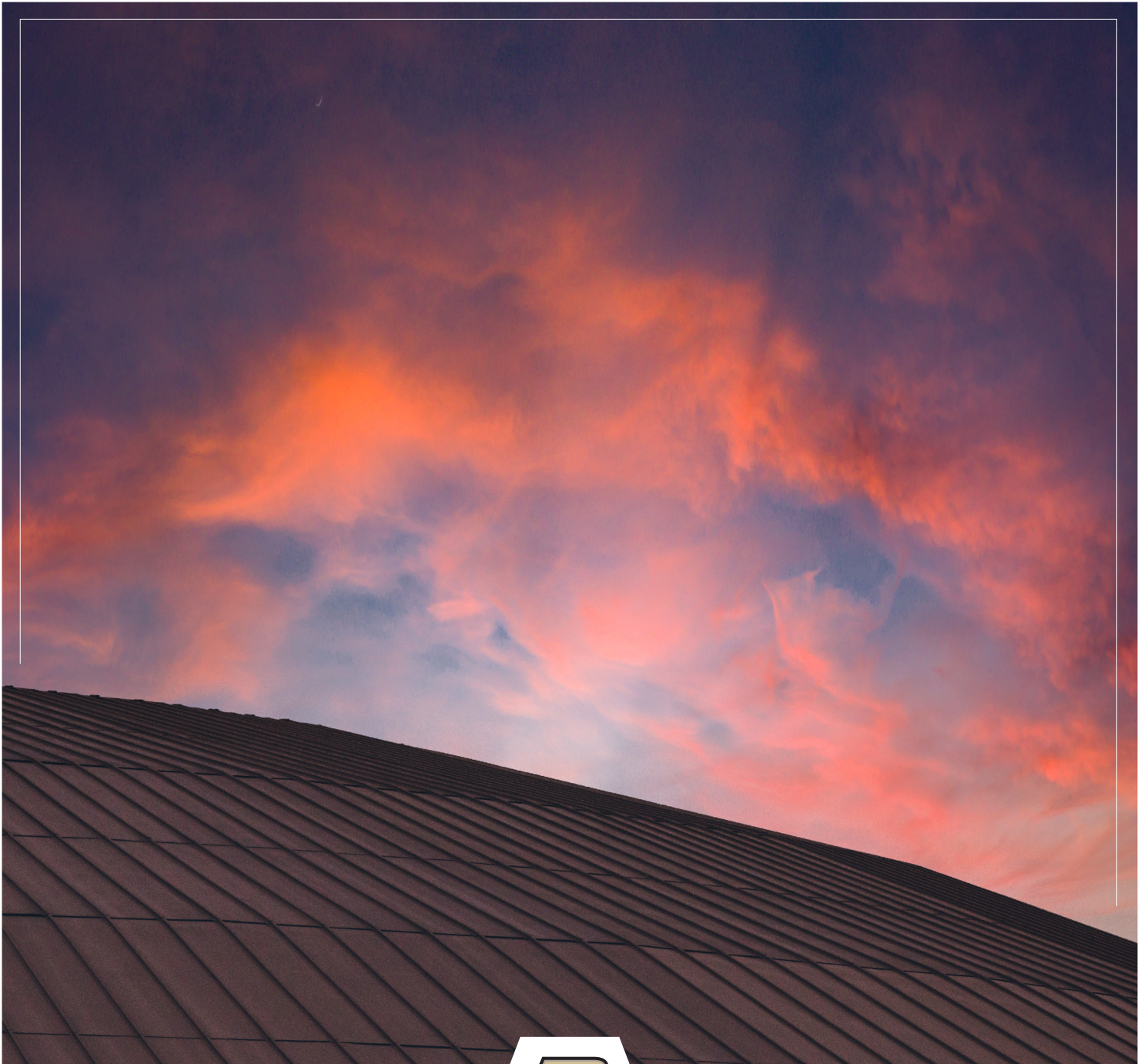


# FORGE







To our valued Boilermakers,

This issue of Forge marks the end of 2020, the most challenging year I have experienced as an athletic director and the strangest year you have experienced as a fan and supporter. This is a year none of us could have anticipated and has been full of learning opportunities. There's more talk more about this year with the editors of Forge on page 4.

Despite its setbacks, this has been a year filled with gratitude. I have been reminded every day how fortunate I am to be part of such a passionate community and prestigious university. Gamedays have looked drastically different, but the support of our fan base has never wavered and I know that we all look forward to the day we can pack our stands again.

I am grateful for our resilient student-athletes, who have responded to all we've asked of them with a cooperative and understanding attitude.

I am encouraged by our coaches and staff, who have taken on more challenges than ever before. Most of all, I am thankful for our fans and supporters across the country and the globe who have reaffirmed their pride in being Boilermakers.

Wishing you and yours all the best this holiday season and into 2021.  
Boiler Up!

Mike Bobinski  
Vice President —  
Director of Intercollegiate Athletics

*This edition of Forge  
is presented by*



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# PROTECTING THE NEXT GIANT LEAP

“Being a Protect Purdue Ambassador gives me purpose, a practical way to be part of the solution. It’s not just a resumé builder, and it’s not just a title. It’s a duty and an honor.”

## MADDIE DESELEM

A neurobiology and physiology major, Maddie is taking her next giant leap as a scientist at Eli Lilly & Co.



Protect Purdue Ambassadors serve to educate, unify and encourage students, faculty and staff to protect themselves, others and the entire Purdue community.

**200+**  
students  
across all class  
years and majors

**4,000+**  
hours worked  
in support of  
Protect Purdue

EA/EOU

# MORE

# THAN A GAME

A CAMPAIGN FOR THE FUTURE OF PURDUE ATHLETICS

Purdue Athletics is one of only a handful of Division I athletics departments that is entirely self-sustaining. It does not receive any taxpayer dollars, funding from Purdue University, student fees, or gifts from the Protect Purdue campaign. We earn what we spend.

We do not have a general operating endowment to rely on in times of need. Most of our endowments are for scholarships, with the annual cost of attendance for a student being upwards of \$45,000.

**Now more than ever, every dollar counts.**

With the establishment of the More Than A Game campaign, we will be doing everything in our power to prevent drastic changes from having to be made to Boilermaker athletics programs as our counterparts across college athletics face job and sport elimination.

This campaign’s \$18 million goal will help offset a Purdue Athletics budget shortfall.

**This is more than a game.**

Campaign supporters will receive additional priority points, and those who contribute in excess of \$5,000 will have their names immortalized on a donor recognition wall outside of Mackey Arena.

For more information, or to make a gift, please visit

**[jpcmorethanagame.com](http://jpcmorethanagame.com)**





# NAVIGATING IN UNCHARTERED WATERS

## BOBINSKI LOOKS TO 2021 WITH PROMISE

BY KASSIDIE BLACKSTOCK

March 12, 2020 and October 24, 2020. Dates which will forever be remembered as the unexpected and sudden end of competition within the Big Ten Conference, and the day when the Purdue Boilermakers took the gridiron once again. Two hundred and twenty six days were filled with uncertainty, anxiety and a crash course in navigating a pandemic. Questions were endless. Answers evolved. Outlooks were unknown. Now, while our landscape continues to bring new and unique challenges, we sat down with athletics director Mike Bobinski to hear about the current state of Purdue Athletics.

### HOW HAS PURDUE ATHLETICS FARED THROUGH THE COVID-19 ERA?

No one could have predicted or planned for the countless conversations, meetings and complex preparations that have taken place during the last eight months. I'm proud of the response from our student-athletes, coaches and staff as we have collectively navigated uncertainty and almost daily adjustments – from the way we recruit future Boilermakers to how we continue to keep our current student-athletes game-ready or support academic success – 2020 presented many new challenges and opportunities. Despite those challenges, our student-athletes maintained their focus and continued to achieve academically. As evidence, following the spring 2020 semester, the cumulative GPA for all current Purdue student-athletes was a record-high 3.22.

As a department, we've introduced a number of new leadership initiatives this year with focus on well-being, voter registration, civic responsibility, and professional/career preparation. We're more invested than ever in the overall growth and development of our student-athletes and the 93% job placement rate post-graduation confirms what we already knew – these students are high performers in the classroom, on the playing field, and are leaving Purdue as sought-after and capable leaders.

### WHAT IS THE OUTLOOK FOR PURDUE ATHLETICS AND WILL COVID-19 HAVE A LONG-TERM IMPACT?

I remain optimistic about our future, primarily because of the grit, resiliency and determination shown by all Boilermakers during the last eight months. The path to full recovery will certainly be challenging, and we still can't predict exactly what the long-term impact will be on our athletics department, or the college athletics world in general. However, we've been intentional in our planning and decision making to try and do everything possible to limit the future impact of this disruption and position our entire athletic program for a quick and successful return to full activity.

### WILL PURDUE ATHLETICS CUT SPORT PROGRAMS DUE TO THE REDUCTION IN BUDGET?

Throughout this time, we've maintained a fiscally conservative approach to our budget and spending, with an emphasis on identifying items that are truly a necessity and in support of the environment and experience we're committed to providing our student-athletes. We have closely reviewed and either reduced or eliminated many expenditures, and will continue to do so. Because of this disciplined approach, we've not yet had to consider the elimination of sport programs as a financial mitigation strategy. We already have one of the leanest sport offerings in the Big Ten, and while it's impossible to rule out further reduction if circumstances continue to deteriorate, it's our clear preference to avoid such action unless absolutely necessary.

### HOW WILL MORE THAN A GAME BENEFIT PURDUE ATHLETICS? WHAT WILL THE MONEY BE USED FOR?

The More Than A Game campaign is an essential component of our overall financial mitigation strategy. Despite all the personnel and operational cuts and reductions we've implemented, a significant financial gap remains due to the elimination of ticket sales and all other game-day related revenues, a multi-million dollar reduction in media rights revenues because of reduced competition schedules and the cost of the Big Ten COVID-19 testing program for student-athletes, coaches and other team staff. All funds donated to the More Than a Game campaign will help to offset these impacts and allow us to continue to deliver the best possible experience for our student-athletes.

### HOW CLOSE ARE WE TO THE \$18M MTAG GOAL?

Since launching in August, the More Than A Game campaign has raised nearly \$7 million, and we're incredibly grateful for all who have already stepped forward to help. However, our financial challenge is real and continuing to raise funds toward our goal will be a top priority throughout the 2020-21 fiscal year and on until we've restored our athletic program to fiscal stability. In many ways, the success of the More Than A Game campaign will determine the trajectory of Purdue Athletics for years to come and I'm confident that the Purdue community will deliver.

### HOW WILL PURDUE REACT TO THE NAME, IMAGE AND LIKENESS LEGISLATION DUE FOR AN NCAA VOTE IN JANUARY 2021?

As we anticipate entering an entirely new environment regarding a student-athlete's ability to utilize their Name, Image and Likeness (NIL), Purdue Athletics' primary objective is to provide the very best in education, support and brand-building resources for Boilermaker student-athletes. By expanding our current relationship with Teamworks to include department-wide access to the INFLCR platform, we are able to provide richer and more readily available editorial and graphic content for our student-athletes, along with additional recruiting tools for our coaches. This is a continued and evolving conversation among our staff, coaches, peers, and college athletics at-large – but we've been preparing to navigate the new environment effectively when the time comes.

### IF BASKETBALL SEASON IS SIGNIFICANTLY DISRUPTED, WHAT KIND OF FINANCIAL IMPACT WILL THAT HAVE ON THE ATHLETICS DEPARTMENT?

A disruption of men's basketball season would result in a severe financial loss in our multimedia rights distribution from the Big Ten Conference, among other revenue streams associated with a traditional gameday. We'll continue doing our part to keep our players and coaches healthy and are optimistic that the measures in place within the league will give us the best chance of having a successful season.

### WHY WAS THE DECISION MADE TO SEND ALL STUDENT-ATHLETES OTHER THAN THOSE IN FOOTBALL, AND MEN'S AND WOMEN'S BASKETBALL HOME AFTER THANKSGIVING THROUGH THE END OF THE SEMESTER?

The decision to have only the student-athletes who are currently competing return to campus after the Thanksgiving holiday was made in concert with Purdue's campus-wide desire to de-densify in order to help the broader community manage the spread of the virus, which had reached its highest levels locally during the month of November.

### WILL FAN ATTENDANCE BE PERMITTED AT ANY POINT DURING BASKETBALL SEASON, EVEN IF IT'S A LIMITED NUMBER?

We'd sure love for that to happen – Mackey just isn't the same without our tremendous fans. That being said, any decision/change to current conditions is dependent on factors outside of our control. We will continue to follow the guidance and protocols of the campus, county, and state and do what is best for our community.

### HOW WAS THE DECISION MADE THAT OUR MEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM WOULD PLAY ON CHRISTMAS DAY?

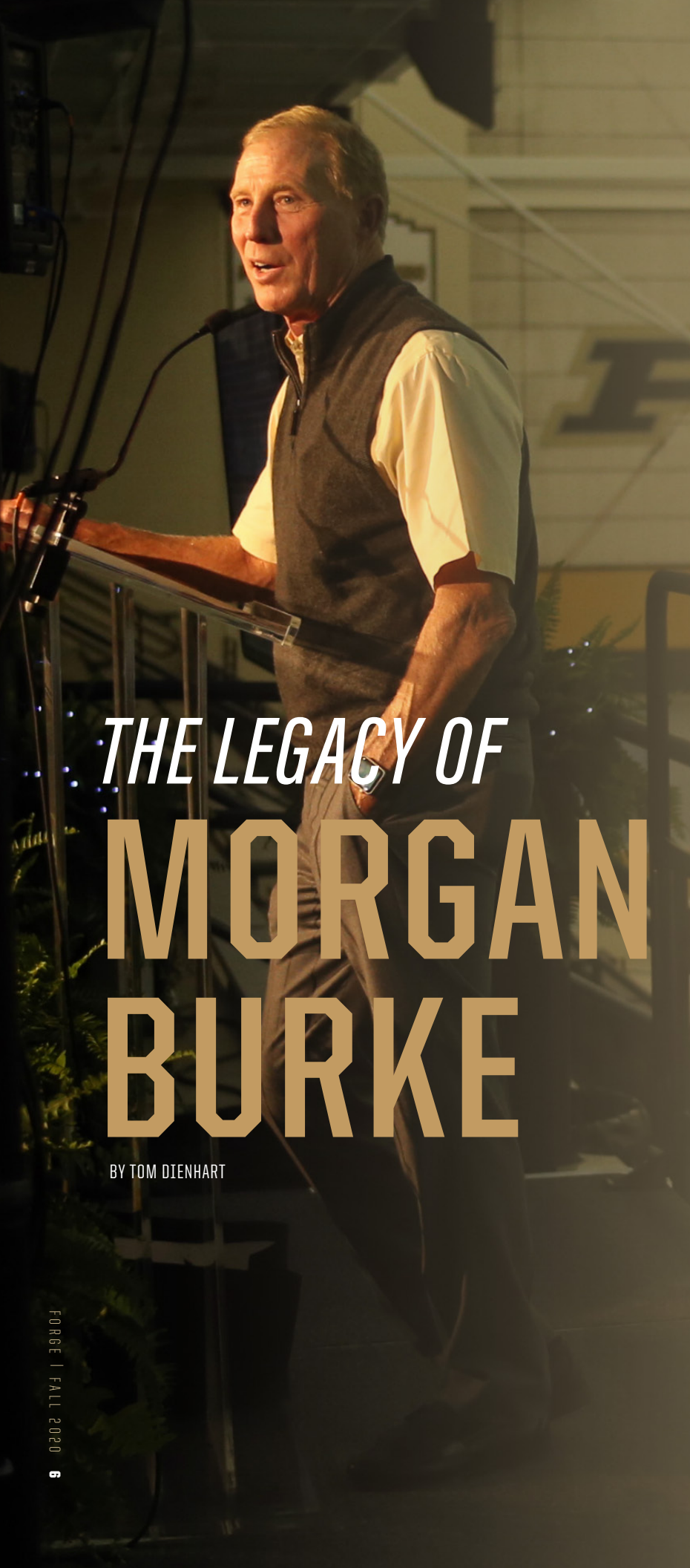
The Christmas Day basketball games in the Big Ten are a unique, 2020 only, phenomenon that arose from a player-led initiative to not travel home during the holidays and be placed at additional risk of virus exposure. Players across the league, including our Boilermakers, expressed a desire to compete through the holiday time rather than be confined to practice-only on a sparsely populated campus. Additionally, many mentioned the novelty of participating in the NBA's tradition of Christmas Day games as an exciting opportunity. We recognize this is unusual, but are hopeful it helps our athletes through the challenges of this year.

### WHAT WILL THE SPRING SPORT SCHEDULE LOOK LIKE? WILL THE FALL SPORTS COMPETE?

At the present time, we do anticipate that delayed fall/winter sports and our traditional spring sports will all compete in what will be a compressed and very ambitious period of time beginning in January. Competition schedules will be reduced in number of contests, and most sport seasons will include Big Ten opponents only.

The obvious degree of difficulty that's been encountered trying to conduct a football season, and in getting the basketball season started, does indicate that all plans are subject to adjustment, particularly when multiple activities are hoping to be conducted simultaneously. ✖





# THE LEGACY OF MORGAN BURKE

BY TOM DIENHART

Life is all about impacting others in a positive way. And by that standard, Morgan Burke had a life well-lived.

The former Purdue athletics director passed away suddenly on June 15 at the age of 68. He had been battling amyloidosis, a rare disease that occurs when an abnormal protein builds up in organs and interferes with their normal function. His passing means Purdue and college sports lost a major figure in the athletic community. Each has lost a man of service.

Burke had become the face of Purdue Athletics for almost a quarter century, assuming command of the department in 1993 from George King after a successful 18-year run working for Inland Steel. And Burke held the A.D. post until 2016, a 23-year stint that when he retired was among the longest in Big Ten annals. Burke's accomplishments were many, including seeing Purdue win national championships in women's basketball (1999) and women's golf (2010).

"The Boilermaker family lost a great friend, an intensely competitive fan and a gifted leader of intercollegiate athletics when Morgan passed away," former Purdue president Martin Jischke says. "I admired Morgan as a great athletics director for Purdue, and I enjoyed a growing friendship that lasted more than 20 years. His impact on Purdue can be seen in every aspect of the athletics program. He is the longest serving AD in school history."

## A FAN AND A COMPETITOR

The only thing Burke loved more than his job as athletics director was being a fan. He loved his Boilermakers. Make no mistake about it. He regularly could be seen at athletic events. Didn't matter the sport, day of the week. Burke was there, often cheering louder than the spectators ... and often chiding officials, like any good fan.

"Morgan was sitting on the stairs, and literally was cheering like he was a 13-year-old kid," former football player Roosevelt Colvin says. "He was the athletics director, and I get there was a lot on the line win or lose, but the passion and desire that he had for the program, that reflects well with me."

Burke came to it naturally. He was on the swimming team while he was a student at Purdue, serving as captain as a senior and graduating in 1973 before going on to earn a law degree. The swimming bug never left him. Burke was often in the water, getting his exercise. His tapered waist, taut physique and cut features were proof of a regime he never relinquished. Burke liked to be fit. But he liked to compete even more.

"He was amazingly competitive; he hated to lose – in the pool, in the stands, on the golf course," Jischke says. "We both became more

generous with gimmie putts over time as our friendship grew. Morgan was loyal – to his school, to his friends, to his colleagues. Morgan made Purdue Athletics better, especially for student-athletes. And he made Purdue University better."

But when Burke pulled away from the arena of competition, he saw the big picture. And that big picture was serving the student-athlete through various means of support. Burke had a way of connecting that resonated with the countless athletes that matriculated through West Lafayette during his tenure.

Bottom line: Burke's impact on Purdue Athletics will resonate for years. He will be so dearly missed by many, but none more than wife Kate, daughter Joyce, and sons Morgan Jr. and Pat.

The mission of athletic department under Burke was simple but impactful: "Developing Champions / Developing Scholars / Developing Citizens."

It goes without saying that Burke filled his mission by filling many roles. To wit:

## BURKE THE EVALUATOR

Firing people is easy. But hiring good ones is difficult. And more times than not, Burke displayed the magic touch for tabbing the right coaches. And that was never more apparent than when Burke hired Joe Tiller to lead the football program in 1996 and hatched the succession plan in men's basketball that saw Matt Painter take over for Gene Keady in 2005-06.

Tiller made Purdue football matter during his 12-year run, taking the program to 10 bowls, including the Rose after a Big Ten championship during the 2000 season.

"They were so competitive," former Big Ten commissioner Jim Delany says. "He brought in coach Tiller, who really sort of raised the bar, took them to the Rose Bowl and played basketball on grass football."

Painter had to step into the long shadow of Keady, who authored a legendary 25-year career in West Lafayette as one of the Big Ten's best coaches ever. Painter is now 16 years deep into a career with a growing trophy case and resume that's tracking as an all-time Big Ten great.

"Not many people loved Purdue more than Morgan Burke," Painter says. "Morgan's impact on Purdue Athletics was huge. Personally, I owe him a huge debt of gratitude for having the faith and confidence in me to lead our basketball program. To say I'm forever grateful to him for that would be an understatement. My heart goes out to Kate and their family."

Among Burke's other headline hires were Dave Shondell (volleyball), Sharon Versyp (women's basketball) and Devon Brouse (golf).

## BURKE THE BUILDER

Walk around the Purdue campus, and you can see it. They are everywhere: The sparkling athletics facilities that dot the landscape. Of all of Burke's many accomplishments, the infrastructure work he did to upgrade facilities arguably is his greatest feat. Because of Burke's driving force, Purdue can stand shoulder to shoulder with its Big Ten peers from a brick and mortar standpoint.

"Morgan got us back on the map, he got us respect," says Cathy Wright-Eger, who served as women's swimming coach and then as the leadership advisor for the athletics department during Burke's tenure. But Wright-Eger says Burke knew how to push buttons so that those around him earned the respect they were deserved.

"He was true to himself," Wright-Eger says. "He was a feisty go-getter, in your face, let's go, you can do better. You can do more. He got a lot out of everyone that he touched."

Burke's two most noteworthy projects were the renovation of Ross-Ade Stadium (2002) and Mackey Arena (2011). While those facility overhauls are the two that garnered the most attention, Burke's work to upgrade the facilities for Olympic sports was equally impressive. There was the Birck Boilermaker Golf Complex, Schwartz Tennis Center, Alexander Field and Bittinger Stadium, among others. But, no doubt, the former swimmer took great pride in the aquatic center that was erected in 2001 and now bears his name.

The building of top-flight facilities had an impact beyond helping programs and student-athletes.

"Because of the investments he helped make happen across all of



our sports, it set the table for hiring a talented AD to follow him," says Mike Berghoff, chair of the Board of Trustees. "I was heavily involved in that search. We had a number of candidates come to campus. And they all mentioned what a significant advantage it was having a complete inventory of facilities for both non-revenue and revenue sports.

"I really think that without Morgan's work on the facilities, we may not get Mike Bobinski (at Burke's replacement). And if we don't get Bobinski, we may not get Jeff Brohm (as head football coach)."

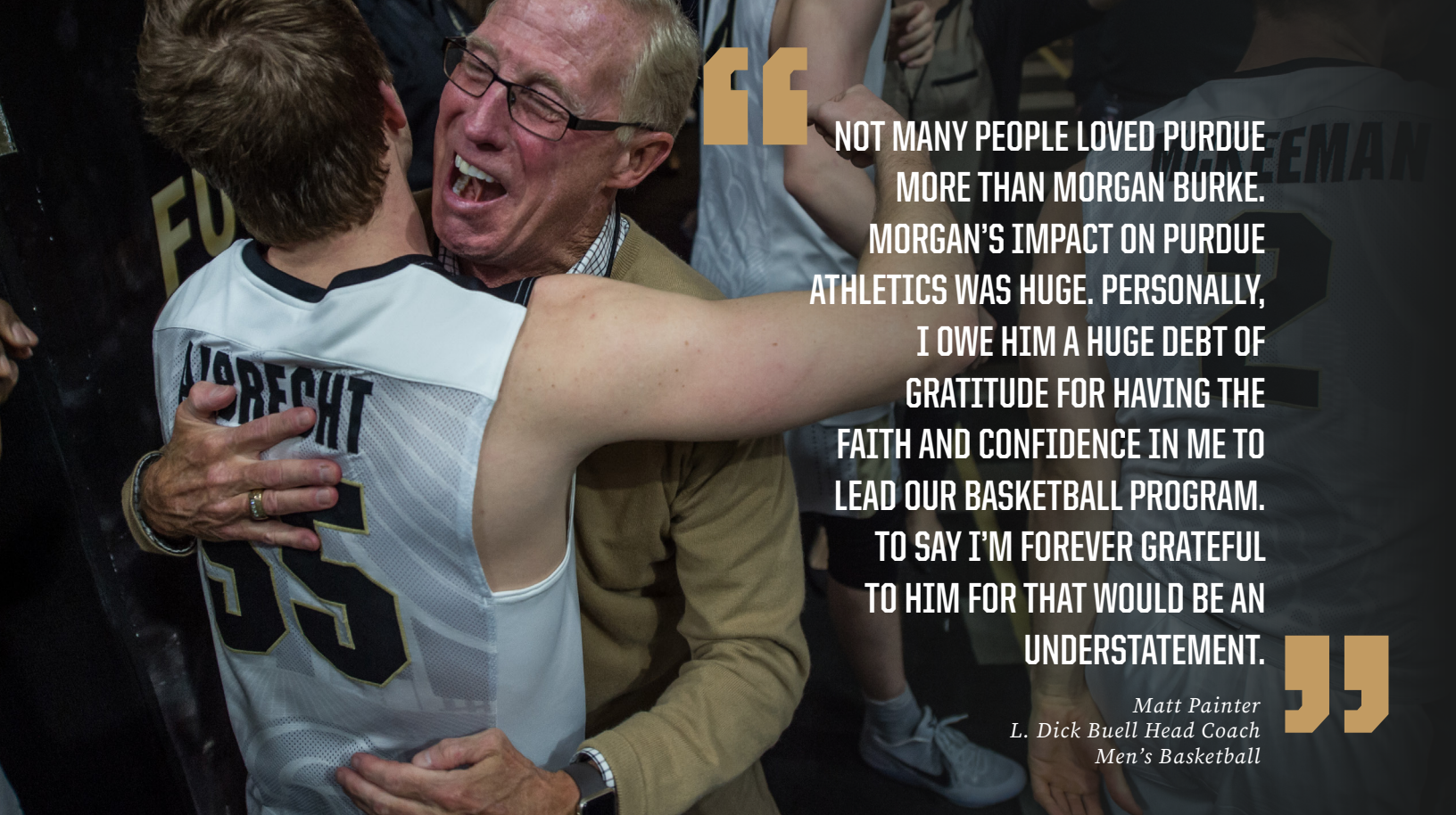
## BURKE THE MENTOR

Winning games and championships are great. But none of that happens without relationship-building. And that's something at which Burke excelled. Connecting with others and making them feel valued and important.

For all of Burke's strengths – his smarts, organization, worth ethic, passion – his greatest asset may have been his ability to get to know his student-athletes. Maybe it was because he was one of them. Burke made it a point to talk the student-athletes. Not just the football players and basketball players ... but everyone.

"Morgan Burke dedicated his life to Purdue Athletics," women's basketball coach Sharon Versyp says. "I never met





“NOT MANY PEOPLE LOVED PURDUE MORE THAN MORGAN BURKE. MORGAN’S IMPACT ON PURDUE ATHLETICS WAS HUGE. PERSONALLY, I OWE HIM A HUGE DEBT OF GRATITUDE FOR HAVING THE FAITH AND CONFIDENCE IN ME TO LEAD OUR BASKETBALL PROGRAM. TO SAY I’M FOREVER GRATEFUL TO HIM FOR THAT WOULD BE AN UNDERSTATEMENT.”

*Matt Painter  
L. Dick Buell Head Coach  
Men’s Basketball*

a person who carried as much passion for student-athletes and made it a point to learn and interact with them on an individual basis. His personal approach to leadership ensured that every Boilermaker knew that they were cared for and that they had a voice. Morgan focused on building Purdue Athletics into more than just a successful sports program. He wanted to equip every student-athlete who walked through our doors the tools to go out into the world and be a champion, a leader and a catalyst to make the world a better place. And for his entire tenure, he made that mission a reality.”

It was that personal touch, that intimacy, which still resonates with those who competed for the Boilermakers during his tenure. Not only did Burke want his “kids” to excel athletically, but he felt academic success was even more vital. And knowing the athletics director cared about the totality of the student-athlete fueled them to do well in all endeavors.

“The reason why he was able to accomplish things is because he valued relationships,” says diver David Boudia, who has won four medals at the Olympics and hopes to add to that total in 2021 in Tokyo. “Whether you were a

walk-on swimmer or this random track & field athlete, he wasn’t looking for a transaction. He wasn’t talking to you in exchange for something else.”

Delany also was impressed. “Their goal always was to have all their programs in the top 25 and graduate 85 percent of their kids,” he says. “He called it the 25/85 Club. So, he was very goal-oriented, he used metrics in a lot of different areas. He was a great conference guy, as well as a great Purdue guy.”

### BURKE THE POLICY MAKER

Burke served as president of the Division I-A Athletics Directors Association, on the NCAA Leadership Council and several Big Ten boards (Executive, Program/Budget and Compliance committees) and NCAA working groups (Championships and Competitions and Postseason Football committees). He wanted to impact on the legislative level.

“He was a good person. Smart and honest,” Delany says. “He was a person of great integrity. And then I think about the things we did together, and the leadership that he provided in those areas was about ‘we’ in all cases. He was there for Nebraska, he was there for Rutgers and Maryland, he was there for the founding

of the Big Ten Network and he was there for sculpting the outlines of the big media deal that we did in 2015-16.”

### BURKE THE FRIEND AND STUDENT-ATHLETE ADVOCATE

For all of the tangible things Burke accomplished while AD, an intangible characteristic stands out: He was a relationship-builder.

“I think his legacy is physical facilities that he has put together, but also the friendships that he has put together,” longtime Board of Trustees member Tom Spurgeon says. “Everybody would be Morgan’s friend.”

And it was easy to be the friend of someone who treated people the right way.

“One of the things that is special and true to Morgan is his concept of fairness,” Spurgeon says. “He was always fair. And he did things in the context of fairness. And that fairness and his friendships came out of the fact that he knew everybody’s name. He also knew the sports and records of the student-athletes. Those friendships are another example of how he became so special for everyone.”

Senior associate athletics director Nancy Cross saw it in Burke often.

“As much as anything, Morgan brought Purdue athletics into the 21st century,” Cross says. “But he also totally embraced female student-athletes. Part of that was because he had been a swimmer and didn’t get a lot of resources as an Olympic sport. It was very different in his day.

“He came in with the attitude that if we’re going to have a team, and we’re going to sponsor it, then Purdue is going to do everything in a first-class fashion. Every student-athlete, whether they’re a golfer, a swimmer, a football player, men’s basketball player, they’re going to be given the resources to compete at the highest level, to excel academically and to achieve everything that they want to achieve.”

And, again, Burke embodied fairness.

“He tried to put all of the teams in a position where they were going to be treated fairly, so to somebody who had been a coach when that wasn’t the philosophy, that was incredibly refreshing,” Cross says. “Morgan was such a bridge builder across campus. Morgan changed that when he took over the role.”

### BURKE THE FAMILY MAN

Saying bedtime prayers was a cherished ritual in the Burke house. And Patrick Burke, the youngest of the three Burke children, never will forget how his father would punctuate those quiet bedside times.

“He would say, ‘Your one job for me tomorrow is to put a smile on someone else’s face,’” said Patrick Burke. “It became ingrained in us over time and it’s something that’s a fond memory we have. And I think that’s a good encapsulation of the person he was in terms of being a family man and then obviously outwardly with Purdue.”

Morgan Burke has an older son—Morgan, Jr.—who lives in San Francisco and a daughter—Joyce—who is in Austin, Texas. Patrick resides in Chicago. The close-knit Burke kids are living successful lives, and are bonded by loving parents.

“People may not understand how important my mother was to everything my father accomplished

at Purdue,” says Patrick of Kate. “She was very instrumental in everything he did. And that gets understated a lot. There’s a lot of stuff that goes on behind the scenes. And she was just as impactful in many ways to what happened at Purdue over that 20-plus year period as he was.”

And Morgan Burke accomplished a lot. But the family he raised may be his greatest accomplishment.

“It begins with his unconditional love for each of us,” says Patrick. “That was always first and foremost. That was underpinning everything that he did. And I think a lot of what he did was instilling in us a set of values that he really believed in. Taking care of others, being respectful, discipline ... From a family perspective, those are some of the key things that I think about.”

Says Joyce Burke: “He pushed us to focus on effort and conduct in school, and taught us that if we were persistent and worked hard, we would achieve.”

Dad will be missed by the Burke family. The life lessons he imparted were meaningful. But often, it was the every-day machinations of life that resonate.

“We have a lot of great stories and memories of our dad,” says Joyce. “I remember some of the small things like being in the car with him and chatting about our days while driving to and from swim practices. He really loved the water and taught us how to sail a boat...and when we lost the wind we’d have to swim the boat in to shore. He also liked setting up surprises for our family. He’d put together a dinner with friends, or get gifts for everyone on a vacation. Little things that would always put a smile on our faces.”

The Burke family takes comfort in knowing that this was a life well-lived. It was cut short. And there’s sadness in that. Morgan and Kate won’t be able to enjoy together the next chapter of their lives.

“But if each of us could go to the grave having touched that many people and made an impact on people’s lives for the better like my father did, it would be a much better world,” said Patrick. ✕



I NEVER MET A PERSON WHO CARRIED AS MUCH PASSION FOR STUDENT-ATHLETES AND MADE IT A POINT TO LEARN AND INTERACT WITH THEM ON AN INDIVIDUAL BASIS.

*Sharon Versyp  
Head Coach  
Women’s Basketball*



They both remember their early matches at Purdue in similar ways: There were some uneasy nerves, moments of uncertainty and feelings of being overwhelmed.

Caitlyn Newton and Jena Otec comprise the Purdue volleyball team's senior class this season and two of the best at their position in the Big Ten. Newton, an outside hitter, was an honorable mention selection to the American Volleyball Coaches Association All-American team last year. Otec, a defensive specialist, led the Big Ten in aces.

They will lead an experience-laden squad looking to build on last season's trip to the NCAA Tournament Sweet 16. Seniors always are expected to lead, but that role is magnified this season which is expected to begin on Jan. 22.

With so much speculation on how a season might play out, along with the fluidity of the situation, it's easy for student-athletes to lose focus or wonder what might happen. Will there be a season? Will there be a postseason tournament? Will fans be allowed to watch any matches?

"There are a lot of uncertainties," Newton says. "That's a time for me to step in and keep everybody on track. No matter what happens, it's out of our control."

Purdue is a team that might be able to handle the constant state of flux better than other programs. The Boilermakers return Hayley Bush, Grace Cleveland and Marissa Hornung – a trio of juniors with extensive playing experience – along with Newton and Otec – providing a nucleus of players used to each other's tendencies.

"You have to have those players in your program that are as solid as a rock that the younger players are going to look to and be assured everything is going to be alright regardless of what the situation is going to be," Art and Connie Euler head coach Dave Shondell says.

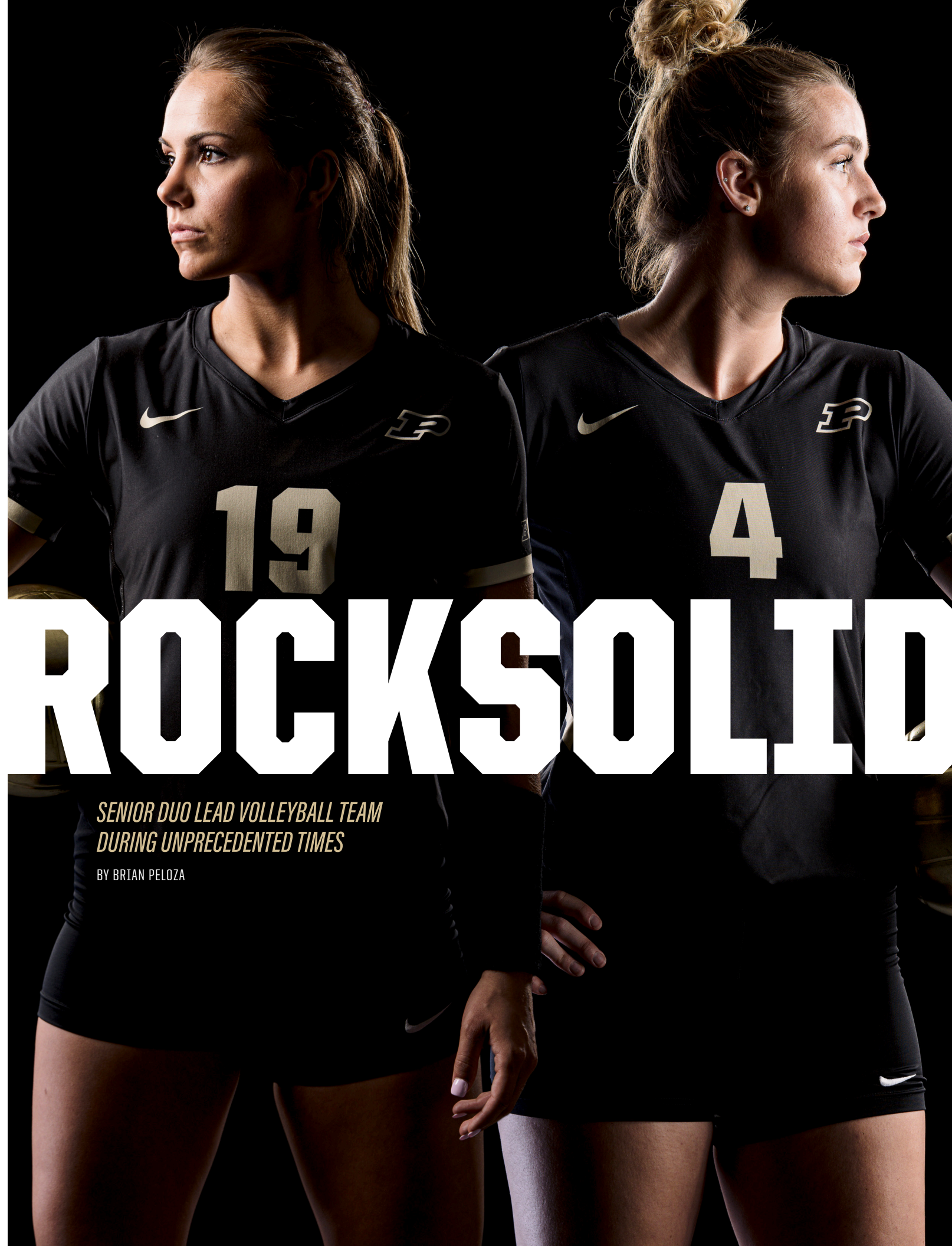
Newton and Otec fall into the category of being "solid as a rock" because of the early moments of their careers. They weren't necessarily pretty or flawless, but instead necessary building moments. Newton didn't play a lot during the first half of her freshman season, but made her first start against perennial national power Penn State.

"I was so nervous because I knew Penn State was a great team," Newton says. "During the game, I was kind of lost with blocking because everyone was running their sets so fast. That game made me realize how good everyone else was and really exposed my weaknesses.

"The freshman year was really kind of a shock. I didn't know what to expect and didn't realize how good everyone else was and made me realize I had to work even harder to be as good as I wanted to be."

Shondell was confident Newton could develop into a quality player because she attacks the ball so hard, noting there are few players that can hit with her pace and power. Over the years, Newton has become better conditioned and more athletic.

During her time at Purdue, Newton has increased her vertical jump by five inches. She was reaching about 9-foot-11 inches as a freshman and is now reaching 10-4. That increased hang time allows her to see the block a little bit better and hit shots around the block.



*SENIOR DUO LEAD VOLLEYBALL TEAM  
DURING UNPRECEDENTED TIMES*

BY BRIAN PELOZA

And with her power in hitting the ball, the added vertical jump makes Newton more of a threat to hit over the top of the block.

"One of the advantages of being able to touch 10-foot-4 is you can hit the ball flat and hit the ball off the top of the hands and drive it out of bounds because she hits it so hard," Shondell says.

Newton had 113 kills as a freshman, 330 as a sophomore and a team-high 445 last season. Her increased productivity came from a mixture of more opportunities and a better rapport with three-year setter Bush, along with an improvement in hitting her line shot.

"She didn't get cheated, she would hit it hard, but she was missing half of the time as a sophomore," Shondell says. "She would do two or three great things, but then shoot herself in the foot two straight times. Now, she's getting herself in position because she's quicker and understands the setter well."

Newton's power is impressive, Otec says, adding that Newton has left bruises on players trying to receive her kill attempts.

"I have been on the other side of Caitlyn's swings, and no, they are not fun to dig," Otec says. "She has grown a lot this past year, especially as a hitter. Now it's not just her powerful rocket of an arm or swing. Now she has the shots and she has the angles. She's smarter, and that has helped her come a long way in just a year."

And Otec knows defense. She had 425 digs last season, second most on the team. But it's her serving that can provide instant momentum for the Boilermakers. Otec topped the conference with 50 aces a year ago and Newton labeled her "one of the best servers in the Big Ten."

More specifically, Otec's float serve provides the biggest challenge for opponents.

"She has very good accuracy, so whatever zone she wants to serve, it's going to go there," Newton says. "And it's pretty fast and very hard to read whether it's going to drop or not."

Otec's float serve is unique not just for the movement – which is similar to a knuckleball pitch in baseball – but for the speed at which she can hit it, about 40 mph. Many players can hit a serve at that speed, but to maintain the movement along with the added velocity isn't easy.

"Sometimes if you hit it too hard, the float serve doesn't move as much as it should," Shondell says. "So there is a fine line hitting that ball with pace so the ball will really bob and weave, and I think she's mastered that. She keeps it low to the net and can move the ball around a lot."

Otec was a prolific hitter in high school, but came to Purdue knowing she would be used only as a defensive specialist. She had opportunities to play as a hitter in college, but it would have been at a lower level of competition than the Big Ten.

"My competitiveness came out, and I decided I wanted to be playing against the best of the best," Otec says. "The Big Ten is one of the best volleyball conferences in America, and playing against great competition every night, I wouldn't trade it for anything." ✂



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ON ITS END





# PARKER FILIUS HOW TO GET UP



BY TANNER LIPSETT

When you're a four-time high school state champion, you're probably pretty good. After all, you spent four years of your life being better than anyone else in your entire state at your sport of choice. That's likely enough winning and enough confidence to send a young student-athlete to college with a high level of belief and confidence.

It's no secret, though, that college athletics is a whole different animal, and that the level of competition rises to a new level. Eighteen-year old freshmen start competing against 22- or 23-year old grown adults. The experience is humbling for most, brutal for some and career-ending for others, squashing many college dreams before they ever begin. What do you do when you go from being the best to being just another body, or worse, the lowest rung on the ladder? How do you get back up when you've been knocked so far down? Purdue wrestling's Parker Filius may not have all the answers to these questions, but he's probably got a few ideas that could help a lot of people.



There’s no reason to bury the lede here; this is a story about mental health, mental strength and fortitude. When times get tough, when adversity strikes, when we meet challenges in life, we’re left with the choice to either give up or forge on. That’s clearly oversimplifying the process, but it’s what most things boil down to.

Filius came to Purdue in the fall of 2017, on the heels of one of the best careers in Montana high school history. He won 169 matches in four seasons, became the first four-time state champion ever at Havre High School and helped lead his team to four straight state team titles. He won the 2017 USA Wrestling Junior Folkstyle national title, was a three-time junior freestyle All-American, was rated as a top-50 recruit in his class and was a two-time all-state football player to boot. He had every reason to enter college ready to embark on a highly successful career that included a bushel of wins, awards and championships.

“I thought I was going to be able to come in as a true freshman and bang with everyone right away,” Filius says. “I thought I could get in the lineup, get to nationals, become an All-American and compete for a national title. Expectations were super high.”

Some of those things came true for Filius, while others didn’t. A solid redshirt freshman campaign at 141 pounds had him ready to start competing at the varsity level, but there was a small problem. The Boilermakers already had two guys at the same weight class who were talented enough to be in the starting lineup. Head coach Tony Ersland sat down with the two and talked it out, and Filius made the choice to compete at the higher weight class. He thought he could use the offseason to focus on wrestling, bulking up and growing into the weight.

“I didn’t grow into the weight the way I thought I would,” Filius says. “I thought it was in my best interests at the time, but I’m not sure I would do it the same way if I had to do it over again.”

Things started well for Filius, seeing success early in the year, but the wheels quickly came off the bus. A string of losses midway through the year shook Filius’ state of mind and put the rest of the season on tilt.

“I started looking at things as if I only won or lost,” Filius says. “I won or lost this position, I won or lost this match; it got pretty heavy, pretty quickly, I started becoming critical of everything I was doing, and my confidence fell with that.”

Instead of focusing on improving and performing at a higher level, he stewed over the losses. They ate at him, taking his focus away from the daily tasks in practice that could’ve helped him rebound.

“It’s really hard to get better when you’re thinking like that,” Filius says. “It wasn’t like I wasn’t working hard, I was, but you have to work your mind in the same way that you work your body, and I didn’t understand that at that point. Everything became about the mistakes I made last week, looking back on my losses. There was no focus on my strengths, I wasn’t doing anything to make myself feel better. When you look at something as if it’s broken, it leads to a lack of confidence.”

Things turned real dark for Filius. After his two losses at the Big Ten Championships he remembered sitting in the hallway by himself, crying, feeling lower than he could ever remember. He didn’t want to talk to anyone, disregarding his teammates, coaches, even random people passing by, who could tell that he was struggling. He wasn’t doing much to hide it.

Filius survived the day without much interaction with anyone, and got up the next day to a lesson from his head coach, that he didn’t really appreciate at the time, but has come to love. “So the sun came up today, huh?” asked Ersland. “You’re healthy, your family is healthy, it’s going to be OK.”







Initially, discounting the comment and continuing with his frustrations, Filius didn't sleep much the next two weeks. He found himself questioning everything, trying to figure out where it all went wrong. Asking things like: Is Purdue is the right place for me? Do I need to go somewhere else? Is all of this worth it? How did I get here? In addition to the crippling questions in his mind, Filius was still going to practice to help his teammates prepare for the NCAA Championships, a meet for which he failed to qualify. He wanted time to decompress, to get away for a while, but he was there in practice with contempt for being there.

He was lost and he needed to find his way back to the sport he loved.

"He wasn't himself, not even a little bit," teammate and roommate Thomas Penola says. "His habits changed, his behavior changed, and it was hard to be his friend and not tell him that he wasn't doing the right things. The good news is that he became better in the end. He found a way to open up, he found some perspective in his life and leaned on other people, and we became better friends and teammates."

"There's a lot of things that guys don't talk about when they struggle like that," Filius says. "It was brutal to keep that all bottled up and suffer. It was a hard way to learn, but I found that life gets a lot easier when you let some of it out and talk to people."

What came next happened in two pieces.

A conversation with former Purdue assistant coach, and fellow Montana native, Tyrel Todd helped put Filius back on the right track. He made a decision to return to his natural competition weight of 141 pounds, and go full bore on what it would take for him to be successful there. The second part, however, is where even bigger strides would be made.

Filius started making regular appointments with Purdue sports psychologist Dr. Brad Foltz. Filius had dabbled in sports psychology before, attending team gatherings on the topic during his redshirt year, and making a few appointments during the second semester of his freshman year at the behest of Ersland and assistant coach Jake Sueflohn. Despite finding those meetings fruitless in the past, he knew that if he was going to make a change he was going to have to be all-in both on and off the mat.

Things started to improve by just talking – about life, about wrestling, about all the things that were wrong and all the things that were right. Then came the reading. Filius started delving into books that had to do with sports psychology, and he would talk through those with Dr. Foltz, looking for more answers. He started finding ways to apply lessons to performance, to help keep him in the moment and focus on the next five seconds. Those lessons paid off.

The early gains came in the freestyle season; his training got better. He started making mental jumps with improved focus and confidence, which in turn positively affected his wrestling. He got better at wrestling learning to manage his fatigue, improving his execution toward the end of practice. Everything became more fun.

You could start to see things come together before the USA Wrestling U23 men's freestyle world team trials in June 2019, and Filius knew he was capable of performing well in a major

tournament. He just had to translate that feeling into success on the mat.

He followed through with his intentions, finishing seventh in a 128-man bracket at 65 kg with an 8-2 record. The mental work was improving the physical output, and he was starting to love wrestling again. Equally important, he loved wrestling at Purdue.

The 2019-20 season came with a fresh slate and a variety of change, setting the table for Filius to take big strides. The move back to preferred weight class 141 pounds came easy. All the while sharpening his mind along with this physique.

Filius opened the season at the Michigan State Open, and faced a tough draw right out of the gate. His first opponent was a two-time NCAA qualifier and 2017 Mid-American Conference champion, and Filius was ready. The early round win propelled Filius to a third-place finish and ignited a strong start to his sophomore campaign.

He won his next eight matches and stood 10-1 going into the holiday break, but something was no longer present. Unlike the past, he had started to understand it wasn't about the wins and losses, but more on how he was performing. The challenge was he wasn't performing where he thought he should be.

"I was doing enough to win, but I wasn't trying to score as much as I could or compete as hard as I could," Filius says. "I was winning by two or three points, when I should've been winning by six or eight. I wasn't giving my coaches or my team everything I had, and I knew this had to change."

He had a decent tournament at the 2019 Midlands, going 3-2 and reaching the round of 12 before bowing out, but he knew it should have been better.

"We had to have some hard conversations there, and we had to lay out some truth," Ersland says. "To continue to tell a guy that 'you do the right things and it will eventually turn for you' doesn't work if you can't be honest with each other. I painted the picture of why he wasn't getting what he wanted. He had to take that truth and make some changes."

After that honest conversation with his coach, and permission given by both parties to continue to speak honesty with one another, Filius went back to work. He knew that there was more he could do, so he gave his coaches the green light to train him the way he needed to train, to get where he needed to go. It all moved the needle in the right way, physically and mentally.

The rest of the season went well for Filius. It would be awesome to say that he won every match; that he took home a Big Ten title and a national championship and rode off into the sunset. But it's not that kind of fairy tale.

He won some and lost some, wrestled great at times, and just OK at others. His 19-10 record marked one of the nation's biggest turnarounds at any weight, and he was named the Boilermakers' most improved wrestler. He scored at Big Ten's for the first time, he qualified for his first NCAA Championships, but he understands that he's nowhere near finished. Everything has become part of the process.

His realization was no more evident than the moment he defeated Alec McKenna of Northwestern at the Big Ten Championships to earn his NCAA bid. There was no celebration, no pointing to his family in the stands, no giant hugs with his coaches, just a few high fives and handshakes. A moment that was monumental in comparison to where he was just one year prior, was treated like a footnote. What Filius did remember, however, was what he had accomplished for his team and how it served as a building block toward his bigger goals.

When it all stacked up at the end of 2020, how many times do you think Filius thought about his freshman year? None. Not once.

"Ersland teaches us to live in the moment, focus on what's right in front of us, and I'm getting there," Filius says.

This story is nowhere near complete. Filius still has lots to learn, lots to work on and two more years of college wrestling to work on it.

An outstanding student, where he holds an impressive grade-point average as a construction management major, Filius aims to further his studious nature on the mat and in his own headspace. Training his body and mind for what comes next is the top priority.

"Expectations are still high, I want to win conference titles, I want to be an All-American, I want to win a NCAA Championship," Filius says. "To get there I've got to have my best performances. So instead of thinking about those tangible things, I'm going to focus on performing at my highest level. If those things happen for me, it's great, but if I don't reach those goals and still perform to the best of my ability, I will have no regrets."

Mirroring life, the reality is being a college athlete comes with a variety of highs and lows, championships and failures, victories and losses. How student-athletes deal with this emotional roller coaster is often closely tied to the overall level of success in their careers.

The ability to get back up after you have been knocked down, to continually answer the bell in every round of life, to have the mental fortitude to withstand life's challenges, that's the lesson here. Filius doesn't have all the answers, but he hopes that he can help a few more people get the right idea. ✂



# BACK

BY TOM DIENHART



The pain. The doctors. The needles. The medications. The surgery. The enormity of it all. Sarah Griffith still gets emotional talking about it.

The junior soccer player has walked through fire to get to the other side of what was an arduous journey though back pain management and subsequent surgery. And it was a surgery that offered no guarantee she would ever play soccer again at a high level – if at all.

But look at her now.

Griffith is 5-feet, 3-inches of fire, spunk and determination who has come through the cauldron

of despair to now stand tall, wiping away the tears of pain and looking back at what she endured ... and smile. Yes, smile.

If there ever was any doubt about the veracity of Griffith's recovery, she answered it by scoring a blistering goal against Georgia early last season.

"Going into the game, I was definitely nervous," Griffith says. "It was going to be a hard game; they are a really good team."

With the Boilermakers on the offensive, Griffith took a pass at her forward spot and ... BANG!

**"IT WAS LIKE I HIT THE BALL WITH EVERY OUNCE OF ANGER AND DOUBT," GRIFFITH SAYS. "AND JUST BEING MAD FOR THE PAST 18 MONTHS. IT WAS DEFINITELY A MOMENT WHERE I JUST FELT LIKE I FINALLY HAD GONE THROUGH IT LIKE ALL THE WEIGHT HAS BEEN LIFTED. I DID IT, THERE ARE NO MORE DOUBTS ... I'M BACK."**

It wasn't long ago when doubt clouded the future of the Naperville, Illinois, native. Even her coach, Drew Roff, didn't want Griffith to get her hopes up after she told him her plans to sit out the 2018 season as a redshirt and have surgery after a strong Purdue debut in 2017 that saw her start 18 of 19 games and tally two goals.

"There certainly were times where I didn't want to be overly optimistic because I didn't want to put added pressure on her to get back sooner," Roff says. "There are some doctors who gave her a less than a 50-50 chance to come back and play this game at a high level, so I wanted to be supportive and optimistic with her. But there's certainly some times where I didn't know how encouraging I should be. She also had to be concerned for her long-term health, too."

Griffith knew the risks of surgery. But it was the last resort, the final door in the hallway of hope. She had tried seemingly every non-surgical remedy to improve her condition, known as spondylolisthesis.

"Between the time I got my diagnosis and the time I decided to have surgery, we tried five spinal injection procedures," Griffith says. "We did two months of a traction program that would help the curvature of my spine.

"There were multiple ER visits. It was a really hard time. Those five months were extremely hard because it was just like doctor after doctor ... and no one gave you what you wanted to hear. Everyone had a different opinion about how to treat my back. We tried every procedure in the book. I had steroid injections, cortisone, epidural; we even tried a nerve burning procedure."

Lauren Link, Purdue's director of sports nutrition and former Boilermaker soccer player, saw what Griffith was enduring up close.

"It crept up at first, so we tried to manage it," says Link, who also is an analyst on Purdue soccer broadcasts. "Our thought was she would do rehab, and she will get through it. But it became pretty clear pretty quickly

that we could not just get through it. She was having trouble at practice, even just walking around and going to class, sitting through a class. The pain became so unmanageable."

That is when it was clear that something drastic would have to be done. It was time to go under the knife.

The issue to fix: Griffith had fractures in her lower back that caused her vertebrae to move. She had to have it all fused surgically.

"So my lumbar portion of my spine, they fused into one bone," Griffith says.

She had the surgery done in September 2018. Griffith had four screws, two rods and a cage along part of her back inserted to correct her back issue.

Griffith returned to the field in March 2019 ... with some trepidation. Would she be the same old Sarah? What would happen when she fell? Got bumped?

"I was unsure," Griffith says. "I felt like the player I always was. But ..."

At practice that spring, she jumped in the air for a header and landed on her hip. Silence fell over the practice. All eyes fixed on Griffith. Was she OK? Would she get up? Griffith popped back up. She was fine. And she hasn't looked back.

The surgery worked.

Griffith further cemented her comeback last fall, when she started all 20 games and scored three goals and tallied nine points for the Boilermakers. Both totals ranked second on the squad. She also led the team with 20 shots on goal.

"It's a great story of perseverance," Roff says. "She's one of those players that if I was a paying customer, she's definitely worth the price of admission because when she gets the ball, she can do things with it.

"She's extremely confident on the ball, great technical ability. She sees the field extremely well. She's a playmaker, and she's a player that can score goals. She's a player that can create chances for her teammates. She's a special talent."

She also has a special story. ✂





# THE BREES LINE

## AN IN-TRENCHES RECOLLECTION OF PURDUE'S 2000 CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON

BY ALAN KARPICK

To label the offensive line of 2000 the unsung heroes of the Purdue Big Ten champion football team would be a misnomer. It isn't an accurate characterization of what this unit meant to the Boilermakers' fortune two decades ago.

There was nothing unsung about this unit. In many ways the big uglies up front were the personality, if not the fabric, of head coach Joe Tiller's squad. And they were proud of it.

"We set the tone," says Matt Light, who was an All-American caliber offensive tackle protecting the blind side of quarterback Drew Brees. "As a unit, we were aggressive, we took things personally, we wanted to do it right every snap, and exert our will on the opponent."

And it was infectious on the rest of the team. The core group of Light; guards Gene Mruczkowski, Ian Allen and Rob Turner; center Chukky Okobi; and right tackle Brandon Gorin brought stability to Tiller's squad in 2000. That was especially true when things got bumpy early in the season after unexpected losses at Notre Dame and Penn State. It settled things enough to make

possible Purdue's fabulous October run of four victories that eventually delivered the Boilermakers to Pasadena.

Collectively, the unit had endured a lot in their careers leading up to the championship season. Four had switched positions when Tiller took over the reins of the program prior to the 1997 season. Light was moved to left tackle from tight end, while Allen, Turner and Gorin all came to Purdue as defensive linemen.

The position switches loomed large for giving the unit "swagger." It also built confidence in them that their head coach and staff knew what they were doing, strategically moving the chess pieces around to build a winner.

"It's not that offensive linemen don't have swagger," Gorin says. "But because four of us didn't begin our Purdue careers as offensive linemen, we brought a different perspective, different toughness to the position."

There were other things that bonded the unit. Things like tough love from position coach Danny Hope. It wasn't always

easy playing for the man who would lead Purdue football from 2009 to 2012. But it was a whole lot of fun and a great learning experience.

"Coach Hope was the heartbeat of the entire offensive line," Light says. "We had strong individuals at all the positions, but Coach Hope was the guy that pulled it all together."

"We weren't always sure that Tiller was on our side. Of course, that's the job of a commander-in-chief to keep you guessing. But we knew that no matter what happened, if somebody walked into our offensive line room and had something to say to us, it was going to be Coach Hope chewing on them before we even got there. He had our backs."

And two decades later, the way Hope made his teaching points still resonates. There were numerous examples like the time when the offensive line was having a few fisticuffs with the defensive line, and Hope jumped into the fray with his fists at the ready.

And then you could always count on to some of Hope's classic sayings to provide have memorable moments seared forever on the brain.

"We're going to break that Christmas silence for some good old-fashioned violence." Allen quickly recites Hope's decree during a pre-Rose Bowl practice.

Hope knew of and played off everyone's personality. He was fully cognizant that Light was the prankster, Okobi and Allen were the motivators, Gorin was chill, and Turner and Mruczkowski were young guys who stayed in the background, but were hungry to contribute.

"Brandon was just so laid back, so cerebral, so cool," says Turner, who was a rotational guy in 2000, starting three games but playing in all 12 contests. "Coach Hope used to get after him to try and get him riled up. One time at a 6 a.m. workout he finally pushed Brandon's button, and Brandon pushed back."

"Coach Hope, why are you picking on me?" Brandon hollered back at his coach. "We all just gasped, because Brandon never raised his voice like that."

But it lit a fire under Gorin and the rest of the guys. It also bonded them even more as a unit.

It was an offensive line that worked hard, but played hard too. That was a



big part of its charm and personality that came out in the infamous "Speedo photo" taken during preseason media day by Michael Heinz of the (Lafayette) *Journal & Courier* is a reminder of such.

The concept behind the J&C photo was that the offensive line was Brees' lifeguard. So, it only seemed natural that the group should have scant bathing suits. And the photo was almost too natural, if you get the drift.

"Matt brought up the photo idea and I said, 'Yep, we'll do it,'" recalls Gorin about the picture of the unit in bathing suits provided to them by the men's swimming team. "If anything was going to be comical on our team, it was probably the offensive line that was going to do it."

Social media and the Internet have kept that photo alive two decades later. It has served as a conversation starter, viewed sometimes as a positive and sometimes, well ... it even came up recently in a job-related situation for Mruczkowski.

"I was called in to my boss' office and he said, 'Tell me about this,' says Mruczkowski, admitting anxiety when seeing the picture on the desk. "Luckily, he cracked up about it right after he laid it in front of me. I responded with, 'Oh my God, where do I start?'"

*Gold and Black Illustrated* used as its 2000 preseason cover a photo of the six linemen "Protecting the Franchise." The line was dressed as secret service agents in tuxedos with Brees emerging from a limousine.

It was another memorable moment for the offensive line, but the one thing Mruczkowski remembers most about the photo shoot 20 years later?

"We missed our nap," Mruczkowski says. "I loved the limo shoot and it was great getting some pub for the offensive line, but that was in the middle of two-a-day practices. During 'Camp Tiller' naps were important."

The offensive line was rested and skilled enough to do its job protecting



Brees. It allowed only 10 sacks in 502 pass attempts, establishing itself as one of the best units in the country. There is little debate it is the best line in Purdue football over the last half century.

It didn't hurt that Brees possessed the personality of an offensive lineman. He was one of them. He had that workmanlike mentality that blended perfectly with a genius football intellect and throwing accuracy like few quarterbacks who have ever played.

"We knew there was just something different about the way Drew thought, the way he approached things," Okobi says. "Drew wasn't the most vocal guy, he wasn't the most high energy guy. He wasn't the most laid back guy. He was just himself, and we related well to that."

And the group related to winning and what it took to be successful. Each has gone on to successful careers after football (see box). Many had success in the National Football League, which included Super Bowl rings for Light, Mruczkowski and Gorin for the Patriots and Okobi for the Steelers. Allen also played a handful of years in the NFL, mostly for the New York Giants. They remain close in spirit, but don't get to talk as much as they would like.

"There will always be a strong connection between us," Okobi says. "We were just a bunch of kids going on a journey through college football together, and it took us to some incredible places both physically and mentally."

"I was intense and a little too serious sometimes. When I look back, I recognize that they just accepted me the way I was. With them laughing with me or at me, however you want to look at it, it really taught me to laugh at myself."

Gorin, the engineer of the bunch known for his brevity, said it thusly.

"Even if I haven't talked to them in what seems like forever, if any one of them called and needed something, I am there," Gorin says. "And I know they feel the same way."

Maybe Allen, however, summed it up best.

"When college athletics are done right, when coaches actually care about the kids, and the kids respond accordingly, this is what it looks like," Allen says. "That was our experience as Boilermakers."

And a Big Ten title and a trip to the Rose Bowl was the by-product of doing it right. And there's nothing unsung about that. ✕

## THE SUCCESSFUL SIX WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

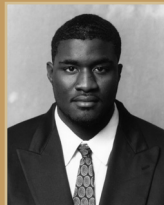


54

**ROB TURNER**  
SOPHOMORE | GUARD

KIRTLAND, OHIO

He is president of his industrial ready mix concrete company R Turner Enterprise and lives in Sandusky, Ohio.

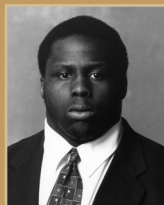


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**IAN ALLEN**  
FIFTH YEAR SENIOR | GUARD

FAIRBURN, GEORGIA

Allen serves as senior manager of strategic partnerships & new business development for Target and lives in the Minneapolis area.

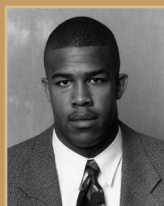


56

**CHUKKY OKOBI**  
FIFTH YEAR SENIOR | CENTER

HAMDEN, CONNECTICUT

Okobi has had several business ventures and recently founded Basic Instructions, NLP, which helps executives, athletes and others in self-improvement. He lives in Shawnee, Kansas.

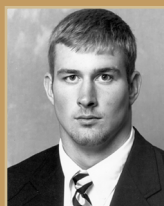


77

**BRANDON GORIN**  
FIFTH YEAR SENIOR | TACKLE

MUNCIE, INDIANA

Gorin lives in Fishers, Indiana, just north of Indianapolis, and has been an entrepreneur in the restaurant business and commercial real estate development.

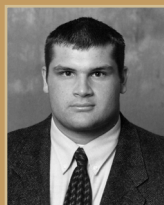


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**MATT LIGHT**  
FIFTH YEAR SENIOR | TACKLE

GREENVILLE, OHIO.

Light lives in Foxboro, Massachusetts, and among other endeavors runs the Matt Light Foundation that exists, in part, to work with at-risk kids.



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**GENE MRUCZKOWSKI**  
SOPHOMORE | GUARD

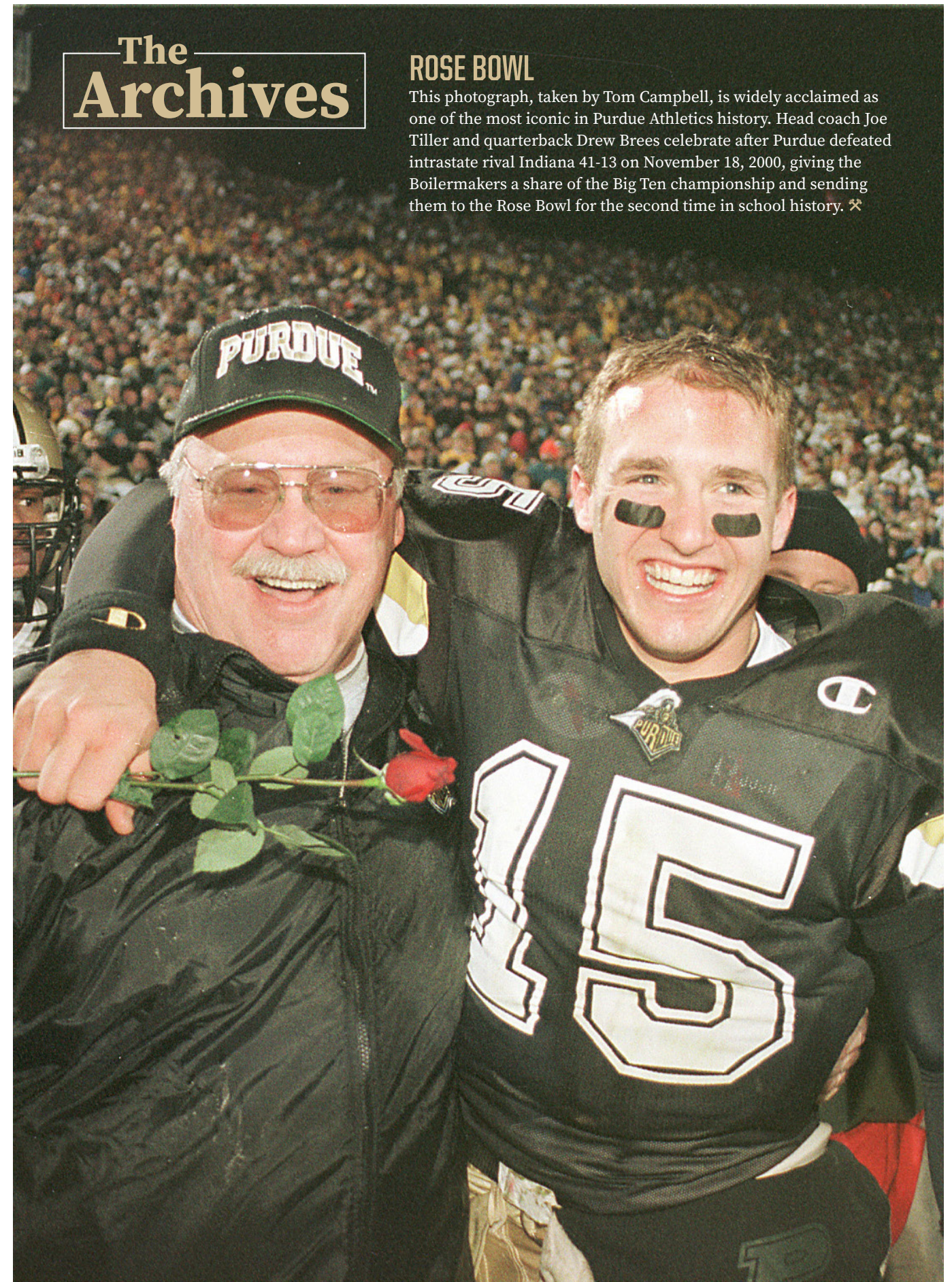
CLEVELAND, OHIO

Mruczkowski serves as an area sales manager for Anthrex, a medical orthopedic device company that is a leader in sports medicine. He still lives in the Cleveland area in Broadview Heights, Ohio.

## The Archives

### ROSE BOWL

This photograph, taken by Tom Campbell, is widely acclaimed as one of the most iconic in Purdue Athletics history. Head coach Joe Tiller and quarterback Drew Brees celebrate after Purdue defeated intrastate rival Indiana 41-13 on November 18, 2000, giving the Boilermakers a share of the Big Ten championship and sending them to the Rose Bowl for the second time in school history. ✕







INVEST IN PURDUE  
ENGAGE WITH BOILERMAKERS  
BE RECOGNIZED AS A FOUNDING MEMBER

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.

University enrollment is at an all-time high of 46,114 students, and Purdue Athletics has been one of the drivers of its growth and popularity. Annually, approximately one million alumni, fans, and friends spend time in athletic venues. Businesses that make an investment in Purdue student-athletes over a five-year period will be recognized on the donor wall outside of Mackey Arena - the focal point of the Purdue Athletics footprint - and receive other benefits such as exclusive student-athlete recruitment opportunities and visibility at various John Purdue Club events.

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

**[jpcmorethanagame.com/1869-society](http://jpcmorethanagame.com/1869-society)**

or contact your Boilermaker Athletics Representative,  
email the John Purdue Club at [JPC@purdue.edu](mailto:JPC@purdue.edu), or call the JPC offices at 765.494.2582.



THOSE WHO PROUDLY REPRESENTED THE OLD GOLD & BLACK,  
AND NOW CHOOSE TO GIVE BACK

Operating under the umbrella of John Purdue Club (JPC), Varsity P are JPC members who are also athletics alumni: **former Boilermaker varsity student-athletes, managers, athletic trainers, coaches, practice players, and spirit squad members. Alumni do not need to have lettered or graduated from Purdue to join. Varsity P members help pay for student-athlete scholarships, approved capital projects, and academic support.**

## CONTACT US

**For more information on Varsity P, please reach out to your Boilermaker Athletics Representative or the John Purdue Club:**

**email:** [JPC@Purdue.edu](mailto:JPC@Purdue.edu)  
**phone:** 765.494.2582  
**web:** [johnpurdueclub.com](http://johnpurdueclub.com)

## VARSITY P STAFF

Mark Herrmann '81, football  
Ryan Isaac '14, football  
Carly Mercer Schmitt '15, women's swimming

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### *WHO CAN BE A MEMBER OF VARSITY P?*

Varsity P is open to all John Purdue Club members who were varsity student-athletes, athletic trainers, managers, coaches, practice players, graduate assistants, or spirit squad members during their time at Purdue. If you are an active JPC member and fall into one of those categories, you are automatically a member of Varsity P.

### *I DID NOT LETTER OR GRADUATE FROM PURDUE. CAN I STILL BE A MEMBER?*

Varsity P is not a letterwinners organization; all members are welcome even if they did not letter, did not graduate, or only played their sport for a season.

### *IS THIS SEPARATE FROM THE JOHN PURDUE CLUB?*

Active JPC members who were varsity student-athletes, athletic trainers, managers, coaches, practice players, graduate assistants, or spirit squad members during their time at Purdue are considered Varsity P members. Varsity P falls under the larger John Purdue Club umbrella.

### *WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP?*

John Purdue Club members receive annual benefits that change as their membership level increases. Varsity P members will receive additional benefits. To look at the benefits chart, [click here](#).

### *DO I GET ADDITIONAL PRIORITY POINTS AS A VARSITY P MEMBER?*

Varsity P members receive 4 additional priority points as a membership bonus. To access your John Purdue Club priority points, [click here](#).

**FIND MORE ANSWERS AT: [JOHNPURDUECLUB.COM](http://JOHNPURDUECLUB.COM)**





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