

College Football Hall of Fame And Boilermaker Basketball





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Columnist

How Can College Hall Continue to Bypass Drew Brees?

The best player in New Orleans Saints history was a unanimous selection for the team's Hall of Fame on May 30.

Drew Brees' 15 seasons in New Orleans not only earned the city a Super Bowl championship but established the quarterback's credentials to become a first-ballot Pro Football Hall of Fame selection when he becomes eligible in 2026.

Brees, who is the lone player honored by the Saints in 2024, was a two-time NFL Offensive Player of the Year and 13-time Pro Bowl quarterback who retired with the second-most passing yards (80,358) and passing touchdowns (571) in NFL history.

Those numbers are on top of what Brees accomplished at Purdue. He still holds the Big Ten record for career passing yards (11,792) and graduated with two NCAA records, 13 Big Ten marks and 19 Purdue standards.

Yet with those numbers I just listed, there's one Hall of Fame whose doors are closed to Brees.

This week's College Football Hall of Fame ballot once again does not have Brees, a black mark on this so-called organization which has been a vagabond shrine since being founded in 1951 by the National Football Foundation.

An investigation by the New Jersey attorney general into the finances of the Hall of Fame's foundation in the late 1960s resulted in cancellation of plans to build a permanent shrine at Rutgers. Next

stop, New York City. That is until that state's attorney general launched his own investigation.

Kings Mills, Ohio – home of Kings Island amusement park – was the next destination in 1978 with the hope that visitors to the park would also want to visit the hall of fame. When that wish failed to work out by 1992, South Bend won the bid to become the permanent home. Well, permanent lasting until it closed in September 2012.

The Hall of Fame's current home in Atlanta cost \$68.5 million when it opened on Aug. 23, 2014.

The College Football Hall of Fame's first requirement for enshrinement is a player earning first-team All-American recognition by an organization recognized by the NCAA and utilized to comprise consensus All-America honors.

Brees' lone first-team All-America honor came from Gannett News Service in 2000, which does not fall into either of the Hall of Fame's criteria. Brees, however, did win the Maxwell Award that is presented annually to the best all-around college football player.

Brees easily fulfills the second and third Hall of Fame requirements.

· He played his final game at Purdue during the 2000 season; the Hall of Fame has a 10-year waiting period. If they played pro football, an athlete must be retired to be eligible.

· A player's post-football record as a citizen also is weighed. "He must have proven himself worthy as a citizen, carrying the ideals of football forward into his relations with his community and fellow man. Consideration may also be given for academic honors and whether or not the candidate earned a college degree."

Just ask the people of New Orleans what Brees did for their proud city in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Additionally, the Brees Dream Foundation has contributed more than \$500 million to charitable causes globally. Its mission statement is to improve the quality of life for cancer patients and provide care, education and opportunities for children and families in need.

Brees was named the 2000 Academic All-American Player of the Year and ironically, a recipient of the National Football Foundation's post-graduate scholarship.

The lone exception to the first-team All-America rule to date is another well known quarterback.

Fran Tarkenton led the nation in passing in 1960 at Georgia but all that got the

future 18-year NFL star was second-team All-America honors. SEC Player of the Year Jake Gibbs of Mississippi swept first-team honors that season. Gibbs would go on to be a catcher with the New York Yankees.

Granted an exception by the National Football Foundation, Tarkenton was elected in 1987.

Since the Joe Tiller National Football Foundation Chapter received its charter in 2004, the group has helped five Purdue players and one coach earn induction:

quarterback Mike Phipps (2006), quarterback Mark Herrmann (2010), running back Otis Armstrong (2012), coach William "Lone Star" Dietz (2013), defensive tackle Dave Butz (2014) and defensive back Rod Woodson (2016).

Record-setting wide receiver Taylor Stubblefield once again is on the Hall of Fame ballot. The consensus 2004 first-team All-American set the NCAA record for career receptions (316) and led the Big Ten in receptions three consecutive seasons (2002-04).

Stubblefield and former Lafayette Jeff/Purdue quarterback Doug Downing will be inducted into the Indiana Football Hall of Fame on Sunday during the Tiller Chapter NFF Honors Brunch at the Purdue Memorial Union. Brees also was elected but will be honored at a later date.

Purdue All-American wide receiver Larry Burton fell off the 2025 ballot, having exceeded the requirement that a player must have played their final game within the past 50 years. Burton's hopes now fall to the Football Bowl Subdivision and Divisional Veterans Committees.

Eligible Purdue consensus All-Americans yet to make an appearance on the College Football Hall of Fame ballot are tight end Dave Young, who played his final game in 1980; punter/kicker Travis Dorsch (2001) and defensive end Ryan Kerrigan (2010).

Young, who died at age 64 in 2023, was the first tight end in college football history to lead the nation in receptions (6.1 per game) in 1980. Dorsch won the 2001 Ray Guy Award as the nation's best punter. Kerrigan set the Big Ten record and matched the national standard with 14 fumbles forced to go with 33.5 sacks and 57 tackles for loss.

Wide receivers Rondale Moore and David Bell will not be eligible until 2030 and 2031, respectively unless both are still playing in the NFL.

Purdue consensus All-Americans before 1974 who are not in the Hall of Fame are running back Ralph "Pest"

Welch (final game in 1929), tackle Elmer Sleight (1929), end Paul Moss (1932), running back Duane Purvis (1934), end Dave Rankin (1940), end Bernie Flowers (1952), middle guard Chuck Kyle (1968) and Burton.

Unfortunately for Purdue's winningest football coach Joe Tiller, his career mark of 126-92-1 (.577 winning percentage) falls just shy of the 60 percent standard set by the College Football Hall of Fame. Going 25-25 over his final four seasons at Purdue after posting a 62-37 mark over his first eight years dropped Tiller's winning percentage below 60.

The 2025 Hall of Fame ballot also includes Purdue offensive coordinator Graham Harrell for his accomplishments at Texas Tech and former Indiana University standouts Antwaan Randle El and Vaughn Dunbar.

The electorate consists of more than 12,000 NFF members and surviving Hall of Famers. Retired coaches Nick Saban and Urban Meyer seem a certainty for election.

Decommits Worked Out Well for Purdue Boiler Basketball

Would Purdue have reached the NCAA men's basketball championship game for the first time since 1969 with this trio alongside guard Fletcher Loyer and forward Trey Kaufman-Renn?

Hunter Dickinson at center. Jameel Brown at point guard. Dra Gibbs-Lawhorn at guard/small forward.

Dickinson, Brown and Gibbs-Lawhorn were either committed to Purdue or were coach Matt Painter's No. 1 target during their recruitment over the past four years.

Instead, Purdue wound up with Zach Edey, Braden Smith and Lance Jones. If only all consolation prizes turned out to be so valuable.

Purdue's recent good fortune with decommitments began in March 2015 when Indianapolis Tech guard C.J. Walker backed out of his pledge. In the aftermath, disgruntled former Purdue point guard Ronnie Johnson celebrated the decommitment, stating on Twitter that "CJ Walker has too much sauce to his game. Great decision."

Five months later, four-star guard Carsen Edwards of Humble, Texas, accepted the scholarship vacated by Walker. The same Carsen Edwards who scored 1,920

points in three seasons. The same Edwards who made an NCAA tournament record 28 3-pointers and averaged nearly 35 points a game while leading Purdue to within a second of a 2019 Final Four berth.

Who would Boilermaker fans rather have had wear gold and black?

That's why the unexpected release of five-star forward Kanon Catchings from his national letter of intent last week by Painter could end up working out for the Boilermakers.

The 7-2 Dickinson surprised Purdue when he chose Michigan, where he lived up to his four-star rating as a two-time first-team All-Big Ten selection. Dickinson abandoned the Wolverines after three seasons for a bigger paycheck at Kansas. There, he earned first-team All-Big 12 honors, but the Jayhawks were booted by Gonzaga in the second round of the 2024 NCAA tournament.

Painter's Plan B for the 2020 class, 7-1 Ryan Kalkbrenner, went to Creighton, where he's had an excellent career. Plan C, 6-8 forward Ben Carlson, struggled for two seasons at Wisconsin before playing his final two seasons at Utah.

Plan D ended up becoming a two-time National Player of the Year and Purdue's all-time leading scorer and rebounder.

Brown decommitted from Purdue in 2022 shortly after his primary recruiter, Micah Shrewsbury, took the Penn State head coaching position. In 41 games at Penn State, Brown has averaged three points.

When Painter searched for a guard to replace Brown, he discovered a game tape of an undersized Westfield guard, Braden Smith. That's how the Purdue and Big Ten single-season assists record holder ended up in West Lafayette.

Purdue fans first became aware of Gibbs-Lawhorn during his freshman season at local McCutcheon High School. After one season, Gibbs-Lawhorn moved on to prep schools in Utah and Florida but

he still seemed to be a priority recruit for Purdue.

After committing to the Boilermakers in Dec. 2021, Gibbs-Lawhorn backed out of his pledge the following August. Painter did not fill that scholarship when national signing day came in November, leaving a spot available for a potential transfer.

That transfer, guard Lance Jones of Southern Illinois, became the missing piece for a Purdue team coming off an embarrassing NCAA tournament loss to Fairleigh Dickenson. Jones became Purdue's third-leading scorer (11.7), and his 3-pointer against Tennessee knocked down the door to that elusive Final Four berth.

In the long run, maybe Catchings wouldn't be the star of this Purdue freshman class. At the same time Catchings exited, 7-3 center Daniel Jacobsen was impressive while helping Team USA's U18 National Team win the gold medal at the FIBA Americup in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Somehow just a second-team Americup All-Star Five selection, Jacobsen set an American record with 19 blocked shots over six games. The previous record-holder was Indiana Pacers center Myles Turner, who had 18 in 2014.

In just 16 minutes a game, Jacobsen averaged 9.2 points and 7 rebounds. He shot nearly 65 percent from the field (22 of 34) and was 11 of 14 (.786) at the free throw line.

With or without Catchings, expectations remain high for the reigning NCAA runners-up. The Athletic has Purdue ranked 13th, the highest Big Ten team on author CJ Moore's ratings.

"It's going to be difficult to replace Edey, but Matt Painter won a lot of basketball games before Edey showed up and he'll continue to do so," Moore writes. "Painter has a really good core returning, led by Smith, who became a killer in pick-and-roll last season as both a scorer

and distributor. If you asked college coaches to rank the best point guards in the country, he'd be near the top.

"Purdue got a head start on what life without Edey would be like last summer when it went on a foreign tour without him and Kaufman-Renn led the team in scoring. Painter also has three centers on the bench who could be next in line as dominant low-post scorers. The 7-foot-2 Will Berg has been learning behind Edey the last two years, and then Painter signed two centers in Daniel Jacobsen and Raleigh Burgess. Jacobsen was a standout ... at the tryouts for the U.S. U-18 team. When I asked two coaches there who stood out, both mentioned Jacobsen, with one saying he'll eventually be a star. He's 7-3, skilled and playing at Purdue, so odds are in his favor."

The Boilermakers' schedule should once again prepare them well for Big Ten play. The Athletic's No. 1 preseason team, Alabama, comes to Mackey Arena on Nov. 15 for the start of a two-game home and home series.

Purdue also plays No. 11 Texas A&M in this year's Indy Classic at Gainbridge Fieldhouse on Dec. 14. In between Alabama and Texas A&M is a trip to No. 14 Marquette on Nov. 19.

Michigan at No. 17 is the second-highest conference team, followed by Indiana (19th) and Illinois (20th).

"It's a huge year for (coach Mike) Woodson," Moore writes. "Based on this class, Indiana's donors are coming through financially, but that could quickly change if results don't follow."

Noteworthy

Purdue football has the new Big Ten's second-most difficult schedule, according to Bill Bender of The Sporting News.

Bender's criteria included the number of ranked teams from The Sporting News' preseason top 25 on the schedule. Purdue will play three top five teams – Ohio State, Penn State and Notre Dame – but the Nittany Lions and Fighting Irish come

to Ross-Ade Stadium.

"Wisconsin and Nebraska are unranked for now, but Purdue faces those teams on back-to-back weeks in late September," Bender writes. "This just isn't a friendly schedule for second-year coach Ryan Walters."

Michigan's schedule is rated the Big Ten's toughest. Indiana and Oregon tied for the 12th most difficult schedule. The Hoosiers also have to play at Ohio State but host Michigan and Washington. ...

Purdue cornerback Nyland Green, formerly of Georgia, was ranked among the top incoming Big Ten transfers by CBSSports.com writer Tom Fornelli.

"The defensive scheme Ryan Walters brought to Purdue puts a lot on the plates of its corners, who are often left alone in man coverage," Fornelli writes. "For that reason alone, Nyland Green will have a huge impact on Purdue's 2024 season. If the Georgia transfer can perform at a level matching his ranking out of high school (Green was the No. 2 CB in the 2021 class), it will go a long way in helping the Boilermakers defense improve significantly this season."

New Indiana quarterback Kurtis Rourke also made Fornelli's list.

"New coach Curt Cignetti has done excellent work in the transfer portal this offseason, but none of it matters if the QB doesn't work out," Fornelli writes. "Luckily for the Hoosiers, Rourke is a good bet to work out, as he was a highly productive player for one of the MAC's best programs at Ohio." ...

Former Purdue volleyball standout Annie Drews will compete in her second Olympics Games this summer in Paris.

Drews is one of eight returning players from the United States' 2020 gold medal-winning squad in Tokyo.

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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