

# Fruitful effort for Paterno

## Orange Bowl win second of career for Penn State coach

By STEVEN WINE  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**MIAMI**

The longest game in Joe Paterno's 40-year head coaching career had been over for half an hour when he emerged from the victorious Penn State locker room.

Waiting at the door, wife Sue shouted his name three times before he heard. She dropped her cane as she rose from a chair, gave him a hug, kissed his cheek and rubbed his back.

"It's late," Paterno said.

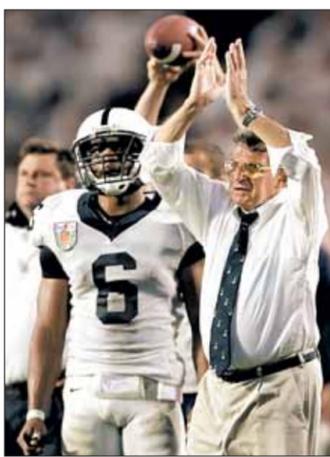
Way past his bedtime, in fact, as he wryly noted. But the 79-year-old coach showed in the Orange Bowl that he's still spry enough to win a marathon.

Paterno's Nittany Lions needed 4½ hours, three overtimes and three tries at a game-winning field goal to beat 76-year-old Bobby Bowden and his Florida State Seminoles 26-23.

The epic ended at 1 a.m. Wednesday, and Paterno found the result worth the wait.

After consecutive losing seasons left restless fans in Happy Valley grumbling "Joe must go," Paterno quieted critics with an 11-1 record marred only by a last-second loss to Michigan. His first Orange Bowl win since 1974 could vault the Nittany Lions to No. 2 in the final rankings Thursday.

"To think that people actually wanted him to give up the game, to call it quits — I'm at a loss for words," Penn State



AP PHOTO

Penn State coach Joe Paterno calls for a safety against Florida State in the fourth quarter of the Orange Bowl at Dolphins Stadium in Miami on Tuesday. At left is Penn State safety Donnie Johnson.

quarterback Michael Robinson said. "He's a great coach."

Five victories separate Bowden and Paterno, who rank 1-2 in Division I-A wins, and the margin between them was even slimmer in Miami.

Smothering defense and sudden scoring strikes — including an Orange Bowl-record 87-yard punt return by Florida State's Willie Reid — kept the teams close. So did errant kicks by both sides that could have won the game.

Gary Cismesia missed first: His failed extra-point attempt in the second quarter was his first in 46 career attempts.

Penn State's Kevin Kelly, hampered by a shaky hold, was wide left on a 29-yard field-goal attempt with 35 seconds left in

regulation, and the game went into overtime at 16-all.

Florida State had possession first, and Cismesia missed again, this time on a 44-yard field-goal attempt. It was all painfully familiar to Bowden, beaten by arch rival Miami six times because of missed or blocked field goals.

"When they pick the all-time missed field-goal coach, I'll probably get the award," he said.

Kelly then attempted a 38-yard game-winner. Bowden started onto the field, thinking the kick was good, but Kelly pushed it left.

When the dejected freshman reached his bench, Paterno gave him a pat on the back.

"He said to me, 'Coach, I'm sorry,'" Paterno said.

"I said, 'You're going to have another chance to win the game. Forgot about that one. Just get your head on right to get the next one.'"

In the second overtime, each team scored a touchdown, and even managed to kick the extra point.

Then Cismesia misfired for the third time, his 38-yard try bouncing off the right upright as thousands of Florida State fans groaned in unison.

Penn State picked up a first down at the 13.

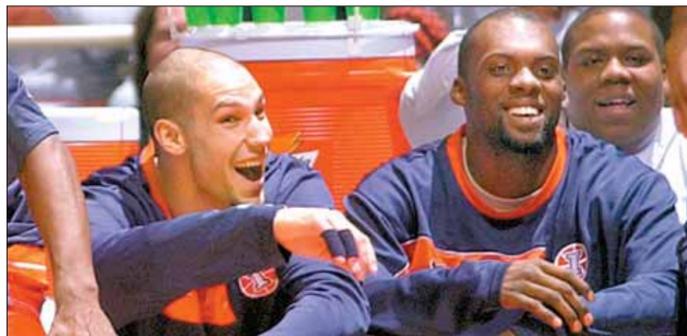
On second-and-9, Paterno ordered a fake field goal and sent Kelly back into the game.

Quarterback Robinson argued with his coach.

"He kept jabbering at me, 'We don't need to do that,'" Paterno said. "He wanted to run the ball."

Florida State's defensive alignment negated plans for the fake, and Kelly instead split the uprights for his first game-winning field goal since ninth grade.

No. 22-ranked Florida State finished 8-5, Bowden's worst season since 1981.



AP PHOTO

Illinois' James Augustine, left, and Marcus Arnold react to a play during the second half of Illinois' college basketball game against Tennessee-Martin at Assembly Hall in Champaign, Ill., on Dec. 30. The Illini host Michigan State for a Big Ten game tonight.

## Powerhouses match up in early conference game

By JIM PAUL  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**CHAMPAIGN, Ill.**

Big Ten fans circled this game on their schedules months ago. Illinois and Michigan State, two of last season's Final Four, begin the new conference season against each other tonight.

"It should be an incredible atmosphere for what we hope is an incredible game," says Tom Izzo, whose seventh-ranked Spartans bring an 11-game winning streak to the Assembly Hall, where Illinois has won 29 straight.

Michigan State (12-2) hasn't lost since that 109-106 triple-overtime thriller against Gonzaga at the Maui Invitational on Nov. 22. The Spartans are averaging nearly 83 points per game, Maurice Ager leads the Big Ten in scoring, and Paul Davis is the league's leading rebounder.

No. 6 Illinois is undefeated through 14 games. Nobody averages more than 15 points, but they have held opponents to less than 56 points per game, and average 10 rebounds more than their opponent.

Bruce Weber knows defense will be critical again for his Illini to beat the Spartans a fourth straight time tonight and when they meet again in the regular-season finale March 4.

"We have to stop their fast break," he said. "They're one of the best fast-breaking teams in the country."

"If you can limit that and then make them play half-court, it gives you a chance to compete with them."

Champaign has been especially unfriendly to Michigan State recently. The Spartans got whipped 70-40 in February 2003, and Illinois won by 24 in the teams' only matchup in the 2003-04 season. The Illini won again 81-68 at East Lansing in their only meeting last season.

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