

## Kenny Talks Early Boilermakers



*Photo courtesy of Purdue Athletics*

## Boilermaker's Earliest Leaders Walked So Future Leaders Could Run

During the early days of college football, most coaches had other occupations.

No, nothing like those cheesy insurance commercials that fatten the bank accounts of Alabama's Nick Saban and new Colorado coach Deion Sanders.

Take Purdue's first coach in 1887. For the princely sum of "\$1 per lesson," 23-year-old Albert Berg was charged with preparing a team to play against another Indiana school making its collegiate football debut, Butler.

One more thing to know, Berg was a deaf-mute. The cause: a childhood bout of spinal meningitis.

After attending the Indiana Institution for the Deaf in Indianapolis, Berg went on to play football for what is now Galaudet College in Washington, D.C.

In 1980, Journal and Courier sports writer Paula Waltz recounted the tale of Berg's task of teaching football at Purdue. Only two of his players had ever seen a football.

That was painfully obvious on Oct. 29, when Purdue traveled to Indianapolis and received a 48-6 thrashing. Jacob Sholl scored the first touchdown in school history. He and his teammates returned home, as an Indianapolis newspaper described it, "in a disturbed state of mind."

Purdue wouldn't play another football game until 1889.

Berg would eventually become a teacher at the Indiana School for the Deaf. He would return to Purdue on Nov. 22, 1924 for the Ross-Ade Stadium dedication ceremony. Berg lived to be 80, dying in Council Bluffs, Iowa in 1945.

George Ade, half of that famous stadium duo, wrote years later that Berg "demonstrated the fact that the right kind of hero can overcome almost any handicap."

The next eight men to lead the Boilermakers on the football field were anything but typical football coaches as well.

Harvard-educated G.A. (George Andrew) Reisner's only connection to Purdue football other than his 2-1 record in 1889 was having a niece married to 1930s Boilermaker standout Cecil Isbell.

Archaeology was Reisner's claim to fame. A front page story in the Journal and Courier declaring his death in 1942 at the age of 74 didn't mention Reisner had coached Purdue football

"World Famous Explorer Dead Near Pyramids, the headline declared. "Dr. G.A. Reisner, Greatest of Egyptologists,



**KENNY THOMPSON**  
Columnist

Brother of a Business Man Here; World Owes Debt to Him."

Reisner fittingly died at the site of the pyramids of Gizeh. He had been in charge of the Harvard University excavations since 1905. The story also reported that Reisner had been the youngest person ever awarded a degree at Harvard at the time of his graduation in 1889.

Clinton L. Hare was another one and done Purdue football coach, going 3-3 in 1890 after a three-year stint (8-0-1) at Butler. That same year, Hare was admitted to the Indiana bar and worked at a law firm whose partners included Benjamin Harrison, the 23rd President of the United States.

Hare later was president of the Indiana Wholesale Grocer's Association. He died of throat cancer in 1909 at age 44.

The Journal and Courier's tribute to Knowlton "Snake" Ames in 1931 referred to the Princeton great as "the father of football at Purdue." One thing is for sure: Ames will be the only undefeated coach in school history.

Ames went 12-0 over 1891 and 1892. His 1891 squad outscored opponents 192-0 in four games. The 1892 squad was dominating as well, scoring 320 points while allowing 18 over eight games.

The star player on those teams, Alpha Jamison, said Ames "was one of the greatest players and coaches that ever lived." Ames was elected to the College Football Hall of Fame in 1969.

Ames was a success in business too, earning a reputation as a financier, newspaper publisher and social leader in

Chicago.

Financial losses suffered at the beginning of the Great Depression and declining health was too much for Ames, who took his own life while sitting inside his car two days before Christmas. He was 63.

Not long after helping Princeton go 11-0 and win a mythical national championship, D.M. (David Milton) Balliet continued the momentum Ames started by leading Purdue to a 5-2-1 record in 1893, 9-1 in 1894 and 4-3 in 1895.

Balliet began practicing law after leaving Purdue but put that career on hold in 1897 to join the Klondike Gold Rush in Alaska. When that didn't pan out, Balliet returned to Purdue in 1901, going 4-4-1. Closing the season with losses to Notre Dame, Illinois and Northwestern, Balliet was fired.

He found his life's work as a coal salesman in Pennsylvania and died at the age of 93 in 1960.

The first to coach Purdue as a member of the Big Ten Conference, Samuel M. Hammond found a more lucrative profession after leaving West Lafayette with a 4-2-1 record in 1896.

Hammond practiced medicine as an ear and eye specialist in Connecticut for over 30 years before passing away at age 64 in 1934.

Not much is known about William Church, who guided the Boilermakers to a 5-3-1 record in 1897. He's regarded as one of Princeton's all-time greats of the 19th century and judging by this quote, a quick-witted person.

"Am neither statesman nor politician," Church said in 1909. "Have not brains enough for the first and am not smart enough for the second."

Church died in 1966 at the age of 91.

Purdue's final coach of the 19th century would be better known as an early mayor of West Lafayette.

Presumably, Alpha Jamison was a better mayor than football coach. Arguably Purdue's greatest football player of the 19th century, Jamison led the Boilermakers to an 11-11-1 mark from 1898 to 1900. He fared better on the basketball court, going 12-1 over two seasons.

Jamison married into a well-to-do family in 1900 and was associated with their bakery business for 42 years. Jamison died in 1962 at the age of 86.

Charles M. Best replaced Balliet in 1902 and was very successful, posting a 7-2-1 record. Best's success translated to the basketball court as the Boilermakers went 10-3 during the 1901-02 season.

The years between 1903 and 1917 are lost to history (and Google) before Best resurfaced at The University of the South, better known as Sewanee. Playing in the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association, a predecessor to today's Southeastern Conference, Sewanee went 7-4-1 in two seasons under Best. Best passed away in 1962 at age 87.

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## Unofficial Ranking Of Purdue Men's Basketball Championships

Time will tell where the 2023 Big Ten champion Purdue men's basketball team ranks among the school's 24 other title squads.

Purdue's 25 championships are the most in conference history, three more than Indiana and five better than Wisconsin and Ohio State.

Here's one man's rankings of the previous 24 Boilermaker Big Ten championship teams.

1969

Purdue won its first Big Ten championship in 29 years in impressive fashion, topping Illinois and Ohio State by four games. All-American guard Rick Mount's 33.7 scoring average boosted the Boilermakers to the national scoring championship at 94.8 points per game.

Only an all-time great UCLA team, led by Lew Alcindor (later known as Kareem Abdul-Jabbar), stood between Purdue and a national championship.

1994

National Player of the Year Glenn Robinson led the nation at 30.3 points a game and scored the winning basket at Michigan that delivered the first of three consecutive outright Big Ten championships for the Boilermakers.

1988

Led by seniors Troy Lewis, Todd Mitchell and Everette Stephens, Purdue lived up to preseason expectations by rolling through the Big Ten at 16-2. The top-seeded Boilermakers routed Fairleigh Dickenson and Memphis State in South Bend, but their national championship dreams ended with a heartbreaking loss to Kansas State in the Sweet 16.

1932

Purdue's lone national basketball championship to date was inspired by Big Ten scoring champion John Wooden, a three-time consensus All-American guard. To his dying day, Wooden never forgot the lone loss that season. A car accident on the way to Illinois left Wooden with an

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injured right hand. Purdue would avenge that 28-21 loss a month later and finish 17-1 overall.

2010

Seemingly on its way to Purdue's first No. 1 ranking and an elusive Final Four berth, Robbie Hummel's torn ACL at Minnesota dashed both of those dreams. The Boilermakers recovered enough to salvage a three-way tie with Ohio State and Michigan State.

2019

Jerry West Award winner Carsen Edwards and fellow sharpshooter Ryan Cline teamed up with role players Nojel Eastern, Matt Haarms and Grady Eifert to earn a share of the Big Ten title with Michigan State. These Boilermakers came within a second of reaching the Final Four for the first time since 1980.

1930

The only season two all-time college basketball greats, John Wooden and Charles "Stretch" Murphy played together. The 6-7 Murphy and Wooden led Purdue to the first undefeated conference season since Minnesota in 1919. Murphy claimed the third of three consecutive consensus All-America honors, and was joined on the consensus team by Wooden.

1979

A three-way tie with eventual national champion Michigan State and Iowa earned the Boilermakers a berth ... in the NIT. At the time, only two teams per conference were allowed in the NCAA tournament, and the Hawkeyes' season sweep gave them the second nod. Future All-American center Joe Barry Carroll blossomed under first-year coach Lee Rose, leading the Big Ten at 23.8 points per game and second in rebounding at 10.1.

2017

An impressive front court of All-American Caleb Swanigan, 7-2 center Isaac Haas and Vincent Edwards powered the Boilermakers to a two-game edge over Wisconsin and Maryland.

1987

One of several "what might have been" teams in the Keady era. Having wrapped up the Big Ten title, third-ranked Purdue was demolished at Michigan 104-68 on the final day of the season. Co-champion Indiana, instead of Purdue, was assigned to Indianapolis by the NCAA tournament committee to start its path toward a fifth national championship. Purdue was sent

to Syracuse, N.Y. and lost in the second round to Florida.

1984

Picked to finish ninth in the then 10-team Big Ten, Purdue shared the championship with Illinois at 15-3. Jim Rowinski was named Big Ten Player of the Year and Gene Keady won his first national coach of the year award.

1995

Seniors Cuonzo Martin and Matt Waddell, fathers to current Boilermakers Chase Martin and Brian Waddell, plus future NBA All-Star center Brad Miller led Purdue to the first consecutive outright Big Ten titles in school history.

1996

Chad Austin, Brandon Brantley and Brad Miller spurred the Boilermakers to the championship by three games over Penn State and Indiana.

1940

Piggy Lambert's last Big Ten championship team topped Indiana by one game thanks to a comeback victory at Illinois on the final day. Fatefully, Lambert declined an invitation to the second annual NCAA tournament. The bid went to Indiana, which claimed the first of five national championships.

1938

"We won it the hard way," Piggy Lambert said after his team prevailed 42-39 at Northwestern to finish 18-2 overall and edge Wisconsin by one game at 10-2. Two-time consensus All-American Jewell Young wrapped up his second Big Ten scoring title.

1934

The smallest team by height in the Big Ten packed a scoring punch on the way to a 10-2 mark and a two-game edge over Wisconsin and Northwestern. Purdue set a Big Ten record with 512 points (nearly 43 points a game). Norman Cottom earned consensus All-America honors.

1928

The beginning of a golden era of Purdue basketball. Murphy helped the Boilermakers win at Minnesota in the season finale to match Indiana at 10-2 as well as identical 15-2 overall records.

1926

All-American forward George Spradling won his second Big Ten scoring title while leading the Boilermakers to a share of the championship at 8-4 with Indiana, Michigan and Iowa.

1935

A victory at Northwestern on the final day gave the Boilermakers a tie with Illinois and Wisconsin at 9-3. Forward Bob Kessler earned first-team All-Big Ten honors.

1936

Purdue rallied from a 13-point halftime deficit at Michigan, earning a share of the title with Indiana at 11-1 thanks to a pair of free throws from Kessler to claim a 38-37 victory. Kessler earned consensus All-America honors.

1921

The first of Piggy Lambert's 11 Big Ten championship teams were led by All-American guards Donald White and Ray Miller. White led the Big Ten in scoring, and the Boilermakers shared the title with Michigan and Wisconsin at 8-4.

1922

The first outright Big Ten championship team once again was led by Miller. The Boilermakers went 8-1 in conference play and 15-3 overall.

1912

Undefeated in Big Ten play, Purdue ended up with a share of the championship with Wisconsin despite playing two fewer conference games. Center Ed McVaugh and guard Karp Stockton earned first-team All-Big Ten honors.

1911

The first of many outstanding big men, All-Big Ten center David Charters, led Purdue to its first league title.

News and thoughts

Hopefully, Purdue junior center Zach Edey's family home in Canada has room for all the honors coming his way.

Edey became the first Boilermaker since Glenn Robinson in 1994 to claim national player of the year honors when The Sporting News made their announcement Wednesday. Earlier, Edey was named first-team All-America. The Sporting News is one of four organizations recognized by the NCAA to determine consensus All-America honors.

On Tuesday, Edey became Purdue's fifth conference-awarded Big Ten Player of the Year. He joins the late Caleb Swanigan (2017), JaJuan Johnson (2011), Robinson (1994) and Steve Scheffler (1990).

Edey and Michigan's Chris Webber are the only two Big Ten players in the past 30 years to have at least 600 points, 350 rebounds and 50 blocked shots in a season. Edey goes into the postseason

averaging 21.9 points, 12.8 rebounds and a national-best 23 double-doubles.

He's only the second player in Big Ten history to lead the league in scoring, rebounding and field goal percentage (.611). The other was Ohio State's Gary Bradds in 1963-64. ...

The Big Ten coaches and media got it right with Edey and Indiana's Jalen Hood-Schifino winning Freshman of the Year honors. As for coach of the year, not so much.

Just because Northwestern wasn't its usual conference road kill doesn't mean Chris Collins did the best coaching job. The honor should have gone to Matt Painter for winning a championship by three games after being picked to finish fifth or sixth in the preseason.

A 15-5 Big Ten record after losing an NBA lottery pick (Jaden Ivey), an All-American big man (Trevion Williams), its best 3-point shooter (Sasha Stefanovic) and a four-year regular (Eric Hunter)? Winning a championship with an all-freshman backcourt of Braden Smith and Fletcher Loyer? No one saw this coming.

Smith was selected to the Big Ten All-Freshman team, and Loyer claimed honorable mention all-conference honors.

Smith, the 2022 Indiana Mr. Basketball from Westfield, averages 10 points, 4.2 assists and 4.3 rebounds per game. He is the first Purdue player since Troy Lewis in 1987-88 to average those numbers.

Loyer's 11.6 scoring average and 54 3-pointers rank fourth among Big Ten freshmen. ...

USA Today ranks Painter atop the list of college basketball's most underpaid head coaches.

"In terms of pure bang for your buck in men's college basketball, it's hard to top the return on investment Purdue has found in longtime coach Matt Painter," writer Paul Myerberg states.

Painter's reported total compensation of \$3.58 million for 2022-23 ranks 21st nationally and sixth in the Big Ten. Entering the Big Ten tournament, Painter owns a 408-197 record with 14 NCAA Tournament appearances and four Big Ten regular season titles.

*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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