

# Purdue basketball: Student athletes take pride in their academics

By **LOGAN CORDES** Sports Editor | Posted: Monday, January 12, 2015 10:00 am

Something that gets lost in Top 25 rankings, primetime ESPN games and daily analysis is the fact that Purdue student-athletes are students before they are athletes.

That's something a couple of Purdue basketball players, senior guard Jon Octeus and junior guard Hayden Hamby, take pride in. Octeus is in his one and only season with Purdue as a player while participating in a master's level program in the College of Technology after obtaining his undergraduate degree at Colorado State University. Hamby is a pre-med student with a 3.99 GPA.



1/10/15 Maryland, Jon Octeus

Purdue senior Jon Octeus looks for an open shot on Saturday at Mackey Arena.

Both Octeus and Hamby have their own motivations, one of which is the old “jock” stereotype that they aim to shred. Hamby, in particular, was quick to dismiss the thought that Purdue student-athletes don’t take their studies seriously.

“Everyone has heard that stereotype, but with Purdue, we have such a great academic history,” Hamby said. “We come here to play the sport, but also we understand that we’re not going to play sports forever and that we have to take classes seriously because that’s going to be our livelihood after we leave.”

Octeus was open about his studying habits: enjoying dinner and television before he sits down to do his work. Granted, in his new program, he typically only has class on Saturdays, but he’s also got bigger, more impactful projects to worry about week-to-week. He said time management issues that tend to plague many students is something student-athletes can’t struggle with.

“I feel like time management is something you have to learn when you’re a freshman, as soon as you step on campus,” Octeus said.

When student-athletes aren’t responsible for their schoolwork, discipline is commonplace. Discipline can vary from more time at study tables to physical punishment. Octeus said he’s heard of players being forced to run to the top of Mackey Arena and then back down 100 times. But he said the successful programs are the ones who keep their players accountable.

“It’s not my first time around,” Octeus said. “The programs that I’ve been a part of, they hold you

accountable for your grades. It's a 2.0 to stay eligible, but they don't want 2.0s. They want a 3.0 or better ... I was always obligated to have study hall, like at Colorado State I had to have a certain amount of hours a week early on in my career. It could be meeting with tutors, just studying alone, but you're obligated to get in there and do your work."

Hamby believes student-athletes and their programs must work hand-in-hand to be successful. In the end, having a rich academic background is what helps carry your program forward.

"I think it's important as a program because people look at those stats," Hamby said. "Like a player who might be thinking about committing here, they can look and see that the program cares about as us as students as much as athletes."

# Chemistry, improved play focus for Purdue women

Mike Carmin, Lafayette Journal & Courier

The Purdue women's basketball team leaves Saturday for its 12-day trip to Italy, which includes three games.

Five things about the team's offseason workouts and what the Boilermakers look to accomplish the next two weeks:

## EARNING IT BACK

Once the Boilermakers started workouts in June, coach Sharon Versyp didn't allow the players to wear Purdue practice gear.

"Grey shirts and black shorts with a 20 on the back for the 20 wins we'll get this season instead of the losses," junior Bridget Perry said. "We literally had to earn our stuff back. It was a good experience."

Purdue posted an 11-20 record, including a 3-15 mark in Big Ten play last season.

Versyp allowed the players to begin wearing official gear when practices for the trip started July 19.

"They're good kids. Sometimes you have to make some changes and make some tough concessions. It's a totally different unit. Night and day," Versyp said.

Junior Bridget Perry provides an update on her knee and ankle injury from last season and how the Boilermakers responded during offseason workouts Mike Carmin/Journal & Courier

## BOUNCING BACK

While you won't hear the Boilermakers talk a lot about last season, the memory of what happened will drive them to avoid a repeat performance.

They've moved forward, but what transpired remains a driving force.

"Expectations were high, everyone was held accountable," Perry said of the offseason program. "Everything had to be perfect. It was really tough. We had to be tough and we had to increase our expectations and our level of intensity in the weight room, conditioning and on the floor. We were disappointed in what we did last year, but if we learn from that it's not a failure, it's not a failed season. Last year is going to help us become a better team."

## BETTER SHAPE

According to point guard April Wilson, the Boilermakers have been working non-stop to shore up their conditioning.

"Usually in the summer we have an off day but our off-day has been cardio," the senior said. "We've been going hard. Coach has been saying we were not in that great of shape last year and we need to be the best conditioning team this year."

Versyp sees improvement mentally and physically. The 10th-year coach put her players through mental exercises, including reading books and listening to guest speakers along with building more physical strength and endurance.

"Totally new chapter, fresh, excited, you walk in the gym and the energy is 10 times different than it was before," she said. "I'm never satisfied but I'm very pleased with how our players have responded."

## NEW STYLE

Going into the 2015-16 season, Versyp plans to use a 4-out, 1-in offense, highlighting the perimeter skills of her roster. The trip allows the coaching staff to see how the scheme will work against other teams.

Perry will play both small and power forward, while Dominique McBryde and Torrie Thornton will focus on the power forward spot. Andreona Keys is set at small forward. Wilson and Tiara Murphy will handle point guard duties, while Ashley Morrisette, Justine Hall and Hayden Hamby can play shooting guard.

Bree Horrocks, Erica Moore and Nora Kiesler will play inside.

"How we play, the style of the play with Bridget at (power forward) has opened up so many things for us," Versyp said. "That's been fun to see."

Thornton, Kiesler and McBryde are dealing with injuries and their playing time is expected to be limited on the trip.

## TRIP GOALS

While the Boilermakers are looking to improve their play on the court, this trip is more about developing team chemistry.

"We're going to be gone for two weeks and it's only three games but the down time should be used to get to know each other," Wilson said.

These offseason trips are designed to bring teams closer together.

"This is huge to build that foundation so when we come back great things can happen," Versyp said.

Purdue women's basketball in Italy

Tuesday, Aug. 11: Lithuanian University, 12:30 p.m.

Thursday, Aug. 13: Cameroon National Team, 10 a.m.

Saturday, Aug. 15: TK Hannover, 1 p.m.

Note: The last piece of the nonconference schedule has been announced. The Boilermakers will face Louisiana State on Nov. 27 in the opening round of the Gulf Coast Showcase in Estero, Fla. Purdue will play either Louisville or Marist on Nov. 28. Other teams in the tournament are Dayton, Maine, Stanford and Missouri State.

Purdue women energized for season

by Mike Carmin

They've had a spring and summer full of workouts and conditioning.

They had 10 extra practices and played three games during a trip to Italy in August. They've had six more weeks of conditioning and individual drills.

"They're ready to get after it on the court," said Purdue women's basketball coach Sharon Versyp, who begins her 10th season as the Boilermakers start official practices Wednesday. "Now, it's basketball season."

But the Boilermakers have a lot to prove.

Last year wasn't what fans expected from this tradition-rich program. Losing season overall and tying for last in the Big Ten. It took a last-second shot to advance past the first game of the conference tournament but the Boilermakers were headed home after the next round.

Versyp sees a different team, one that is focused on the things she's preached during her tenure.

Question: What's the vibe of this team right now? As you put your hand on the pulse, what is it and how different is it compared to last year?

Answer: Hungry and togetherness.

Q: How can you sense those things about them?

A: Energy. The energy in the room. You walk in and it's a just a different feeling, a different vibe. There's excitement, there's camaraderie. You sense it and feel it when you walk into the room. That speaks volumes. Anybody that's come across our team that's the thing that they say. Great energy no matter what we're doing, whether it's on the court, whether it's in the community.

Q: How do you get it to translate to on-the-court performance?

A: We did that a lot this summer. I thought those 10 practices and our games, we were able to jumpstart our season. We had that then and we'll continue to have it. The fight that we have inside of us and the toughness is starting to grow every day. Now, we have another four weeks to really get the proof in the pudding a little bit and work on the basketball part, working together and having all healthy bodies out there and trying to see the big picture even though you're going day-by-day but seeing the big picture of what it will collectively look like.

Q: You've put in a new offensive system. How do you evaluate where you're at in that process and what will be the benefit?

A: We're trying to stretch our (power forwards) out a little bit when you have Bridget (Perry), Torrie (Thornton) and Dominique McBryde that can the play the 4 spot. They're good one-on-one players, they can shoot the 3, they can score down low. You're seeing in women's college basketball – not everywhere – but you're starting to see 4-out, 1-in more, a lot of pick and rolls, two-person games. What I liked is when we were in Italy we executed some really good things and we were very successful. When you're doing it against teams that you don't know anything about and you just put it in, that boosted our players' confidence – 'Wow, this worked.' That's part of it. If you have success at something, it's just going to build the confidence.

Q: You've always tried to run. Do you want to be able to move it with this group?

A: That was a weakness last year, but there's a reason why we couldn't push the ball. This year, we're getting it and going. We're going to push. We had a real small lineup when we played Germany overseas and that was a fun, fun lineup. We had other lineups where we were able to go big and you could still run. We have to rebound and go. The biggest thing is rebounding. I think that's an area of weakness we have to really focus on. That's going to make or break us this year.

Q: Who do you need to rebound?

A: Our (centers) have to rebound. I don't care collectively if they each have four. Bree (Horrocks), Nora (Keisler) and Erica (Moore) have to rebound the basketball. I'm telling them they have to be rebounders, screeners, passers and then you score the ball. Our 4s and (small forwards) they have to board. That's a huge focus on both ends of the floor.

Q: Any change to the defensive approach?

A: Just a lot more intense. Last year we had to play a lot of zone because certain people were injured. We're in your face. Point guards have got to start it and it makes everybody else rise and we can be able to front down low with our small ones, play behind with our big ones but pressure the basketball more than we have than last year. We'll full-court press when we need to and play 2-3 (zone). Defense was the key to how we were successful overseas.

Q: Coming off the year you had, what do you want for this team or want from this year?

A: We don't talk about the past anymore. We talk about today. They've done a lot of great things already. We've got a long way to go but the mindset, the commitment, the respect, understanding the program is bigger than them, all of those things came back. They're fun group to coach. When you get on the court and you're having fun because they want to work hard and they want to be pushed every single second, they want you to get on them, they want you to kick them in the rear, that's the best team to coach. If we do those things, it's going to be fun basketball again.

Q: Are those the goals you set for this team or do you set the same landmarks that Purdue usually has?

A: Everybody has the same landmarks. You don't need to talk about that. We know what Purdue basketball is supposed to be. That's why these women are here. In order to do those things, we're talking about all the things I just talked about, that is what matters. Your team comes first, you're the best-conditioned team, you love, care and service your teammates and the rest takes care of itself because then you play together and have fun and things work out.

# Boilermakers host Marian in exhibition game

Mike Carmin, [mcarmin@jconline.com](mailto:mcarmin@jconline.com) 4:56 p.m. EST November 7, 2015

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- What did coach Sharon Versyp learn from the closed scrimmage against Cincinnati?

"We felt we ran very well and we shot the ball well," she said. "Those are two key things we have to do exceptionally well. We can't have three turnovers in a row and a lot of that is being young and still understanding what they're doing to some degree."

- The top area of concern is rebounding. It will be a common theme throughout the season.

"I learned we have to be better on the boards," Versyp said. "That's something I will always talk about, even if we're outrebounding people."

- Sophomore guard Ashley Morrisette (thumb) and freshman Dominique McBryde (illness) didn't play in the closed scrimmage and won't play against the Knights.

Morrisette has been cleared, but Versyp is waiting until the Nov. 16 season opener against Jacksonville State to put the Ohio native in the lineup.

- Look for April Wilson, Hayden Hamby, Andreona Keys, Bridget Perry and Bree Horrocks in the starting lineup.

- Marian is coached by former Boilermaker Katie Gearlds, who begins her third season.

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But that might be only a side note to the bigger storyline: She's healthy.

After enduring ankle and knee injuries during the Big Ten season last year, the first injury costing her a month, she's good to go now. And in the Boilermakers' exhibition, a 78-37 win over Marian University Sunday afternoon, the junior showed so, going for 17 points on 7-of-10 shooting, with 13 rebounds, two blocks, two assists and a steal in 30 minutes.

"It's really nice being healthy, that way I can bring energy to the team," Perry said. "It's great to be out there playing with my teammates again, being a part of that energy and being a part of this amazing team."

Perry wasn't at 100 percent after the start of the New Year last season. She first suffered a high ankle sprain against Maryland, then missed seven games, but shortly after she returned her knee started to be a hindrance.

Rest and rehabbed helped in the offseason, and she's good now. Perry scored nine of Purdue's first 17 - the hosts were up 17-10 after the first quarter - in a variety of ways. She scored on a couple free throws, converted a three-point play and made a layup after taking it herself following a rebound on the other end.

"She's just so long, especially for our kids," said former Boilermaker Katie Gearlds, the head coach at Marian. "But even more so when they get into their schedule, and in the Big Ten. She's so long and deceptively quick. You don't think that her first step is as quick as it really is. And she's active, more active than I saw last year and if she can keep that up, then she brings a versatility that most teams aren't going to be able to matchup with."

Although Perry started quickly, Purdue did not. The Boilermakers made only four of their 14 shots in the first quarter, but started to heat up afterward.

Early in the second, Andreona Keys stole a ball, then scored on a layup. Perry scored inside off a feed from April Wilson - the point guard had nine assists, 15 points and four steals - then Hayden Hamby hit a triple. At the four-minute mark of the second quarter, the Boilermakers led 28-14.

Then, Purdue really opened up in the second half against the NAIA Knights, shooting 58.1 percent.

"We want to get out and run and in the second half, we turned it up on our fast breaks," said Keys, who had a dozen on 3-of-5 shooting and a perfect 6-6 from the line. "We got after it and were sharing the ball well in the second half. It just opened up everything for us."

The Boilermakers outscored the Knights 20-8 in the third quarter, turning the 36-20 lead into a 30-point margin. Height was an advantage; Purdue had 42 points in the paint, including eight straight from 6-foot-6 freshman Nora Kiesler to end the third. The rookie finished with 10 points and five rebounds.

The Boilermakers shot 51 percent for the game, including an 18-of-31 percent in the second half. They had only three of their 15 turnovers after the break as well.

"The second half is what we looked like all summer," said Coach Sharon Versyp, who sat Ashley Morissette (left thumb) and Dom McBryde (illness). "It's nice to share the basketball, nice to get back to playing great defense."

But it's Perry who is frequently making the offense work, particularly because of the matchup issues she can create in the post.

"She's tenacious," Keys said. "She is all over the place and can do anything for us. She's aggressive all the time. She's just getting after it and she always gives 100 percent, always."

# Healthy Perry sparks Purdue women's basketball

Mike Carmin, [mcarmin@jconline.com](mailto:mcarmin@jconline.com) 8 p.m. EST November 8, 2015

The exhibition season for the Purdue women's basketball team actually started in August when the Boilermakers played three games in Italy.

It concluded Sunday with a 78-37 victory over Marian University, coached by former Boilermaker star Katie Gearlds.

Five takeaways from the 41-point win at Mackey Arena:

- Bridget Perry is healthy. When the junior doesn't have to worry about ankle and knee injuries sustained last season, the 6-foot-2 Perry is the team's top go-to option right now. The Boilermakers will need more, but Perry looks comfortable in this role.

"She's just so long, especially for our kids," Gearlds said. "When they get into their schedule, even in the Big Ten, she's so long and deceptively quick. You don't think that her first step is as quick as it really is. She's active, more active than I saw last year and if she can keep that up she brings versatility to this team that most teams aren't going to be able match up against."

Perry's final numbers – 17 points, 13 rebounds, two blocks in 30 minutes. In coach Sharon Versyp's new 4-out, 1-in offense, Perry is the power forward. She also played a few possessions at center Sunday. Perry missed seven games last season due to injuries.

"It's nice being healthy," Perry said. "That way I can bring energy to the team and it's great to be out there playing with my teammates again, being part of that energy and being part of this amazing team."

- The Boilermakers held an expected big advantage on the boards. That allowed Purdue to eventually move into its transition game, scoring 42 points in the paint and 26 off turnovers.

“We want to get out and run,” said sophomore Andreona Keys, who had 12 points. “In the second half, we turned it up on our fastbreaks. We were sharing the ball very well in the second half. It opened up everything for us.”

Senior point guard April Wilson led a majority of those fastbreaks, handing out nine assists.

- The offense started slow, relying on free throws to build an early lead.

But the production picked up after halftime as the Boilermakers shot 58.1 percent and finished the game at 50.8.

“First half, it was a little jittery,” coach Sharon Versyp said. “The second half is what we’ve looked like all summer. It’s nice to share the basketball and it’s nice to get back to playing great defense.”

- Ashley Morrisette (thumb) and Dominique McBryde (illness) didn’t play Sunday but both are expected to see action in the Nov. 16 regular season opener against Jacksonville State.

Both should be impact players. Versyp said Morrisette is the team’s “best one-on-one player. When she goes against guys she even jukes the guys quite a bit.”

Meanwhile, McBryde is still learning the physicality and intensity needed at the Big Ten level. McBryde has missed practice time, which has probably slowed her progress.

“She hasn’t had enough reps,” Versyp said. “This summer, everyone got to see that she’s very versatile and she’s got great post moves down low and she can score and make three different moves.”

- Gearlds isn't accustomed to walking to the visiting team's bench at Mackey Arena after playing four seasons for the Boilermakers.

"Walking out, it was a little different because, 'wow', that's a long walk," she said. "This will always be home."

She still remembers the school song.

"Every time I heard Hail Purdue, I was, in my head, singing the whole day," Gearlds said.

Former McCutcheon standout Lakan Hasser-Smith had seven points for the Knights. Frontier's Jenna Sullivan pulled down five rebounds.

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"The second half is what we looked like all summer," said Coach Sharon Versyp, who sat Ashley Morissette (left thumb) and Dom McBryde (illness). "It's nice to share the basketball, nice to get back to playing great defense."

But it's Perry who is frequently making the offense work, particularly because of the matchup issues she can create in the post.

"She's tenacious," Keys said. "She is all over the place and can do anything for us. She's aggressive all the time. She's just getting after it and she always gives 100 percent, always."

# Healthy Perry sparks Purdue women's basketball

Mike Carmin, [mcarmin@jconline.com](mailto:mcarmin@jconline.com) 8 p.m. EST November 8, 2015

The exhibition season for the Purdue women's basketball team actually started in August when the Boilermakers played three games in Italy.

It concluded Sunday with a 78-37 victory over Marian University, coached by former Boilermaker star Katie Gearlds.

Five takeaways from the 41-point win at Mackey Arena:

- Bridget Perry is healthy. When the junior doesn't have to worry about ankle and knee injuries sustained last season, the 6-foot-2 Perry is the team's top go-to option right now. The Boilermakers will need more, but Perry looks comfortable in this role.

"She's just so long, especially for our kids," Gearlds said. "When they get into their schedule, even in the Big Ten, she's so long and deceptively quick. You don't think that her first step is as quick as it really is. She's active, more active than I saw last year and if she can keep that up she brings versatility to this team that most teams aren't going to be able match up against."

Perry's final numbers – 17 points, 13 rebounds, two blocks in 30 minutes. In coach Sharon Versyp's new 4-out, 1-in offense, Perry is the power forward. She also played a few possessions at center Sunday. Perry missed seven games last season due to injuries.

"It's nice being healthy," Perry said. "That way I can bring energy to the team and it's great to be out there playing with my teammates again, being part of that energy and being part of this amazing team."

- The Boilermakers held an expected big advantage on the boards. That allowed Purdue to eventually move into its transition game, scoring 42 points in the paint and 26 off turnovers.

“We want to get out and run,” said sophomore Andreona Keys, who had 12 points. “In the second half, we turned it up on our fastbreaks. We were sharing the ball very well in the second half. It opened up everything for us.”

Senior point guard April Wilson led a majority of those fastbreaks, handing out nine assists.

- The offense started slow, relying on free throws to build an early lead.

But the production picked up after halftime as the Boilermakers shot 58.1 percent and finished the game at 50.8.

“First half, it was a little jittery,” coach Sharon Versyp said. “The second half is what we’ve looked like all summer. It’s nice to share the basketball and it’s nice to get back to playing great defense.”

- Ashley Morrisette (thumb) and Dominique McBryde (illness) didn’t play Sunday but both are expected to see action in the Nov. 16 regular season opener against Jacksonville State.

Both should be impact players. Versyp said Morrisette is the team’s “best one-on-one player. When she goes against guys she even jukes the guys quite a bit.”

Meanwhile, McBryde is still learning the physicality and intensity needed at the Big Ten level. McBryde has missed practice time, which has probably slowed her progress.

“She hasn’t had enough reps,” Versyp said. “This summer, everyone got to see that she’s very versatile and she’s got great post moves down low and she can score and make three different moves.”

- Gearlds isn't accustomed to walking to the visiting team's bench at Mackey Arena after playing four seasons for the Boilermakers.

"Walking out, it was a little different because, 'wow', that's a long walk," she said. "This will always be home."

She still remembers the school song.

"Every time I heard Hail Purdue, I was, in my head, singing the whole day," Gearlds said.

Former McCutcheon standout Lakan Hasser-Smith had seven points for the Knights. Frontier's Jenna Sullivan pulled down five rebounds.

# Purdue Women's Basketball: Boilermaker freshmen bring an array of skills

By **BROCK REISH** Sports Editor | Posted: Tuesday, November 10, 2015 10:00 am

The Purdue women's basketball team is coming off a subpar season, finishing with an overall record of 11-20, finding just three wins in the Big Ten. The program is hopeful that a dynamic freshman class will add some much-needed depth to the roster.

The 2015 recruiting class brings center Nora Kiesler, forward Dominique McBryde and guards Tiara Murphy and Abby Abel to a Boilermaker squad that lost just two seniors last season.

Center Liza Clemons and guard Whitney Bays combined last season for 750 of Purdue's 1,959 points. Head coach Sharon Versyp and the upperclassmen of the squad believe the talent among the freshmen could benefit the team.

"They just come in and bring a whole new level to the team," said junior guard Ashley Morrisette. "They come in talking. A lot of them come in with great skill sets. We've just got to get them experience and I think they'll be a great asset to this team."

Versyp acknowledged that all of the new players bring something different to the team as a whole "(Kiesler and McBryde) are the two that have really separated themselves on the basketball floor," Versyp said during Big Ten Basketball Media Day in mid-October. "(They're) rising to the occasion and producing. You can play hard, but you've got to have some production. I think those two have done a great job."

Versyp explained that Murphy was battling some injuries coming into the season which put her a little behind the rest of the team, but is confident her talent, along with Morrisette and senior point guard April Wilson helping her adapt to playing the point position in college, will have the freshman producing on the court when her time comes.

Often considered more important than on-court production is the mentality of the freshman class, which could give Purdue an advantage. According to their coach, this class of women is unselfish and willing to do whatever it takes to get the program back in the place that the Purdue community wants to see.

"What they've done this summer, what they've shown to our seniors – that they want to do everything possible to make such a special year for the seniors – I think that's big," Versyp said.

The Boilers first took the floor on Sunday for an exhibition game against Maryland, and Abel, Murphy and Kielser all saw time on the floor. Kielser led the class with 10 points and five rebounds.

Regular-season play for the women's team kicks off on Monday when the Boilers host Jacksonville

State.

Purdue's Wilson at the top of her game

Mike Carmin, Lafayette Journal & Courier

Dec. 26, 2015

April Wilson banned herself from social media.

You read that right. The college student no longer is immersed in the daily chatter on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Talk about breaking the mold.

Now Wilson is enjoying a strong start to her final season. Are the two related?

"I don't know. It could be," she said, smiling. "Looking back, I've never known a team to win because of having (social media) or lose because of not having it. I thought, 'Why not try it?' It does help you focus more because there are distractions."

In Wilson's world, the distractions are gone. As the long 18-game Big Ten Conference schedule is set to start, the Boilermakers need Wilson's focus and talent to avoid the basement for the second straight year.

So far, Wilson is showing she can be the leader coach Sharon Versyp's team needs.

"It's all mental," the 10th-year coach said. "She's had the physical capability of doing everything, and she's really bought in 100 percent and beyond. She wants the leadership role and she wants players to look to her, and it takes a while to gain that."

Social media distract from what Wilson wants to accomplish. That includes academics. Staying up late to check Twitter notifications and counting Facebook likes used to cut into Wilson's sleeping habits.

Not anymore.

“Just go to sleep,” she said. “It will be there in the morning. Someone said you get highs going on there and seeing your likes or seeing your notifications. It’s an addiction. I had to cut that off. It was unnecessary. It’s helped me focus.”

Wilson already has made more 3-pointers this season than she did all of last year. Part of last season’s struggles was attributed to fractured ribs the Louisville native played with during most of the conference season.

It impacted everything. Her shooting, running, the ability to play defense and just being able to breathe became a monumental task. The pain never went away.

She couldn’t extend on her shot, especially from the 3-point range, because of the pain. Wilson’s strength — her mid-range game — even suffered. She shot 35.4 percent overall and made only 19 of 80 from 3-point range as a junior.

“I didn’t have any protection — I was out there free with it,” said Wilson, who attempted to wear padding around her ribs but found it too cumbersome. “It was extremely painful, and I don’t know how else to explain it. It hurt to breathe; it hurt to laugh, to talk. Throw in the running, and it was a bad combination.”

Wilson didn’t consider shutting down her season, although she missed some time after suffering a concussion. In fact, when Wilson was told her ribs were fractured, she went straight to practice.

“Regardless, it wasn’t going to heal within the time the season was still going,” she said. “It was late in January, and it wasn’t going to be any better come Big Tens or the conference tournament. At one point they said, ‘If you want to’ ... it never even crossed my mind.”

Wilson showed Versyp her toughness and her ability to battle through just about anything.

“She could’ve sat in January and not played at all. I appreciate her fight,” Versyp said. “You’re not going to play well or shoot well and you can’t play man-to-man when you’ve got broken ribs.”

The 2015 version of Wilson is one that is playing with tremendous energy, passion and leadership.

The first thing Wilson recognizes when she watches film this season compared to last year is her overall health. When the 2014-15 season ended, Wilson went right to work, not only to improve her conditioning but to change the attitude from such a dismissal year.

It was a combination of physical and mental improvement.

“Sometimes, I forget about last year — ‘Wow, I was really injured’ — but to see my film now boosts my confidence,” Wilson said. “I’m happy to see my team out there playing so much better than we have been before.”

Purdue's Thornton enjoying final season

Mike Carmin, Lafayette Journal & Courier

Dec. 30, 2015

Torrie Thornton feels old.

By college basketball standards, 23 is old. The Carmel native has been on Purdue's campus and a member of the women's basketball program since 2011. This is her final season with the Boilermakers, but Thornton had to make a decision whether to return.

Here's the story. Thornton's knees are a mess. She's had tendons removed from each one, forcing her to miss the 2012-13 season. The right knee healed quickly. The left one took longer. She's battled pain and soreness over the last two seasons but contributed as many minutes as possible.

The pain and soreness aren't going away. Ever. Thornton has to manage her situation, spending extra time to warm up and stretch. That will never change. She even underwent foot surgery at the end of last season.

The decision to return for another season was made at the end of last year. It wasn't easy knowing what lies ahead once Thornton's playing career is over.

"That was a big reason why I was scared and skeptical about playing my last season because it's hard for me to go up and down stairs and it's hard for me to sit down and get back up," said Thornton, who is expected to be in the starting lineup when the Boilermakers open Big Ten play Thursday at Michigan. "That's an issue but I guess I decided it's not that big of an issue. I'll deal with it later."

Later can wait.

She's focused on ending her career on a positive note and re-establishing coach Sharon Versyp's program to where fans are accustomed to seeing it, especially in the Big Ten standings. Thornton will do what she can, attempting to stay out of foul trouble, holding her own defensively, contributing on offense and playing extended minutes when asked.

Thornton would make the same decision today that she made at the end of last year. Purdue's 9-2 start has helped reaffirm she's made the right choice.

"I wouldn't trade it for anything, especially the way the season is going thus far," she said. "Hopefully going into the Big Ten we can continue to be as successful as we've been. That was the whole reason I wanted to come back. I didn't want to end things how we did last year. It's a big goal and a big plan to end on a better note."

Versyp will lean on Thornton's experience, especially as sophomore Bree Horrocks and freshman Nora Kiesler continue to develop, along with her intensity and physicality as the Big Ten season unfolds.

"Those are the things that she needs to bring to the table to set the tone for everybody else," Versyp said. "In the Big Ten it's a battle every single second, not that it wasn't in the nonconference, but the intensity is just different."

Thornton knows her knees will never return to a normal level, but Versyp has managed her playing time during the first 11 games. In one game, Thornton didn't play in the second half. In the lopsided victories, Thornton remained on the bench for long stretches.

Ideally, Versyp would like use Thornton for 20 minutes per game during the conference season.

"I don't know if they'll ever be back to where I want them to be but they're definitely back to a state where I can play and I'm OK with that," she said.

Since Thornton is the oldest player on the roster, you can probably guess her nickname.

“Grandma. It’s OK. I feel like the grandma of the team,” she said. “I’m a fifth-year senior and my body feels that way. Once I get warm and stretched a lot – more than anybody else – I’m OK to go. I do feel a little bit older.”

#### Noteworthy

Versyp said freshman guard Tiara Murphy could return to action in two weeks. Murphy has missed the last four games due to a stress reaction in her leg.

“She’s starting to get in shooting drills, she’s starting to run the treadmill,” Versyp said. “She’s never going to be totally pain-free but we want to manage it.”

## **Versyp, Boilers celebrate milestone**

*Clyde Hughes, For the Journal & Courier 6:19 p.m. EST January 11, 2016*

It was a time for Purdue women's basketball coach Sharon Versyp and her players to smile Sunday, after vanquishing in-state rival Indiana to remain undefeated in Big Ten play while knocking off nationally ranked Northwestern just days before.

The victory not only marked a high point in the Boilermakers' season with their eighth straight victory, but professionally for Versyp becoming the winningest women's basketball coach in Purdue history with victory No. 207.

Versyp passed Lin Dunn, for whom she played during Dunn's first season at Purdue in 1988-89. On Sunday, Versyp gave credit to her players – past and present – for the honor.

"I ride them hard and they handle it because they know I care for them," Versyp said, bringing quiet smiles from guards Ashley Morrisette and Andreona Keys sitting next to her. "They are the reason that I'm sitting here and being as successful as we are. It's great to see former players come here. It's been an honor."

Morrisette attested to Versyp's demanding style but added that the proof of the coach's efforts is in their record this year, 13-2 and 4-0 in conference play.

"She's one to get on us when we're not doing what we're supposed to and when we're doing what we're supposed to be doing," Morrisette said, bringing a laugh from press conference attendees. "She just wants to make us better players and better people. I appreciate that."

Keys said she was happy to be part of Versyp's historic Purdue victory.

"We just want to help her and she wants to help us," Keys said. "I think that it was a great job today getting her this exciting win."

The Boilermakers are coming off their first losing season since the 2009-10 season. Purdue went 11-20 last year, their lowest win total since the 1980s, and 3-15 in Big Ten play. All of that seems a distant memory now with the Boilers already surpassing both of those win totals and holding on to a share of first place in conference play with Ohio State.

To top it off, Purdue knocked off its second top 25 team of the season, in beating Northwestern at home Thursday. Versyp said, though, she does not care about the lack of recognition the Boilers have received so far in the national rankings.

"It was fantastic that we got the win at Northwestern and were able to stay the course Sunday," Versyp said. "We like being the unsung hero, the underdog. We don't like that type of attention. If we deserve it, it will come but we don't talk about that.

"We take it one game at a time. We've done some great things so far but the Big Ten is a tough league and we've got a lot of games left. We're 4-0. We can stop the season now and would be great. That's not how it is. I like what I see."

The Big Ten statistics show how defense has carried Purdue. The Boilermakers are currently second in scoring defense (54.7 per game), third in 3-point field goal defense (.262) and fourth in field goal defense (.361), rebounding defense (33.6), steals (8.8) and turnover margin (+3.5).

Versyp and the Boilermakers won praise from Indiana's coach Teri Moren , who saw her team fight back from a double-digit deficit for a good portion of the game.

"I think they are just really sound defensively," Moren said. "I think they're playing with a lot of confidence right now. They're playing at a very high level. Sharon has them playing really well. Sharon's a good coach and they execute well offensively."

Purdue will try to get Versyp win No. 208 on Thursday at home against Minnesota (10-5, 2-2 Big Ten).

Purdue coaches by wins

Sharon Versyp (2006-present) 207

Lin Dunn (1988-96) 206

Kristy Curry (2000-06) 179

Ruth Jones (1977-1986) 101

Sharon Versyp's coaching record

Maine (2000-05) 98-51

Indiana (2005-06) 19-14

Purdue (2006-present) 207-110

# Douglas inspires Purdue women

*Clyde Hughes, For the Journal & Courier 12:02 p.m. EST January 13, 2016*

Katie Douglas admitted before going into Purdue's locker room Sunday that she was not big on big pep talks.

In fact, arguably the most celebrated women's basketball player to come out of Indiana and a two-time All-American claimed she had never given one.

"I don't know what I would say," said the former Boilermaker star who helped lead the team to a national title in 1999 and a Final Four appearance in 2001. "I never really gave a pep talk before. I've always been critical of my coaches' pep talks.

"I'll just say how happy I am to be here and emphasize to just cherish these moments and opportunities because they go by so quick. I was told that time and time again by different adults but it's different when a player can communicate that to another player. Don't take things for granted because all you'll have left are memories, so make great memories."

Douglas, who was inducted earlier this year into the Purdue Athletic Hall of Fame, was honored with a bobblehead doll at Sunday afternoon's game against Indiana, won by Purdue 63-53.

Little did Douglas know, she didn't have to say a word. For Purdue guard Ashley Morrisette, who scored 12 points along with eight rebounds and eight steals Sunday, just taking time to be with them was reward enough.

"She didn't have to say anything," Morrisette said. "It was just inspiring just for her to walk into the room. Her presence there motivated us probably more than her speech did."

Douglas' WNBA career was one for the record books. Along with winning a league title in 2012 with the Indiana Fever, she ranks eighth all-time in points (5,563), fifth in 3-pointers made (727) and fourth in

steals (623). Andreona Keys, who scored 11 points and grabbed 10 rebounds against the Hoosiers, said she had followed Douglas's pro career.

"I idolize her," Keys said. "I've been watching her since she's been playing for the (Indiana) Fever. I said, 'Oh my gosh, we have a famous person in here.'"

Former Purdue great Katie Douglas speaks at halftime of the Boilermakers game with Indiana Sunday, January 10, 2016, at Mackey Arena. Purdue beat Indiana 63-53. (Photo: John Terhune/Journal & Courier)

Douglas said the visit was special while taking in the renovations at Mackey Arena.

"It's crazy because you walk around this arena and there's been so many phenomenal updates and changes," Douglas said. "Being here is more like reminiscing of how things used to look.

"It's much better now. I have memories about going to practice and talking to some of my teammates, along with thinking of all the lifelong friendships you've made. It's a lot of fun being up here."

Back problems essentially ended her 14-year career. She said she nearly played with the Connecticut Sun last summer.

"I feel OK now," Douglas said. "I finally feel like I'm on the mend. I was close to playing last summer but felt like it was in my best interest to not push the envelope anymore. I'm blessed that I'm as healthy as a normal citizen can be. I may not be able to run, jump and those things anymore."

She said she opted out of the Purdue women's alumni game this year but attended the alumni luncheon with other former players. Those players, along with Douglas, were introduced at halftime of Sunday's game.

"They asked why I couldn't play, but I don't think I'm in any kind of shape to do that, so I watched the game," Douglas said.

Douglas said now that she is officially retired, there are some aspects that she does miss but is happy with her decision.

"I miss my teammates and coaches," Douglas said. "I don't miss the travel. I don't miss the practices, of course. There are some things I don't miss, but the relationships every day and the kind of fun you do have with your teammates and coaches I do miss."

# Boilermakers hold off Minnesota

*Clyde Hughes, For the Journal & Courier 12:03 a.m. EST January 15, 2016*

The Purdue women's basketball team turned up the defensive intensity in the fourth quarter, just when it appeared they would be overtaken by Minnesota's hot-shooting guards, to pull away to an 84-72 victory in Mackey Arena Thursday night.

The hard-fought win extended Purdue's winning streak to nine games and leaves the Boilermakers (14-2, 5-0) alone on top of the Big Ten standings after Northwestern knocked off No. 5 Ohio State 86-82.

Purdue coach Sharon Versyp, though, was quick to put things in its proper perspective.

"Five wins is one thing, but you still have 13 (more) games," Versyp said. "It's a tough league. On any given day anything can happen. You have an off day, you're going to lose. That's the bottom line in this league. Our kids have worked exceptionally hard and have done everything we've asked them to do."

Thursday night was another example of the Boilermakers doing what needed to be done against the big-scoring Gophers (10-6, 2-3). Behind freshman Dominique McBryde (22 points, eight rebounds), Purdue led by as many 13 points in the first quarter and 14 points (34-20) in the second.

But Minnesota's Rachel Banham and Carlie Wagner, ranked second and fourth in the Big Ten in scoring, respectively, got going in the third quarter after Purdue held them to a combined 13 points in the first half.

Down 48-30, Minnesota closed out the third quarter on a 17-5 run, with Barham doing most of the damage by scoring in double-digits.

"I thought our first half plan of trying to limit opportunities for their guards worked out really well," Versyp said. "Our defense was very strong. We also knew at some point they were still going to be able to score because when you're playing man-to-man that intently, they would make some type of run."

Minnesota coach Marlene Stollings moved Banham down to the '4' position to get her closer to the basket and a different matchup, which worked. Banham finished with 27 points and Wagner 21.

"We knew (hedging the high screens was) how they were defending the on-ball screens and what we wanted to do is make harder turns off those to go at their big girl a little harder," Stollings said. "I thought we didn't handle the physicality of them jumping out on us very well."

But it was Purdue's offense and defense that won out at crunch time. A Shayne Mullaney 3-pointer cut Purdue's lead to 55-54 with 8:23 left. Bridget Perry connected on a driving shot to push the lead back up to three points.

Ashley Morrisette ran down a Minnesota 3-point miss and April Wilson (17 points, eight assists) knocked down a 3-pointer with 7:40 left. Wilson had missed her six previous attempts.

"I'm just glad it went in," Wilson said. "It was like a sigh of relief that it finally went down."

Purdue got stops on the defensive end and Perry made another driving basket at the 7:16 mark, giving the Boilermakers a 62-54 lead.

Minnesota got it back down to six points again after a Wagner shot with three minutes left to play, but McBryde knocked down a basket at the 2:55 mark. After Purdue forced a turnover, the game turned into a free-throw shooting contest with the Boilers' lead never going below two possessions again.

McBryde made 7 of 8 shots and was 8 of 11 from the free-throw line, all in 22 minutes of play. Morrisette and Andreona Keys turned in solid performances, scoring 14 and 12 points, respectively, while Bree Horrocks pulled down 11 rebounds.

But there is little rest for the Boilermakers as they travel to Columbus for Sunday's game against Ohio State, which they have a one-game lead over in the Big Ten standings.

"It's a good feeling because it shows all the work we've put in since April," Wilson said. "We're not surprised that we're here. But our coaches are always saying stay hungry and humble. We're winning but we're not going to get the big head and just go into every game and play our best."