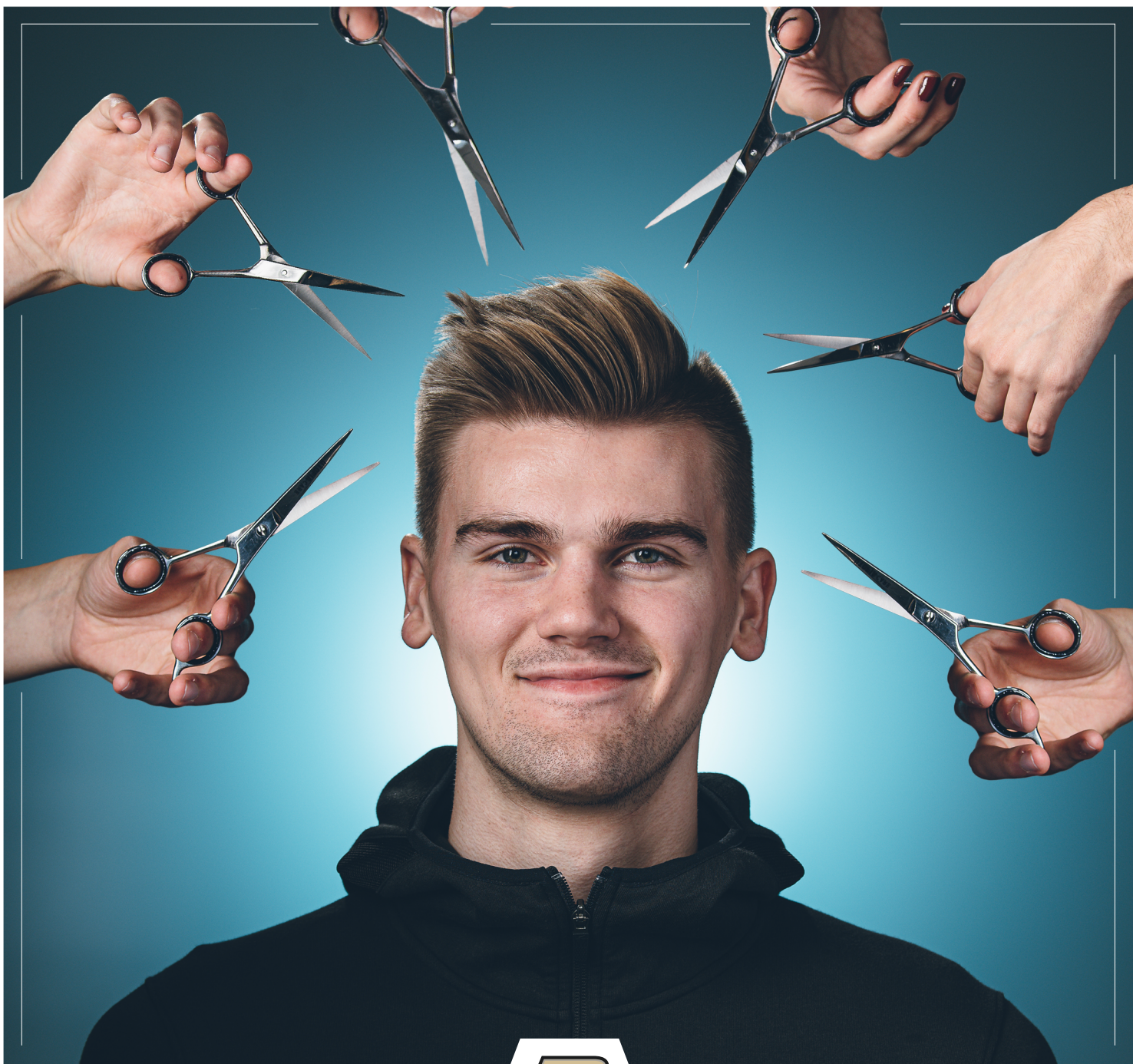


# FORGE









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BANK & TRUST

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# LOVE & HAATE

INSPIRING HIS TEAM. INFURIATING THE OPPOSITION. MATT HAARMS JUST WANTS TO HAVE FUN.

*By Tim Newton*









Martine van Hoorn watches her son from thousands of miles away on television. She's well aware that fans at Mackey Arena adore Matt Haarms and his high-octane style of play. Opposing fans are, to be kind, less appreciative.

"I am really happy that all Purdue fans are so kind and supportive," she says. "It's fantastic to see and feel the support from Boiler Nation. Reactions of opposing fans can be harsh and negative, but I guess that's part of sports life.

"I read this once and try to keep it in mind when I see something really harsh: 'Haters don't really hate you, they hate themselves because you're a reflection of what they wish to be.'"

### **SOMETHING NEW**

The journey for Haarms to hero/villain status was miles in the making. Growing up in Amsterdam, he wasn't interested in sports at an early age. His mom signed him up for judo, but he quit after a year. Other than some backyard soccer activity with his dad, Peter Haarms, he stayed to himself in his room most of the time.

Then he found basketball. He started playing at age 12, and within a couple of years found himself attracted to the game. He played on a local team and even installed a hoop at his house, even if it didn't meet basketball code. "It was a super cheap model where we had to put up the pole every time. I don't think we ever got it at exactly 10 feet," he says.

Haarms was always one of the tallest in his class, and he had a big growth spurt at age 14, going from 6-foot-3 to 6-foot-10 over the next two years. "You don't get to be 7-foot-3 without it," he quips.

As he grew physically, so did his aptitude for the game. He was a member of the U-18 Dutch National Team, and prior to his junior year his coach invited him to Badalona, Spain, just outside Barcelona. Haarms didn't realize it at the time, but the trip was an audition to stay and play on a club team there. He maintained his school work via distance education while preparing himself for an opportunity to play at a higher level.

Mom was excited for that chance, but also apprehensive about her only child leaving home.

"He was just 17 when he moved," van Hoorn says. "Luckily, Barcelona was only a two-hour flight away, and we had the chance to visit him frequently. We are really proud that he follows his dreams, and we want to support him in doing that. When your child is surrounded by people who support and love him,



it's a bit easier to deal with the fact that you really miss him."

## TOTO, WE'RE IN KANSAS NOW

Haarms decided not to return to Spain for his senior year in high school. Instead, he made the decision to come to the United States. He wound up at Sunrise Christian Academy, a prep school in Wichita, Kansas, the same school that produced former Oklahoma All-American Buddy Hield and Michigan State's Tum Tum Nairn.

Language would be no barrier in the new country. Haarms learned English from his mother at an early age and also took English in high school. He played video games in English and watched movies and television shows with subtitles.

Aside from the culture shock of going from Amsterdam and Barcelona to America's heartland, Haarms had to make an adjustment on the basketball court. "I wasn't good enough to get on the court at first. It took a while for me to adjust to the higher talent level," he says.

In fact, at the end of that season, Haarms wasn't offered any college basketball scholarships. To gain more exposure, he played for the Chauncey Billups AAU Elite team based in Denver. He played well enough to gain some interest from college coaches ... including Matt Painter.

"I was impressed with his overall length and his energy level," Painter says. "I knew he came from a good program at Sunrise Christian, and they talked highly of his ability.

"When we first talked, I think he knew more about Purdue than I did. He had seen us play a lot on television, and he was aware of how we used people like AJ Hammons, Caleb Swanigan and

Isaac Haas. A lot of schools had been on him longer than we had, but we were fortunate."

Part of that good fortune was that unlike other schools that were recruiting him at the time, Purdue had a scholarship open, which was important because Haarms was going to enroll mid-year. His visit to campus sealed the deal.

"I was blown away at how nice everyone was the entire time I was there. I met with Cathy Wright-Eger about the leadership program they have for student-athletes, and she has to be the nicest person in West Lafayette," Haarms says.

"I was getting ready to make a visit to another school, and the day before I was supposed to leave, coach Painter showed up. That made a big impression on me, and during that trip I couldn't stop thinking about Purdue. I committed three days later."

## BIG MAN ON CAMPUS

Haarms flew to Indianapolis on Christmas day in 2016. P.J. Thompson picked him up at the airport and offered his home over the holidays. Haarms wasn't eligible to play the rest of that season, but he could practice with the team.

But just as his initial foray to the U.S. had produced a basketball shock in Kansas, the same thing awaited him in Indiana. As the Boilermakers were going through two-a-day practices to get ready for Big Ten Conference play, Haarms was awaiting the results of a routine blood test before he was cleared to play.

He admits that he was in no hurry for those results. "I just wanted to watch at that point," he admits with a laugh.

Once he did get on the court, he faced Haas and Swanigan on a

daily basis. It took time to adjust, but with time in the weight room, he grew another inch and added 20 pounds to his slender frame. Slowly, he felt more and more like part of the team.

His time came in the fall when he was finally able to play as a redshirt freshman. He appeared in all 37 games of the 2017-18 season, averaging 4.8 points and 3.2 rebounds. He also blocked 79 shots, the second-most ever by a Purdue freshman and the seventh-most by any player in school history.

He also found out how intense practices could be. He earned stitches or black eyes that year from accidental contact with three of the four Boilermaker seniors: Haas, Thompson and Vincent Edwards.

One highlight of the 30-7 campaign was a win over Indiana in Bloomington. Late in the contest, when the outcome was no longer in doubt, Dakota Mathias pulled the players into an on-court huddle.

"I thought he was going to give us some offensive or defensive instructions," Haarms says. "Instead, he just told everybody to take a minute and listen to how quiet the arena had gotten. Dakota was always so quiet and serious that it was a little out of character for him to do that, but I'll always remember it."

## THE MAN THEY LOVE TO HATE

That silence wasn't there last season. During a February game at Assembly Hall, Haarms was showered with vulgar chants from the Hoosier faithful. He got the last word in, though, tipping home the game-winning shot with 3.9 seconds to play to give Purdue a 48-46 win.

“ I'M JUST A NORMAL GUY WHO HAS A LOVE FOR THE GAME. COACH PAINTER ALWAYS WRITES ON THE BOARD TO HAVE FUN, SO THAT'S WHAT I DO. ”







Haarms makes no apologies for his on-court enthusiasm.

"I've always had the freedom to be myself playing basketball," Haarms says. "I was an energy guy at Sunrise, and I tried to make the most of my minutes when I played. I'm just a normal guy who has a love for the game. Coach Painter always writes on the board to have fun, and that's what I do."

"Also, if the other fans are yelling at or booing me, it means they weren't yelling at Carsen Edwards or some of the other guys."

Evan Boudreaux has seen the reaction Haarms generates up close and personal. He understands the Jekyll and Hyde nature of his teammate.

"Off the court, he's the nicest guy you could ever meet," Boudreaux says. "But on the court, he's intense and competitive. He loves it when fans single him out and give it to him. It really gets him going, and it fires us up, too."

Painter has no problem with his big man's enthusiasm.

"He's a high-energy guy and he feeds off that energy," Painter says. "It's authentic and real. He cheers for good plays whether he's on the court or sitting on the bench. The fact that he's had success has helped, too."

Indeed, Haarms improved his output as a sophomore, averaging 9.4 points, 5.4 rebounds and 2.1 blocks per game. He shot better than 63 percent from the field, sixth-best in program annals. He saved one of his best games for the second round of the NCAA Tournament, scoring 18 points and grabbing nine rebounds in a rout of defending national champion Villanova.

Painter believes Haarms can take another step this season. "We have the ability to run the offense

through him," Painter says. "I also think he's possibly the best interior defender in the Big Ten."

Coming off an Elite Eight appearance, Haarms is excited about the potential of the 2019-20 squad. He's equally happy that a couple of familiar faces will be on the sidelines as part of the coaching staff. Grady Eifert will serve as a graduate assistant, as will P.J. Thompson, whose brother, Isaiah, is in his freshman year on the team.

"Grady exemplifies the culture we have at Purdue. I think he can have a super influence on some of the younger players," Haarms says.

Across the ocean, Peter and Martine will be watching their son play again this season, although at different times.

"We have access to all the U.S. networks," van Hoorn says. "We have a seven-hour time difference, and games are on in the middle of the night."

"My husband watches all the games live, but I find it too stressful to watch. I prefer to watch the games the day after ... when I know the score."

Haarms is a political science major and is considering law school once his basketball career is finished. It's not surprising, then, that he practices his possible future career on the court.

"Matt never thinks he fouls, and I'm usually the guy during practice that blows the whistle," Painter says. "He wants to challenge every call I make to court. He's an intelligent kid, and I have to admit he's pretty good at making his arguments."

Boilermaker fans are hoping Haarms and his teammates can make a case for a Final Four run this season. ✖







## FAMOUS FLIP

Matt Haarms is one of the top players in the Big Ten, and with a unique skillset and 7-foot-3 frame, he likely will be able to extend his playing career well beyond college. Wherever he goes, his floppy blond hair will follow.

Haarms has gained national attention for his locks, running his hand through them hundreds of times every game. That wasn't always the case, though.

"I shaved my head when I was 13," Haarms says. "I kept a buzz cut for years, and it was really easy to maintain. You didn't have to give it a thought when you rolled out of bed every morning."

Eventually, Haarms decided to let the hair grow. The result wasn't particularly appealing at first – Haarms admits that his hair "looked like a toilet brush" at first – but eventually by cutting the sides and letting the top grow he achieved the flip that fans see today.

The frequent hand to the hair motion is mostly subconscious, almost a "tick," he says. But the 'do will stay.

"He really takes it seriously," Evan Boudreaux says. "It matches his personality." – Tim Newton





WINNING THE

MENTAL

GAME

*By Tom Dienhart*



Parker Filius was down on himself last winter. The Boilermaker wrestler couldn't figure out why he wasn't clicking on the wrestling mat during what was supposed to be a breakout redshirt freshman season.

"I wasn't having the best year athletically," he says. "There were high expectations for me and from the coaching staff. But things didn't go my way."

That was Filius' impetus to seek help. Not on the mat. He felt good with his wrestling skill set. Rather, Filius looked to hone his mental game. For that, he sought counsel with Purdue sports psychologist Brad Foltz.

"It mostly doesn't come down to ability, it's what is going on in your head," Filius says. "I began to meet with the sports psychologist once a week last spring and through the summer and into the fall."

The integration of sports psychologists into the college athletics landscape is still in its infancy on many campuses. Purdue has fully embraced the concept.

"A lot of people don't know where to go for help," junior soccer player Hannah Melchiorre says.

They do now. Just go to the event level of Mackey Arena. That's where you will find the offices of Brad Foltz and Kelsey Dawson, Purdue's sports psychologists. The department brought Foltz on board late in 2018 to address the mental and psychological needs of its 500-plus student-athletes. Dawson followed in 2019.

The pair were a much-needed addition to a student-athlete care program at Purdue that already was delivering top-notch medical and nutritional services. But there was a void when it came to mental health care.

"I think, in general, we are seeing higher levels of stress and anxiety in that age group as compared to 10 years ago," Foltz says. "Resiliency is a little bit different than it used to be. Factor in that getting help is more normalized ... Ten years ago this didn't exist, so we didn't know the demand back then."

Turns out, the demand was big. Student-athletes were waiting to talk to Foltz within hours of his arrival. Prior to the hiring to Foltz and Dawson, Purdue had contracted with St. Vincent Hospital in Indianapolis to provide mental health care. Twice a week, a psychologist would come to campus to assist student-athletes. Now, Purdue has an array of mental health services it can provide its student-athletes from its two full-time staffers.

"Right now, it's very heavy in individual therapy because there is a high demand here," Foltz says. "I think we are seeing a little improvement in the destigmatization of seeking mental health treatment. We have more student-athletes coming in with it being more acceptable."

Foltz's role includes counseling and sports psychology. He provides mental health treatment and support to all student-athletes, dealing in myriad areas including anxiety, depression, suicide, substance use, disordered eating and more.

In addition to Foltz and Dawson, student-athletes can seek help through the peer organization Boilermaker Brave. And student-athletes have access to a Headspace app on their smartphones that offers self-guided sessions on everything from stress, to focus to anxiety. The goal of the Headspace app: to learn to meditate and live mindfully.

"Everyone here was the best player on their high school team," Dawson says. "It can really challenge their identity and how to adapt if they aren't the best in college. Maybe they were a starter. Now, they aren't. A big thing for me is identity development of who they are going to be. This is one of the biggest transitions in their development, going from being home with mom and dad and having it all provided for you. Now, you are on your own. Trying to navigate that stuff is very stressful."

The typical day for Dawson?

"That's one of my favorite questions, and I get to say there is no typical day," Dawson says. "And that's a big appeal to the job for me. With me coming on just earlier this year, more people are realizing that we are here, that they can utilize our services. I am doing a fair amount of individual sessions right now."

A topic often discussed: performance. Student-athletes always are looking for an edge.

"We do sports performance enhancement psychology work," Dawson says. "So we will work with athletes on their confidence in sports, how they concentrate and how they bounce back from mistakes or losses or things like that. And a lot of things in between."

Do male student-athletes use the sports psychology services differently than the female student-athletes?

"I would say female student-athletes are more likely to use the resources for personal reasons," Filius says. "And males are more likely for sports-related reasons. You find a lot of men in my sport struggling and they won't utilize the resources because it isn't considered manly."





*Dr. Brad Foltz (left) and Dr. Kelsey Dawson are sports psychologists for Purdue Athletics Counseling and Sport Psychology Services. They provide psychological counseling, performance enhancement, psycho-education, consultation and team-building services to student-athletes, coaches and staff.*

So this is an on-going challenge to make everyone as comfortable with the mental health resources as possible.

Coaches? They are just looking for an edge.

“Coaches are still kind of learning what we can do and what that looks like,” Dawson says. “I think the hope for us is incorporating being available more at practices, maybe some team programming, as well.”

To that end, Dawson is traveling with the men’s basketball team this season at the behest of head coach Matt Painter, who advocated for her hiring.

“We want to be the best resource we can for each coach and team,” Foltz says. “They know what they are doing as coaches, we don’t want to encroach on them.

“There used to be a push-back to having a psychologist involved. Part of the reason Dr. Dawson is here is because coach Painter realized his team needed more support.

“My position already existed. I came here in January. I couldn’t provide that to one team. To have a high-profile coach advocate that for us is very meaningful.”

It’s all about making Purdue student-athletes better at what they do ... and healthier, happier people. ✂

## HEADSMART

Student-athletes can get mental health assistance with a few taps of their thumb.

The athletics department has purchased an app called Headspace for all of its 500-plus student-athletes. The app’s website bills it as “a personal meditation guide, right in your pocket.” There are many themed sessions on everything from stress, to sleep, to focus to anxiety. Basically, they are guided meditations for people with busy schedules.

“It is a mindfulness-based mental health,” sports psychologist Brad Foltz says. “It teaches skills related to being present, managing stress, working on performance psychology, injury rehab stress.”

The NBA has partnered with the app, which has videos to watch that walk clients through issues.

“We can’t meet with an athlete every day, but we want to have

as many tools and resources available to navigate this stuff on their own in addition to what we are doing,” Foltz says. “This is a supplement to the work we do.”

A resource like Headspace allows student-athletes to address issues if they are unable to speak with Foltz or fellow sports psychologist Kelsey Dawson.

“The holy grail for our field is to preventively attend to what is going on,” Foltz says. “It’s hard with resources and time. We want to try to get better in letting the student-athletes have the tools before they feel the need to come in. To help athletes help themselves. It frees us up to take care of higher-risk or higher-concern stuff.”

Adds Dawson: “My goal is to get you to where you don’t need to see me or want to see me because you can do it on your own. If I am creating a scenario where you feel dependent on coming to see me, I’m not doing my job right.” – Tom Dienhart



# BOILER BRAVE

Hannah Melchiorre wanted students to have a voice when it came to mental health issues. That's why she started Boilermaker Brave. What is it?

"It's a mental health initiative run by student-athletes," says Melchiorre, a junior soccer player. "We have the sports psychologists, whose role is deal with the student-athletes on an individual basis. I wanted to design something that was more community-based for all student-athletes to come together in an environment to discuss mental health topics and effective strategies led by discussion. But also using the knowledge of upperclassmen and what they have deemed tried-and-true ways to deal with those challenges."

Boilermaker Brave meets monthly to discuss an array of topics.

"I think something similar should be implemented at every school," Melchiorre says. "I think it's a necessity. It's a place where you can feel comfortable sharing your thoughts. You learn to know you are valued not just as an athlete but as a whole student."

Open discussion typically kicks start a dialogue, and there also are exercises to emphasize discussion points. Sports psychologists Brad Foltz and Kelsey Dawson attend.

"I went to Cathy Wright-Eger (Purdue leadership advisor) because I wanted to do something that was more student-led, because we had one student sport psych at the time, and it wasn't enough given what I had heard from my team and the things we were going through as a team."

There are many stressors in the life of a Purdue student-athlete, ranging from playing time, role on the team, academics, social media to home life.

"Being an athlete in high school, you were the best on the team," Melchiorre says. "You come to a Big Ten school and you aren't the best on the team. You have to realize it isn't all about you anymore, but it's hard to separate yourself from where you stand on the team because that is so much of your life here."

"In Boilermaker Brave, we validate that you are an athlete and there is a large part of your mental health associated with being an athlete. But it's not everything you are." – Tom Dienhart





# GAMEDAY

**126** PARKING LOT ATTENDANTS

**82** GOLF CARTS IN OPERATION

**18,000** BEERS SOLD

**20** FAN EXPERIENCE STAFF

**10,588** STUDENT SEASON TICKETS SOLD

**484** "ALL-AMERICAN" MARCHING BAND MEMBERS

**100+** LAW ENFORCEMENT ON DUTY

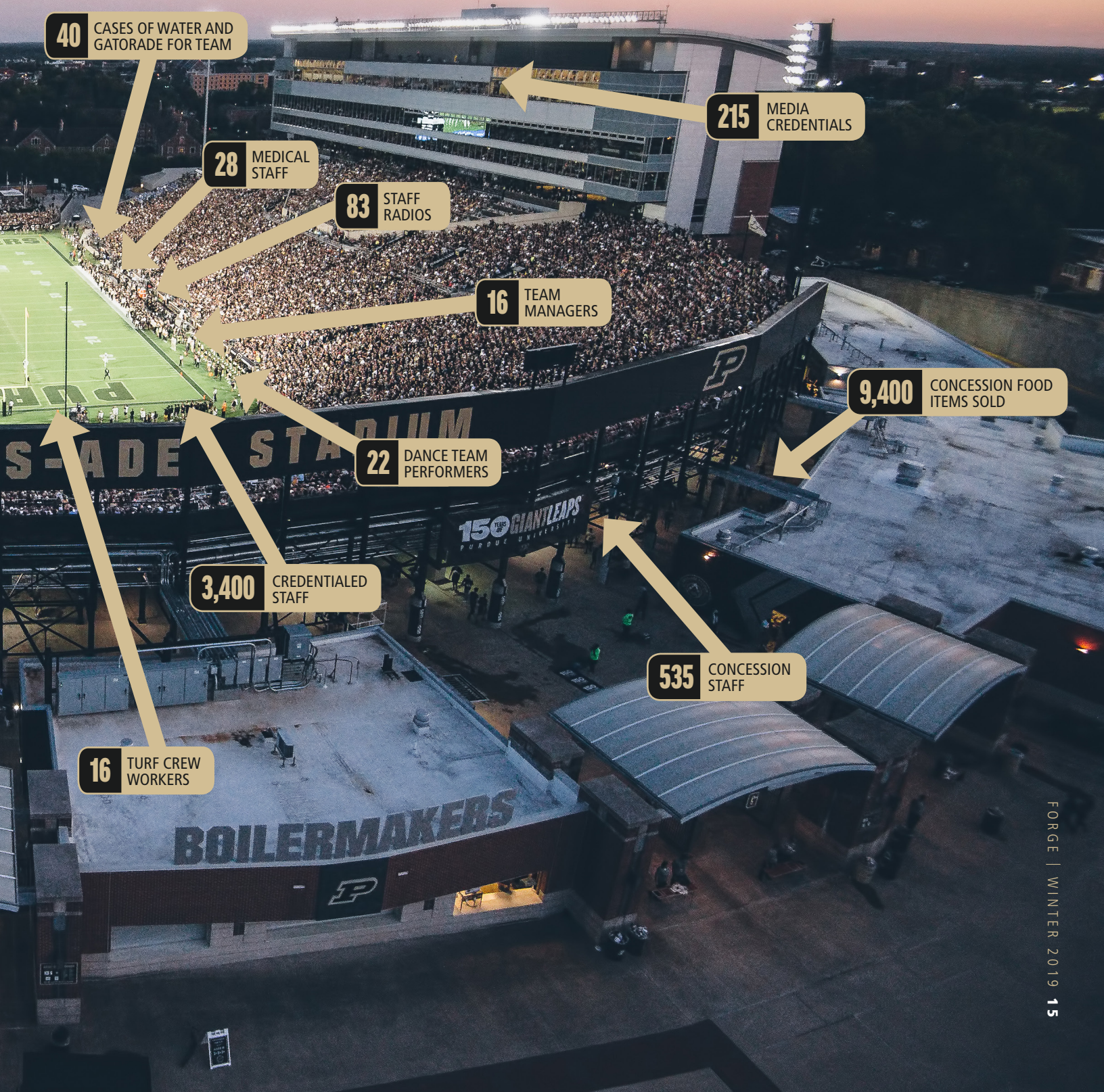
**23,400** BEVERAGES SOLD

**80** UNIFORM KITS PREPARED

**300** GAMEDAY OPERATIONS STAFF IN STADIUM



# NUMBERS







# DON'T BET ON IT

## NO-GAMBLING POLICY AIMED AT MAKING STUDENT-ATHLETES FEEL SAFE

*By Tom Campbell*

In the first month following the legalization of sports betting in Indiana, casinos across the state reported over \$34 million in sports wagering. Thanks to the 9.5% tax rate on the casino profits, Indiana will see an increase to the tax coffers of more than \$800,000 from September alone.

But where there is big money, there are big concerns. On the Purdue campus, a primary concern is how to shield student-athletes from gamblers looking to access inside information that could affect the betting lines of athletic events.

"We've always educated our student-athletes and the athletics department staff that when it comes to injuries, keep it in the family," says Tom Mitchell, a compliance officer at Purdue since 2010 and associate athletics director for compliance since 2016. "Don't share information with outside folks because they could use it to place bets. Now that betting is legal in Indiana, it becomes that much more important to share that message."

The NCAA specifically prohibits student-athletes and athletics department staff members from any type of sports wagering activities concerning intercollegiate,

amateur or professional athletics competition.

In October, the Purdue Board of Trustees went a step further by approving a sports wagering policy prohibiting all faculty, staff and students from betting on Purdue sporting events.

"This action by the board of trustees sends a strong message of support to our student-athletes," athletics director Mike Bobinski said when the university-wide policy was enacted. "They can be confident in conducting their daily business on campus without fear of being compromised for information or in other ways that might be connected to sports gambling activities."

According to Mitchell, it's all part of a plan to create a safe space on campus for Purdue's student-athletes. The idea to ban gambling on campus first gained momentum at the August meeting of the athletic affairs committee, a group comprised of faculty, students, alumni, community representatives and senior administrators from intercollegiate athletics.

"Our faculty raised concerns that they wanted to create a 'safe place' for our athletes," Mitchell says.





"If a student-athlete wants to come in and talk to me, or to his or her head coach, or a trainer or academic advisor about what is going on within their team, they can do that, knowing none of the information will ever be used to impact any sports gambling."

Once the state legalized sports gambling, the Purdue Trustees moved quickly to adopt the "no gambling" policy for the Purdue campus.

The Trustees announcement came just one week after Indiana allowed on-line betting on October 3.

"It really took off because Mike Bobinski shared a conversation about a policy proposal with Mitch Daniels," Mitchell says. "And president Daniels was immediately on board. What we thought was going to be a much longer process with the constituencies on campus ended up being fast-tracked."

Mitchell says the policy not only protects Purdue's student-athletes, but it makes a statement about what he calls the "culture of Purdue." It has proved to be a culture shared all across campus.

"It's been great to hear different faculty groups contact our office and talk about how they support creating a safe space for faculty and student-athletes," Mitchell says. "By building and ensuring a safe place for our students and our faculty, it says that student-athletes are students first, especially here at Purdue."

But by no means has Mitchell been alone in his efforts to protect Purdue's student-athletes from gambling and its operatives.

"The FBI, the state gaming commission, the Indiana State Police and the Purdue Police Department have all been very supportive and very engaged in helping us try and understand

the process and trying to build education across the campus," Mitchell says.

In October, deputy athletics director Jason Butikofer arranged for FBI agent and Purdue alum Andy Evans to address the entire athletics department staff on the legal ramifications of sports gambling.

"Gambling is coming on to us in Lafayette, and it is a new thing we are starting to adapt to," Evans told the 200 in attendance. His speech echoed discussions he previously had with members of the Purdue football and basketball teams in August.

"The main speaking point of those discussions was awareness. It's so simple that something bad can happen," said Evans, citing a personal example. "We were on the sidelines before a football game recently, talking to a couple of other law enforcement officers. 'I wonder who's starting at quarterback?' one of them asked. Before long, enough information had been passed back and forth that, in the wrong hands, could easily affect the betting line of that game."

"It puts us in a different environment and puts everybody in the athletics department on the front lines. It doesn't matter if you are the head coach, the groundskeeper, or the trainer. The fact that you are around the athletics department really puts you on the front line when it comes to potentially having some information that somebody out there trying to place a bet would want to know. Be aware the threat is real, and be cognizant of what you are talking about."

In its August newsletter, the John Purdue Club addressed the gambling issue with this appeal to its membership:

*NCAA sports wagering legislation prohibits Purdue Athletics staff*

*members, non-athletics staff members with athletics responsibilities (President Daniels, Faculty Athletics Representatives), Big Ten staff members and student-athletes from knowingly participating in sports wagering activities or from providing information to others.*

*Now that sports wagering is legal in the state of Indiana, it is important that JPC members are aware of the rules and the pressure to "keep information within the family" – injuries, game plans, lineups, etc. Thank you for your understanding and support!*

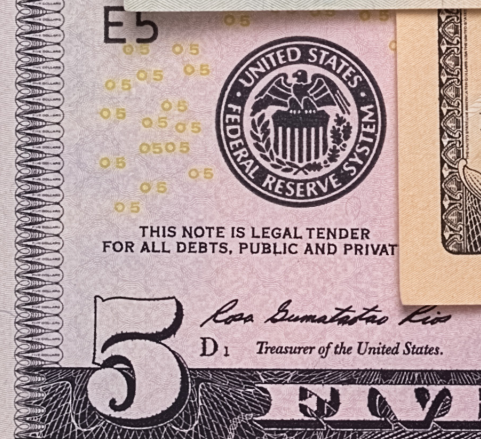
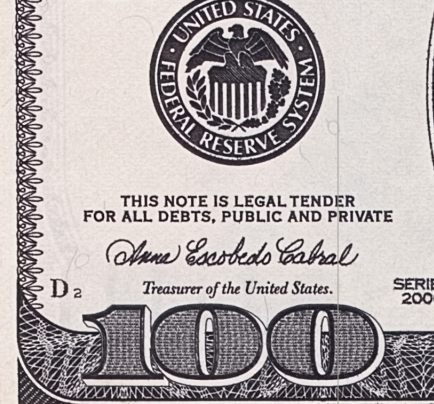
The idea behind the volume of information being delivered by Mitchell and area law enforcement agencies is to ensure they can continue to be proactive with the Purdue community, rather than reactive to any campus gambling situations that may occur.

For Evans, it goes deeper than just doing his job as one of several FBI agents based in West Lafayette.

"I am a Purdue graduate. I don't want to see something bad happen on my watch," he says.

Neither does Mitchell.

"Our thought is that we are just trying to make sure our fans understand our concern," Mitchell says. "I think we have great fans and great donors. If they understand our concern and they understand the risk for our student-athletes, I don't think they would do anything to hurt them." ✖





# EAT (AND DRINK!) TO WIN

By Cory Palm

Redshirt freshman defensive tackle Lawrence Johnson knew many things would change when he got to college. Sure, he was a force as a 300-pound defensive tackle for Fort Wayne Snider High School. What he didn't know was that one of the biggest things to change would be his diet.

Like a lot of teenagers, Johnson arrived to campus with suspect eating habits. And from the moment he stepped on campus, his culinary ways began to change.

"I came in weighing about 324. I weigh 294 now and I actually got stronger in the weight room, and I just feel better physically," Johnson says. "I didn't eat too well back home, but I got here and sat down with our dietician. We made a great plan, and I stuck to it."

That dietician is director of sports nutrition Lauren Link. Now in her sixth year on staff, Link has overseen major changes, both in the student-athletes she works with each day and within the department she runs. Link was the first full-time dietician on staff for Purdue Athletics. Now she leads a team of four, with additional help from student assistants.

Link came on board at the most opportune time, joining the athletics department mere months before NCAA rules were relaxed about nutritional benefits a school could offer student-athletes without running afoul of the regulatory body.





"Deregulation was the catalyst for our growth," Link says. "This was a massive change, and we had to have someone overseeing it. What's made it continue to grow is that teams start to really understand the benefits of eating healthy and putting actual consideration into these things that they have never done before."

At the same time, the role that nutrition plays in the holistic development of student-athletes has evolved.

"Sports nutrition used to be just about weight gain, weight loss and performance during competitions," says Doug Boersma, associate athletics director for sports performance and director of sports medicine. "Now, Lauren and her staff are involved in every aspect of our sports medicine and performance department. From injury prevention and recovery, to mental and physical preparation to nutrition education, they have a hand in all of it."

For Link, the job is not just immensely rewarding, it's the realization of a life-long dream.

As a young girl, Link (née Varnau) came to Purdue games often. Growing up less than an hour from campus – in Kokomo, Indiana – she and her family shared a passion for Purdue.

"As a kid, we had season tickets to football and men's and women's basketball," Link says. "We were in San Jose for the Women's Final Four in 1999. We were constantly coming to Purdue."

As she grew older, Link had a passion for playing sports, as well, and excelled at soccer. A four-year all-conference forward at Maconaquah High School, Link was amongst the top goal scorers in the state of Indiana

both her junior and senior seasons. That earned her a spot on the Purdue soccer team.

She played in 58 games for the Boilermakers and earned Academic All-Big Ten honors all four years while being a part of a Big Ten Tournament championship team as a freshman. After graduation in 2012, Link worked in the health care industry for a time but was delighted to find her way back to Purdue.

"I would say it's a dream job," Link says. "To work with your alma mater is obviously rewarding, and to see it grow like it has is amazing. To do this job where I played competitively and to be able to work with the soccer team, it's surreal sometimes."

While Link is the primary contact for football and men's basketball, it was her work with the soccer team this fall that leads to one of her most rewarding success stories.

"Isaac Haas really changed his body composition while he was here, which led to significant gains on the court, and everyone knows the Caleb Swanigan and Trevion Williams stories," Link says. "But for me, Sarah Griffith's story is one of the best."

Griffith is a redshirt sophomore with Purdue soccer and missed the entire 2018 season and the 2019 spring season with a major back injury. She made it back onto the field for the season opener and scored the game-winning goal that night against Georgia.

"We met weekly throughout that process because she lost a lot of weight and muscle mass," Link says. "Just to see her get back on the field this fall was a victory. When she scored that goal, I felt like I had scored, too."

Link and her staff spend their days, nights and weekends being a constant presence with their teams. Each dietician has four to six teams that she works with on everything from proper nutrition and educational seminars with teams to individual consultations with student-athletes. They cover everything from weight gain and weight loss to hydration and supplements to proper fueling before both practice and competition to reach optimal performance.

"It's pretty simple," Link says. "If you aren't feeling well, you won't practice well and you won't get better. If we can flip that through proper nutrition, we have done our job."

The nutrition staff also oversees the expanded fueling stations and training table meal options for student-athletes.

"We have three main fuel stations in each of our strength and conditioning facilities as well as a new snack station in the J. Nine nutrition area," Boersma says. "We are really hitting on all cylinders in this area, allowing student-athletes an opportunity to fuel properly."

Speaking of doing her job, when Link heard that Johnson had mentioned their work together, a prideful grin spread across her face.

"It's so great that Lawrence talked about his improved habits," she says. "He's right, the education piece was the biggest part of it for him. Every student starts from a very different place. So many come in, like Lawrence, having had little exposure to fresh fruits and vegetables. It's all about teaching new habits."

A few years back, Link noticed that while her work with

current student-athletes was leading to great success, she often was getting questions from former athletes about the transition to post-competition life. She began to research this topic to help her former teammates and others but ran into a problem: the information simply didn't exist.

"I actually did a Google search to find resources on the topic and found there were none," Link says. "So I decided to try to fill that void."

**IF YOU AREN'T FEELING WELL, YOU WON'T PRACTICE WELL AND YOU WON'T GET BETTER. IF WE CAN FLIP THAT THROUGH PROPER NUTRITION, WE HAVE DONE OUR JOB.**

*Lauren Link*

Link started the BLAST (Boiler Life After SporT) program for current Purdue student-athletes and wrote her first book, *From Athlete to Normal Human*. It's a legacy she hopes will outlast her at Purdue.

Link has her dream job at her dream school. But what's the best part?

"Being on the field for games is great," she says. "But I still have my Purdue-geek moments. I was lucky enough to be Joe Tiller's official escort for his Hall of Fame induction a few years ago. I've sat on the bus next to Gene Keady on the way to games thinking, 'What the heck? Coach Keady knows who I am.' And I will never not geek out when I see Stephanie White. Those are the moments that are surreal to me still." ✨





# TRIP(S) OF A LIFETIME

BY TOM DIENHART



Kangaroo was on the menu. Yes, kangaroo. And Cassidy Hardin tried it.

"It was an interesting taste," says the sophomore women's basketball player. "We were undecided on how it tasted. I don't think anyone went back for seconds."

That's what happens when you take an overseas summer basketball trip to an exotic destination. You try new things. You visit new places. You experience new things. And you also get to play basketball against some good competition. The Purdue women's basketball team did all of that during a trip to Australia in August.

"First and foremost, it's the competition," head coach Sharon Versyp says. "You are playing against professionals. We played against WNBA players, former Olympians. You are seeing a different brand of basketball. You have to step out of your comfort zone. It's much quicker and physical. It shows us what we need to work on on the court."

Purdue men's and women's basketball teams have been taking these trips for years, typically once every four years as NCAA rules permit. The volleyball program has traveled abroad, as well, from the days of Carol Dewey to current head coach Dave Shondell. Men's basketball head coach Matt Painter is a fan of these junkets for several reasons. One of the big advantages is the fact the trips allow a team to practice before going. And that was a privilege afforded only to schools that went on these trips.

"So that was always the big catch, you got 10 practices in the summer and no one else did," Painter says. "The extra time working together helped."

Painter thinks the team-building and education that goes on during overseas trips is the true benefit.

"What jumps out more than anything is just the time you spend together, the educational piece of it, being able to see another part of the world, another culture," Painter says. "I think that's an experience that is priceless, guys will always remember that international trip."

Former Boilermaker point guard P.J. Thompson got to go overseas as a player with Painter during the summer of 2016.

"We went to Spain," says Thompson, who is in his first year as a graduate assistant with the program. "Carsen Edwards was there. Caleb Swanigan was there. We were first-year captains – me, Dakota Mathias, Vince Edwards. We had a different role. When you get older, you stop worrying about yourself so much and you worry about others and the team. You have to become an everyday guy. That trip helped us accomplish that."

There were many highlights for Versyp's team in Australia. Among them: seeing the Sydney Opera House, holding koala bears, snorkeling and enjoying the Great Barrier Reef. That's where the squad helped freshman Bria Harmon swim. And that was a big deal for someone who has a fear of water and had never done it before.

"She was really scared," Hardin says. "But we wanted that experience for her because you don't go to Australia every day. She calmed down and was able to do it."

The moment sticks with Versyp.

"She got out of her comfort zone, trusted her teammates," Versyp

says. "It took us 15-20 minutes, but she finally got her flippers and goggles on. This isn't like getting in a pool. I was there, the players were there. And for her to finally get in the water (was really something). She put her head down. She didn't snorkel, but she was in the water. We were holding her."

"That was an incredible moment."

Hall of Fame Purdue basketball coach Gene Keady loved these excursions for some of the same reasons as his successor.

"It was great because the NCAA allowed you to practice 10 days before you left," he says. "So you got extra practice time together. And you go overseas to play on foreign soil, no home-court advantage. So you have to learn how to be tough as far as adjusting to the referees and to players who sometimes were better than you. It was a great experience to make you a better team."

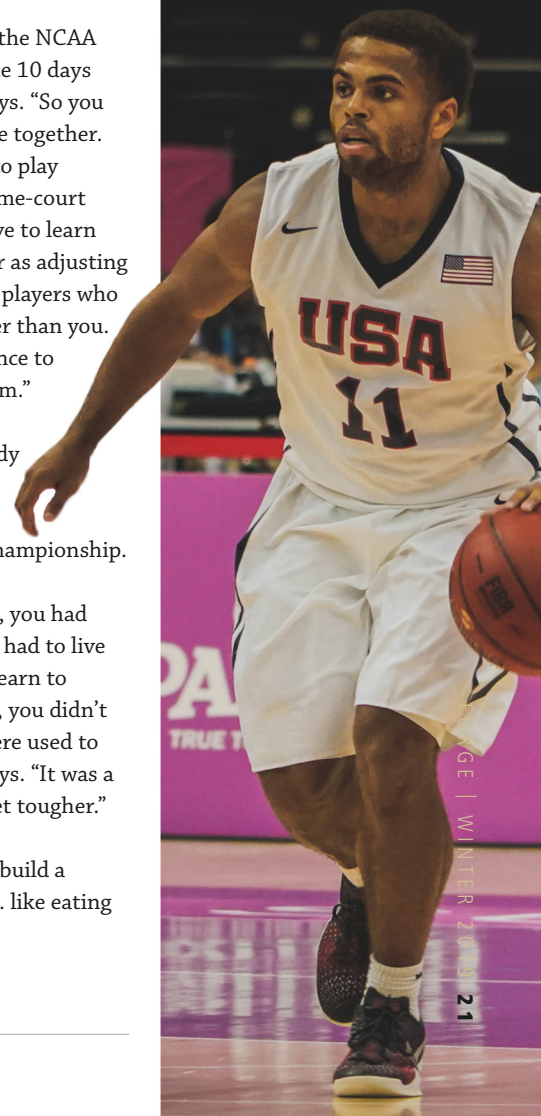
About every year Keady took a team overseas, it went on to win the Big Ten Conference championship.

"You were by yourself, you had to work together, you had to live together, you had to learn to adjust to tough times, you didn't get to eat food you were used to in America," Keady says. "It was a great time for us to get tougher."

It was a great time to build a team and memories ... like eating kangaroo. ✨

“  
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THAT TRIP HELPED US  
ACCOMPLISH THAT.”

P.J. Thompson on  
the men's basketball  
2016 trip to Spain







# YELL PURDUE!

## Steve Solberg's Enthusiasm is Unmatched

### STAFF SPOTLIGHT

INSIDE PURDUE ATHLETICS

By Tom Schott

You would be hard-pressed to find someone boasting more school spirit than Steve Solberg. For Purdue's spirit coordinator and head cheer/mascot coach, every day truly is a great day to be a Boilermaker. He is constantly bursting with passion and pep.

Purdue Athletics fields a co-ed cheerleading team (27 athletes), an all-female squad (30 athletes) and five Purdue Petes. The cheerleaders and Pete perform at all football games and all home men's and women's basketball and volleyball games (plus postseason tournaments). In addition, Pete makes appearances at other athletics events as well as around campus and throughout the community.

The cheerleading team also

competes, winning the Division I small co-ed category at the Universal Cheerleaders Association College Cheerleading and Dance Team National Championships in January of 2018. The Boilermakers have been a perennial contender for the title, finishing second in 2016 and 2017 and third this year.

Born in Seoul, South Korea, Solberg grew up in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin, and was a cheerleader at the University of Wisconsin. He is in his 10th year with the Boilermakers.

Among other topics, Solberg shared with *Forge* how he recruits athletes to Purdue, how he describes Purdue Pete and how he manages to always appear full of vim and vigor.

#### **FORGE: How has cheerleading changed and evolved at Purdue over the last decade?**

SOLBERG: I think the biggest change was during my second year we added the all-female team. That has been a great addition. It has given more female athletes – of different backgrounds, skill levels and strengths – the opportunity to be a Purdue cheerleader.

All the pregame stuff has become big. The tunnel the football team runs through is something I started the first year I was here, and now it has become a fan tunnel for most games. That has been a great enhancement. The pregame for men's basketball with the light show is unbelievable, and we love being part of that. The increased emphasis on atmosphere and fan experience



has been a real positive for us. In many ways, I feel that Purdue Athletics and the spirit squad are trailblazers. We do things that are fun, and people come to us for ideas instead of us going to them.

**FORGE: How does the spirit squad prepare for the football season?**

SOLBERG: We get together one weekend a month during the summer and spend four days in Wisconsin at the biggest college cheerleading camp in the country – the Universal Cheerleaders Association College Cheerleading Camp. We work with a lot of other Big Ten teams and other teams around the country to enhance our routines and to get ready.

Then in August, we report to campus and practice three days a week for about three hours to get ready for that first game. In addition, the cheerleaders work out three days a week with a strength & conditioning coach. After the second or third home game, we cut back to two-hour practices, and then we shift gears a little and start preparing for nationals.

**FORGE: Speaking of nationals, what did winning the national championship in 2018 mean for the program?**

SOLBERG: The No. 1 thing winning a national championship does is gives you a lot of notoriety in the cheerleading world. It helps you attract more talent. Beyond that, it provided validation to the sacrifices we have made and the hard work the athletes have put in to be the best. Striving for excellence isn't easy, but it will pay off eventually, and that has been a great lesson learned.

**FORGE: You recruit like other coaches at Purdue. What is your sales pitch to prospective cheerleaders?**

SOLBERG: It's a combination of things. First and foremost is the excellent academics we have at Purdue. When I tell parents we haven't raised tuition in eight

years, it blows them away. Next is all the great things going on with Purdue Athletics – back-to-back bowl games, Big Ten championships, NCAA tournaments. Last but not least is the family atmosphere among all the athletes, whether they are studying in the Brees Academic Performance Center, working out in the weight room or getting treatment in the training room. The athletes intermingle all the time, and that really catches people's attention when they visit here.

**FORGE: How would you describe Purdue Pete?**

SOLBERG: When you think of a Boilermaker, you should think of Purdue Pete. He is somebody who is tough and has a certain swagger about him. But as a mascot, he has to be friendly, so he has to strike that balance. I would say his character has evolved over the years in terms of trying to make him more family-friendly with how he acts around children versus adults. The guys have really taken the consistency of the character seriously. They all try to walk the same way and have the same mannerisms.

**FORGE: What is the genesis of your incredibly upbeat personality?**

SOLBERG: That has always been my nature. My mom tells me that as far back as first and second grade, my teachers described me as a "high-energy, positive kid." I am a firm believer that your attitude and how you feel is dictated by you. I tell my athletes all the time that it's amazing how your mood can change if you just simply smile. If you smile, you automatically feel better. Or maybe someone sees you smile, and you might put them in a better mood.

**FORGE: What has been your favorite moment at Purdue?**

SOLBERG: Two of them jump out. The first is when men's basketball beat Indiana to win the Big Ten championship three years ago. It was Senior Day; you had all the confetti after the game and the presentation of the trophy. And, obviously, you can't top the Ohio State football game last October. I still get chills thinking about it: the game itself, the electricity, the postgame celebration and Tyler Trent. Those are two games I will never forget. ✖







*Mariah Huge (seated) with her parents, Jane and Duane*

# THE SPIRIT OF PURDUE



## DONOR SPOTLIGHT

FORGING THE FUTURE

*By Laurie Silverstein*

Mariah Huge almost didn't go to Purdue.

Not for any particular reason, but purely to buck the status quo.

For as long as she can remember, Huge has been described as "Purdue inside and out." She contemplated proving everyone wrong by applying to two additional schools, almost hoping for a change of pace and some new scenery from the familiar Old Gold & Black. She knew the West Lafayette campus inside and out. She was getting "kind of sick of it."

Once she got her acceptance letter, though, it was a no-brainer.

Currently a senior at Purdue, Huge served as president of the Reamer Club last fall. She pledged during the fall of 2016, her first semester on campus. A family friend had gotten involved, and it seemed

like a natural next step and the best way to jump into the college experience with two feet.

The Reamer Club dates to 1923 and is dedicated to fostering the observance of school traditions, supporting all sporting events and aiding in the development of proper school spirit. Its members are the caretakers of the official mascot of Purdue, the Boilermaker Special VII – "the world's largest, fastest, heaviest and loudest collegiate mascot" – as well as the Boilermaker Xtra Special VIII – the smaller version of the locomotive built on a golf cart chassis.

"Being born and raised in a Purdue family and going to every basketball game and football game, you don't realize how cool the Boilermaker Special is," Huge says. "It's the best way to be immersed in athletics culture and in the spirit of Purdue."

The Reamer brigade can be spotted giving rides around campus on Fridays before home football games, down on the field for the national anthem, traveling with sports teams (at up to 75 mph on the highway) and contributing to community service projects on and around campus. The Boilermaker Special is a key component of the Reamer Club's community initiatives and provides the surprise factor when Purdue travels around the country for athletics contests.

"That reaction – the 'Wow, it's really out here!' – is the best part about traveling with the Special," Huge says. "People don't really expect to see it."

During her tenure as a member of the Reamer Club, Mariah has traveled as far as California with football and to the 2019 NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament



Elite Eight game in Louisville, but there is one game that stands out to her more than any other.

On October 20, 2018, the decidedly underdog Purdue football team faced second-ranked and undefeated Ohio State under the lights at Ross-Ade Stadium.

“There were about two minutes left in the game, and I saw the crew standing in the end zone in their striped overalls. I get a text from Mariah: ‘I think they’re going to rush the field,’” recalls Duane Huge, Mariah’s father. “I don’t think they knew what to do.”

Mariah had one goal in mind as time was winding down on the Boilermakers’ seismic 49-20 crushing of the Buckeyes.

“My job was trying to tell the fans around us where to jump the railings, so they didn’t land on the Xtra Special and damage it or hurt themselves,” she says. “I didn’t know if anyone was going to listen. We tried to drive it on to the field without running into the crowd’s path and then the carbon dioxide tank ran out. It was chaos.”

That game was memorable for multiple reasons, perhaps none more so than the impact of Tyler Trent. His inspiring story resonated with Purdue fans and casual viewers across the nation.

For the Huge family, the connection to Tyler and his legacy began way before October of 2018.

Duane (B.S. agriculture 1985) and Jane (B.S. agriculture 1984) have had basketball season tickets for over 20 years – Mariah was a ticket-holder before she was even born and has been a John Purdue Club member herself for 20 years. They made it to every game of last season’s Big Ten championship run. Jane attended every football game with her parents from when she was in first grade up until

her senior year of high school. However, her love for Purdue basketball and the Mackey Arena experience didn’t spark until she was a student at Purdue – an interest she would pass along to her daughter.

They would pick up Mariah from elementary school or in her later years from sports practice, and hit the road for the hour-long trek north from their home in Cloverdale, Indiana, to Mackey Arena. They would pack her a onesie, and she would nap in the backseat on the way home.

One of Mariah’s first big trips with the Reamer Club and the Boilermaker Special was to the 2017 Foster Farms Bowl in Santa Clara, California. They explored the bowels of Levi’s Stadium and took holiday photos at the Golden Gate Bridge.

Tradition dictates that the train must never be left unattended, so on road trips members of the Reamer Club sleep in the back. The hotel that the Reamer Club had booked for the bowl game had concerns regarding the safety of the members planning to sleep in the Special in an underground parking garage and asked that they find permanent accommodations. As a result, two train crew members were without sleeping quarters – one of them being Mariah.

She asked to stay in her parents’ hotel room – the only Reamer parents who made the trip to California. The trip coordinator thanked them and told them he would make it up to them for having to host their daughter on a school trip.

Duane and Jane didn’t think anything of the offer at the time.

A few days later, the family received word that the Special was going to be doing a community service

ride for a group of friends around San Francisco and that they were welcome to come along as a thank you for hosting Mariah. They graciously accepted ... and spent the night riding around with Tyler Trent and a group of his friends.

“We had no idea it was going to be him,” Duane says. “He wasn’t a household name at that point, but we knew something special was happening.”

That wasn’t the only coincidence.

Jane, a breast cancer survivor, had finished her last round of chemotherapy before heading to the West Coast. Purdue Pete used one of his allotted personal visits to visit see her in the hospital during her final round of chemotherapy before a final surgery. She had held the American flag on the field at Ross-Ade Stadium for the Hammer Down Cancer Game to open the season.

When Tyler won the 2018 Disney Spirit Award and the Boilermaker Special took a celebratory trip to his house, Mariah was on the crew. She says that Tyler remembered that trip around San Francisco.

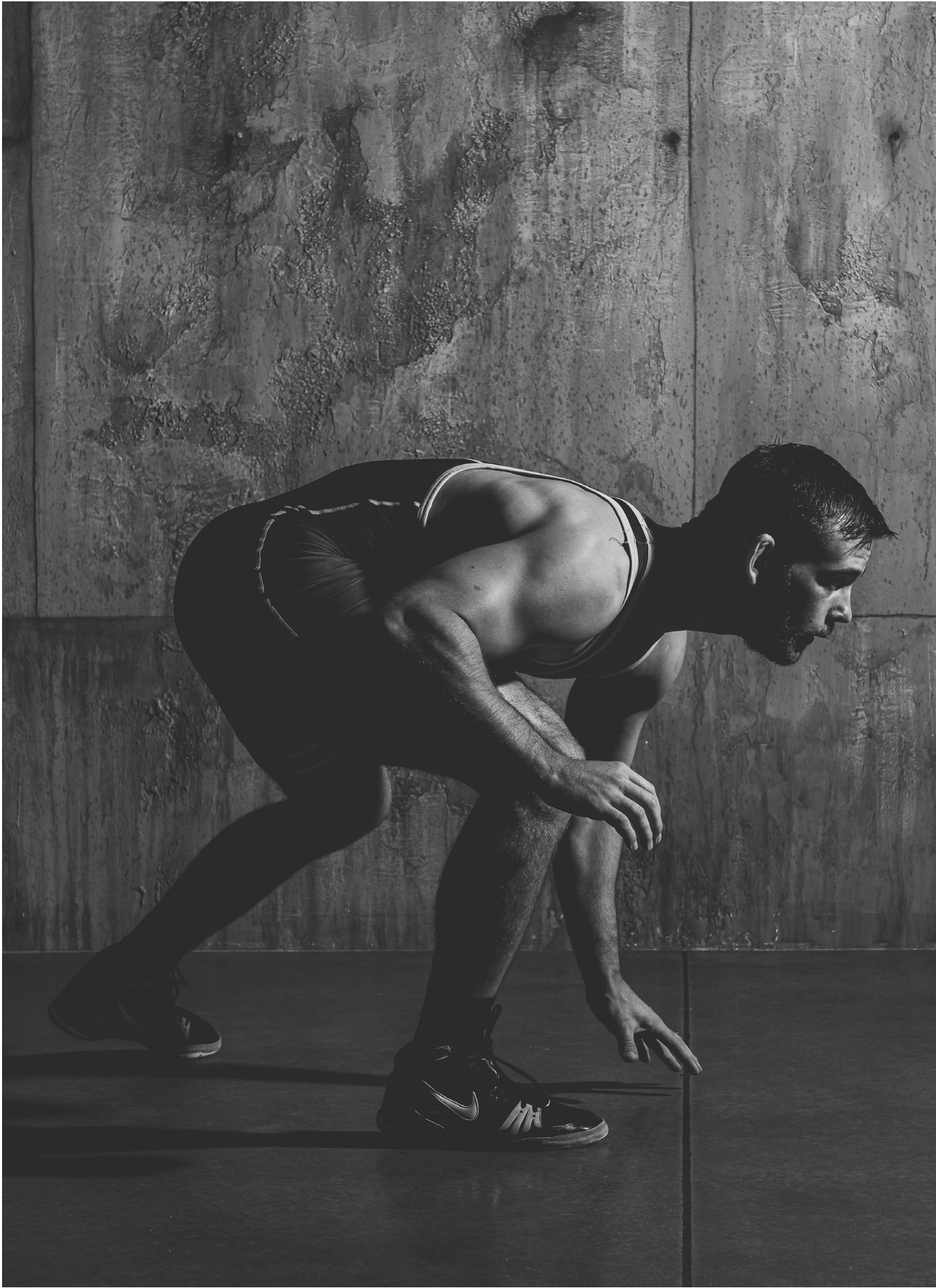
Duane attended a Purdue Agriculture Alumni meeting near their hometown and won Tyler’s book, *The Upset*, in a random drawing.

Their stories had come full circle and would forever be intertwined.

“At the beginning of the 2018 football season, Duane had said to me, ‘I can’t believe you bought season tickets. What a waste of money. We travel so much we’re never able to go any more,’” Jane recounts her husband saying. “In the middle of the Ohio State game, he turned to me and said, ‘I’m so glad you bought season tickets.’”

There’s no doubt about it: the Huges are “Purdue people” through and through. ✨











# REMEMBERING 1969

By Alan Karpick

## WITH MIKE PHIPPS

Mike Phipps was back on campus to celebrate Purdue's Homecoming win over Maryland in October, and *Forge* got his thoughts on the 50th anniversary of his senior season. In 1969, Phipps led the Boilermakers to an 8-2 record, as he became the first quarterback to defeat Notre Dame three straight times. Phipps also came within an eyelash of winning the 1969 Heisman Trophy, the closest Boilermaker ever to earn college football's most coveted award.

**FORGE: From a leadership standpoint, what did you learn as captain of the 1969 football team?**

PHIPPS: That was the year I really had to take charge as far as leadership was concerned. On offense, we only had two seniors – center Walt Whitehead and me. I had to step up. I was and wasn't a verbal leader, not like these guys today. I prided myself in being very competitive and dependable, and I learned I could lead by example.

**FORGE: You had a special relationship with your backup, Don Kiepert. What was that like?**

PHIPPS: Don is a really special friend, we talk two to three times a month. It seems ironic in a way that you become really dear friends when you competed so hard for playing time against each other. I played and he didn't get to play as much, but I learned from watching him because he was such a team guy.

We roomed together. He saw things on the field that really helped me. Don would have started on any other Big Team team I believe. He was that good. There just wasn't room. There was no two-quarterback system in those days.

Don has gone on to do great, great things in the pharmaceutical world, and I am proud to call him my friend. He is incredibly smart and innovative.

**FORGE: How was it playing for two legendary coaches in Jack Mollenkopf and Bob DeMoss?**

PHIPPS: That was pretty special. I went to Purdue because of those two guys. Coach DeMoss had played quarterback and had the reputation of being a tremendous quarterback coach. To me, it was the perfect place to be.

Coach Mollenkopf had something dynamic about him. You could believe what he said. His word was his word. He was not going to make any promises to you about being a starter or building you up and telling you how great you were. There was none of that, but you knew you were going to get an opportunity. It was neat how I got to play the last game that coach Mollenkopf ever coached. He was a fiery guy; trying to keep him under control on the sidelines wasn't always easy.

**FORGE: Going back to the 1969 season, what do you remember about the logo and the 100-year celebration of Purdue?**

PHIPPS: I do remember the logo. What I can't believe is 50 years have gone by. It was a real special year to be on the 100th anniversary team. But, the helmet was the helmet. I didn't see it much because it was on my head (laughing).

**FORGE: Purdue beat Stanford that season in one of the classic games in Ross-Ade Stadium history, trailing by 14 points entering the fourth quarter and rallying for a 36-35 win.**

PHIPPS: I think (Stanford quarterback) Jim Plunkett and I combined for about 900 yards passing and nine touchdowns. In today's world, that's a normal game, but that didn't happen in the late '60s. I got a hot hand and had over 200 yards passing in the fourth quarter. I know older fans that were there, they still love that game. But it's been 50 years, so a lot of people don't remember it, but I certainly do.

**FORGE: That also was the year that Neil Armstrong walked on the moon, so it was a special time to be at Purdue. Do you have any recollections of that, as far as being a Purdue student when it happened?**

PHIPPS: I can actually say that I shook the hand of the first man on the moon because I met him after the Texas A&M game my sophomore year. Coach Mollenkopf introduced me to him. At the time, he wasn't the first man on the moon. That was two years later, but it's still pretty cool that I shook his hand.

I was like everybody else. I was fascinated by watching that happen live. It was amazing, like can this be true? That was more exciting than the 100th anniversary for me. Neil's accomplishment was unbelievable. ✖



# The Archives

## 100th Anniversary Helmet

1969 was a notable year on campus, across the nation and around the globe. It marked the 100th anniversary of Purdue University (established May 6, 1869), and the football team wore commemorative helmets throughout the season to give prominence to the occasion. It also was the 100th anniversary of college football. And on July 20, Purdue alum Neil Armstrong became the first man to walk on the moon. 🌕







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