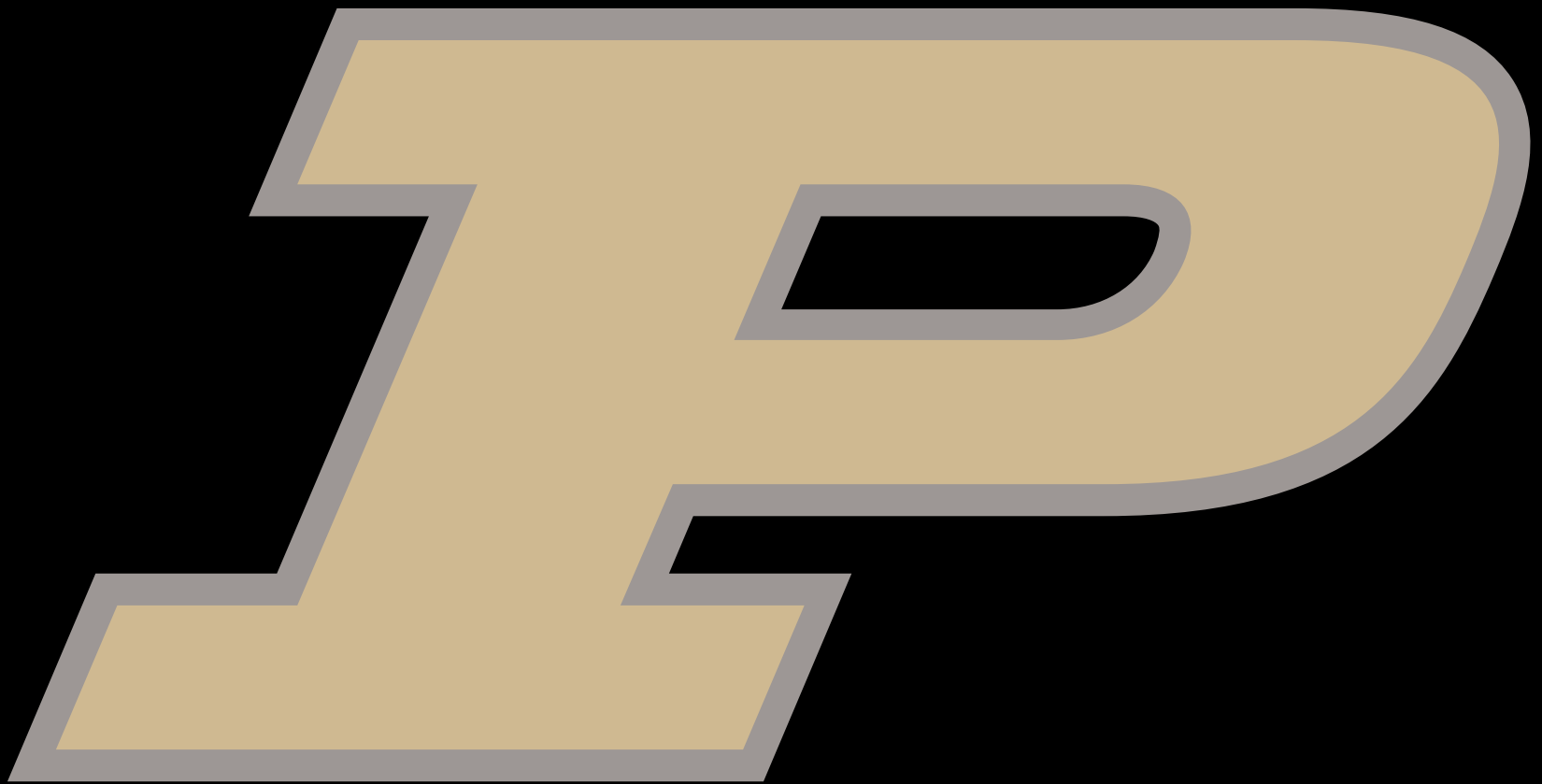


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IU Only Has to Look North for Identity it Used to Have



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Columnist

Bob Knight for a fan base that cannot let go of the past.

Like Mike Davis, Tom Crean and Archie Miller, Woodson was pressured to step down last week during the midst of a disappointing fourth season. Already, dreams of Brad Stevens, Billy Donovan, Bruce Pearl and Dusty May are dancing through the heads of that fan base.

If athletic director Scott Dolson and Board of Trustees chairman Quinn Buckner have learned anything from the success of football coach Curt Cignetti, it's time to move on from the Knight family tree. Being a star player for Knight during a glorious era of Hoosier basketball was Woodson's lone qualification for the job. Do you think any other school in the nation would hire a sixtysomething coach with no college experience and a losing resume in the NBA?

Woodson's downfall was being unable to duplicate Knight's ability to build a successful team. With the aid of well-heeled boosters such as Mark Cuban, Ken Nunn and the Cook / Simon families, it almost seemed that Woodson ran his finger down a list of five-star high school recruits / top-ranked transfers and chose the biggest names that their money could buy.

It is almost impossible to believe that a program that won national championships with the likes of Steve Alford, Scott May and Woodson himself has been unable or unwilling to bring in consistent 3-point shooters.

During Miller's four-year coaching tenure in Assembly Hall, the Hoosiers ranged

between 31.2 and 32.4 percent 3-point shooting on an average of six attempts per game. Davonte Green in 2018-19 (41 percent) and Armaan Franklin in 2020-21 (42.4) were Miller's lone high-volume 3-point shooters.

Other than the 23-12 season in 2022-23, when Indiana shot 36.8 percent on low-volume 3-point shooting (5.7 per game average), Woodson's teams have shot 33.3 percent (5.9 attempts), 32.4 percent (5.0 attempts) and through 24 games this season, 32.2 percent (6.3 attempts).

Miller Kopp (44.4 percent) in 2022-23 and Luke Goode (41.1) this season, as predicted here, are the only high volume 3-point shooters Woodson has brought in. Both were transfers. Somehow, Goode has only started nine games this season while so-called transfer portal gems Myles Rice and Kanaan Carlyle have combined to shoot just below 27 percent from 3-point range.

This should have come as no surprise since Rice shot 27.5 percent as a redshirt freshman at Washington State, and Carlyle made 32 percent as a freshman at Stanford. A larger bank account does not guarantee improved shooting.

For the reported \$1.2 million paid to secure center Oumar Ballo from Arizona, plus whatever cash Indiana's boosters paid out to Rice, Carlyle and Goode, the return on investment has been 15 wins, a 6-8 Big Ten record and embarrassing losses to Louisville, Iowa and Illinois.

Now travel 115 miles northwest of Bloomington to West Lafayette. Purdue

twice has finished second nationally in 3-point shooting percentage during the Miller / Woodson era. That includes last season's 40.4 percent effort during Purdue's run to the national championship game. In five of the eight seasons, the Boilermakers have shot at least 37.4 percent from beyond the arc.

In 2017-18, when Purdue went 30-7, it started three 40-plus percent 3-point shooters in Carsen Edwards, Dakota Mathias and P.J. Thompson. Vincent Edwards was one made 3-pointer shy of giving the Boilermakers four 40-percent shooters from 3-point range.

Purdue's Elite Eight squad in 2018-19 fielded Carmel's Ryan Cline at 41.7 percent, Grady Eifert at 43.8 percent and Sasha Stefanovic at 41 percent. Stefanovic was a 40-percent shooter from 3 in 2020-21.

The Boilermakers posted a 29-8 mark in 2021-22 with Mason Gillis (41.4), Eric Hunter Jr. (43.6) and Isaiah Thompson (42.4). In lower volume that season, sophomores Caleb Furst (42.3) and Ethan Morton (44.1) were effective behind the 3-point line.

With Zach Edey carrying much of the offense in 2022-23, Braden Smith was Purdue's most effective 3-point shooter at 37.6 percent for the Big Ten champs. Fletcher Loyer improved from 32 percent as a freshman to 44.4 percent a year ago for the national runners-up. Smith (43.1), Gillis (46.8) and Myles Colvin (41.4) also were key reasons why Purdue finished second nationally in 3-point shooting.

Loyer has been even better

this season at 45.8 percent, which would lead the Big Ten if he had the minimum attempts required. Freshman guard C.J. Cox has made 42.1 percent from 3-point range.

Notice many of the names I've just listed. Mathias. Vincent Edwards. P.J. and Isaiah Thompson. Cline. Stefanovic. Gills. Hunter. Smith. Loyer. Going back further in the 21st century, there's Robbie Hummel, E'Twaun Moore, JaJuan Johnson, Rapheal Davis and Caleb Swanigan.

That mix of Indiana and Ohio high school stars used to be prime recruiting territory for the Hoosiers.

Fifth-year seniors Anthony Leal and Galloway are the only native-born Hoosiers to spend their entire collegiate careers in Bloomington. Instead of being the dream destination of every teen-age player from Fort Wayne to Evansville, IU basketball has lost its identity.

Purdue has an identity. Toughness, talented big men and game-changing guards who have spurred an offensive renaissance. Naismith Hall of Fame coach Gene Keady laid the foundation over his 25 years in West Lafayette. His protégé, Matt Painter, has built a luxury high rise on that foundation in his 20 seasons.

Michigan State is another example of stability equaling success. The Spartans have prospered under Jud Heathcote and Tom Izzo for nearly 50 years with 13 combined Big Ten and two national championships.

Since Knight was fired by Indiana president Myles Brand in 2000, the Hoosiers have had Davis, Kelvin Sampson, Dan Dakich, Crean, Miller and Woodson

heading the program. Davis was pushed out in 2006, unable to build off a run to the national title game in 2002 with some of Knight's players. Impermissible phone calls, compounded by a history of rule-breaking at Oklahoma led to Sampson's dismissal. To the chagrin of the Indiana faithful, Sampson has transformed the University of Houston into a Big 12 and national contender. Dakich restored discipline during his brief interim tenure, but Indiana officials brought in Tom Crean from Marquette to basically start over. After three miserable seasons, Crean brought Indiana back to No. 1 in the polls. The honeymoon ended with the top-seeded Hoosiers losing in the Sweet 16 to Syracuse in 2013. Crean was fired in 2017 after a 10th-place finish in the Big Ten.

Miller was never a good fit despite his success at Dayton. Miller's defense-first mindset lacked the offensive skill players to be a consistent winner.

Like the Purdue football program, which will be paying off a \$9 million contract to Ryan Walters over the next three years, Indiana must get this hire right and not just for competitive reasons.

The new coach will almost certainly be forced to restock the roster from the transfer portal with only one high school recruit signed for 2025-26. That will require serious cash on top of the \$8 million deposited into Woodson's retirement account, the discounted buyout of \$15.5 million to former football coach Tom Allen spread over two years and the \$20.5 million annual revenue sharing agreement that begins with the 2025-26 academic year.

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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