

## Saints savoring season's second life

By Mark Singelais

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### Loudonville

The Siena men's basketball team is the last one standing from the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference.

Manhattan was eliminated after giving defending national champion Louisville a scare in the NCAA Tournament. Iona bowed out in its National Invitation Tournament opener and Quinnipiac and Canisius each lost its first game in the CollegeInsider.com Tournament.

That leaves the Saints, picked 10th in the MAAC preseason poll, as the league's lone program with a game still on the schedule.

"We're definitely excited because like Coach (Jimmy Patsos) told us, we're the only MAAC team that's playing right now," Siena junior guard Evan Hymes said. "So that's something to be proud of."

The Saints (16-17) will try to extend their season on Monday at 7 p.m, when they take on Penn State (16-17) of the Big Ten in the quarterfinals of the College Basketball Invitational at Times Union Center.

The game will be televised nationally on CBS Sports Network.

While the CBI is a consolation tournament, Hymes said he relishes the opportunity to put on the green-and-gold jersey again this season.

"I only have one year left, so I want to play as much basketball as I can," Hymes said. "So does the other guys. The young guys are very excited to know that we could possibly put a banner up here and come back with a big trophy and we're the only team playing."

Siena has no scholarship seniors and hopes to use this postseason experience as a springboard to win the MAAC title next season.

While Penn State is accustomed to facing some of the nation's best programs in the Big Ten, such as Michigan, Wisconsin and Michigan State, coach Pat Chambers insisted the Nittany Lions are fired up about traveling to Albany for the CBI.

Penn State has only one senior, all-Big Ten guard Tim Frazier, among its top six scorers.

"I know Siena's got a young team," Chambers said. "We have a young team. I think that's why you want to do it. You're giving them that practice, that preparation to prepare for a tournament. And our guys did want to play in it. If our guys didn't, I would think maybe I didn't recruit the right guys."

Siena freshman forward Lavon Long pointed out the Nittany Lions beat Ohio State, an NCAA Tournament participant, twice this season.

"It's a good tournament," Long said. "We play some good teams, a team that beat Ohio State. They're good, so the tournament has to be good if they're in it."

This marks the first time Siena, which pays an undisclosed sum to the CBI for the home game, has ever hosted a visit from a Big Ten team. Usually, these matchups only happen when the mid-major conference school is willing to travel for guaranteed money, or if they meet at a neutral site in the NCAA Tournament.

"It's a big-time (game)," Patsos said. "I think it's good they're coming. ... Our guys want to play Penn State."

In their only previous meeting, Penn State beat visiting Siena 105-103 in a second-round game of the 2000 National Invitation Tournament, which also proved to be Paul Hewitt's last as Saints head coach before he left for Georgia Tech.

That game was played in State College because Times Union Center was already booked with a Ricky Martin concert.

In the rematch 14 years later, Siena will have to contend with Penn State's talented guards, Frazier (15.2 points per game) and junior D.J. Newbill (17.8 ppg).

"Great backcourt," Patsos said. "That's as good of a 1-2 punch at the guards as we've seen."

It's unclear whether this will be Siena's final home game of the season. The winner will face an undetermined opponent at a site to be announced on Wednesday. The CBI decides its semifinal matchups after the quarterfinals are over.

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### At a glance

#### CBI quarterfinal game

#### Siena (16-17) vs. Penn State (16-17)

**When:** 7 p.m. Monday

**Where:** Times Union Center, Albany

**TV/radio:** CBS Sports Network/1300 AM