

The 1932 Boilermakers



Although the Boilermakers lead the Big Ten in titles and by several other measures, only once has the Old Gold and Black finished a season atop the national rankings.

The year was 1932, when the Boilermakers went 17-1.

In those days, the Associated Press didn't rank teams and the first NCAA-sanctioned postseason tournament wasn't held until 1939. Instead, from 1901 to 1938 a panel of experts called together by the Helms Athletic Foundation voted on the national champion at the conclusion of the basketball season.

The triumph of 1932 followed years of outstanding basketball at West Lafayette, highlighted by an undefeated conference season in 1929-30 and conference championships in 1926, 1928 and 1930.

The national championship year also coincided with the senior season of Johnny Wooden, a guard and team co-captain from Martinsville, Ind. Wooden had been named an All-American in each of his years of playing varsity basketball. In 1932, he was named player of the year by the All-America Board of Basketball.

The only blemish that banner year was a 28-21 loss to Illinois on the road. Not coincidentally, the Boilermakers were without the services of a healthy Wooden.

In those days of the Great Depression, players piled into cars and headed for away venues. On that January in 1932 as the Boilermakers prepared to head west, Wooden jumped in Ward Lambert's car. The senior co-captain liked to ride along with his mentor and had become a bit



The 1932 Boilermakers were named national champions by the Helms Athletic Foundation.

of a coach on the playing floor. During the trip, Lambert's car hit a patch of ice and overturned, shattering the windows. Wooden's hand was cut by the glass and, although he played, the eventual league scoring champ was not himself. Illinois prevailed 28-21.

The loss to Illinois was followed by a string of 11 victories, including a 34-19 decision over Illinois at West Lafayette.

The eventual champions went out in style. On the final night of Western Conference play, Purdue defeated conference foe Chicago, 53 to 18 at Memorial Gymnasium on campus. Besides outscoring the entire opposing team by 3, Wooden's

point total also secured him the Western Conference scoring title, which had been held since 1930 by Indiana center Branch McCracken.

Wooden was far from a one-man show. Senior co-captain Harry Kellar is credited with hitting an open Wooden and running the fast break to perfection. Center Ralph Parmenter and forward Ray Eddy used Lambert's pressing defense, quick passing and fast breaks to wear down opponents and claim the mythical national championship of 1932.

1931-32 Results (17-1)

Coach: Ward Lambert

Captains: John Wooden, Harry Kellar

Lineup: Eddy (f), Kellar (f), Stewart and Fehring (c), Wooden (g), Parmenter (g)

Dec. 12	W	52-23	Washington (Mo.)	St. Louis, Mo.
Dec. 15	W	32-24	Notre Dame	South Bend, Ind.
Dec. 18	W	41-23	Pittsburgh	W. Lafayette, Ind.
Dec. 29	W	51-21	Montana St.	W. Lafayette, Ind.
Dec. 31	W	51-26	Monmouth	W. Lafayette, Ind.
Jan. 4	W	49-30	Indiana	W. Lafayette, Ind.
Jan. 9	L	21-28	Illinois	Champaign, Ill.
Jan. 11	W	38-22	Wisconsin	W. Lafayette, Ind.
Feb. 3	W	26-23	Marquette	W. Lafayette, Ind.
Feb. 8	W	38-33	Ohio State	Columbus, Ohio
Feb. 13	W	40-27	Chicago	Chicago, Ill.
Feb. 15	W	43-26	Ohio State	W. Lafayette, Ind.
Feb. 20	W	48-33	Northwestern	W. Lafayette, Ind.
Feb. 22	W	42-29	Indiana	Bloomington, Ind.
Feb. 27	W	28-21	Wisconsin	Madison, Wis.
Feb. 29	W	34-19	Illinois	W. Lafayette, Ind.
Mar. 5	W	31-17	Northwestern	Evanston, Ill.
Mar. 7	W	53-18	Chicago	W. Lafayette, Ind.



(Left to Right) Harry Kellar, John Wooden and Ward Lambert.