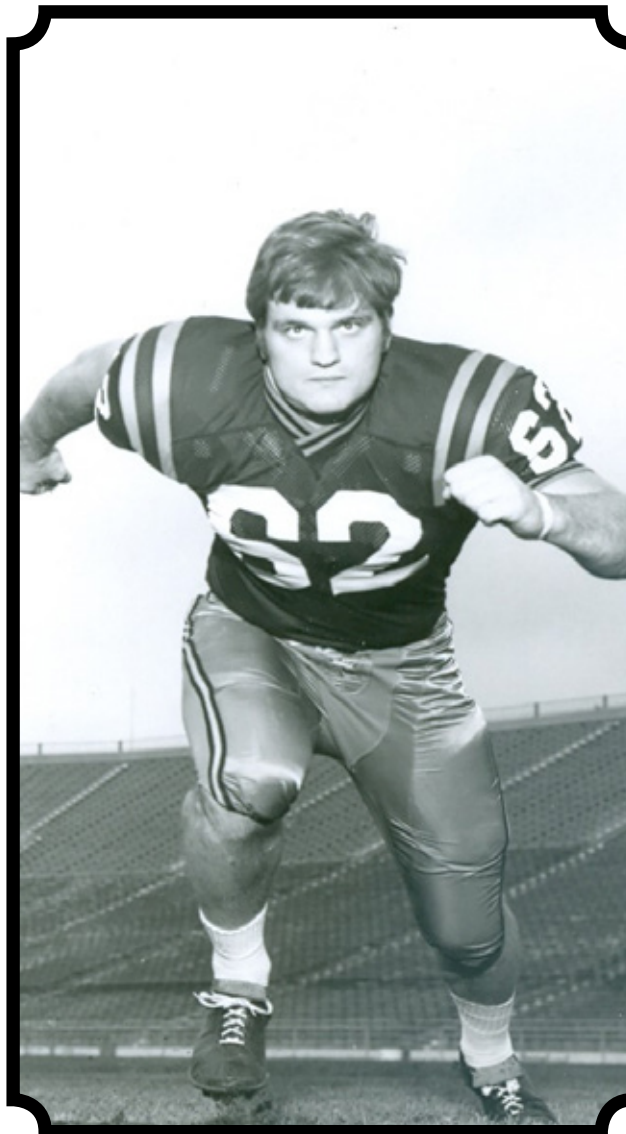
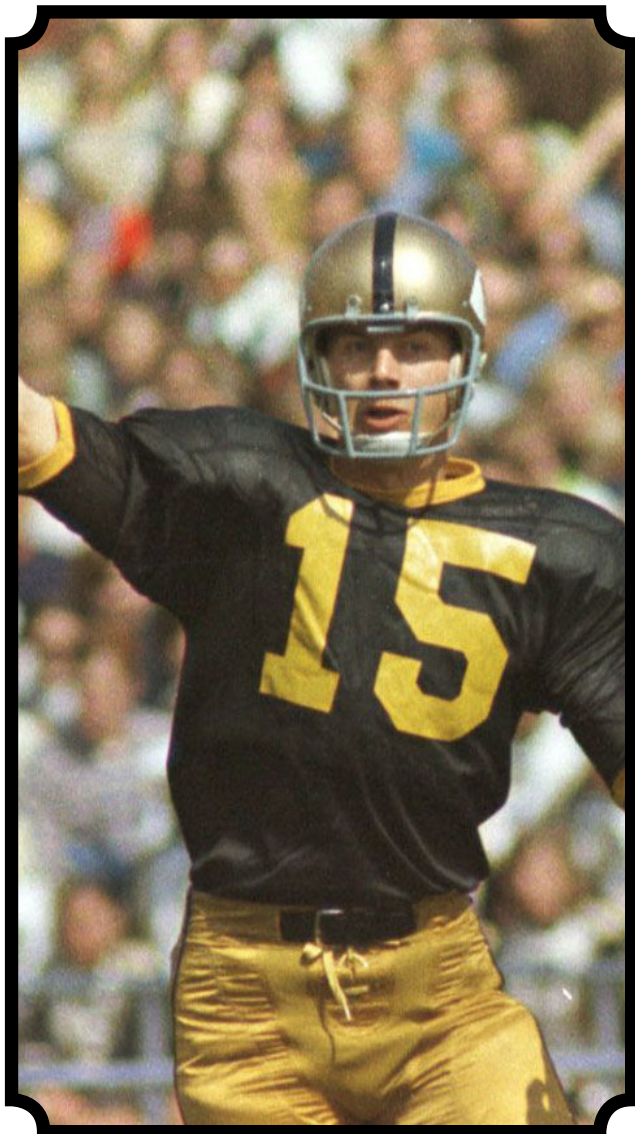


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Talking Jersey Number Retirement And the NFL Draft With Kenny



Left to right: Mike Phipps, Dave Butz, Jack Mollenkopf- Photos courtesy of Purdue Athletics

With the NFL Draft Behind Us, Kenny Looks at 2023 Prospects

Now that the 2022 NFL Draft is history, it didn't take long for national media to start thinking about prospects for 2023.

A lot of guesswork goes into these projections. Which incoming juniors will make the jump like Purdue's George Karlaftis and David Bell? Which seniors will improve enough from their junior years to become prospects? Which players will give up their free COVID year of eligibility to take their shot at pro football?

The Athletic recently selected one NFL prospect from each Big Ten school. Linebacker/safety Jalen Graham was the choice to represent Purdue.

"Graham's a hybrid defender with a lot of coverage upside, which makes him unique and valuable at the next level. The Detroit Cass Tech product is built with a linebacker frame (6-3, 220) but has safety skills and room to grow. Graham plays with a lot of length, which allows him to eat up a ton of ground in coverage."

Cornerback Cory Trice, who missed most of the 2021 season due to injury, was also mentioned by The Athletic as a draft candidate because of his size (6-3, 215). Wide receiver Milton Wright was also regarded as a prospect but goldandblack.com and jconline.com have reported that Wright is no longer with the Boilermakers for academic reasons.

Thanks to the NCAA's gift of a free eligibility season to those on rosters in 2020, both Graham and Trice could return in 2023.

Frankly, The Athletic didn't dig deep enough into Purdue's prospective NFL Draft candidates. There was one egregious oversight, in fact.

Maybe it's because he's not mobile like a Lamar Jackson or Kyler Murray but sixth-year senior quarterback Aidan O'Connell has the arm and the ability to win big games that you'd think NFL teams would value.

The former walk-on earned second-team All-Big Ten honors behind the much more touted C.J. Stroud of Ohio State in 2021 after throwing for 3,712 yards and 28 touchdowns. O'Connell obliterated David



KENNY THOMPSON
Columnist

Blough's school record for completion percentage, connecting on nearly 72 percent of his passes.

Tennessee may not have had the best defense Purdue faced in 2021 but O'Connell impressed with leading scoring drive after scoring drive when it seemed the Vols would take control before a home state crowd in the 2021 Music City Bowl. Scouts had to have taken notice that O'Connell threw for 534 yards and five touchdowns.

Another draft candidate overlooked by The Athletic is tight end Payne Durham, who also has eligibility for 2023 if he chooses.

Durham probably will be O'Connell's top receiving option in 2022 with the departure of Bell to the Cleveland Browns and the academic ineligibility of Wright. Durham is the top returning receiver statistically with 45 catches for 467 yards and five touchdowns. Don't be surprised if Durham joins Brycen Hopkins, now with the Los Angeles Rams, as the winner of the Big Ten Kwalick-Clark Tight End of the Year award.

Let's rank the rest of Purdue's 21 scholarship seniors (a high for the Jeff Brohm era) in order of NFL Draft chances.

Branson Deen – His size (6-2, 280) may not fit the ideal NFL mold for a defensive tackle but his 26 tackles and 4.5 sacks in 2021 indicate playmaking ability. He possesses eligibility for 2023.

Cam Allen – The 6-1, 195 safety just makes plays. He's Purdue's No. 2 returning tackler with 65 and led the Boilermakers with four interceptions in 2021. Allen has 2023 eligibility available.

Reese Taylor – The former Indiana Mr. Football from Ben Davis is a graduate transfer defensive back who compiled career statistics of 74 tackles and two interceptions for Indiana after being converted from quarterback. If Taylor can crack a veteran secondary that includes Trice, Allen, Jamari Brown, Chris Jefferson and Sanousi Kane, his athletic ability could get him noticed by scouts.

Broc Thompson – The offensive MVP of the Music City Bowl underwent surgery on both knees following the game and missed spring practice. A senior academically, the wide receiver has 2023 eligibility.

Lawrence Johnson – He has the size (6-3, 310) scouts covet for a defensive lineman. Johnson probably has to increase his 2021 totals of 34 tackles and 4.5 tackles

for loss. Even though this is Johnson's fifth season as a Boilermaker, he possesses 2023 eligibility thanks to redshirting in 2018 and the 2020 COVID free pass.

Jamari Brown – The Kentucky transfer stepped up when Trice was lost for the season, recording 32 tackles and an interception. The 6-3, 205-pound Brown possesses 2023 eligibility.

Chris Jefferson – The safety transferred from Division II Findlay and proved he belonged in the Big Ten with 47 tackles in 2021. Fifteen of those came in the Music City Bowl against Tennessee. His initial hit of Vols running back Jaylen Wright on fourth down in overtime bought time for Jamari Brown and Kieran Douglas to come in and stop Wright short of the goal line.

Kieran Douglas – Purdue's leading returning tackler with 67 last season. The 6-2, 240-pound linebacker began his college football career with Army in 2017.

Semisi Fakasiieki – The 6-2, 230-pound linebacker was granted a sixth year of eligibility after missing 2021 with a knee injury. He had been a projected starter before the injury.

Jack Sullivan – The early favorite to replace George Karlaftis at defensive end, Sullivan stepped in for the NFL first-round draft pick in the Music City Bowl and came away with a sack among his four tackles. Sullivan had 22 tackles and 2.5 sacks in 2021.

Scotty Humpich – The defensive end from Murray State is making the jump to the Big Ten as a graduate transfer. He has two seasons of eligibility.

King Doerue – Purdue's rushing leader in 2021 with 533 yards and two touchdowns. Doerue has 2023 eligibility available.

Sampson James – Although listed as a senior on Purdue's 2022 roster, the former four-star running back from Avon has sophomore eligibility thanks to COVID and sitting out 2021 after transferring late from Indiana.

Mitchell Fineran – Arguably had the best season of Purdue's 2021 transfer class. The former All-American from Samford just missed matching Ben Jones' school record (25) with 24 field goals in 29 attempts.

D.J. Washington – The 6-3, 310-pound Washington has played both offensive and defensive tackle.

Eric Miller – The 6-7, 305-pound offensive tackle has 2023 eligibility.

Austin Burton – The presumptive backup quarterback to O'Connell completed 5 of 7 passes, his first for Purdue after coming from UCLA as a graduate transfer, for 44

yards.

NBA post-lottery forecast

Now that the Indiana Pacers have had their usual bad luck in the NBA Draft lottery (drew the No. 6 slot after having the fifth-worst record in 2021-22), it looks like they will be out of luck if Purdue star Jaden Ivey was their favorite.

Jonathan Givony of ESPN.com has Ivey going fifth to Detroit.

"Ivey is the most electric prospect in the class, possessing the type of extra gear-changing speeds in the open floor that few NBA players possess," Givony writes. "Ivey's size, frame and length, along with the strides he has made as a shooter, will allow him to slide into a variety of lineup configurations, making it easy for him to find his way onto the floor, especially as his defense and decision-making improve."

Givony also has Purdue center Trevion Williams going to Minnesota with the 50th overall selection. Williams was not in the draft forecast of The Athletic's Sam Vecenie, who has Ivey going to Sacramento with the No. 4 pick.

"Picking Ivey this high is all about his upside," Vecenie writes. "He's the best athlete in the class and was extremely productive this year at Purdue. He has a lightning-quick first step, can power through defenders on the move and finish with explosive leaps at the hoop. The way he uses his speed to create driving lanes and transition opportunities resembles No. 1 pick John Wall early in his NBA career."

"Ivey's main issues are his non-existent midrange game and sub-elite passing skills, both essential skills for an NBA lead guard. If he can't improve those areas, it will be hard for him to take on a primary offensive role consistently. But if those parts of Ivey's game come together, he could end up as the best player in this class."

Former Carmel star to Purdue

Cole Brevard, a two-time all-state defensive tackle for Carmel, announced Monday on Twitter that he is transferring to Purdue from Penn State.

The former four-star prospect redshirted in 2020 and played in one game this past season, leaving him with four seasons of eligibility at Purdue.

Brevard joins sophomore running back Dylan Downing as Carmel alumni on the Boilermaker roster.

Brevard is the ninth transfer to join the Boilermakers for the 2022 season, joining wide receivers Tyrone Tracy (Iowa) and Elijah Canion (Auburn), defensive end

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Scotty Humpich (Murray State), cornerbacks Reese Taylor (Indiana), Tee Denson (Kansas State) and Bryce Hampton (Adams State) plus offensive linemen Sione Finau (Florida International) and Daniel Johnson (Kent State).

Going Back to the Jersey Number Retirement Debate with Kenny

A few weeks ago, we explored what would happen if Purdue athletics would reverse its stance and retire numbers of its men's basketball greats.

Now we'll take a look at which Purdue football legends should have their numbers retired. Unlike basketball, NCAA rules permit duplicate numbers to be worn as long as both players wearing, say No. 5, are not on the field at the same time.

Theoretically, this rule would give athletic directors more options than in basketball, which does not permit numbers higher than 55.

Not surprisingly, a quick check of Big Ten schools revealed that retired numbers are commonplace. Wisconsin has retired five numbers, including those worn by Heisman Trophy winners Alan Ameche and Ron Dayne

Michigan has six, among them President Gerald Ford's 48 and Heisman winners Tom Harmon (98) and Desmond Howard (21). Not to be outdone by its bitter rival, Ohio State has seven retired numbers (five of them Heisman winners) and a "WH" for Woody Hayes.

Since Purdue has no Heisman winners in its history (Bob Griese and Mike Phipps should have won but that's a column for another day), what criteria should the Boilermaker administration apply?

To me it's simple: Membership in the College Football Hall of Fame or winning a major award such as the Maxwell, John Mackey or Ray Guy.

Here's my list in chronological order, starting with the College Football Hall of Fame members:

Cecil Isbell (88) – One of the great passers of the 1930s, Isbell came to Purdue from Houston in 1934. In coach Noble Kizer's offense, Isbell played left halfback and was a triple threat as a runner, passer and punter. During his junior season in 1936, Isbell was responsible for 15 of Purdue's 23 touchdowns. He was a two-time second-team All-America selection. Isbell was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 1967.

Bob Griese (12) – Voted Purdue's All-Time Quarterback in 1987 as part of the Boilermakers' football centennial celebration, Griese led Purdue to a 22-7-1 record during his three seasons as a starter from 1964-66. Two-time consensus All-American who guided the Boilermakers to their only Rose Bowl victory in 1967. Griese was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 1984.

Leroy Keyes (23) – Fans voted Keyes Purdue's greatest player in 1987. He remains the only two-time consensus All-American in school history and finished third in the Heisman balloting as a junior and second to O.J. Simpson as a senior. In 1968, Keyes made the cover of Sports Illustrated, which declared the Boilermakers its preseason No. 1. Keyes led the nation in scoring as a junior with a school-record 114 points (13 rushing touchdowns, six receiving touchdowns). He was also Purdue's first 1,000-yard rusher. Keyes was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 1990.

Mike Phipps (15) – The Columbus, Ind., native played two games for Purdue before being on the cover of Sports Illustrated for leading the Boilermakers to the first of three consecutive victories against Notre Dame. Phipps' sophomore season in 1967 also saw Purdue win a share of the Big Ten Conference title. As a senior, Phipps was a unanimous All-American and lost the Heisman voting to Oklahoma's Steve Owens by 154 points, one of the closest margins in Heisman history to that point. Phipps was elected to the College Football Hall of Fame in 2006.

Otis Armstrong (24) – Just like Mike Phipps had to follow a legend in Bob Griese, Otis Armstrong managed to surpass Leroy Keyes in the Purdue record book in several categories. The Chicago native rushed for 3,315 yards from 1970-72, which is still third in program history 50 years later. Armstrong averaged nearly 5 yards a carry and his 276-yard effort against Indiana during his final game on Nov. 25, 1972, is still the greatest single-game total in Boilermaker history. Armstrong was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 2012.

Dave Butz (62) – The massive defensive tackle and Armstrong headlined arguably the greatest recruiting class in Purdue football history. Even Michigan's Bo Schembechler called Butz "the greatest defensive lineman I had ever seen." Butz was such a great athlete that he earned a basketball

scholarship offer from Kentucky's Adolph Rupp. In three seasons, Butz collected 108 tackles, 21 tackles for loss and eight pass breakups. He was the defensive MVP of the Senior Bowl. Butz was elected to the College Football Hall of Fame in 2014.

Mark Herrmann (9) – The most prolific passer in NCAA history when he graduated from Purdue, Herrmann held nine NCAA passing records including yards (9,188) and completions (707). A four-year starter from 1977-80, Herrmann was the first quarterback in NCAA history to throw for 8,000 yards and later 9,000 yards. He led Purdue to three consecutive bowl victories (Peach, Bluebonnet, Liberty) and was the offensive MVP in each. A unanimous All-American in 1980, Herrmann was elected to the College Football Hall of Fame in 2010.

Rod Woodson (26) – Owing 13 individual records when he played his final game for Purdue in 1986, Woodson was a three-time first-team All-Big Ten defensive back. The 1986 consensus All-American's record haul included solo tackles, interceptions, interception return yardage, interception returns for touchdowns, kickoff returns and kickoff return yardage. He also owns the longest interception return in school history, 100 yards against Iowa in 1986. Woodson was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 2016.

Kenneth "Jack" Mollenkopf – If Ohio State can honor Woody Hayes, why can't Purdue salute the man who won 67 percent of his games from 1956 to 1969? During his final three seasons, Mollenkopf led Purdue to a 25-6 record. Today that record would earn him a statue outside Ross-Ade Stadium. His College Football Hall of Fame biography states that Mollenkopf "was a coach who stressed fundamentals, preparation and execution." Mollenkopf owned a 10-4 record against Notre Dame and was 11-2-1 against Indiana. He was elected to the College Football Hall of Fame in 1988.

Purdue claims seven more College Football Hall of Fame members, three players and four coaches.

Alex Agase (95) was one of the stars of Purdue's undefeated 1943 Big Ten championship team, coming over from Illinois. He returned to Illinois after serving in the Marines during World War II and was an All-American again in 1946. The All-America guard was selected to Purdue's all-time team in 1987.

Chalmers "Bump" Elliott (18) was a running back for Purdue in 1943 and

1944 after being sent to West Lafayette by the Marines for officer training. His Boilermaker career lasted nine total games before being shipped out to China in 1944. Elliott finished his college career at Michigan in 1946-47, playing alongside brother Pete.

Purdue didn't have uniform numbers when Elmer Oliphant arrived on campus from Linton-Stockton High School in 1910. That tradition began at Purdue in 1928. Oliphant earned seven letters from 1911 to 1913 in football, baseball and basketball. His 43 points against Rose Poly in 1912 remains a school record. Oliphant's legend was secured when he broke an ankle against Illinois yet managed to kick the game-winning field goal for a 3-0 triumph. Thanks to wartime rules, Oliphant also was able to continue his athletic career at West Point, where he earned consensus All-America honors in 1916 and 1917.

Before sealing his Hall of Fame credentials at California, Andy Smith coached at Purdue from 1913-15. Smith went 12-6-3, with a Big Ten runner-up finish his first season. Before his untimely death at the age of 42 in 1926, Smith compiled a record of 116-32-13.

William "Lone Star" Dietz made it to the College Football Hall of Fame in 2012, no thanks to his one season at Purdue. Dietz went 1-6 and was fired after the 1921 campaign.

Jim Phelan built a dominant Purdue squad in the 1920s, capped by an 8-0 Big Ten championship season in 1929. That year, Purdue outscored opponents 187-44. Phelan left for the University of Washington in 1930 and owned a 137-87-14 career record.

Jim Young was a disciple of Bo Schembechler, his old boss at Michigan, but transformed Purdue football with his passing offense during his five-year tenure from 1977-81. With Mark Herrmann setting NCAA records, Purdue went 28-7-1 from 1978 to 1980. That included the only 10-win season in school history, a 10-2 mark in 1979. Young also won at Arizona and Army, finishing with a record of 120-71-2.

Last but not least, Drew Brees (15). Under current College Football Hall of Fame rules, the greatest passer in Purdue history is not eligible for election. Since the wise voters of the NCAA-recognized All-America teams believed Chris Weinke and Josh Heupel were better quarterbacks in 2000, Brees doesn't qualify.



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