

UNIVERSITY PARK, **Pa.** — Penn State men's soccer played its final home game of the season Friday night at Jeffrey Field, hosting Michigan in a primetime matchup that brought together players, staff, and fans under the lights. The Nov. 7 contest marked the Nittany Lions' last chance to compete at home after finishing the season with an overall record of 5–8–4.

While Penn State did not qualify for postseason playoffs, the matchup against a Big Ten opponent served a meaningful close to the home schedule, offering a moment of reflection and appreciation for the team's efforts throughout the season.

The atmosphere at Jeffrey Field was energetic as temperatures dipped into the 40s, and students filled out the bleachers wearing winter coats. Cowbells rang from the student section; chants echoed across the field, and players communicating loudly from kickoff to the final whistle.

"For the guys, this night means more than just another game," said Percephany Renae, a student manager for the Penn State men's soccer team. "They've spent countless hours on this field. Even when the season didn't turn out how we hoped, the commitment and effort never stopped."

Renae said the season was defined by close matches and moments that tested the team's resilience.

"There were tough losses that could have broken morale," she said. "But they kept showing up for each other, staying focused, and competing. That's something I'll always respect about this group."

The student section, known as the Park Avenue Army, played a noticeable role in Friday night's atmosphere against Michigan. Phillip Latinski, a board member of the Park Avenue Army, said the final home game was an opportunity to show appreciation for the team.

"We wanted to be loud and present the entire game," Latinski said. "This season had ups and downs, but playing with a team like Michigan made it even more important to show up. The players still represented Penn State with pride."

Freshman Jacob Corcoran, also a member of the Park Avenue Army, said attending matches has helped him feel connected to campus.

"Being part of the student section makes you feel like you're contributing to something bigger," Corcoran said. "Even when the season doesn't go perfectly, the energy and togetherness make it worth coming out."

For some in attendance, Friday's match was a new experience. Kendra Chew, who described herself as a new fan of soccer, said the environment drew her in.

"I didn't expect it to be this exciting," Chew said. "The pace of the game and the crowd reactions kept me engaged the entire time. Playing a big school like Michigan made it more intense."

The shared experience was more important than the outcome as fans eventually left Jeffrey Field, and the lights on the 2024 home season went down. Even in a difficult year, community, loyalty, and student support remain at the core of college athletics, as demonstrated by Penn State's final home game against a conference rival.