathan Holland (6'4" 240 rFr) PS#23.  
**C 72 BRIAN GAIA SR.** 6-3 304 PS#59. 11 gm, 5 tkl, 58 DL rFr. 12 st '14. 13 tkl LY. 55 Wendy Laurent (6'2" 294 Sr) 5 gm '13. 3 st '14. 5 st LY. 44 Tyler Yazujian (5'11" 264 Sr) 12 gm '14. 13 gm LY. Nick Cox (6'0" 230 rFr).  
**RG 70 BRENDAN MAHON JR.** 6-4 318 PS#35. 9 st '14. 11 st (7RT, 4 LG) LY. 57 Steven Gonzalez (6'4" 324 rFr) PS#53. 75 Brendan Brosnan (6'6" 296 So) PS#109. 9 gm LY. 74 Evan Galimberti (6'4" 279 Jr) PS#265.  
**LG 52 RYAN BATES RFR.** 6-4 305 PS#25. 53 Derek Dorey (6'3" 321 Sr) PS#144. 8 gm DT '13. 1 st '14. 5 st LY. 77 Chaz Wright (6'7" 339 So) PS#304. 9 gm LY. Tom Devenny (6'1" 302 Jr). Zach Simpson (6'3" 272 So).  
**RT 60 NOAH BEH SO.** 6-6 295 PS#68. 13 gm LY. 73 Paris Palmer (6'7" 302 Sr) PS#14JC. 11 st LY.  
**LY 58 CHANCE SORRELL (6'5" 295 So) PS#136.** 3 gm LY. Adam DeBoef (6'5" 273 So). Hunter Kelly (6'2" 287 Fr).  
**LT 59 ANDREW NELSON JR.** 6-6 302 PS#46. 13 st '14. 8 st LY. 76 Sterling Jenkins (6'8" 329 rFr) PS#18.  
**Connor McGovern is PS#29.** Will Fries is PS#65. Akeel Lynch is PS#112. 79 Charlie Shuman (6'8" 290 So).  
**K 95 TYLER DAVIS JR.** 5-11 186 4 st, 8-8 LG, 14-22, 11-11 PAT. 3 TB/10 KO LY. 99 Joey Julius (5'10" 259 So) PS#83. F/9 st, 10-12, L/40, 20-24 PAT, 22 TB/53 KO LY. Alex Barbir (5'9" 195 Fr) PS#13. 91 Nick Bomerhi (5'8" 173 So).

**DE 94 EVAN SCHWAN SR.** 260 So PS#221. 13 gm, 11 tkl, 5.5 tfl LY. Shareef Miller (6'5" 245 rFr) PS#88. Daniel Joseph (6'3" 255 Fr) PS#65.  
**NG 41 PARKER COTHREN JR.** 6-4 302 PS#195. 12 gm, 11 tkl, 2.5 tfl '14. 13 gm, 13 tkl LY. 54 Robert Windsor (6'4" 286 rFr) PS#276. Tyrell Chavis (6'3" 295 Jr) PS#126. Ryan McKim (6'1" 285 rFr). Antonio Shelton is PS#148.  
**DT 30 KEVIN GIVENS RFR.** 6-1 280 PS#124. 52 Curtis Cothran (6'5" 280 Jr) PS#101. 13 gm, 16 tkl, 4 tkl LY.  
**39 ANTOINE WHITE (6'2" 292 So) PS#122.** 10 gm, 12 tkl LY. Brenon Thrift (6'3" 290 So) PS#207. Ellison Jordan is PS#27.  
**RDE 90 GARRETT SICKLES JR.** 6-4 258 PS#28. 13 gm, 11 tkl, 3 tfl '14. 12 st, 36 tkl, 3 sk, 2.5 tfl LY. 97 Ryan Buchholz (6'6" 254 Fr) PS#50. Shane Simmons (6'3" 245 Fr) PS#12. 46 Colin Castagna (6'4" 244 So). Shaka Toney is PS#100.  
**WLB 40 JASON CABINDA JR.** 6-1 245 PS#114. 1 st, 17 tkl '14. 13 st, 100 tkl, 5.5 tfl LY. Cameron Brown (6'5" 210 Fr) PS#30. Jason Vranic (6'0" 225 Jr) IFS. 33 tfl in 2Y at JUCO. 34 Jan Johnson (6'2" 216 Fr). Frank Di Leo (5'9" 204 So).  
**MLB 5 NYEEM WARTMAN-WHITE SR.** 6-1 243 PS#56. 8 st, 32 tkl rFr. 12 st, 75 tkl, 3.5 tfl '14. 1 st, 2 tkl-OFFY (inj) LY.  
**33 JAKE COOPER (6'1" 226 So) PS#65.** 1 st, 14 tkl, 2.5 tfl as true. 47 Brandon Smith (6'0" 223 Jr) 3 gm, 1 tkl LY.  
**SLB 11 BRANDON BELL SR.** 6-1 231 PS#82. 1 st, 24 tkl as true. 10 st, 47 tkl, 5 tfl, 3 pd '14. 11 st, 65 tkl, 5.5 tkl, 7 tfl LY. 43 Manny Bowen (6'1" 220 So) PS#36. 13 gm, 18 tkl as true. 25 Von Walker (5'11" 219 Sr) 3 st, 22 tkl 2Y.  
**BC 15 GRANT HALEY JR.** 5-9 189 PS#99. 13 gm, 18 tkl as true. L/11 st, 42 tkl, 9 pd LY. 1 Christian Campbell (6'1" 186 Jr) PS#219. 1 st, 26 tkl, 1.5 pd 2Y. 21 Amani Oruwariye (6'1" 205 So) PS#140. Desi Davis (5'11" 172 So).  
**FC 29 JOHN REID SO.** 5-10 186 PS#23. F/2 st, 3Y tkl, 3 pbu, 2 int as true. 17 Garrett Taylor (6'0" 187 rFr) PS#21. 12 Jordan Smith (5'10" 191 Sr) PS#303. 20 gm, 9 tkl 3Y. Kyle Alston (5'9" 180 Jr). Troy Shorts (5'10" 198 So).  
**SS 6 MALIK GOLDEN SR.** 6-0 205 PS#106. 19 gm, 15 tkl 2Y 4st, 40 tkl LY. 28 Troy Apke (6'1" 198 Jr) PS#88WR. 1 st, 26 tkl LY. 7 Koa Farmer (6'1" 222 So) PS#58. 12 gm, 405 Kr (22.5) LY. 14 Jarvis Miller (6'2" 198 Fr) PS#166.  
**FS 2 MARCUS ALLEN JR.** 6-2 209 PS#81. L/7 st, 58 tkl, 3 pbu as true. 12 st, 81 tkl, 5 tfl LY. 23 Ayron Monroe (5'11" 200 tfl) PS#201. 24 Nick Scott (5'11" 197 So) From RB spg. John Petrishen (6'0" 201 rFr). Joe Berg (6'0" 200 So).  
**P 92 DANIEL PASQUARIELLO JR.** 6-1 200 47 punts (37.3), L/63, 34.3 m net as true. 58 punts (39.9), L/60, 35.7 m net LY. 37 Chris Gulla (6'1" 199 Jr) PS#93. 23 punts (37.7), L/52 LY. Blake Gillikin is PS#8. Jordan Wombaker (5'10" 175 rFr).



