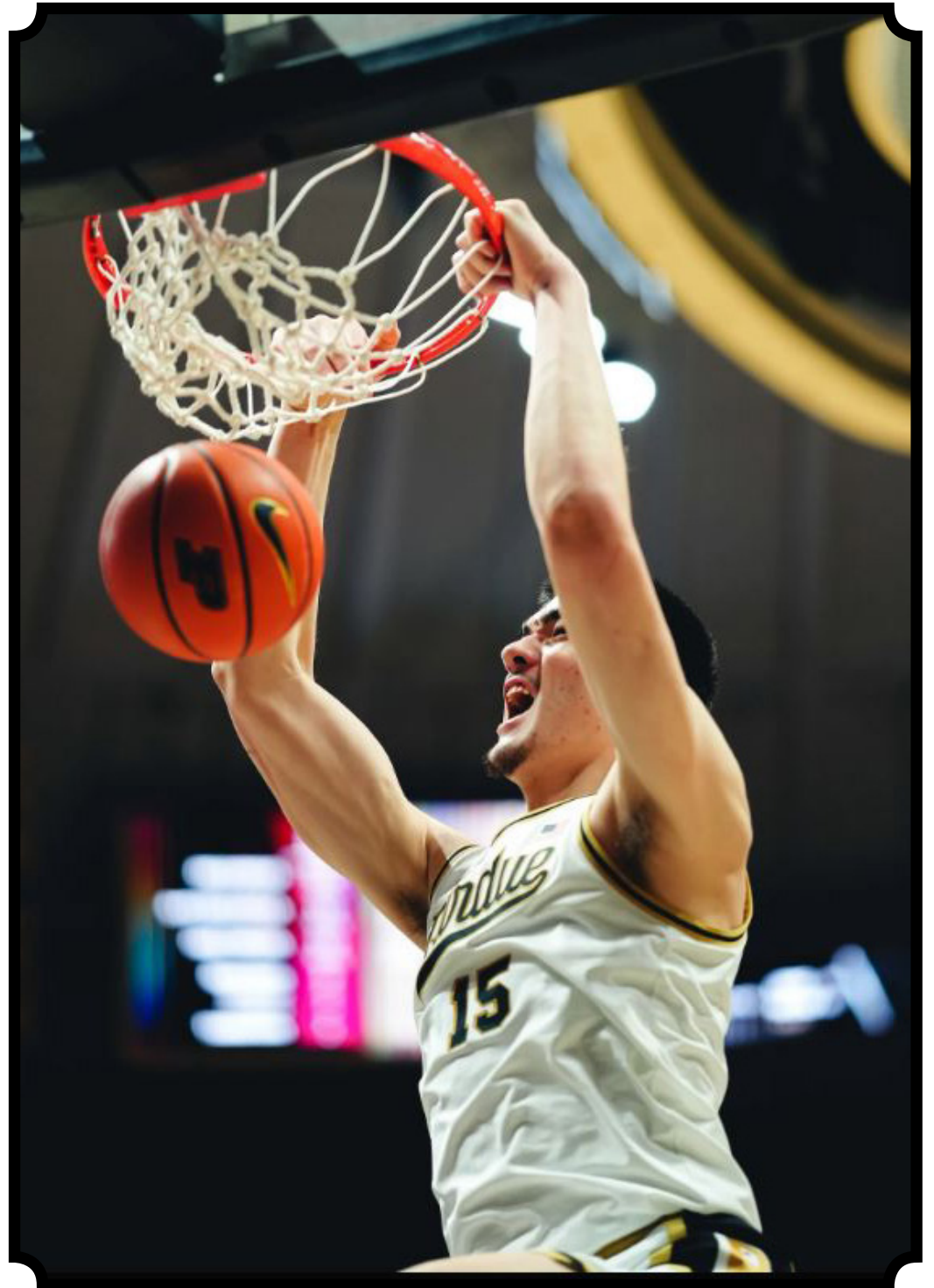


## Kenny Thompson Talks Boilermaker Basketball



*Photo courtesy of Purdue Athletics*

## Kenny Looks at Big Ten Schedule Shakeups

Media reports indicate the Big Ten Conference's top officials will meet sometime this month to work out plans for football schedules in 2024 and beyond.

It's not going to be as simple as plugging in new members USC and UCLA alongside Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, Northwestern and Wisconsin in the West while shifting Purdue to the East. The East and West divisions will cease to exist for one very lucrative reason.

FOX, CBS and NBC aren't paying ridiculous sums of cash to show USC traveling to Wisconsin in November. They want matchups like USC-Ohio State and UCLA-Penn State to lure viewers and advertisers and offset the cost of doing business with the Big Ten.

Then there are the annual rivalry games. Most, like Michigan-Ohio State and Purdue-Indiana will be protected. But how does the Big Ten make sure that the Illibuck Trophy game is played more than four times in a decade? Before 1987, it wasn't a worry that Illinois and Ohio State wouldn't meet annually.

Then Penn State came along. Since 12 was a nice even number, and it opened the door to a lucrative football championship game, Nebraska was welcomed into the fold in 2010. When commissioner Jim Delany cast his eyes toward New York City and Washington D.C. in 2014, he saw Rutgers and Maryland as a chance to extend the Big Ten Network's reach.

Now that the Big Ten has planted its flag from sea to shining sea, the hard work begins. How to please the fans and television partners, and not necessarily in that order, with games that will raise interest in Big Ten football but preserve the traditions in a league co-founded by Purdue president James H. Smart in 1896?

Let's give it a try, using the oft-rumored scheduling format of three permanent rivals and six opponents that will rotate every two years to ensure every Big Ten school plays the other 15 members.

Purdue – Protected rivals Indiana, Illinois and Iowa. Yes, Northwestern is closer to West Lafayette but there would be cries – especially from Bloomington – that some years this would give the Boilermakers quite a head start in conference play.



**KENNY THOMPSON**  
Columnist

Since 2000, Purdue is 14-8 vs. Indiana, 14-6 vs. Illinois (for The Cannon) and 10-10 vs. Northwestern. The series with the Hawkeyes over the last 22 years is 8-12.

I also would recommend the first six rotating schools come from the pre-expansion era Big Ten: Michigan, Michigan State, Minnesota, Northwestern, Ohio State and Wisconsin. In these changing times, familiarity may help ease older fans into accepting this is not their father's Big Ten. Replace them in 2026-27 with Maryland, Nebraska, Penn State, Rutgers, UCLA and USC for a home and home series.

Indiana – Next to the Old Oaken Bucket game, the Hoosiers' longest rivalry is with Ohio State (96 games). However, the Buckeyes are locked in with Michigan and probably some combination of Penn State, USC and UCLA for marquee matchup reasons.

Fortunately, the Old Brass Spitoon gives the Big Ten a reason to extend the series with Michigan State. As for the third permanent rival, Illinois makes a lot of sense.

Illinois – Speaking of the Fighting Illini, they might be one of the easiest schools to assign permanent rivals.

They would be Purdue (The Cannon), Northwestern (Land of Lincoln) and Indiana, a reasonable drive (169 miles) between Bloomington and Champaign. This would relegate the Illibuck Trophy game with Ohio State and a longtime rivalry (97 games) with Michigan to 4-6 times a decade.

Iowa – The Hawkeyes' Floyd of Rosedale rivalry with Minnesota has gone on for 116 games, one fewer than Michigan-Ohio State. This is a lock to continue annually.

Since we have Purdue as a permanent foe (the Boilermakers have played the Hawkeyes 93 times), let's plug in Iowa-Wisconsin for the Heartland Trophy each year.

Maryland – Believe it or not, the Terrapins have won just four times in 46 games with Penn State. So why would we advocate the Nittany Lions as a permanent rival?

Travel, the same reason I'd assign Rutgers as permanent foe No. 2. By process of elimination, as you'll see later, Northwestern is the pick for the third permanent opponent.

Michigan – Something will have to give for the Wolverines if a permanent slot is saved for a second marquee TV game outside their matchup with Ohio State.

Three of the Big Ten's oldest rivalry games belong to Michigan: Ohio State (117), Michigan State (115, Paul Bunyan Trophy) and Minnesota (109, Little Brown Jug). Jim Harbaugh wouldn't mind if those three games are permanent but if FOX/CBS/NBC request annual Michigan/USC contests, the Gophers might be the odd rival out.

Michigan State – The Spartans and Michigan carry grudges to the extreme.

Michigan believes MSU cost them a trip to the Rose Bowl in 1973, being the swing vote in the secret balloting among athletic directors. The Spartans have reason to believe Michigan tried to keep them out of the Big Ten in the 1940s.

The name calling and deep-seated resentment between the two programs sells this game without the usual rivalry hype. While not as bitter, Michigan State and Indiana have had some really good rivalry games. Let's pick Minnesota for the third permanent game.

Minnesota – We've already mentioned Iowa and Floyd of Rosedale, but the Gophers play for an even bigger (literally) trophy in Paul Bunyan's Axe with Wisconsin. The Badgers and Gophers have met 132 times, easily the Big Ten's longest standing rivalry.

Since we've cast aside the Little Brown Jug, Michigan State would be a worthy substitute for Michigan.

Nebraska – Alas, the "\$5 Bits of Broken Chair Trophy" (I'm not making this up) with Minnesota is unlikely to make the annual cut.

The Heroes Trophy matchup with Iowa won't work either if the Hawkeyes are permanently linked with Purdue.

The rivalry most likely to remain is the annual struggle with Wisconsin for the Freedom Trophy. As the closest geographical school to the Los Angeles branch of the Big Ten, let's pencil in UCLA as permanent rival No. 2. Rutgers has to play someone permanently so why not a fellow expansion team?

Northwestern – The Wildcats have just one natural rival, Illinois. This fact makes Northwestern a wild card to fill out permanent schedules, and I've chosen to fit in Maryland and Ohio State.

Ohio State – The Buckeyes are a valuable TV commodity and as much as FOX/CBS/NBC would love to stack their lineup with games against name opponents (Penn State, UCLA, the Cleveland Browns – kidding), the 3-6-6 scheduling model limits the Big Ten in its options. That's why I have Northwestern paired with Michigan and USC.

Penn State – Maryland and Rutgers make too much sense geographically and would allow the Nittany Lions to retain their traditional East Coast sensibilities.

But a name brand like Penn State needs a worthy annual rival, and UCLA has the cachet.

Rutgers – The Scarlet Knights feel like everyone's last choice when selecting teams for a pickup basketball game.

Penn State and Maryland aren't fits athletically but the shorter road trips will help pay for those flights to Los Angeles for basketball, volleyball and Rutgers' other athletic teams. Nebraska completes the expansion triumvirate.

USC – The Victory Bell rivalry with UCLA will claim the honor of closest Big Ten rivals (14.2 miles or an hour in Los Angeles traffic) from Michigan/Michigan State (87 miles).

Ohio State is almost a certain second permanent foe, and the guess here is Michigan will be the third.

UCLA – Looking at the Bruins' football history, the most games they have played against a current Big Ten school is 13 against Nebraska. The Cornhuskers still possess a big enough name to lure casual viewers.

The third permanent rival after USC and Nebraska? Penn State is a strong bet.

Wisconsin – Three traditional rivals,

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three permanent scheduling slots.

It just makes too much sense to choose anyone but Iowa, Minnesota and Nebraska so why complicate things?

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### **Kenny Talks The Company That We Keep**

A wise man once said we are judged by the company we keep.

The good people that determine who gets into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame and who doesn't have once again deigned to give Purdue's winningest coach, Gene Keady, a chance to be immortalized.

While joining fellow Purdue legends John Wooden, Ward "Piggy" Lambert and Charles "Stretch" Murphy in Springfield, Mass., would be a great 87th birthday (May 21) present, Keady would add class to a section of the Hall of Fame that at times has dispelled the myth that cheaters never prosper.

Take Larry Brown. Elected in 2002, Brown pulled off the triple crown of violating NCAA rules at UCLA, Kansas and SMU. But read his Hall of Fame biography on the Naismith website (hoophall.com) and one would get the impression winning was all that mattered and that Brown was basketball's gift to coaching.

Here's what you won't read in that biography: Suspended for 30 percent of SMU's games in 2015 and the Mustangs banned from the 2016 NCAA tournament. His actions at UCLA and Kansas also drew postseason bans. But yeah, he's an all-time great.

To his dying day, former Purdue coach Lee Rose was bitter toward Brown for violating NCAA rules to put together the UCLA team that beat him during the 1980 Final Four.

Current Kentucky coach John Calipari also pulled off a rare feat in NCAA history, coaching not one but two schools (UMass, Memphis) who had their Final Four berths erased due to recruiting violations.

Rick Pitino, whose penchant for cheating extended (embarrassingly in one case) into his personal life, swore he knew nothing about an assistant procuring escorts for recruits and players at Louisville. That fib resulted in the NCAA stripping the Cardinals of their 2012 national championship.

There are other Hall of Fame coaches who had, to be kind, sketchy history with NCAA investigators: Jim Boeheim, Jim Calhoun, Everett Case, Bill Self and Jerry Tarkanian.

Perhaps then it is fitting that the Class of 2023 will be announced on April Fools Day in Houston as part of the NCAA Men's Final Four festivities. It would also be fitting if Keady's protégé, Matt Painter, and the Boilermakers would be there to celebrate (hopefully) his big day.

Keady has been waiting since 2006 for a third chance at election to the Naismith Hall of Fame. Among the competition this time is East Chicago native Gregg Popovich, a five-time NBA championship coach with the San Antonio Spurs, and women's basketball coaching great Gary Blair, who led Texas A&M to the 2011 title.

Keady's credentials lack a Final Four but he can boast six National Coach of the Year honors (1984, 1988, 1994-96, 2000), six Big Ten titles (1984, 1987-88, 1994-96) and a record seven Big Ten Coach of the Year awards (1984, 1988, 1990, 1994-96, 2000).

Keady isn't the only Purdue legend who has waited too long for enshrinement.

Rick Mount hasn't picked up a basketball professionally since 1975. If I am interpreting the Hall of Fame eligibility rules correctly, the greatest shooter in my lifetime has been waiting more than 40 years for the call.

Caleb Swanigan and Zach Edey are among a select group of Purdue players who have had seasons approaching the career numbers put up by Terry Dischinger in the early 1960s. His career averages were 28.3 points and 13.7 rebounds per game.

Dischinger, also the 1963 NBA Rookie of the Year and a three-time NBA All-Star, is in the Naismith Hall of Fame as a member of the 1960 Olympic gold medal basketball team. But Dischinger deserves a solo plaque like his 1960 teammates Oscar Robertson, Jerry West, Jerry Lucas and Walt Bellamy.

Glenn Robinson's case for Hall of Fame enshrinement includes unanimous collegiate player of the year in 1994, national scoring champion that same season and a nearly 21-point scoring

average in the NBA. He has been out of basketball since winning an NBA championship ring with San Antonio in 2005.

College basketball's future Former Purdue star Robbie Hummel and Boilermaker coach Matt Painter are among The Athletic's "20 for the next 20 years of college basketball" who will influence the game.

Hummel came in at No. 6, two spots ahead of his former head coach. After his playing career ended, Hummel has been in demand as a TV analyst. He currently calls games for both ESPN and the Big Ten Network.

"The former Purdue star already has proven to be insightful and intuitive, appreciated for both his understanding of the game and his candor," Dana O'Neil writes. "Analysts are pretty much the sport's megaphone, and Hummel could be the insider voice of the future."

Painter was given a place on the list for more than his coaching acumen.

"Aside from his own staying power, as a perennial March presence, Painter is quietly and unassumingly becoming a powerful voice in college basketball leadership," O'Neil writes. "He sits on a number of NCAA committees and is on the (National Association of Basketball Coaches) board of directors.

"More important than the positions themselves, he wants to roll up his sleeves and take care of the game. Coaches hope that, in the new NCAA structure, there will actually be room at the table for them to share their insights and opinions. If so, seat Painter at the head."

Noteworthy

The Purdue men's and women's basketball teams could have something in common at season's end.

For the first time in school history, each squad could have a 2,000-point career scorer on their roster. However, this statement comes with an asterisk.

Fifth-year senior guard Lasha Petree surpassed the 2,000-point milestone last Sunday in the 83-60 loss at No. 2 Indiana. Her team-high 23 points gives her 356 in a Purdue uniform to go with 257 at Rutgers and 1,398 at Bradley for a total of 2,011.

On the men's side, fifth-year senior guard David Jenkins Jr. is 46 points shy of 2,000. His totals include 1,194

at South Dakota State, 399 at UNLV, 264 at Utah and 97 in his role as the backup to Braden Smith at Purdue. ...

Purdue's Matt Painter and Northwestern's Chris Collins are the only Big Ten Conference coaches on the Naismith Coach of the Year late-season watch list.

The Atlanta Tipoff Club placed 15 coaches on the list that includes Randy Bennett of Saint Mary's, Jeff Capel of Pittsburgh, Mick Cronin of UCLA, Dennis Gates of Missouri, Pat Kelsey of College of Charleston, Dusty May of Florida Atlantic, Sean Miller of Xavier, Nate Oats of Alabama, T.J. Otzelberger of Iowa State, Kelvin Sampson of Houston, Shaka Smart of Marquette, Jerome Tang of Kansas State and Rodney Terry of Texas.

The list will be narrowed to 10 semifinalists on March 9 and four finalists on March 20.

Projected to finish in the middle of the Big Ten pack, Purdue (23-4) leads the league at 12-4. The Boilermakers have spent seven weeks atop The Associated Press poll and are competing for the program's fourth No. 1 NCAA Tournament seed in school history. ...

The Darrell Hazell era at Purdue was one fans would like to forget. But two members of Hazell's staff made news last week.

Notre Dame head coach Marcus Freeman, the co-defensive coordinator during Hazell's final season in 2016, needed an offensive coordinator after Alabama hired away Tommy Rees this offseason.

Enter Gerad Parker, the man who served as interim coach at Purdue in 2016 for the final six games after Hazell was dismissed.

Parker was promoted from tight ends coach and earned praise for his development of Mackey Award finalist Michael Mayer.

"I know firsthand the person, teacher, recruiter and innovative football mind he is," Freeman said. "I look forward to watching our offense flourish under Gerad's leadership and direction."

*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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