INSIDE PURDUE UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS







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2021 PURDUE FOOTBALL

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With a specific focus on businesses who donate to Purdue Athletics, the new 1869 Society offers an opportunity to engage with Purdue student-athletes and coaches in meaningful ways while also being physically recognized outside of the world-famous Mackey Arena.

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One of the marquee benefits of membership will be the inaugural 1869 Society Leadership Summit, the premiere event of its kind in college athletics. Purdue Athletics looks forward to inviting our 1869 Society members to campus (or virtually if necessary) each year for a high-end evening where they will have an exclusive opportunity to hear from current and former nationally-recognized coaches, administrators and student-athletes about topics that impact their businesses.

Visit the campaign website at

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or contact your Boilermaker Athletics Representative, email the John Purdue Club at JPC@purdue.edu, or call the JPC offices at 765.494.2582.



BEGINS IN MACKEY ARENA PURDUE 3 UPPURTUNITY TU HUST UPENINU-RUUND UAWIES UP THE NGAA WEN 3 TOURNAMENT AT MACKEY ARENA THIS YEAR IS UNIQUE FOR ITS CIRCUMSTANCES,

The NCAA Tournament was canceled last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. On Jan. 4, the NCAA announced that the entirety of this year's tournament would be played in the state of Indiana, with Mackey Arena being one of the sites for opening-round games.

Once before, Mackey Arena has hosted NCAA men's basketball tournament games, first- and second-round contests in 1980 before the advent of exclusively neutral sites. If not for the pandemic, that would have remained the case.

"Unique is the main word for this," says Katie Egloff, assistant athletics director for event management. "We wouldn't have this opportunity to host if COVID-19 and health and safety concerns had not happened. We get this opportunity to showcase Mackey and let people see how great Mackey is."

As has been the case during the Big Ten season, Mackey Arena won't be quite as boisterous as fans have come to expect. First, Purdue is not eligible to play at Mackey if selected to play in the tournament.

Second, there will be a limited number of fans in attendance. The NCAA announced on Feb. 22 that it will allow up to 25% capacity at men's tournament games and Mackey Arena is expected to have less than that.

"When the NCAA comes to host, they look for a different experience," Egloff says. "There's no homecourt advantage. It will definitely look different, the feel is going to be different, but I think it will still look really great for those that can attend and for those that see it

Mackey will host three days of tournament games. Two of the First Four games will be played at Mackey on March 18. Purdue then will host two days of first-round games on March 19 and 20.

"We are planning for anywhere from two to three games per day from those subsequent first-round games," Egloff says. "So, we could have, between our three days of games, anywhere from 12 teams to 16 teams."

Purdue will be using its two track & field locker rooms, located within Mackey Arena, as its core locker rooms for the tournament games. The size of those areas allow the most space for teams to social distance. Each of those locker rooms will be used by a different team for each subsequent game, and will have to be cleaned - not only well, but efficiently.

"One of the biggest hurdles and priorities is options for physical and social distancing for the teams," Egloff says.

Purdue officials have worked with the NCAA, Indiana Sports Corporation, health department officials and other ancillary vendors to ensure a safe, controlled environment for student-athletes.

NCAA Tournament games will be played on two courts inside Lucas Oil Stadium, as well as Bankers Life Fieldhouse, Hinkle Fieldhouse, Indiana Farmers Coliseum, Simon Skjodt Assembly Hall and Mackey

A majority of teams will be staying at hotels in downtown Indianapolis, able to reach practice courts inside the Indiana Convention Center via skywalks, and traveling via bus to games played at remote venues.

Those remote venues will have a different look to the teams that have played inside them previously, as plenty of NCAA-branded logos will be covering venue specific

"The transformation of Mackey Arena to an NCAA First Four/First-Round site involves coordinating with the NCAA and a lot of other vendors, from court vendors to people responsible for putting up the NCAA logos on the wall," says Al Capitos, assistant athletics director for facilities. "A lot of entities are part of this process and I sit in on a lot of meetings and coordinate with them and coordinate with our staff on the timing so we can be prepared when the time comes."

Previously, Purdue has hosted a myriad of NCAA tournament events, from women's basketball and volleyball tournament games, to golf and swimming & diving championships.

The experience of hosting those events will help to a small degree, but those events came with plenty of advanced warning. Tasks that would typically be done six to eight months prior to the event, are now being executed four to six weeks before due to the truncated timeline.

A litany of details have to be worked out, many that ideally need to be consistent among all facilities, such as clear bag policies for entering the venue and where fans will be able

to eat and drink concessions. Others, such as cleaning procedures, might vary from venue to venue depending on numerous factors.

"These details can change week to week, even daily," Egloff says. "It's a true living document. It's a lot of work for everyone, but it's a great experience when you can do this. The ultimate goal is to try to get a tournament for these student-athletes. They missed out on it last year, so anything we can do. We won't see our students here, but the more we can do it for someone else's team just means our guys can be at another venue and get that experience."

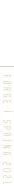
The NCAA Tournament selection show will be on March 14, and all 67 games of the tournament will be televised live on either CBS, TBS, TNT or truTV.

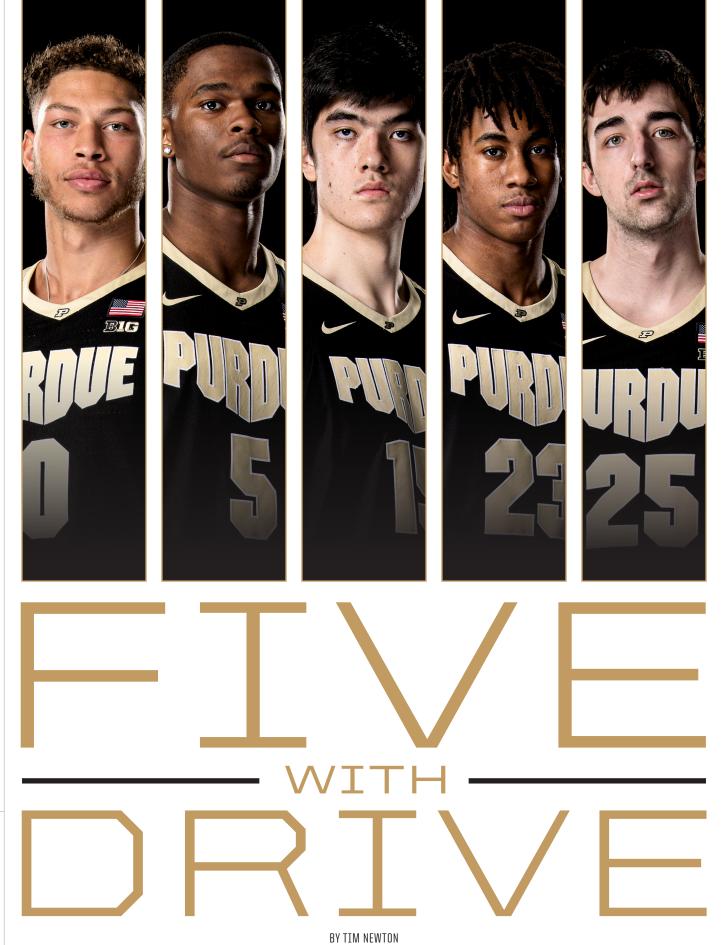
Until those games at Mackey Arena are played, Purdue officials will be busy finalizing every last detail. A large workload that leads to long days and nights, but something that will be rewarding once finished, Capitos acknowledges.

"I love the fact we are hosting," he says. "It's a unique experience and opportunity to showcase Purdue. We're all very engaged and excited about this opportunity."

UNIQUE IS THE MAIN WORD FOR THIS. WE WOULDN'T HAVE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO HOST IF COVID-19 AND HEALTH AND SAFETY CONCERNS HAD NOT HAPPENED. WE GET THIS OPPORTUNITY TO SHOWCASE MACKEY AND LET PEOPLE SEE **HOW GREAT MACKEY IS.**

Katie Egloff, assistant athletics director for event management





They don't have a collective nickname. Too flashy and out of character.

Baby Boilers 2.0 doesn't work, either. The group of Robbie Hummel, E'Twaun Moore and JaJuan Johnson had to shoulder a big part of the scoring and rebounding load during their 2007-08 freshman year. This team has a talented group of juniors who have helped lessen the load.

So how would you describe the five men's basketball newcomers: redshirt freshmen Mason Gillis and Brandon Newman, and true freshmen Zach Edey, Jaden Ivey and Ethan Morton? Coach Matt Painter says they all share common DNA.

"All those guys work and all those guys put in a lot of time," Painter says. "They watch extra film and they listen. They're trying to do things ... and it's refreshing."

A YEAR TO ADJUST

Painter says that Gillis and Newman had an edge on the other three coming into the season.

"Being able to go through your first year and develop, get adjusted to college and academics and lifting and conditioning and running plays ... it helps you," he says.

For Gillis, a native of New Castle, Indiana, sitting out competition during his first season was nothing new. Between his junior and senior year of high school, he injured his right knee during his first AAU game.

"I jumped off my left leg to shoot a floater in the paint and felt a tweak in my right knee when I landed. I could feel it but I didn't think it was going to be major at all," Gillis says. "Time went on and the knee swelled up and I wasn't getting any better, so I had my first surgery.

"I might have come back a little too early and pushed too hard. It wasn't getting any better, so I went to a different doctor. He told me I had two choices. The first was I could do an intensive rehab to try to get back for my senior year of high school, or I could have an intensive surgery to make sure I was pretty much good for the rest of my life."

Gillis took the surgical option, costing him his senior season. The second procedure was performed by Dr. Timothy Kremchek, the chief orthopedic surgeon for the Cincinnati Reds – an

ironic choice, given that Gillis admits his first love was baseball.

"I had played baseball my entire life, and I thought about playing both sports," says Gillis, who played center field. "Once I got older I realized I had a better opportunity in basketball."

Gillis says he learned from the experience his sister, Lauryn, had when she was recruited to play volleyball, starting her career at USC and finishing at Wisconsin. He knew what to look for in a destination.

"It was three different things for me," Gillis says. "First, I fell in love with coach Painter. The way he recruited me, I respected how honest he was. He laid out what he wanted me to do and what he expected I could do, and where I could go after Purdue. He made it obvious he wanted me.

"My sister and her friends were telling me a Purdue degree is like an Ivy League degree. Basketball isn't forever and education is really important. It would be hard for an employer to turn me down.

"And I really liked the campus. The players and the staff go along with the campus and it felt like home to me. I felt really comfortable here on my visit."

Once Gillis arrived on campus for his freshman year, he tried to eliminate the rust from his un-played senior season. When it was apparent he was behind some of his teammates, Painter approached him for a difficult conversation.

"He was honest with me. He told me he didn't know how much playing time I would get, and that I needed to improve and learn the offensive and defensive schemes," says Gillis, who follows Willie Deane, Terone Johnson and Jon Octeus as the only players in program history to wear uniform number 0.

He says the decision to redshirt was the right one. In addition to giving him time to develop, the years on the sidelines have given the 6-foot-6 forward an added motivation.

"I don't take any games for granted. I play every game and every practice my hardest," he says.

Gillis had company on the sidelines last season. Brandon Newman, a 6-foot-5 guard from Valparaiso, had a similar conversation with Painter after coming to campus for his freshman season.

"It came out of nowhere, but I had a meeting with coach Paint. He laid out what the team looked like, who I was behind and how my minutes would have looked. He gave me the choice of trying to compete for minutes or taking the year off to try to get better as a player in our system," Newman says.

"Some nights it was hard, but I'm grateful that I was given the opportunity to redshirt. I could have ended up wasting a year."

Newman had built trust with Painter and his assistants during his recruiting process, saying "there wasn't any other coaching staff in the country I wanted to play for." He averaged better than 25 points a game at Valparaiso, the same high school that produced Hummel, and was prepared to play his senior season at Montverde Academy in Florida.

But the plans changed when his mom became ill. He returned to Valparaiso, scoring better than 27 points a game his senior year and finishing second in the Indiana Mr. Basketball voting to Trayce Jackson-Davis.

His mom recovered, but Newman suffered a blow at the end of his redshirt season. His father, Ronald, a 20-year veteran of the Chicago Police Department, passed away in April after contracting COVID-19 while on duty.

"I'm still going through the grieving and mourning process," Newman admits. "Some days are better than others. I've tried to channel it and use it for motivation."

Newman has been a fixture in the starting lineup through much of the season. He exploded for 29 points in a January win over Minnesota and shoots over 40% from three-point range, in addition to having the ability to score inside

Newman says his fellow freshmen are fun to be around and they share a common thread.

"We're all hungry," he says. "We all want to help this program win basketball games and championships. We want to create a new narrative and leave our mark on the program."

GOOD GENE POOL

Newman and Gillis were joined last summer by three newcomers. Jaden Ivey grew up in South Bend and around the game of basketball. His mom, Niele, was an All-American at Notre Dame and a member of the Fighting Irish team that defeated Purdue in the 2001 national championship game. After her playing days in the WNBA were done, Niele went into coaching, first as an assistant for the Irish and then for the NBA's Memphis Grizzlies. She succeeded Muffet McGraw as head coach at Notre Dame before the 2020-21 season.

Jaden Ivey says having a mom who coached was perfect. "When I could travel with them I would go to the other end of the court while they were doing a walkthrough and shoot hoops. I love the game of basketball and being around it," he says.

Ivey, who has never played his mom in a 1-on-1 game, says an early disappointment helped fuel his desire to be a great player. As a freshman at Mishawaka Marian, he played one of the worst games of his career in a sectional loss to South Bend St. Joseph's.

"I don't think I hit a shot that night," Ivey says. "I was so down on myself. After that game, my work ethic was insane. I wanted to be in the gym 24/7 and I enjoyed working hard on my craft. Ever since then, I've been a gym rat."

Ivey decided to play his final high school season at La Lumiere, a prep school in La Porte, Indiana. Facing an elite schedule, he averaged 15 points a game. Just as importantly, the year away from home prepared him for his next step. "From a physical standpoint, it helped me get a glimpse of what was to come on the college level," he says. "It was my first time away from home and getting that college experience was a blessing for me."

Ivey says he built a strong relationship with both Painter and the coaching staff during the recruiting process.

"Coach Painter is so genuine," Ivey says. "He and my mom are great people and great coaches, and they both love the game. They study it on a daily basis."

Ivey was slowed early in the season with an injury, but has bounced back to showcase his enormous potential. The 6-foot-4 guard hit a game-winning three-pointer in the final seconds to beat Ohio State, and showed his emotion on the court after the game and in the postgame press conference.

"I've always had that emotional piece. I want to succeed and do so well. Sometimes the emotion I have is negative because I put so much pressure on myself, and I'm still working on that. But my emotional side and love for the game will never change," he says.

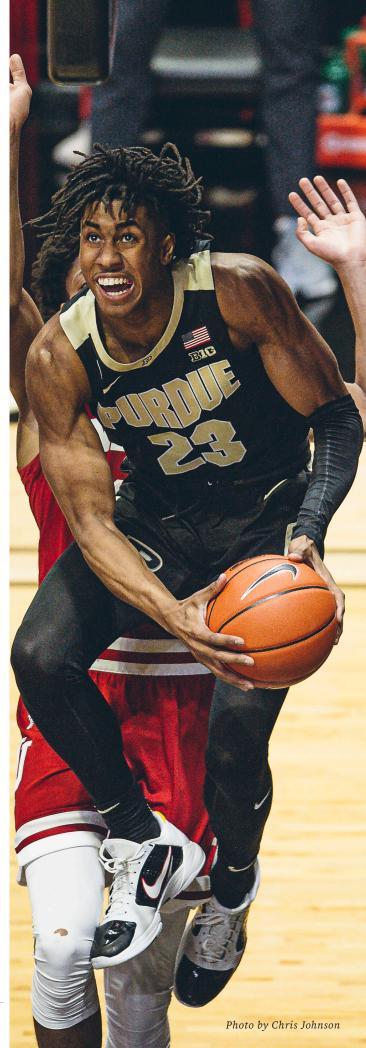
By contrast, Zach Edey always seems to keep an even keel on and off the court. At 7-foot-4, the Toronto native is easily recognizable on campus, even while masked. "My face isn't what people recognize me for," he laughs.

It would be easy to assume that with his size, Edey has been a lifelong basketball player. But that's not the case. He never picked up a basketball until after his sophomore year in high school. Baseball and hockey were his first passions.

He was a pitcher in baseball – think a right-handed Randy Johnson – and a defenseman in hockey. He had planned on pursuing baseball for a career until arm problems caused him to rethink and consider basketball as an option. He's quick to say that both of his original sports have helped him in his current role.

"In hockey, you learn the rotations and zoning, how to stick up on your man and play help defense. And my shooting touch is better because I learned how to snap my wrist and get rotation on the ball by pitching," Edey says.

Edey decided to head to Florida for his junior year in high school, enrolling at IMG Academy. He played on the varsity team his first year there, and then moved up to the elite national team filled with



Division I prospects for his senior season.

He originally considered playing a third year at IMG, but decided to reclassify to the Class of 2020. Purdue assistant coach Steve Lutz first watched Edey work out, and Painter followed with another visit and a scholarship offer. Edey liked the way Purdue utilized big men and decided to choose the Boilermakers over Baylor and other schools.

"I thought it was a family atmosphere here. Coach Painter was honest with me and told me I would have to work for every minute I would get. But the chemistry is great and everyone likes everyone else," he says.

Edey made an immediate impact, scoring 19 points against Liberty in his Purdue debut. But he also found out that while being tall has its advantages, it also puts a target on his back. Like Isaac Haas, referees sometimes are unsure about how to officiate a player with such a size disparity.

"It's something I've been going through my whole life," Edey says. "I got a lot of penalties in hockey for making contact to the head when I would pin people to the boards. It was frustrating when I was young, but you can't let it get into your head and become a double negative. It is what it is."

Edey competes with someone close to his own size in practice, going up every day against Trevion Williams. "Banging with him every day has brought my physicality up on the court. I'm not scared of anyone pushing me around," Edey says.

RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

Like Gillis and Edey, Ethan Morton has a close connection with baseball. His high school basketball coach in Butler, Pennsylvania, was Matt Clement, who pitched nine seasons in the majors with San Diego, Florida, the Chicago Cubs and Boston, where he was an All-Star for the Red Sox in 2005.

Morton played with Clement's sons beginning in elementary school, and he says he considers Clement like a second father.

"He was able to talk about what

it was like to be a pro and share the experiences he had. It was valuable to have him in my life. He was a part of the inner circle when it came time to my recruiting process, along with my family," says Morton, who was named Pennsylvania Mr. Basketball his senior season and maintained a 4.0 grade-point average in high school.

Morton saw similarities in Clement and Painter, and it was one of the reasons he chose Purdue over a myriad of suitors.

"Their approach to a lot of things is the same ... they're kind of relentless when it comes to figuring out ways to be better," he says. "They're really unselfish guys.

"I was looking for a coach during the recruiting process that I could have a similar relationship to as with Coach Clement. Coach Paint is never going to tell you something that he doesn't think or believe. If you're not hearing the truth, then what are you here for? It's not going to get you the results you want at the end of the day. That honesty is something that I love because that's the type of person that I am."

Morton's freshman season has been affected by illness. He had to quarantine over the summer on a couple of occasions due to COVID protocols and then contracted mono near the beginning of the season.

He's fully healed physically, but the 6-foot-6 guard's biggest goal is to regain his mental edge despite limited playing time. Morton says assistant coach Micah Shrewsberry, who spent time in the NBA, has offered valuable advice.

"Coach Shrews says he saw in the league that even guys who don't play stay confident because of the work they put in. They're ready when their number is called and they usually perform because their confidence has stayed high. I feel like I'm doing a little bit better job trying to replicate that," Morton says.

So, it may be true the quintet doesn't have a special name. But it does have an appreciative coach.

"I'm excited about where they are right now," Painter says. "And I'm excited about where we're going."

TALK AMONG YOURSELVES

Ethan Morton says the freshman class is happy to "let the results speak for themselves." And while there is no manufactured name to describe them, the five are happy to talk about each other. Here what their fellow freshmen think of them:

ZACH EDEY

- "he's funny ... nonchalant ... someone you can throw the ball into and he'll score"
- "he's a dog and a different breed on the court ... great human being and passionate about the game"
- "a very simple guy ... never any drama ... he comes to work every day"
- "tougher than a lot of people probably give him credit for ... has the ability to fight and the will to get better"

MASON GILLIS

- "he's such a competitor ... he plays so hard and gives us an edge and grit"
- "he's selfless ... he wants to do well ... he's a hard worker who doesn't back down from any challenge"
- "grit and grind"
- "does whatever Purdue needs to win ...
 tough and hard-nosed ... wants to take your
 heart out"

JADEN IVEY

- "one of my favorite guys ... we push each other ... super competitor"
- "funny and outgoing ... one of the most athletic players I've ever played with"
- "so explosive and talented ... really competitive and works his tail off"
- "wild and free"

ETHAN MORTON

- · "smarts and heart"
- "great teammate ... one of the most wellrespected people I've ever met"
- "funny off the court ... one of most unselfish players I've played with"
- "very simple guy ... never any drama ... I'm excited to see what he can do in the future"

BRANDON NEWMAN

- "like a brother to me ... wants to constantly improve ... work ethic is unmatched"
- "very attuned to what he's doing and very focused ... would do anything for me"
- · "flash and skill"
- "his shooting ability is impressive ... always works hard and is competitive"

STOM DIENHART



Jaden Mattox will never forget the look on the face of Norbert Elliott.

The Purdue senior long jumper had been struggling with an aspect of her training. And the Boilermaker coach understood. And stuck with her. His nurturing words of encouragement pushed her.

"I remember him being very patient with me, not getting frustrated," Mattox says. "I eventually broke through and got what I was struggling with. To just see the look on his face, how happy he was that I was able to get what we were working on was really nice. He usually doesn't get that excited. But when he does, you feel even better about yourself."

Elliott is one half of a unique husband-wife tandem that play a key role in the Purdue track & field program. Norbert Elliott is head coach for track & field/cross country, while his wife, Angela, is an assistant coach who works with sprinters, hurdlers and relay teams.

"I must say that there really aren't any drawbacks," Norbert says when asked about working with his wife. "You really have to love your wife. And I do. But from time to time, we both give each other private time."

When Norbert asks Angela how her day went, he usually already knows the answer. And vice versa. Such is the life of the first couple of Purdue track & field.

"It's rather boring sometimes, I guess," Norbert says. "In other households, one spouse might be really excited to tell the other spouse about what happened at work."

Norbert is in his third season leading the Boilermaker programs, and the 2020-21 campaign is his ninth year overall at Purdue. He was named head coach in 2018 after serving as associate head coach since 2015, working with sprinters, hurdlers, horizontal jumpers and relay teams.

He has helped lead Purdue to unprecedented heights during his time in West Lafayette, highlighted by a Big Ten women's outdoor track & field championship in 2017, the best NCAA cross country finish in nearly 70 years in 2019 and numerous All-America honors. And he has done it with an even, steady hand ... and a listening ear that has allowed him to connect to his student-athletes and get the most out of them.

"I would go into his office every week because I wanted to," says Mattox. "I wanted to build that relationship with him. Before, I used to go in to see my coach because I had to. Coach Elliott is someone you want to talk to. He's a nice, genuine person."

Angela (Goodman) Elliott knows all about her husband's steady hand and ability to teach and develop student-athletes. And, like her husband, Angela excels at connecting to her athletes.

She has a glistening resume as a former Boilermaker track star (class of 1988) who is part of the programs' "hall of fame." Angela is in her eighth season as an assistant coach after she returned to her alma mater in 2013. In addition to her coaching responsibilities, she coordinates the program's recruiting efforts.

"I was gone about 25 years," Angela says. "It was a full-circle moment. It was just so nice to be back. I got to run with some great athletes when I was a student – Yvonne Netterville, Cathey Tyree, among others – I just felt so at home when I came back. This is Purdue, I'm back home."

When she was a student, Angela helped Purdue win the 1987 Big Ten women's outdoor track & championship. She was a four-time conference champion and an All-American in 1988 in the indoor triple jump, sweeping the indoor and outdoor Big Ten triple jump titles in back-to-back seasons, 1987 and 1988.

"And then when we won the Big Ten in 2017," she says. "I was like, 'Wow!' This was like 30 years ago."

Angela can tap into her experiences as a Purdue athlete to make her a better assistant coach. And, of course, her husband is a reservoir of information. But the exchange of information goes both ways in the Elliott marriage.

"It's funny," Angela says. "We both have been in coaching for a long time. But it makes me a better coach because we see the same thing sometimes and then we also come from different perspectives and arrive at the same thoughts. Perhaps I can even see a different way of thinking, analyzing a start or a hurdle move or whatever events we're working on. It's just a different set of eyes and a different perspective.

"So, I think that I've grown a lot in seeing how someone else works. Seeing another view and adding that into my coaching style or the things that I saw. I think it makes both of us better that way."

How did this love affair start? Their paths had not crossed over the years despite numerous coaching stops during long careers. Angela has worked at UConn, Michigan State, Olivet College, Syracuse and Yale. Norbert, a native of the Bahamas, has been at Campbell, Tennessee, Murray State, UTEP and Georgia.

They first met when Angela interviewed and was hired as an assistant coach. After Angela was on staff, the germ of a relationship was born ... and continued to blossom until they became husband and wife in 2015.



"You never know what direction life will take you," Angela says.

The Elliotts hope for big things for the Boilermakers in the coming year. Expectations remain high for a program that is enjoying a renaissance started by former head coach Lonnie Greene and has continued under Norbert Elliott.

"I am blessed to run for him," senior sprinter Waseem Williams says. "It was a big adjustment when I first got here. He is very technical. He explains everything to a T. And he understands the body. His modifications in practice make it happen. I always come out of the big meets with a good time."

To wit: At the 2018 Big Ten indoor meet, Elliott made a slight adjustment to Williams' stance in the blocks.

"He just fixed one aspect, one movement, of how I was in the blocks," Williams says. "And I ran a 6.63 and won the event."

It's a delicate balancing act for the Elliotts to play their role in operating a top Big Ten program and maintain domestic bliss. It's not all about instructing hurdlers and sprinters in spandex tights. The mundane details of life dog the Elliotts, just like everyone else. And nothing is more mundane than making dinner.

"She makes a great risotto," Norbert says.

"It's about taking meat out in advance and thawing it, making meals ahead ... things most families have to do," Angela says.

And it's dinner for three, as the Elliotts are raising Norbert's 5-year-old grandson they call "Trey." This is a family affair with husband and wife feeding off each other. And making one another better.

"How would I describe my wife as a coach?" says Norbert, parroting a question he was asked. "Motherly. She really has compassion for every single student-athlete on the team. Every single one of them. She really truthfully cares for them, from their academics, to their parents ...

"She wants the women to carry themselves a certain way. She wants men to carry themselves a certain way. She reminds them what they're representing. Lots of entities. First and foremost, that name. That last name they have. That's them, that's their family they're representing. The athletics department, the school. So, she is without a doubt a teacher, as well as a very regimented coach, well-organized."

Angela gets to see her husband work up close.

"He loves the sport," Angela says. "He's always watching a video, he pays attention. He is very detail-oriented and exact. It's not all just textbook teaching. He's one that likes to study mechanics. He can just watch someone run and know mechanically what's going on.

"We are fortunate to be able to work together." 🛠



LIVING LIFE'S **LESSONS**

COOPER LED BOILERMAKERS TO NCAA TITLE GAME 20 YEARS AGO

BY TOM DIENHART

It has been 20 years, but Camille Cooper still hasn't watched Purdue's loss in the 2001 NCAA Women's Basketball championship game.

"It still hurts," Cooper says of the 68-66 setback. "To lose by two to Notre Dame, an instate rival. It was a pretty significant blow. But, fortunately, looking at my career overall, it was a good experience. It's life lessons, you know?"

Life lessons that Cooper has put to excellent use the last two decades since she left Purdue after that oh-so-close-to-achampionship campaign. Cooper went on to a brief WNBA career before graduating from Duke with a law degree. Today, the former Boilermaker center lives in Dallas and works as a compliance officer at Wells Fargo while raising four children.

"I have a 12-year old son; his name is Okenna," Cooper says. "I have a 10-year old daughter who will be way taller than me. Her name is Kelenna. I have a 7-year old son, Obinna. And a 4-year old daughter, Ijenna. I live vicariously through them because they're all playing sports. They keep me young and old at the same time."

Cooper's journey of success began in Kentucky, where she was a prep star at Scott County High in Georgetown, less than a 30-minute drive north of Lexington. She helped lead Scott County to a state title before matriculating to Purdue, where she joined teammate Ukari Figgs.

"She was two years ahead of me," Cooper says. "We won a state championship her senior year, my sophomore year. That kind of influenced me to go to Purdue. That was a subtle influence.

"I was attracted to the quality of people surrounding the program, and just the level of academic support. I felt like it was the best place that I could be a total student-athlete and accomplish both my athletic and academic goals. Coming from a basketball state going to Indiana felt like a good move. All those things have proven to be true throughout my life."

Cooper was an instant hit when she arrived in West Lafayette as a freshman in 1997-98, averaging 6.6 points per game. The next season, Cooper was a key cog in the Boilermakers' national championship team. And it's a team – led by seniors Figgs and Stephanie White – that remains close to this day.

"They're incredible, not just incredible players who are both very smart in the game but also knew the dynamics of reading a team," Cooper says of Figgs and White. "They were easy to follow because they garnered respect on and off the court."

After that 1998-99 national title season, Cooper and Purdue were back on the national stage two years later, advancing to the Final Four in St. Louis a season after advancing to the second round of the NCAA Tournament. Cooper teamed with the likes of Katie Douglas and Kelly Komara for what would be a memorable season. The No. 3-seed Boilermakers defeated Southwest Missouri State 81-64 in the national semifinal before falling to the Fighting Irish in the title game.

Which was better: the 34-1 squad that won the national championship or the 31-7 team that came up just short?

"Well, definitely the first one, my sophomore season," Cooper says. "I remember after winning the title, going into the locker room and thinking, 'OK, what's next?' We started that season with a very clear mission against (national power) Tennessee. We started talking about it in the summer, just getting ready to play and stepping onto a larger scene. We were just a team with a laser-focused mission to win."

That team that won it all was coached by Carolyn Peck, who had announced before the season that she was leaving to coach Orlando in the WNBA. Peck was replaced by Kristy Curry in 1999-2000. The coaching turnover was hard.

"It was," says Cooper. "Knowing it was Coach Peck's last year was always kind of in the back of our minds and definitely resulted in a lot of mixed emotions. But we put that to the side and again just focused on the mission and the game moving forward.

"The transition was tough. And I also think about the coach coming in. You had a team that just won a championship and now you're taking over the helm. But I again speak to the quality and strength of the program and its high expectations for coaches and athletes. I think that definitely aided the transition."

To this day, the 42-year-old Cooper remains in touch with teammates. And her fondness for Purdue endures.

"Ukari is the godmother to my four children," Cooper says. "I am the godmother to her son. We stay in regular contact. Two years ago at the Final Four, we all went down to Florida – Ukari, Stephanie, Katie, Kelly and me. We got to hang out and have a small reunion.

"I keep in touch with Candi (Crawford) Hall and a few of the others players. I think that's a testament of just how cohesive we were and how we connected we were, not just on the court but off the court because we're friends and sisters for life."





YOUTH, EXPERIENCE SHAPED AN AMAZING RUN

We weren't really sure what to expect from the 2000-01 women's basketball team.

A season removed from a national championship, the program had endured a somewhat disappointing first year under coach Kristy Curry, finishing third in the Big Ten and losing at home to Oklahoma in the second round of the NCAA Tournament. Little did we know at the time that All-American Katie Douglas, who lost her father to cancer in 1997, was reliving that personal agony as her mother succumbed to the disease in 2000. Katie told me after the funeral that she was unsure at that point whether she was going to return for her final season at Purdue.

But she did return, and with fellow senior Camille Cooper, she did everything in her power to get the Boilermakers back to the Final Four. Purdue started the season 8-1, but had a five-game winning streak snapped in a 72-61 loss at Notre Dame – a match-up that would later be revisited.

After letting a huge lead evaporate in a 62-55 loss to LSU at the Boilermaker BlockBuster, it appeared the season might be mirroring the one before. But Purdue rallied to win its next 13 games and captured the Big Ten regular-season championship. Douglas and Cooper were named first-team All-Big Ten, and honorable mention selection Kelly Komara added grit to the lineup.

But a big factor in the team's success was the play of its freshmen, notably Shereka Wright, Shalicia Hurns and Erika Valek, who assumed the starting point guard role from day one. Wright gave the Boilermakers a slasher who could score inside and get to the free throw line. And Hurns proved to be a tremendous rebounder and presence around the basket. The mixture of old and new, and the effectiveness of its role players, made Purdue a dangerous postseason team.

Although they stumbled in the Big Ten Tournament championship game, losing 75-70 to Iowa, the Boilermakers were poised for a long NCAA Tournament run. Earning the No. 3 seed in the Mideast Regional, Purdue dispatched UC Santa Barbara in a first-round game at Mackey Arena, and then avenged the earlier loss to LSU, holding off a late Tiger rally in a 73-70 win.

In a Sweet 16 matchup in Birmingham, Alabama, the Boilermakers outlasted Texas Tech 74-72. But the win was a costly one, as Valek tore an ACL in the second half, sidelining her for the rest of the tourney. Xavier upset top seed Tennessee in the other regional semifinal. With Komara sliding over to play the point, the Boilermakers beat the Musketeers 88-78, earning their third trip to the Final Four in eight seasons.

Meanwhile, Jackie Stiles led Southwest Missouri State to the Final Four, and the Bears were the nation's Cinderella story heading into the national semifinal in St. Louis. But midnight struck early, as Purdue rolled SMS 81-64. Stiles had tallied more than 1,000 points in her senior season, winning the national scoring title. Douglas won a personal battle with Stiles, outscoring her 25-22. The only thing standing between the Boilermakers and a second national title in three years was the Fighting Irish, who came from behind to beat Connecticut in the other national semifinal.

Purdue held the advantage through most of the game, but 6-foot-5 center Ruth Riley kept Notre Dame within reach. The game was tied in the final minute when Wright narrowly missed a short runner that would have given the Boilermakers the lead. Riley was then fouled in the final seconds – although I have to admit I didn't see the infraction in person just feet away or on subsequent replays – and she hit both free throws to give the Irish a 68-66 advantage. A long two-pointer by Douglas missed the mark, and Purdue's national title hopes were dashed.

Our radio broadcast location was across the floor from the Notre Dame bench, and I'll always retain the image of Niele Ivey jumping up and celebrating the win with her teammates as confetti rained down from the rafters of the Savvis Center. I was reminded of that scene earlier this year when her son, Jaden, hit his game winner against Ohio State. I enjoyed that Ivey celebration much more than the first one I saw.

I was numb as I walked from the arena back to the team hotel afterward. I thought the better team that night had lost, and I knew that for Douglas and Cooper, along with fellow seniors Shinika Parks, Candi Crawford and Mo-nique Langston, a window for another championship had closed. But with Valek, Wright and Hurns just starting their careers, you felt it wouldn't be long before Purdue was back in the Women's Final Four.

It wasn't meant to be. Due to off-the-court issues, Hurns never played another game for the Boilermakers. Komara, Wright and Valek helped lead the team to another Big Ten title the following season, but Purdue lost in the NCAA Tournament Second Round to Old Dominion. UConn handed the Boilermakers an Elite Eight loss in 2003, and Wright, Valek and fellow seniors Lindsey Hicks and Beth Jones saw their careers come to an end with a heartbreaking 66-64 Sweet 16 loss to Georgia in 2004.

But those losses don't diminish the accomplishments of the 2000-01 team. It was a team that blended strong personalities and high basketball IQ and came within a few feet of the top of the mountain – an altitude that few ever attain.



impact made from last year's more traditional postgame highlight packages.

"We knew we had to do something a bit

differently this year," Smith says. "Kylann (who

now works predominantly with football) did a

great job with the video series "In the Arena" a

few years ago, and that gave us a good foundation

If you are not familiar with "The Gold Standard," here's the skinny. It is a new behind-the-scenes video series focusing on stories surrounding the men's basketball team. As of early March, there have been six episodes with subject matter ranging from operations challenges due to COVID-19 to Eric Hunter's comeback from an early-season injury.

As the saying goes, familiarity breeds contempt,

but in the case of "The Gold Standard," familiarity

breeds passion among fans.

It is produced by the athletics department's video services arm, which is directed by Scott Horton. Taylor Smith, in her third year with the creative services team, is the point person for "The Gold Standard."

"The Gold Standard" has a straight forward purpose. Its goal is to grant a level of inside access to all fans and help develop an intimate connection made more difficult with the isolation caused by the pandemic.

"Taylor deserves the credit," says associate strategic communications director Chris Forman, who works primarily with men's basketball. "She is part of a great team with Scott and Kylann Ward, and she really makes it happen.

"With our men's basketball team, it is 'What you see is what you get.' We have great personalities, but Taylor and her staff do a great job of bringing those personalities to life."

Forman, Smith and long-time director of administration and men's basketball operations Elliot Bloom have worked together to formulate story ideas and themes. The planning sessions are informal, and might be better described as brainstorming. Yet, the discussions are frequent as the trio spend a lot of time together during team practices and meetings.

COVID-19 has presented a severe challenge and hardship to the entire world, yet alone Purdue Athletics. The inability for fans to share in the intimacy created by attending live sporting events is real. That reality, in part, served as the genesis of "The Gold Standard."

"We have enjoyed such a close relationship with our fans over the years," Bloom says. "Without our fans physically being there in Mackey and all the things that are different this year, we felt even more of a need to tell the story and stay connected. And that includes not only our most loyal followers, but also potential recruits."

Smith, a University of Texas graduate who grew up playing softball and has always loved being around team sports, says that the video series idea actually was discussed prior to the pandemic. Smith and her video crew were looking for something that would exceed the

from which to expand."

Bloom believes Smith and her crew are uniquely skilled at pivoting when an idea changes or morphs into something else.

Take the Boilermakers' January win at Michigan State, for example. The entire story line changed with the second-half rally and gamewinning shot by Trevion Williams. The working plan is to have "The Gold Standard" episodes about five minutes in length, but there was just too much material to tell the story of a dramatic win at the Breslin Center in that time frame. Hence, a 10-minute edition.

Adding to the challenge was the necessity of a quick turnaround to get that particular episode produced and distributed on social media. The Boilermakers had another game

in a few days and relevance could be lost if things didn't go well on the court in the subsequent contest. Smith received help from Nathan Wiseman, who spends much of his time with women's basketball, and they got to work.

"That episode took about 24 hours to produce and I couldn't have done it without help from Nathan," says Smith who is reticent to take too much credit for the finished product. "This is much more of a team project than people realize."

Smith loves borrowing story ideas from the many documentaries she has watched. And that number has increased during the pandemic. She says there is a never-ending amount of subject matter to share, and she hopes to play her part in making "The Gold Standard" a long-running series.

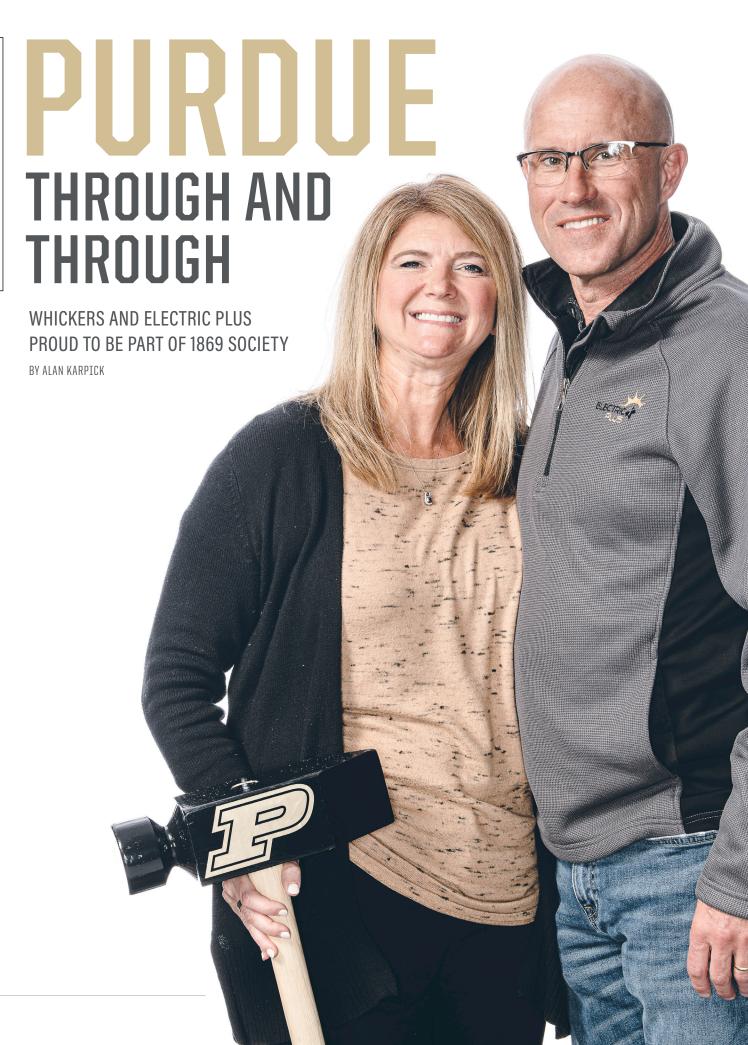
"We have more behind-the-series stories to tell," Smith says. "Team film sessions and background on how recruiting is done are just a few that come to mind. We just have to go with the flow and ideas will come.

"The good thing for me is men's basketball is a great group to work with. Coach Painter makes me feel like I am part of the family. Elliot and Chris see everything before it is shared with the public. That makes it easy for our video team to do its job."

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"

Elliot Bloom, director of administration and men's basketball operations



The life of a Boilermaker comes naturally for Tim and Bonnita Whicker. It's part of who they are now and have been since an early age.

For Tim, it starts by remembering his grandmother Harriet Whicker's passion for Boilermaker basketball and how it continued well into her 90s.

"My grandmother just loved Purdue basketball," Tim says. "For our birthdays, we got a chance to go to Purdue games and that was a huge deal for us as kids. She attended games in Lambert Fieldhouse and Mackey Arena. It continued until just before she passed away. It was a big part of who she was."

Harriet loved the consistent ritual of Boilermaker basketball. So much so, that during the transition from coaches Gene Keady to Matt Painter, Harriet's seats were moved down a couple rows closer to the court.

"She didn't like that, because those weren't HER seats," Tim says with a laugh. "Looking back, coming from a family like this, there was never a doubt where we were going to go to school."

Bonnita was also raised in a family that had gold and black running through its veins. Like many with Purdue ties, Tim and Bonnita's families also shared a love for agriculture. Tim and Bonnita attended rival high schools in Hendricks County just west of Indianapolis, but they met at the county's annual fair.

And the rest is history.

So it should come as little surprise that Tim and Bonnita have raised three die-hard Purdue fans. Son Drake works at the family business Electric Plus, while daughters Hadley and Chloe will experience graduation ceremonies at Ross-Ade Stadium later this spring with degrees in pharmacy and nursing, respectively. This past October they gained a new daughter in law, Abby, who is also a graduate and devoted Purdue sports fan.

It is hard to get more Purdue than that.

Electric Plus got its start after Tim spent 20 years with Shambaugh and Son, and Bonnita taught school. In 2006, they decided to take a leap of faith and commence the new business. With the daunting challenges and uncertainty of a new startup, Bonnita kept her teaching job in the company's early years so the family could have easier access to health insurance. Before long, however, Electric Plus would became a staple of their all-consuming work lives.

And the business has flourished thanks to the skill set of both.

"We started Electric Plus above my garage, and we will celebrate our 15-year anniversary on March 27," Tim says with a tone of voice that sounds like a guy who doesn't quite believe all that has transpired in the last decade and a half.

With four locations (Lafayette, Indianapolis, Kokomo and Bloomington) and 400 employees, Electric Plus continues maturing as a business. It finds itself in a position to spread its community footprint, not the least of which is becoming one of the charter members of the John Purdue Club's newly formed 1869 Society.

In an effort to enhance the More Than A Game campaign, introduced in August to support the future of Purdue Athletics in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, the John Purdue Club launched the 1869 Society. With a specific focus on businesses who donate to Purdue Athletics, the 1869 Society offers an opportunity to engage with Purdue student-athletes and coaches in meaningful ways while also being physically recognized outside of Mackey Arena.

"Over the years, we have been involved with the John Purdue Club and been a sponsor with Purdue Sports Properties, but the 1869 Society gives us an opportunity to connect things even more," Tim says. "There is no better way to get businesses together and serve the student-athlete at the same time."

Tim and Bonnita appreciate the help they are getting from networking with the 1869 Society which, in part, allows them to connect internships at Electric Plus with Boilermaker student-athletes. It is already paying dividends.

"We aren't a small company, but in the big picture, we are viewed as a small company," Tim says. "Most students want to work for big companies, but this association gives us credibility with the student-athlete. In turn, we think Electric Plus can help enhance their Purdue experience and hopefully in time secure us some top-quality potential employees."

A win-win for sure.

So what is the secret sauce that the Whickers can share with Purdue's student-athletes?

"It is recognizing the importance of people," Tim says. "It sounds overly simplified, but when electricians comprise 80% of your work force, and you rarely see them in the office, it can be easy to overlook them. But they are so critical to who we are, and we work not only to recognize them but cultivate those critical relationships. It is part of aspiring to treat people like they want to be treated."

Distilled to a sentence, Electric Plus words to live by are simple: "If you do what is right when no one is looking, everything comes together."

Purdue student-athletes have heard that same refrain from coaches throughout their time on campus. Yet a goal of the 1869 Society is to also permeate that philosophy of service into the work world.

For Bonnita, who spent a recent weekend on campus with some of her college friends, the topic of giving back was a central theme.

"We all realized that being at Purdue was such a good time in our lives," Bonnita says. "It shaped us to a great degree. Now our opportunity to invest in these kids and help them grow is what we want to be about.

"At the end of the day, that is huge." 🛠



RAISE THE FLAG

NEW LOGO TO BETTER IDENTIFY PURDUE'S GOLF FACILITIES

BY ALAN KARPICK

To Charles Jischke, a logo is not just a logo. It is a statement.

So when Purdue's Birck Boilermaker Golf Complex recently unveiled its new mark, Jischke was proud to have played an important role in its development.

There are few, if any, more passionate patrons of Purdue's on-campus 36-hole facility than Jischke. While his daily vocation and love is serving as director of creative services-photography for Purdue Athletics, Purdue's dual Pete Dye facility is never far from his mind.

"The Birck Boilermaker courses are one of my favorite places on Earth," says Jischke, who plays the sport with more than ample skill sporting a scratch handicap. "The high level of golf that is available there isn't always fully understood by the public."

With the new logo, Jischke and others believe it better identifies the plumb facility Purdue has it in its midst.

"We are the home of golf in the state of Indiana, plain and simple, and I thought we needed a better logo to define who and what we are," Jischke says. "It dawned on me during a photo shoot on the course that putting the Purdue flag on the outline of our state would accomplish that goal."

Jischke is a photographer, not a graphic designer. He developed a rough concept of the logo using the photo tools on his phone and then handed it over to Paul Sadler, longtime director of creative services-design for the Boilermakers.

"Paul took it and did what he usually does; he hit it out of the park," Jischke says. "He didn't have to change the logo much, but did a great job of developing color treatments for it that will make it even more useful."

For Dan Ross, who oversees the operations of the Pete Dye courses, he thinks the timing of the new logo has grown in relevance and importance.

"We believe we have turned the corner as a facility," says Ross, who serves as head golf professional and director of instruction and has been with Purdue golf since 2004. "Despite the pandemic, amazingly, we had a profitable year. We think the new logo will have the effect of getting more and more people to visit and use our facility."

Andrew Jent, assistant golf professional who also oversees merchandise and marketing, thinks the new logo will be a big hit, as well.

"We should have something rolled out on shirts, hats and on signage by April," Jent says. That also includes, over time, a slow but systematic exposure to the nearly 60 locations where signage is present in and around the Birck Boilermaker Complex.

It will also help clearly identify the facilities for upcoming events. Purdue will host the Indiana Open this year and an NCAA men's golf regional championship in 2024.

"I naturally arrive at this as a friend to Dan and Andrew, but I want people to see the great job the entire staff has done with this facility by visiting it often," Jischke says. "Everyone in the Purdue marketing world who has seen the new logo uses the word iconic when describing it."

And that can't do anything but better call attention to the special golf nirvana Purdue has on the northwest side of campus. **



2001 FINAL FOUR

Led by seniors Camille Cooper and Katie Douglas, plus a trio of talented freshmen in Shereka Wright, Erika Valek and Shalicia Hurns, the 2000-01 women's basketball team came within an eyelash of winning the Boilermakers' second national championship in three seasons. Under second-year head coach Kristy Curry, Purdue posted 31 victories and won the Big Ten regular-season championship before advancing to the NCAA Women's Final Four for the third time in school history (also 1994 and 1999).

