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Mascots and Expectations



Purdue Boilermakers at Michigan Wolverines. Photo credit: Maize and Blue Nation

Original mascots and great basketball expectations

These days it seems there's a Hall of Fame for everything. Heck, there's even one for Indiana sports writers.

Now there's a shrine for college sports mascots. Even more surprising, it's located in Whiting, Ind.

The Indianapolis Colts' Blue and the Indiana Pacers' Boomer are among the inductees into the Mascot Hall of Fame, which was the brainchild of original Phillie Phanatic David Raymond in 2005.

What began as an online-only shrine took the first steps toward a physical site in 2013 when Raymond approached Whiting officials about constructing a museum. The grand opening took place on April 6, 2019.

The Hall of Fame museum's primary mission is providing a learning environment for children "equally rooted in S.T.E.A.M. educational principles and sport mascot entertainment."

Voting is now under way for the Class of 2022, and Purdue Pete is on the ballot. Butler Blue also is among the 24 mascots seeking a place in the Hall of Fame. To vote, go to mascothalloffame.com/thevote.

The Purdue Pete biography on the Mascot Hall of Fame web site states that the idea for Purdue Pete was born as the logo for University Bookstore, which still has its main location across from the Purdue Memorial Union.

If you've ever seen a sketch of the original Purdue Pete, imagine the upper body size of a human model, football player Carl Verplank, must have had. Purdue Pete made its on-field debut during a 1956 pep rally. Its popularity quickly grew and today you'll find Purdue Pete at all home football, basketball and volleyball games as well as community events.

"Pete's look is meant to represent the ultimate boilermaker; strong, hardworking, determined, and always supporting his team," the Mascot Hall of Fame bio states. "Purdue Pete is never found without his hammer nearby, always ready to put in work and hammer down his opponents. Pete is best friends with Bucky Badger from Wisconsin and Goldy Gopher from Minnesota."

It's not well known, even in some Purdue circles, that Purdue Pete is not the official mascot of Purdue University.

The Boilermaker Special VII is the official mascot, under the care of the Reamer Club. The first Boilermaker Special predates Purdue Pete by 17 years.

During the spring semester of 1939, a sophomore named Izzy Selkowitz wrote a letter to the editor published by The Exponent advocating for the construction of a symbolic mascot.

The great engineering minds at Purdue



KENNY THOMPSON
Columnist

came up with a locomotive mascot to be mounted on an automobile chassis. The president of the Studebaker Corp. in South Bend donated a 1940 Studebaker Champion chassis. The first Boilermaker Special made its debut in September 1939 and was in use until 1953.

The first round of voting for the 2022 Mascot Hall of Fame class ends Saturday. The final round begins Oct. 17 and concludes on the 23rd.

To learn more about the Hall of Fame and how to arrange a visit, go to mascothalloffame.com/FAQs.

Big Ten basketball forecast

This won't come as a surprise to Purdue basketball fans but the Boilermakers and Michigan are the favorites to win this year's Big Ten championship.

Unofficially, of course.

Commissioner Kevin Warren and his staff don't want to hurt ticket sales and TV ratings for those schools (hello Nebraska, Minnesota and Northwestern) who are likely to finish poorly in the standings.

That hasn't stopped the Big Ten media, two writers from each school, from taking its own preseason poll. Purdue and Michigan finished deadlocked with 373 total points. The Wolverines received one more first-place vote (13-12) than the Boilermakers. The other three first-place votes went to Illinois, picked to finish third.

Mike Woodson's first Indiana squad is picked to finish seventh, just ahead of Rutgers and behind Ohio State (4th), Maryland (5th) and Michigan State (6th).

Illinois center Kofi Cockburn was voted preseason player of the year, outpointing Purdue sophomore guard Jaden Ivey 11-5. Indiana's Trayce Jackson-Davis picked up three votes and Purdue center Trevion Williams garnered two.

Cockburn, Ivey and Jackson-Davis comprise 60 percent of the preseason first-team All-Big Ten. They are joined by Ohio State's E.J. Liddell and Michigan's Hunter Dickenson.

Misery continues for IU

Michael Penix forged a national reputation with his heroics in Indiana's 2020 overtime victory against Penn State.

Penix and Penn State are connected again but not in a good way.

The senior quarterback suffered a separat-

ed left shoulder during Saturday night's 28-0 loss at State College, the fourth consecutive season Penix has suffered a major injury.

Penix now has had two shoulder injuries to go along with two ACL tears in his collegiate career.

Coach Tom Allen confirmed the injury Monday while also stating surgery will not be necessary.

"The rehab process has already begun, and he will be working through that on a daily basis," Allen said.

Once again, Penix's injury thrusts Jack Tuttle into the starting quarterback role. During the final three games of the 2020 season, Tuttle completed 44 of 72 passes for 362 yards, two touchdowns and an interception.

Tuttle led IU past Wisconsin 14-6 before the loss to Mississippi in the Outback Bowl.

"I mentioned even in the preseason that I felt we had two proven starters," Allen said. "... just his maturity over time and the experience he got last year, being able to lead us on the road at Wisconsin and then to show a tremendous amount of toughness to play through an injury in the bowl game."

Indiana's running back depth also took a hit Monday when Allen announced the departure of Tim Baldwin Jr. The sophomore backed up transfer Stephen Carr the first five games, rushing for 103 yards.

With Sampson James' transfer to Purdue just before the season, the Hoosiers are down to Carr and two walkons, Davion Ervin-Poin-dexter and Chris Childers.

Around Big Ten football

Gene Keady used to say it's not who you play but when you play them.

The Hall of Fame Purdue basketball coach was proven right time and time again during his 25 seasons in West Lafayette. It also could apply to the Boilermaker football team next week.

A desperately needed week off to heal (starters Cory Trice, Payne Durham and Zander Horvath might be ready to go) for Purdue could be coming at the right time.

As jinxed as the Boilermakers have been against Minnesota (this time a Gophers touchdown that wasn't, according to replay), they've had third-ranked Iowa's number under Jeff Brohm. Including a 24-15 victory at Kinnick Stadium in 2017, Purdue is 3-1 against the Hawkeyes under Brohm. The 2019 loss at Iowa City was a close one, 26-20.

As for the when you play them part of Keady's saying, Iowa will be coming off a showdown at home against fourth-ranked Penn State. The Hawkeyes and Nittany Lions comprise half of the four undefeated Big Ten

teams (No. 9 Michigan and No. 11 Michigan State are also 5-0).

Iowa and Purdue also are among the top scoring defenses in the nation. The Hawkeyes rank second at 11.6 points a game, while Purdue is 12th at 15.4. Penn State ranks right behind Iowa at 12 points a game. ...

Iowa is riding an 11-game winning streak into the Penn State game. The Hawkeyes defense is a big reason why, allowing less than 13 points a game during the run. In fact, Iowa has not allowed more than 24 points in 27 consecutive games. That's the second longest streak by a FBS team since 1990.

Iowa has outscored opponents 380-141 during the winning streak. It's the Hawkeyes' best run since opening the 2015 season with a 12-game winning streak. That's the season Iowa reached the Big Ten Championship Game and played in the Rose Bowl.

A couple more notes about Iowa thanks to ESPN Stats & Info: The seven turnovers the Hawkeyes forced in their 51-14 victory at Maryland was a 25-year high. Iowa now leads the nation with 15 takeaways (12 interceptions).

Also, the 37-point victory was its largest in the Associated Press poll era (since 1936) against a team that entered the game 4-0 or better. ...

Purdue's Zander Horvath and Indiana's Jack Tuttle are among the semifinalists for the William V. Campbell Trophy.

The Campbell Trophy is awarded annually to the nation's top football scholar athlete. ...

Illinois sophomore Chase Brown did something Saturday that the legendary Red Grange did not, rushing for 257 yards in a 24-14 victory against Charlotte.

Brown's total is the fourth-best single-game effort in school history. Grange's best game, 237 yards at Penn in 1925, ranks sixth in Illinois history. Mike Leshoure holds the school record of 330 yards against Northwestern in 2010. ...

Ohio State became only the third school to reach 20 consecutive Big Ten victories when it wiped out Rutgers 52-13. Amazingly, the Buckeyes have won a record nine consecutive league road games by double digits.

Great Expectations not only is an outstanding novel by Charles Dickens but could the slogan for this season's Purdue men's basketball team.

While some superstitious Boilermaker fans are anticipating bad news such as a torn ACL for Jaden Ivey or Trevion Williams, others outside the state see the promised land of the

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NCAA Final Four as a possibility.

CBS Sports asked college basketball coaches to rank the best teams for 2021-22. Granting them anonymity (fear of bulletin board material, no doubt), just over 50 percent of the coaches picked either Gonzaga or UCLA.

Texas picked up 13 percent of the vote, Kansas 11 percent and Purdue garnered 10 percent.

“Purdue’s got their whole team back and they’re going to be pretty good,” one coach told CBS’ Matt Norlander. “They’ve got at least three pros on that team as well, and they run that offense so fluidly. Painter’s a tough coach, the continuity of the offense they run is really good and they’ve got so many counters for each set, so it’s a concept game. You can’t prep for all their games. That was my scout for four years and one of the toughest scouts I had. Ivey’s like, to me, he’s a pro. That freshman group they have is really good. I think they’ve got the pieces to definitely compete to win the Big Ten and be at the top.”

Coach No. 2 adds: “They have a talented backcourt with senior leadership and an emerging star in Jaden Ivey. Their frontcourt – Williams and Edey – is very deep and has a great mixture of experience and youth. And don’t forget about glue guys at Purdue. Isaiah Thompson, Brandon Newman and Mason Gillis can all defend, knock down 3s and have been part of a winning culture that Matt Painter has been building for years.”

Ivey and Edey also figure prominently in an ESPN.com story about the biggest questions in college basketball for the upcoming season. Coming in at No. 6: Can Jaden Ivey and Zach Edey take the next step at Purdue?

“Matt Painter brings back nearly every player from last season’s team that earned a 4-seed in the NCAA tournament, including all five starters and one of the nation’s best players in big man Trevion Williams. But the real reason for a potential national championship run would come from a breakout season from Jaden Ivey. Ivey is the top-ranked returning player in ESPN’s 2022 NBA draft rankings, despite starting just 12 games last season as a freshman. He’s been the subject of much “breakout” hype, and a tremendous showing at the FIBA U19 World Cup in Latvia did nothing to slow that down. He also averaged 14.8 points in his 12 starts in 2020-21, and becoming a consistent go-to guy takes the Boilermakers up a notch.

“Don’t forget about 7-foot-4 Zach Edey, either. The Canadian big man was dominant at the aforementioned World Cup, including a 16-point, 16-rebound effort against the United States. He only started two games last season, but he gives Painter an option very few teams possess.”

Big rule change

With an 18-0 vote by the IHSAA Executive Committee on Oct. 7, a basketball mercy rule will go into effect this season.

With the notable exception of the state finals, a running clock will be triggered after the first half when a team has a lead of 35 or more points.

From that point, the clock will stop only for an injury timeout, a charged timeout, the break between the third and fourth quarters, a foul that results in free throws or when officials determine it is necessary for safety reasons.

Unlike football, where the gap between the haves and have-nots seems to be growing, boys basketball is less likely to have a large number of mercy rule games.

According to John Harrell’s Indiana high school basketball page, reigning 4A state champion Carmel’s largest margin of victory last season was 72-25 at New Castle. None of the Greyhounds’ other 25 victories exceeded the 35-point mercy rule trigger.

In Montgomery County, Crawfordsville had just one victory larger than 35 points. On the other hand, North Montgomery was involved in five games where the margin exceeded 35 points. Southmont had two victories where its margin was 35 and 37 points.

Purdue looks to repeat history

The last time Purdue played a team ranked No. 2 in the Associated Press football poll was the memorable 49-20 victory against Ohio State on Oct. 20, 2018.

The Boilermakers could use an emotional boost, and their history under Jeff Brohm has been pretty good (3-1 overall) against the Hawkeyes.

Coming off a bye week, Purdue will have some reinforcements on both sides of the ball as top tight end Payne Durham and starting cornerback Cory Trice will be ready to play according to Brohm.

Brohm is not so optimistic about the chances of running back Zander Horvath being ready to go. The senior powered through the Hawkeyes for 129 yards in last season’s victory.

“Iowa is playing at a high level,” Brohm said Monday. “Defense has been off the charts, getting turnovers, getting stops, getting interceptions. Offensively they control the football ... and right now they’re playing with a lot of confidence.”

Iowa extended its streak to 28 consecutive opponents being held to fewer than 25 points. The Hawkeyes lead the nation in turnover margin (2.5 per game), are fourth in scoring defense (13.0) and third in team defensive passing efficiency.

That defense will be missing one of its top players Saturday. Cornerback Riley Moss,

who is tied for first nationally with four interceptions, injured his knee against Penn State. Iowa coach Kirk Ferentz said Moss will avoid surgery but will be out of the lineup a couple of weeks.

That may be good news for Purdue and wide receiver David Bell. Bell caught 13 passes for 121 yards and three touchdowns against the Hawkeyes last season. Bell earned Big Ten Freshman of the Week honors in 2019 with 13 receptions for 197 yards and a touchdown.

Bell became the fastest Boilermaker to reach 2,000 receiving yards for his career, doing so in his 22nd game two weeks ago against Minnesota. All-American Taylor Stubblefield held the previous record of 27 games.

In 13 of those 22 games, Bell has surpassed 100 receiving yards. He leads the Big Ten and is seventh nationally, averaging nearly 110 yards per game.

Surprisingly, Bell is not mentioned as a possible first round NFL Draft pick by national media.

That is not the case for his classmate, defensive end George Karlaftis.

CBSsports.com writer Josh Edwards slots Karlaftis fifth to Atlanta in his 2022 NFL mock draft. One pick ahead of Karlaftis is Derek Stingley Jr. of LSU, the grandson of late Purdue star Darryl Stingley.

The last time Purdue had a top five NFL Draft pick? Quarterback Jim Everett in 1986, who went third to the Houston Oilers before being traded to the Los Angeles Rams.

Before that? Defensive tackle Dave Butz was selected fifth overall by the St. Louis Cardinals in 1973.

Football recruiting

Early signing day for the 2022 football recruiting classes is two months away but things are looking good for Purdue and Indiana, according to ESPN.

ESPN updated its recruiting rankings Wednesday, moving Purdue into its Top 40 at No. 34. That’s good for right in the middle of the Big Ten Conference at No. 7. Ahead of the Boilermakers are the usual suspects Penn State (1st), Ohio State (8th) and Michigan (18th). Crashing the party are Michigan State (19th), Indiana (20th) and Rutgers (24th).

Gibson Southern High School quarterback Brady Allen and Brebeuf defensive end Joe Strickland are Purdue’s highest-rated recruits. Strickland is among ESPN’s Top 300 in the nation, while Allen is a four-star recruit.

“Coach Jeff Brohm has anchored his 2022 class with in-state talent in four-star QB Allen and ESPN 300 DL Strickland, a defender who can play with leverage and

brings upside,” Purdue’s recruiting profile states. “Allen is a tall pocket passer with a strong arm and good accuracy. The Boilermakers are bringing in several promising future targets for Allen, including WR Zion Steptoe, a onetime Utah commit who is a sudden and precise route runner with quick hands. Out of Ohio, they pulled Kentrell Marks, a high-three star RB that can add more offensive firepower, as he is a smooth and elusive runner who can also contribute as a receiving target.”

Linebacker Dasan McCullough, son of Indiana running backs coach Deland McCullough, is the Hoosiers’ top-rated recruit at No. 40 overall.

Putting these rankings in perspective, a year ago Purdue was 67th in the ESPN ratings and 28th in 2020. Indiana had the No. 55 classes in both 2020 and 2021. One of the top members of that 2020 IU class, Damarje Lewis, is now at Purdue. The nation’s 41st-ranked defensive tackle has seen playing time as a redshirt freshman this season.

Around Big Ten football

It’s heady times for the conference’s football fortunes. For the first time in Associated Press poll history (since 1936), the Big Ten has five teams ranked in the top 10. Iowa leads the conference at No. 2, followed by No. 6 Ohio State, No. 7 Penn State, No. 8 Michigan, and No. 10 Michigan State.

Iowa, Michigan and Michigan State are 6-0. The Spartans, which travel to Indiana on Saturday, continue to be the biggest surprise of this bunch. An even greater surprise is they are doing it with a balanced offense.

During its 31-13 victory against Rutgers, Michigan State became just the fifth team in FBS history to have a 300-yard passer (Payton Thorne, 339), a 200-yard rusher (Big Ten Transfer of the Year Kenneth Walker III, 233) and 200-yard receiver (Jalen Nailor, 221) in the same game.

That combination hadn’t been accomplished since Oklahoma State in 2008.

Ohio State is 3-0 in conference play after smashing Maryland 66-17. The Buckeyes have recovered since that upset loss to Oregon with the nation’s best offensive unit (563.2 yards per game) and the No. 3 scoring offense (48.5).

Michigan has turned the heat down on coach Jim Harbaugh with the nation’s 15th-best scoring offense (38.5) and ninth-best scoring defense (15.5).

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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