



ZACH ORNITZ | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

**RYAN LICHTENSTEIN** did not receive a scholarship offer coming out of Gateway (Pa.) High School but joined Syracuse as a walk-on and has become the starting kicker. Now on scholarship, Lichtenstein has converted 9-of-10 field goals this season as a true freshman.

# Still kickin'

## Lichtenstein goes from high school goat to Syracuse starter

By Tyler Dunne  
STAFF WRITER

For Ryan Lichtenstein, what happened after his game-winning kick against Northwestern was a surreal blur. The kick split the uprights, time expired, mayhem broke out and punter Rob Long lifted him into air.

"I didn't even realize Rob picked me up," laughed Lichtenstein, Syracuse freshman place kicker. "He was pretty strong."

Sweet redemption for another kick in his life, a kick he had no control over. As a junior at Gateway (Pa.) High School, Lichtenstein missed an extra point in overtime. In the state championship game. The opponent, Pittsburgh Central Catholic, scored, made their extra point and Gateway lost, 35-34.

Lichtenstein took all the heat—from students and media alike. Thing is, it wasn't his fault. The ball was sliding off the field-goal tee by the time he put his plant foot down. He had no chance.

The ball crashed into the line and crushed his school's dreams.

"And Ryan never said a word about it, said Terry Smith, the Gateway head coach, "which tells you who he is. Everyone beat him up, but he never said a word."

Meet Lichtenstein, a true freshman that's lived through the highs (see: Northwestern win) and the lows (see: state title game). He's quiet, shuns attention and has built a strong immunity to pressure-packed moments.

After a handful of kickers quit the team in August, Syracuse (2-4, 0-2 Big East) settled on the walk-on from Monroeville, Pa. So far, it has paid off. Through six games, Lichtenstein has made 9-of-10 field goal attempts, highlighted by that walk-off against Northwestern.

For the record, it's "LICK-tin-steen." He's heard his name pronounced wrong some 35 different ways—sometimes with z's, other times with a "ch" sound. Even his new head coach Doug Marrone pronounced it wrong through

preseason camp.

How Lichtenstein ended up in Syracuse dates back to this February. Lichtenstein remembers sitting in Smith's office on National Letter of Intent Day with zero scholarship offers. Minnesota, Villanova and Syracuse had shown interest. But no offers.

Considering Syracuse had just hired a new head coach, Lichtenstein e-mailed Dan Conley, the SU assistant that had been recruiting him. Conley told him to call back in April. By then, Marrone and the new staff would have a better handle of the kicking situation.

Which meant Lichtenstein had to wait. And wait.

"I was pretty scared for a couple months," Lichtenstein said. "I didn't really know what I was going to do."

Time was running out. He needed to attend college—period—somewhere. So he started applying everywhere. Maybe he could walk

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### FOOTBALL

## Bye comes at perfect time for SU

By Jared Diamond  
SPORTS EDITOR

Doug Marrone learned a valuable lesson about coaching in the Big East Saturday. Seeing two of the conference's top opponents rumble into the Carrier Dome and embarrass his team in consecutive weeks gave Syracuse's head coach insight into what it takes to compete at this level.

It's a lesson he will take with him moving forward, as he continues to rebuild a desolate program essentially from the ground up.

That's all well and good. But it does not solve the immediate problem: The Orange has looked overmatched in Big East play thus far and enters the midway point of the season at a disappointing 2-4.

This means Syracuse must finish the year 4-2 to remain eligible for a bowl game for the first time since 2004.

As SU enters its lone bye week, Marrone has the daunting challenge of righting the ship before it's too late.

"(The last two games) give us a better chance of knowing where need to go as far as recruiting, what we need to do, and then in the future what we need to do to beat these teams," Marrone said on the weekly Big East teleconference with head coaches. "The problem we have right now is we're creating too many mistakes, more so now that we've gotten into the Big East than we had earlier in the season, and that's a concern."

After winning two straight games at the end of the September, Syracuse appears to be regressing. The offense committed seven turnovers in a 34-20 loss against South Florida two weeks ago, and then looked helpless on both sides of the ball in a 34-13 blowout to

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### INSIDESPORTS

#### Tonight's the night

The struggling Syracuse men's soccer team looks to get on track today against Central New York foe Hartwick. **Page 13**

## MEN'S SOCCER

# SU hopes Hartwick game sparks turnaround

By Andrew Meola  
STAFF WRITER

The players see it. They realize the season is rapidly slipping away, and that the next loss could be the backbreaker that ends it all. They also recognize that they cannot let the troubles of the past affect their immediate future.

## UP NEXT

**Who:** Hartwick

**Where:** SU Soccer Stadium

**When:** Tonight, 7 p.m.

But for the Syracuse men's soccer team, the hard part is figuring out just how to do that.

"Heading into the rest of the season, we just have to put these losses behind us and move on," goalkeeper Ryan Jones said after last Wednesday's 3-1 loss to Villanova. "We can't afford not to pick up points in these games."

But after Saturday's game at No. 12 Louisville, the Orange came away with the same amount of points it had when it entered the match. The continual inefficiency of the Syracuse offense once again haunted the team against the dominant Cardinals.

Syracuse (2-10, 1-6 Big East) will look to salvage what is left of its season when in-state rival Hartwick visits SU Soccer Stadium Tuesday at 7 p.m. The contest will be the Orange's first non-conference game since Bucknell on Sept. 13.

The game against Bucknell nearly a month ago took place during the Mayor's Cup, which is held at Hartwick every year. One month later, the Orange faces the annual host of that tournament.

What could be construed as nothing more than an interesting footnote can actually become an advantage for Syracuse. Hartwick is not just a

random non-conference opponent. There is history between these two teams (they have met 32 times, with Hartwick leading the all-time series, 16-11-5) and the Orange has seen Hartwick play in person as recently as a month ago.

The advantage of seeing a team execute its game plan right in front of your eyes could translate onto the field Tuesday night for Syracuse.

"We went down to their tournament and saw them play," Jones said. "So we know what to expect."

But preparation and planning is only part of the battle for Syracuse, as the team continues to try to dig itself out of the massive hole it created in the first half of the season. Studying opponents and preparing itself for games has not been the Orange's problem this season. Execution is where it has all gone wrong.

Saturday's contest against Louisville showcased the Orange's disconnect between preparation and on-the-field play. Syracuse hit the road to face the No. 12 team in the country, and managed to go into halftime trailing by only one goal.

The only problem is that Louisville did not score the goal. Syracuse handicapped itself by registering an own goal, giving the Cardinals an advantage they would ultimately not need (Louisville scored three times in the second half).

Those kind of mental mistakes have cost the Orange all season. Failure to capitalize on scoring opportunities, poor passes and unwise offensive decisions have plagued the team for the majority of its schedule.

After Syracuse's dominating 3-0 win over Rutgers last week, the team tried to build off its momentum by continuing to employ the blueprint it had used to beat the Scarlet

Knights. That plan failed against both Villanova and Louisville.

Hartwick, too, will be a different opponent than Rutgers and all the other Big East foes the Orange has faced this season. If Syracuse wants to start climbing out of the quicksand, a fresh game plan may be in order.

After the loss to Villanova, the players hung their heads, unsure of what to think about such a devastating loss. Senior midfielder Kenny Caceros was at a loss for words.

But his fellow senior teammate, midfielder Elliott Townsend, had only a simple solution to offer.

"We've got to have a good couple of days of training," Townsend said. "We've just got to keep working hard."

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## QUICK HITS

### Last 3

Oct. 2	@ Rutgers	W, 3-0
Oct. 7	Villanova	L, 3-1
Oct. 10	@ Louisville	L, 4-0

### Next 3

Oct. 13	Hartwick	7 p.m.
Oct. 17	South Florida	7 p.m.
Oct. 20	Adelphi	7 p.m.

After a 4-0 loss to Louisville Saturday, in which the Orange only managed four shots and one shot-on-goal, Syracuse will return to the friendly confines of SU Soccer Stadium to take on Hartwick. The Orange will try to get its offense in gear in its next three games, two of which are against non-conference opponents.

## LICHTENSTEIN

FROM PAGE 16

onto a team later on, he thought. In the meantime, he kept in touch with SU special teams coach Bob Casullo "once or twice a month," he said.

Out in Syracuse, the kicking situation was grim. Following the graduation of Pat Shadle, holdover Austin Wallis was doing nothing to quell coaches' fears. So Casullo and Co. compiled a list of four or five kickers they liked that were still available — free agents in limbo like Lichtenstein. Both sides stayed in regular contact throughout the spring and summer.

"He always caught your eye," Casullo said. "There was always something about him that said, 'Gee, this little guy's got something.' Accuracy, consistency, his technique was very smooth, his time."

The final trait may have been what ultimately hooked Lichtenstein into Syracuse. He had wasted little motion from the snap to the kick. Each millisecond is costly.

"One of the real hard things we had to overcome was that the kickers we inherited, their times were atrocious," Casullo said. "You can't protect that long. You have to get rid of the ball in 'X' amount of time."

With Lichtenstein, there was no hesitation, a habit coaches picked up on through film of Lichtenstein at Gateway and the personal workout videos he sent. Through dialogue on e-mail, Casullo told Lichtenstein to send such workout videos.

Good thinking, since those Gateway tapes provided limited sample space. Gateway's offense rarely stalled. In three years as the kicker, Lichtenstein kicked only five, seven and six field goals, respectively. The offense scored 44, 57 and 70 touchdowns in Lichtenstein's stay. Every one of Gateway's tailbacks in the last five years has gone on to play Division I football.

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Bob Casullo  
SU SPECIAL TEAMS COACH

Lichtenstein was rarely needed. "We just didn't have the opportunity to showcase him," Smith said.

Yet still, he was unlike most high school kickers. When Lichtenstein decided to give up soccer for football, Smith didn't require him to come to practice every day. He simply handed Lichtenstein the special teams schedule and said that's when he could stop by. Once a week.

"He disregarded that and came every day for the entire practice for his three years," Smith said.

Lichtenstein attended every offseason workout, every conditioning drill and every practice. Abnormal for a kicker, Smith said. This year, the Gateway coach has two soccer players as his kickers that stroll by the practice field for 45 minutes every Thursday and show up for Friday's game.

"He was truly a part of the team," Smith said. "He sweated like they sweat and worked like they worked."

Eventually, after some stressful waiting, that hard work paid off. Lichtenstein took walk-on opportunity at Syracuse. Following the departure of Wallis and John Barker, Shane Raupers and Lichtenstein became the SU kickers. Raupers was

the frontrunner. Lichtenstein was the underdog.

"(Shane) was on scholarship and I was a walk-on, but I treated it as if we were both equal," Lichtenstein said. "I wanted open competition."

Raupers quit the team and Lichtenstein became the starter. He hasn't looked back since and is now on scholarship.

Four weeks ago, Smith was in a hotel in Washington. Justin King, a former Gateway player now on the St. Louis Rams, was going to play the Washington Redskins the next day. On the Web site ESPN360.com, Smith followed the Syracuse game against Northwestern. After Syracuse safety Max Suter picked off a pass in the waning moments, he sent Lichtenstein a text message.

He told Lichtenstein he'd make the game-winning kick.

"I knew he wouldn't get (the text), but I knew he'd do his thing," Smith said. "These are moments you dream of. As a kicker you always go through those three-seconds-left-on-the-clock (moments), and he did it."

Lichtenstein was mobbed by teammates and the Carrier Dome field transformed into a platform of elation. This wasn't his forte. Lichtenstein doesn't like attention. Good or bad. Back as a junior at Gateway, he didn't point any fingers after that botched extra point — a kick Smith said any pro kicker would miss. He could have. But he didn't.

Sitting with his hands tucked inside the pocket of his hooded sweatshirt, Lichtenstein said his confidence was the same before the Northwestern kick as it is after. Nothing has changed.

Something else that won't change any time soon: Everyone pronouncing his name wrong. Even after the kick of his life, he doesn't see anything changing there.

"Probably not, I don't know," Lichtenstein said. "We'll see."

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