

Illinois Fighting Illini (1-3)

**2002 Record:** 5-7 (4-4 Big Ten)  
**2002 Bowl Appearance:** none  
**Returning Starters:** 13 (6 offense, 7 defense)  
**Head Coach:** Ron Turner  
**Outlook:** After finishing atop the Big Ten in 2001, the Illini returned in 2002 with an overall disappointing performance. Illinois was looking forward to getting off to a fast start, but has lost all three games by a touchdown or less. In the opener, Missouri's Brad Smith beat the Illini with a 63-yard touchdown pass. That pass started the spiral of tough losses. Illinois lost a field goal contest to UCLA, 6-3, before losing last Saturday to Claifornia, 31-24. The Illini had a dismal year defensively last year, but do return a significant amount of starters back, including three on the defensive line. Illinois' defense is struggling forcing turnovers, as it has one interception and a forced fumble.

**Players to watch:** The Illini are without wideout Brandon Lloyd, who's in the NFL. Lloyd had 1,010 receiving yards in 2002 to go along with his nine touchdown catches. The rest of the Illinois wide receivers are young and inexperienced. The top receiver thus far for Illinois has been Kelvin Hayden. Hayden, who is a junior college transfer, has 25 catches for 290 yards. Illinois returns starting quarterback Jon Beutjer, who led an Illini offense in 2002 which was tops in the conference for passing offense. Beutjer is off to a good start throwing for 1,137 yards and eight touchdowns.

**Make or break games:** Sept. 27, vs. Wisconsin & Oct. 18, at Michigan.

Indiana Hoosiers (1-3)

**2002 Record:** 3-9 (1-7 Big Ten)  
**2002 Bowl Appearance:** none  
**Returning Starters:** 16 (8 offense, 8 defense)  
**Head Coach:** Gerry DiNardo  
**Outlook:** The perennial bottom dwellers in the Big Ten, the Indiana Hoosiers are attempting to develop a solid program under Gerry DiNardo. After an opening-week loss Connecticut 34-10, the losses have started to pile up on them. With one year under his belt, DiNardo said he hopes to further develop the team's chemistry. "It's drastically different from a year ago," DiNardo said at Big Ten media day. "The thing that hasn't changed is that we're still fighting the number battle." The "number battle" DiNardo refers to is the fact that the Hoosiers only have 65 players on scholarship, as opposed to the 85 player maximum mandated by the NCAA to which virtually all other Div. I-A programs ascribe. While it may be too late this season, DiNardo said that by the end of the 2004 season, he believed the team would have a full roster of 85 scholarship players.

**Players to watch:** One of the brightest spots of the entire Hoosier roster is transfer quarterback, Matt LoVecchio. He left Notre Dame after his freshman season and sat out the entire 2002 season. "Matt's maturity and experience has served him well," DiNardo said. "He had a positive attitude about the change. He's fit in very well with our players and he loves to play the game. He's really done a nice job making a difficult switch." LoVecchio has played solid in the first four games, despite being 1-3. He has thrown for 822 yards, but only two touchdowns. The other bright spot for the Hoosiers has been running back Brian Lewis. He missed most of last season with a series of injuries, including a hand injury that forced him to sit out the final four games. Lewis has rushed for 160 yards this season.

**Make or break games:** Oct. 4, at Michigan State & Nov. 22, vs. Purdue.

No. 13 Iowa Hawkeyes (4-0)

**2002 Record:** 11-2 (8-0 Big Ten)  
**2002 Bowl Appearance:** Orange Bowl vs. USC (loss, 38-17)  
**Returning Starters:** 12 (5 offense, 7 defense)  
**Head Coach:** Kirk Ferentz  
**Outlook:** After a successful Big Ten run in 2002 and a dismal finish in the Orange Bowl, the Iowa Hawkeyes look to regain the success the team had just a year ago. Following a 21-2 win over previously unbeaten Arizona State last weekend, the Hawkeyes are beginning to look like legitimate contenders again. Led by a stellar defense that currently is ranked third in scoring defense, allowing just 8.25 points per game, Iowa has put the clamps on two strong quarterbacks — Miami, Ohio's Ben Roethlisberger and Arizona State's Ken Walter — in the season's first four weeks.

While safety Bob Sanders recovers from arthroscopic surgery on his right foot, linebacker Chad Greenway has responded with consecutive 17-tackle games. **Players to watch:** The Hawkeyes lost star quarterback Brad Banks, who connected for an astounding 25 touchdowns and just four interceptions. Nathan Chandler, another junior-college transfer, has done an admirable job behind center this season. He doesn't have the same flash, but still has eight touchdown passes and hasn't made many costly mistakes. The true workhorse of the offense has been tailback Fred Russell, who is 13th in NCAA in rushing yards with 494. Despite missing two games last year, Russell carried for over 1,200 yards and nine touchdowns. There is a good probability he'll duplicate those numbers in 2003 behind a strong offensive line led by All-American Robert Gallery.

**Make or break games:** Oct. 4, vs. Michigan & Oct. 18, at Ohio State.

No. 11 Michigan Wolverines (3-1)

**2002 Record:** 10-3 (6-2 Big Ten)  
**2002 Bowl Appearance:** Outback Bowl vs. Florida (win, 38-30)  
**Returning Starters:** 15 (7 offense, 8 defense)  
**Head Coach:** Lloyd Carr  
**Outlook:** Entering the Big Ten season with high expectations, Michigan stumbled in its first real challenge of the season when Oregon tripped up the Wolverines 31-27 last weekend. In the loss to the Ducks, the Wolverines' horrendous special teams cost them the game. Michigan missed two extra points, had a punt blocked and watched as Oregon returned a punt for a touchdown. "There are a lot of mountains out there to climb but we want to climb the highest mountain," Michigan football coach Lloyd Carr said. "I like our team, I like the attitude, the work ethic throughout the winter, the spring, and the summer." While Michigan's talent can make Ann Arbor the pinnacle of the college football world, its special teams may leave the Wolverines looking up at the summit come late November. **Players to watch:** There's never a dearth of talent for the Wolverines, and quarterback John Navarre is taking advantage of the plethora of weapons. The senior recently set the Michigan career passing yardage mark at 6,863 and is just 16 behind Elvis Grbac for first all-time in career touchdown passes. Running back Chris Perry stands fourth in the nation in rushing with 575 yards, while wideout Braylon Edwards has become one of Navarre's favorite targets and has 326 yards receiving and three touchdowns. On the defensive side of the ball, 2002 second-team All-America cornerback Marlin Jackson continues to excel after moving to safety in the preseason. End Larry Stevens has three sacks on the season to lead the Wolverines.

**Make or break games:** Oct. 4, at Iowa & Nov. 22, vs. Ohio State.

Michigan State Spartans (3-1)

**2002 Record:** 4-8 (2-6 Big Ten)  
**2002 Bowl Appearance:** none  
**Returning Starters:** 15 (6 offense, 9 defense)  
**Head Coach:** John L. Smith  
**Outlook:** Following a disastrous mid-season collapse, the Spartans hired John L. Smith to come in and clean up a program in disarray. Now that the helmets feature the classic style with the Spartan silhouette, the team is returning to respectability as well. Despite a 20-19 loss to Louisiana Tech, the team has looked respectable during its quartet of non-conference games that included a stunning 22-16 win over Notre Dame. Returning with the helmets was quarterback Jeff Smoker who missed the team's last three games while he was dealing with substance abuse problems. He has begun to look like the quarterback who led the Big Ten in passing efficiency in 2001, throwing for 932 yards and six touchdowns in the early going. The defense has been stellar against the run, allowing just 41.25 yards per game, the third-best average in college football. Defensive tackle Matthias Askew leads the conference in sacks with five. **Players to watch:** After losing 2002 All-American receiver Charles Rogers, the offense could have taken all sorts of directions, but Agim Shabaj has emerged as a receiving threat with 20 catches for 314 yards. After last year's starting running back David Richard transferred to Missouri in the offseason, the offense starts and ends with Smoker. Jaren Hayes and Tyrell Dortch split the tailback duties. Outside linebackers Ronald Stanley and Monquiz Wedlow return to spearhead the defense after combining for almost 200 tackles in 2002. While both cast less than imposing shadows — standing just 6-feet and 5-foot-11, respectively — Stanley has recorded 31 tackles so far this season.

**Make or break games:** Sept. 27, vs. Iowa & Nov. 1, vs. Michigan.



BIG TEN CONFERENCE OFFENSE			BIG TEN CONFERENCE DEFENSE		
Sean McHugh - Penn State	FB	Robert Gallery - Iowa	LT	Chris Gamble - Ohio State	CB
		David Baas - Michigan	LG	A.J. Hawk - Ohio State	OLB
		Craig Krenzel - Ohio State	QB	Matthias Askew - Michigan State	RE
		Alex Stepanovich - Ohio State	C	Darrion Scott - Ohio State	T
		Bryce Bishop - Ohio State	RG	Chad Greenway - Iowa	MLB
Fred Russell - Iowa	TB	Tony Pape - Michigan	RT	Tim Anderson - Ohio State	NT
		Ben Hartssock - Ohio State	TE	Will Smith - Ohio State	LE
				Deryck Toles - Penn State	OLB
				Marlin Jackson - Michigan	SS
		Taylor Stubblefield - Purdue	FL	Jovon Johnson - Iowa	CB

Collegian Staff Projected  
Big Ten Finish

- 1) Michigan
- 2) Ohio State
- 3) Iowa
- 4) Purdue
- 5) Wisconsin
- 6) Penn State
- 7) Minnesota
- 8) Michigan State
- 9) Illinois
- 10) Northwestern
- 11) Indiana

Associated Press Top 25 Poll

1. Oklahoma (55)
2. Miami (3)
3. USC (2)
4. Ohio State (5)
5. Virginia Tech
6. Florida State
7. LSU
8. Tennessee
9. Arkansas
10. Oregon
11. Michigan
12. Georgia
13. Iowa
14. Texas
15. Nebraska
16. Kansas State
17. Pittsburgh
18. Washington
19. TCU
20. Northern Illinois
21. Washington State
22. Purdue
23. Missouri
24. Minnesota
25. Florida

First-place votes in parentheses

Minnesota Golden Gophers (4-0)

**2002 Record:** 8-5 (3-5 Big Ten)  
**2002 Bowl Appearance:** Music City Bowl vs. Arkansas (win, 29-14)  
**Returning Starters:** 18 (8 offense, 10 defense)  
**Head Coach:** Glen Mason  
**Outlook:** Minnesota football coach Glen Mason has reason to be excited for the 2003 season. "We like our football team," Minnesota offensive coordinator Mitch Browning said. "We are still relatively young, and we have a good nucleus coming back. That's not to say we have the best players in this conference, because we don't, but we've got some pretty darn good ones." Most of the excitement stems from the Golden Gophers running attack. The three-headed monster of Terry Jackson, Marion Barber and Thomas Tapeh is ranked second in the nation. Added with those three fierce runners is freshman Laurence Maroney. Last season, Jackson led the team in rushing with 1281 yards. This season both the yards and carries have been spread evenly with all four running backs. All four tailbacks have rushed for at least 240 yards and Barber leads the group with 337 yards. The Golden Gophers rank fifth in the land in total defense, but this maybe a little misleading as Minnesota hasn't played a good team, yet. **Players to watch:** As good as the running game has been, the offense will go only as far as quarterback Asad Abdul-Khalik takes them. Earlier this season, Abdul-Khalik set the school-record for touchdown passes in a career with 43 touchdowns. Ben Utecht emerged last season as one of the best tight ends in the country and measuring stick in the Big Ten. In the first four games, he has only five catches.

**Make or break games:** Oct. 11, vs. Michigan & Nov. 15, at Iowa

Northwestern Wildcats (2-2)

**2002 Record:** 3-9 (1-7 Big Ten)  
**2002 Bowl Appearance:** none  
**Returning Starters:** 17 (8 offense, 9 defense)  
**Head Coach:** Randy Walker  
**Outlook:** Don't expect much from this team that shared the Big Ten Championship only three years ago. At this school, academics come before athletics, which can make Saturdays in the fall disappointing. Northwestern football coach Randy Walker is willing to try anything to improve his football team, including changing its uniforms to all purple. Some things don't change and Northwestern is currently ranked 10th in the conference in total defense allowing 394 yards per game. Although the offense is fifth in the conference averaging 424 yards per game, it can't put nearly enough points on the board to keep up with the shoddy defense. Had this been the Wildcats basketball team it would have had a challenging schedule playing both Duke and Kansas. **Players to watch:** The marquee player on the Wildcats this season is tailback Jason Wright. A year ago, Wright ran for 1234 yards, 12 touchdowns and was fourth in the nation in all-purpose yards with 2013. He's off to another good start gaining 474 yards through four games this season. After a solid freshman campaign, Brett Basanez, looks to improve in his sophomore season. Senior Pat Durr is one of the lone bright spots on a defense that continually gets torched. After tearing his ACL six plays into the 2002 season, Durr returned to his spot in the middle and is second on the team in tackles with 31.

**Make or break games:** Oct. 11, at Indiana & Nov.22, at Illinois

No. 4 Ohio State Buckeyes (4-0)

**2002 Record:** 14-0 (8-0 Big Ten)  
**2002 Bowl Appearance:** Fiesta Bowl vs. Miami (win, 31-24 OT)  
**Returning Starters:** 17 (11 offense, 6 defense)  
**Head Coach:** Jim Tressell  
**Outlook:** Defending national champions return virtually unfettered with losses from graduation, as they return 17 starters including their entire offense. The biggest loss for the Buckeyes came when athletic director Andy Geiger suspended Maurice Clarett. The 2003 season started much the same way the 2002 season ended. In the first four games, one went into overtime and three victories came by less than a touchdown. Even with the close scares, the road to the Big Ten title still goes through Columbus. The sign of a good team is being able to win the close games.

"We have about 24 seniors. I hope they take as serious a role in what they do," Tressell said. "I don't think leadership is exposed until you are out there battling on the field. The true leader are the guys who, day to day to day in the locker room." While this trimester's classes at Ohio State just started yesterday, the team has been taking opponents to school for weeks. Tressell said he actually favors the work schedule when players are in class because the added scholastic requirements force them to discipline themselves and to follow a more regimented schedule. **Players to watch:** While the Buckeyes boast All-America candidates at virtually every position, the most intriguing spot on the field is the one manned by the tailback. Without Clarett, Maurice Hall has become the quasi-lead back and galloped to his first 100-yard game in the Buckeye's 24-17 win over Bowling Green last weekend. The offensive line is one of the best in the country, with guard Bryce Bishop and tackle Shane Olivea forming a daunting duo on the right side. Tight end Ben Hartssock has emerged as the best at his position in the Big Ten. The offense, however, is led by unflappable quarterback Craig Krenzel. It's hard to find a player who performs as well under pressure and who can almost will his team to win. Cornerback Chris Gamble and strong safety Will Allen could form the top backfield tandem in the Big Ten, while the defensive line — end Will Smith and tackles Darrion Scott and Tim Anderson return from 2002 — leads an Ohio State run defense ranked second in the nation.

**Make or break games:** Oct. 18, vs. Iowa & Nov. 22, at Michigan.

No. 22 Purdue Boilermakers (2-1)

**2002 Record:** 7-6 (4-4 Big Ten)  
**2002 Bowl Appearance:** Sun Bowl vs. Washington  
**Returning Starters:** 17 (8 offense, 9 defense)  
**Head Coach:** Joe Tiller  
**Outlook:** With an experienced, fast and intelligent defense, the Boilermakers enter the Big Ten campaign looking to challenge the Big Two of Ohio State and Michigan for the Boilermakers' first conference championship since 2000. Joe Tiller has completely erased the losing mentality that surrounded the team before he became head coach in 1997, but the team still can't seem to clear the cluster in the middle of the pack. Seven of the nine returning starters on defense are seniors, including outstanding safety Stuart Schweigert and middle linebacker Niko Koutouvides. It's little wonder, then, that the team ranks 16th in the nation in total defense.

The defense is complemented by one of the best receiving tandems in the nation in Taylor Stubblefield and John Standeford. Statistics and an early-season slip up against Bowling Green don't tell the complete story of this team. One more out-of-conference game this week against Notre Dame should tell fans everything they need to know about this under-rated team. **Players to watch:** Stubblefield is the third-leading receiver in the NCAA this season, averaging more than eight receptions a game. He and Standeford are consistent threats that can open up a game and always leave the Boilermakers with a chance to win. In the secondary, Schweigert is as good a safety as there is in the Big Ten.

**Make or break games:** Nov. 8, vs. Iowa & Nov. 15, at Ohio State.

Wisconsin Badgers (3-1)

**2002 Record:** 8-6 (2-8 Big Ten)  
**2002 Bowl Appearance:** Alamo Bowl vs. Colorado (win, 31-28)  
**Returning Starters:** 16 (8 offense, 8 defense)  
**Head Coach:** Barry Alvarez  
**Outlook:** About as steady as a surgeon who has been awake for 36 hours, the Badgers can't seem to find the rhythm that makes a team consistent. Alvarez is one of the best coaches in the Big Ten, but no amount of work seemed to get Wisconsin out of its 23-5 pasting at the hands of UNLV earlier this season. To make matters worse, running back Anthony Davis went down with an ankle injury in the game and hasn't played since. He may be able to return soon, but injuries to the lower body can hamper running backs all season. He is still fifth in the NCAA in rushing yards per game, averaging a strong 141.67. Whether this team can put it all together is debatable. However, they don't have to play Michigan this year and get Ohio State and Iowa, arguably its two toughest games, at home. If Alvarez can kick the boys into gear, the Badgers could make a move. **Players to watch:** Davis rushed for 1,555 yards in 2002, so his loss is a big one. Freshman Booker Stanley rushed for 119 yards and three touchdowns in Davis' absence last week, but don't expect the younger back to hold onto the job when Davis returns. Wide receiver Lee Evans returns to the lineup after missing all of 2002 with a knee injury. So far, he has shaken off any rumors of lost speed and is 11th in the NCAA with 105.5 receiving yards per game. Safety Jim Leonhard, a popular pre-season All-America pick, has two interceptions and three pass breakups to go with his 31 tackles. Standing just 5-foot-8, it's hard not to see the junior's impact in the secondary.

**Make or break games:** Oct. 11, vs. Ohio State & Nov. 22, vs. Iowa.