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## Painter, Freshman and Progress



Photo by kdemerly

# Freshman class and Matt Painter are climbing towards success

After Brandon Newman won his second Big Ten Freshman of the Week honor on Monday, the fifth overall for Purdue this season, people on social media began speculating whether this class is coach Matt Painter's best.

While that verdict will come in about four years from now, today's answer would be no. It wouldn't even be second from this point of view.

Painter wouldn't be seeking his 350th victory at Purdue on Saturday against Northwestern if not for his 2006 recruiting class. Robbie Hummel, JaJuan Johnson and E'Twaun Moore each became All-Americans (Johnson a consensus pick in 2011) while leading the Boilermakers to a regular season Big Ten title, their only Big Ten Conference tournament title to date, and back-to-back Sweet Sixteen berths.

If not for Hummel's torn ACL at Minnesota during his junior season, Purdue likely would have earned a No. 1 NCAA tournament seed and been favored to end the Boilermakers' Final Four drought.

All three went on to play in the NBA, with Moore enjoying the most success.

While not as beloved as "the Baby Boilers," the class of Vincent Edwards, Isaac Haas, Dakota Mathias and P.J. Thompson is among the winningest in school history. The four top 10 recruits helped Purdue claim 104 victories, including a school record 30 as seniors in 2017-18. Also like "the Baby Boilers," a severe injury (Haas' broken elbow in the first NCAA tournament game in 2018) derailed any chance of a Final Four breakthrough.

One reason why a class that also won a Big Ten title is not rated No. 1 is that its overall success was aided by the presence during their four years of three future NBA draft picks: 7-foot center A.J. Hammons, All-American forward Caleb Swanigan and Jerry West Award winner Carsen Edwards.

The current Purdue freshman class perhaps has a higher ceiling than the Vincent Edwards group because Newman and Jaden Ivey could threaten the 2,000-point mark by the time their college careers are over. I don't say that lightly because in Purdue's fine basketball history, only five men have reached that plateau: Rick Mount (2,323), Joe Barry Carroll (2,175), E'Twaun Moore (2,136), Dave Schellhase (2,074) and Troy Lewis (2,038). Mount and Schellhase did it in three seasons when freshmen were not eligible.

Newman's 29 points against then-No. 21 Minnesota last Saturday were the fourth-most by a freshman in Purdue history and second-most by a Boilermaker freshman in Mackey Arena history.

Kyle Macy holds the school freshman record with 38 points during a 111-110 double-overtime victory at Minnesota on Jan. 3, 1976. Russell Cross put up 32 in a 78-69 loss at Tennessee on Dec. 6, 1980. Hammons holds the freshman scoring mark for Mackey Arena, posting 30 in a 97-60 loss to third-ranked Indiana on Jan. 30, 2013.

Incidentally, that's the last time the Hoosiers have won in West Lafayette.



**KENNY THOMPSON**  
Columnist

Through the years When the Vincent Edwards-Haas-Mathias-Thompson class signed with Purdue in 2012, then-Indianapolis Star writer Mark Montieth looked back at Purdue's previous top five recruiting classes. Some of those classes had their share of heartbreak too.

In 1965, the recruiting team of head coach George King and assistant Bob King signed a six-man class that included Indiana Mr. Basketball Billy Keller, future NBA standout Herm Gilliam and Ohio Mr. Basketball Rick Snider. Keller and Gilliam were stars on the 1969 NCAA runner-up team.

But classmate Gary Bancroft was killed the summer before his sophomore year in a trampoline accident. He was a promising scorer who had 21 points in the freshman-varsity game.

Snider suffered injuries in a motorcycle accident as a freshman and injured his shoulder as a sophomore year.

Ralph Taylor became a fan favorite at Purdue and later was on the Boilermaker basketball radio network team. He and Ted Reasoner were reserves on the 1969 squad.

The rest of that 1969 foundation arrived on campus the following year. Rick Mount was a three-time All-American and has held the career scoring record for 51 years. Burly 7-foot center Chuck Bavis could hold his own against UCLA legend Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (then known as Lew Alcindor).

But fate was unkind to Bavis and fellow recruit Roger Blalock. A car accident before his senior season ended Bavis' career. Blalock suffered a broken leg during a brief skirmish with Butler early in his senior season.

Jerry Johnson and Tyrone Bedford were solid contributors to that 1969 Boilermaker team.

Gene Keady had three classes on Montieth's list, starting with his first in 1980. Russell Cross of Chicago was one of the top high school centers in the nation and was the sixth pick of the 1983 NBA draft after bypassing his senior season.

The other members of the class were not highly regarded but this wouldn't be the first time Keady proved that recruiting rankings aren't everything.

Ricky Hall and Greg Eifert were cornerstones of Keady's first Big Ten championship team in 1984 along with a former walk-on named Jim Rowinski. Rowinski, perhaps the most powerfully muscled Purdue basketball player in memory, developed into the Big Ten's most valuable player in 1984.

The unexpected Big Ten title in 1984 (Purdue was picked to finish last) reaped dividends in recruiting. Co-Indiana Mr. Basketball Troy Lewis was joined by another Top 50 recruit in Toledo's Todd Mitchell and future NBA guard Everette Stephens. That trio guided Purdue to back-to-back Big Ten titles in 1987 and 1988.

Jeff Arnold was a solid center but he and classmate Dave Stack were suspended for their senior seasons. Arnold was especially missed during the NCAA tourna-

ment, which ended with a disappointing loss to Kansas State in the Sweet Sixteen.

If the 1991 recruiting class consisted of just Glenn Robinson, it would be among Purdue's all-time best. Robinson would become the National Player of the Year in 1994 before the Milwaukee Bucks made him the first pick of the NBA Draft.

Typical of Purdue luck, however, Robinson injured his back while indulging in horseplay the day before the Elite Eight matchup with Duke. A healthy Robinson, who scored 13 points on 6 of 22 shooting, probably gives Keady his elusive Final Four slot.

Brandon Brantley was the starting center on that Elite Eight team, and Todd Foster was a scrappy, hustling guard who averaged 7.5 points as a senior for the 1996 Big Ten championship three-peat team.

## Purdue center a finalist

Trevion Williams is part of a Big Ten-heavy finalist list for the Kareem Abdul-Jabbar Award, given annually to the nation's top center.

Half of the final list of 10 are Big Ten athletes, including favorite Luka Garza of Iowa. Williams and Garza are joined by Kofi Cockburn of Illinois, Hunter Dickenson of Michigan and Liam Robbins of Minnesota.

The other finalists are Nate Watson of Providence, Evan Mobley of USC, Neemias Queta of Utah State, Derek Culver of West Virginia and Charles Bassey of Western Kentucky.

The list will be cut to five later this month and the winner will be announced in April.

Williams is averaging a team-best 15.8 points a game and ranks second in the Big Ten at 9.9 rebounds a game. He has a chance to become the fifth player in the past 30 years to average at least 16 points, nine rebounds and two assists in Big Ten play.

Williams is averaging a team-best 15.3 points and 9.6 rebounds for the 11-6 Boilermakers this year. He is one of eight players nationally to average at least 15 points, seven rebounds and two assists and has had 12 straight games where he has recorded at least 10 points and seven rebounds.

He is on pace to become just the fifth player in the last 30 years to average at least 16 points, nine rebounds and two assists in Big Ten play.

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Purdue's 75-70 victory against Northwestern on Sunday was not only Matt Painter's 350th with the Boilermakers but the program's 1,850th since first playing basketball in 1896.

Only 10 other college basketball programs have reached 1,850 victories, and coincidentally, those 10 programs are not ranked in this week's Associated Press Top 25 poll. Purdue remains No. 24 for the second consecutive week.

The Top 10 is almost a who's who of college basketball, led by Kentucky's 2,323 victories through Wednesday night's games. Kansas is close behind at 2,315.

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North Carolina is closing in on 2,300 victories, standing at 2,288.

The rest of the top 10 consists of Duke (2,208), Temple (1,944), Syracuse (1,933), UCLA (1,919), Notre Dame (1,912), St. John's (1,884) and Indiana (1,868).

Purdue has built its victory total on the legacy of three coaches: Ward "Piggy" Lambert, Gene Keady and Painter.

Lambert, who grew up in Crawfordsville and played three sports at Wabash College, compiled what at the time seemed almost unreachable numbers at Purdue from 1917-46 (with 1918 off for World War I service). Eleven Big Ten championships (six outright) and 371 victories in 29 seasons. That earned Lambert a place in the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame.

Keady couldn't match the Big Ten championship total, earning six from 1980 to 2005 but he did amass 512 victories. Keady is on the ballot for this year's Naismith class.

Painter will likely pass Lambert during the 2021-22 season, which will be his 17th at Purdue. At age 50, If Painter coaches 15 more seasons at Purdue, he'd have to average just 11 victories to pass Keady by age 65.

The Purdue coaching trio of Lambert, Keady and Painter have 1,233 combined victories over 70 seasons. Indiana's three winningest coaches – Bob Knight (662), Branch McCracken (364) and Tom Crean (166) have a combined total of 1,192 wins.

### Coaching staff instability isn't unusual

The redesign of Jeff Brohm's defensive coaching staff at Purdue entering his fifth season may determine the long term fate of his stay in West Lafayette.

While the hiring of a third defensive coordinator in three seasons (Brad Lambert) is a concern, Brohm may have come out ahead replacing defensive line coach Terrance Jamison (now at Illinois) with Mark Hagen and cornerbacks coach Greg Brown with Ron English.

Change, though, can be good for college football programs. Purdue fans should know because the winningest coach in school history constantly battled turnover on his staff.

Like Brohm, Joe Tiller brought most of his coaching staff to Purdue in 1997 from Wyoming. The only exceptions were Gary Emanuel, who was hired away from Washington State as defensive tackles coach, and quarterbacks coach Greg Olson. Olson came on board prior to the 1997 season following the death of offensive coordinator Larry Korpitz from brain cancer.

Purdue's 9-3 record in 1997 led to co-offensive coordinator Tim Lappano getting a shot in the NFL, coaching running backs for the Seattle Seahawks. Tiller merely summoned Kevin Sumlin from Minnesota to coach wide receivers, and Jim Chaney became the sole offensive coordinator.

Tiller actually held on to his coaches through 1998 and 1999, which saw Purdue win 16 games and another Alamo Bowl championship. Before the Rose Bowl season of 2000, defensive backs coach Tim Burke left for Kansas and Randy Melvin became the second Tiller assistant

to get an NFL call, this time from New England.

Hagen replaced Melvin and became a fixture on Tiller's staff. Former NFL defensive back Ken Greene replaced Burke and became a major influence on a young Stuart Schweigert, the interceptions record holder at Purdue.

Defensive coordinator Brock Spack would be the only member of the original staff to stay the entire 12 seasons with Tiller. During that period, the NFL also hired away Chaney (Rams), Olson (currently offensive coordinator for the Las Vegas Raiders), Lou Anarumo (current Cincinnati defensive coordinator) and Emanuel (currently defensive line coach for Atlanta).

Six future NFL assistants proved what an eye for talent, on and off the field, Tiller had. Purdue fans hope that this offseason will be the end of the coaching merry-go-round for Brohm.

### Ivey honored again

The Purdue Freshman of the Week award, officially known as the Big Ten Freshman of the Week, went to Jaden Ivey.

Brandon Newman and Ivey have traded the honor each of the past four weeks and seem well on their way to joining Michigan center Hunter Dickenson on the league's all-freshman team when that honor is announced next month.

The only question that remains is who will occupy the other two slots on the all-freshman team. There's a possibility the team will be four-fifths gold and black with starting forward Mason Gillis and 7-4 backup center Zach Edey rounding out the honor roll.

Dickenson seems almost certain to be Big Ten Freshman of the Year, leading all first year players at 15.1 points a game. Newman is second at 9.7 and Ivey third at 8.8.

### Best guesses

Now that we are well into February, let's take a look at some NCAA tournament projections from major media outlets.

The most favorable to Purdue belong to Andy Katz of NCAA.com and Joe Lunardi of ESPN.com, both of whom have the Boilermakers as a five seed.

Katz also has Indiana as an eight seed, while Lunardi lists the Hoosiers among his "first four out."

Brian Bennett of TheAthletic.com puts Purdue a six seed, which would be more favorable than a five since it could open the door for a Sweet Sixteen appearance. The 4-5 winner is almost guaranteed to face a top seed, which if projections are correct could be Gonzaga, Baylor, Michigan or Ohio State.

Purdue graduate Jerry Palm of CBSSports.com has Purdue as a seven seed, as does Shelby Mast and Scott Gleeson of USAToday.com.

Bennett and Palm have Indiana in the tournament as one of the last four selected. Mast and Gleeson list IU among their first four out.

### Plenty of candles

A milestone birthday took place earlier this week when the Big Ten Conference turned 125 years old.

Spurred by Purdue president James H. Smart, the University of Chicago, University of Illinois, University of Michigan, University of Minnesota, Northwestern University and University of Wisconsin gathered at the Palmer House hotel in Chicago on Feb. 8, 1896. Smart wanted to form a conference that would organize and develop principles for the regulation of intercollegiate athletics while pursuing academic excellence.

Before 1896, it was a free for all as amateurs and professionals were allowed to migrate from school to school to play the growing sport of football. The Big Ten would establish athletes' eligibility based on grades and full-time student status, a foundation that remains to this day.

The Big Ten, with the addition of Indiana and Iowa in 1899, and Ohio State in 1912, was a media invention in 1917. The "Intercollegiate Conference Athletic Association" didn't incorporate the Big Ten name until 1987.

Chicago departed the Big Ten in 1946, to be replaced by Michigan State in 1949. The league membership remained the same for the next 41 years until Penn State joined in 1990. Nebraska made the Big Ten 12 in 2011, followed by Maryland and Rutgers in 2014.

### Take me out to the ballgame

The former home of the Chicago Bears will be the site of this year's Purdue-Northwestern football game.

Purdue officials announced Tuesday that the Boilermakers would play the Wildcats at Wrigley Field on Nov. 20. ESPN.com writer Adam Rittenberg first reported the move on Friday.

Dick Butkus and Gale Sayers were among the legends to play at Wrigley Field, which the Bears called home from 1921 to 1970.

The Northwestern move is one of three slight changes to Purdue's 2021 schedule. The non-conference slate remains the same with the season opener at Ross-Ade Stadium against Oregon State, followed by trips to Connecticut and Notre Dame.

The Big Ten switched the sites for the Wisconsin and Nebraska games to eliminate three consecutive visits to Madison for Purdue and three consecutive trips to West Lafayette for the Cornhuskers. Purdue hosts Wisconsin on Oct. 23 before traveling to Nebraska on Oct. 30.

Purdue's trip to Wisconsin during the 2020 season was one of two games wiped out by the spread of COVID-19. The season finale at Indiana was the other, despite two attempts to play.

In an unusual scheduling quirk, Purdue will play two home games and two away games each in September, October and November. The only consecutive home dates for the Boilermakers are Sept. 25 against Illinois and Oct. 2 against Minnesota. The Old Oaken Bucket game will be Nov. 27 at Ross-Ade Stadium.

*Kenny Thompson is the former sports editor for the Lafayette Journal & Courier and an award-winning journalist. He has covered Purdue athletics for many years.*



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