

Penn State Offense To Blame For Loss To Illinois

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Penn State couldn't get three yards when it mattered most. It took nine overtimes and seven 2-point conversions to decide one of the wildest games in college football history.

With a limited Sean Clifford, the Nittany Lions offense struggled and proved to be one of the main reasons they were upset by Illinois 20-18 on Saturday.

Coming into the game, Clifford's health was a major question mark. To the roar of the crowd, Penn State had announced that he would be the starter. It didn't seem to matter. Clifford threw for just 165 yards while Penn State's run game was virtually non-existent.

"We thought Sean gave us the best possible chance to win," James Franklin said after the game.

Penn State's only touchdown of the contest came on a 42-yard chunk play to Kandre Lambert-Smith. With Clifford's limited mobility, Penn State was unable to move the chains, opening the door for Illinois to manage the game.

Defensively, the Nittany Lions gave up 357 yards rushing and 26 first downs. Yet at the end of regulation, Penn State had only sacrificed 10 points.

Despite numerous opportunities to take back momentum and seal the game, Penn State's offense looked lifeless and handed the ball right back to the Fighting Illini.

"There were plenty of plays and plenty of opportunities for us to win," Franklin said. "We did not execute."

Now eight weeks into the college football season, it's become fairly obvious Penn State is a one-dimensional offense. Not only does coordinator Mike Yurcich operate a pass-heavy system but Penn State's run game is completely dysfunctional.

All season long, Penn State has been unable to get one yard in important game situations. Now tasked with getting three yards to win a football game, it felt like they needed a Hail Mary.

Even with Penn State's defense forcing three turnovers, Illinois dominated the time of possession from 36:25 to 23:35. Everything Penn State tried, Illinois was ready for.

Yurcich and the Nittany Lions will have just one week to correct their mistakes and prepare for Ohio State on the road. If they want any hope of keeping their season alive, Penn State must figure out how to both run the table and run the football.

Kyle Cannillo is a fourth-year majoring in broadcast journalism. To contact him, email kcannillo1@gmail.com.