

Falling back to Earth



KATHLEEN MARTINUS | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Junior tight end Payne Durham falls to his knees after fumbling the ball.

Purdue follows transcendent win with worst performance

BY ALEX SABRI
Asst. Sports Editor

If there's one thing Purdue football couldn't stand in recent years, it's being ranked in the Associated Press polls.

Even in the 2000 season, one that saw a Rose Bowl appearance behind Hall-of-Fame quarterback Drew Brees, Purdue had to fight with all its strength through three wins of 4 points or less just to keep itself in the Top 25. Just when it seemed Purdue would have one of its highest rankings in program history, it suffered a loss to then-No. 21 Notre Dame off a heartbreaking field goal before losing to an unranked and then-two-win Penn State team to fall back out of the rankings.

Even on squads with as many as six future NFL players, Purdue can't find a way to stay in the national spotlight.

Purdue has had eight seasons where it has spent exactly one week as a flash-in-the-pan ranked team before falling back to its regular spot in the Big Ten West. One of its brightest flashes came in 1984, when a roster with six future NFL players lost 40-3 to an Iowa team with nine future major league players of their own.

The allergy to the AP polls flared up again after the Boilers (4-3, 2-2 Big Ten) dropped out of their recently-earned spot just as quickly as they had entered. They turned a potential low-scoring win into a 17-point blowout loss against the Wisconsin

Badgers (4-3, 2-2 Big Ten) after an exhausted defensive line and line-backing core finally broke under the consistency of the Badger running game and inconsistency of their offensive counterparts.

Wisconsin let loose its array of talented running backs in Chez Mellusi and Braelon Allen for 51 attempts, gaining 331 yards in the process.

"Them being on the field a lot did make a difference," senior line-backer Jaylan Alexander said in the postgame conference. "As a defense, we have to be ready for that and prepare for those types of situations."

Wisconsin quarterback Graham Mertz had to throw the ball just eight times throughout the entire game, with his last pass attempt coming on Wisconsin's last drive in

the third quarter.

From Parrish "P. J." Hill, to Monte Ball and Melvin Gordon, the Badgers have had a long lineage of running backs with an ability to almost literally run over Boilermaker defenses in their 15-game winning streak.

Career-defining performances were born off the backs of games against Purdue run defenses, as then-junior Jonathan Taylor solidified himself as an NFL-level talent in 2018 by gaining ten fewer yards than the entire Wisconsin team did last Saturday on 20 fewer attempts.

On the other side of the ball, Purdue almost completely abandoned the scheme that had given it success

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Boilermakers drop out of AP Poll after loss

STAFF REPORTS

Well, that didn't last very long. The Purdue (4-3, 2-2 Big Ten) football team dropped out of the Week 9 AP Poll after a lifeless 30-13 loss to Wisconsin (4-3, 2-2 Big Ten) Saturday afternoon, one week after it entered the poll at No. 25 for the first time since 2007.

This could mark the eighth season the Boilermakers have spent exactly one week ranked in the poll if the team stays out of the national spotlight for the rest of the season. The last time it happened was the 2007 season, in which Purdue entered the Week 6 poll at No. 23 after beating Notre Dame to go to 5-0, and exited after a home loss to then-No. 4 Ohio State.

The pattern extends all the way back to the 1948 season, when Purdue was ranked No. 15 in the Oct. 4 poll despite being 0-2, and immediately exited after a 40-0 loss to then-No. 7 Michigan. This season was the latest one-week ranking Purdue has earned since the 1961 season. That Purdue team placed No. 7 in the Nov. 13 poll after a 7-6 victory over then-No. 6 Michigan State and made a similar exit after a loss to then-No. 5 Minnesota.

There are now just five Big Ten teams in the poll: No. 5 Ohio State, No. 6 Michigan, No. 8 Michigan State, No. 9 Iowa and No. 20 Penn State. Minnesota also received one vote in the poll, but the Badgers didn't appear in the "receiving votes" section after the victory.

The biggest mover in that group and the overall poll was Penn State, which dropped 13 places after a 20-18, nine-overtime loss to unranked Illinois Saturday.

Volleyball

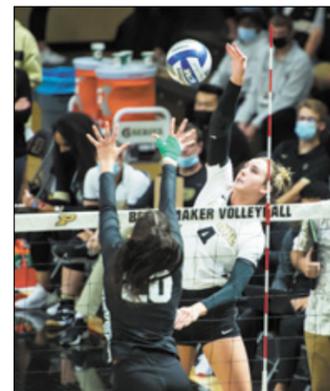
Team loses two in a row

STAFF REPORTS

For the first time in the season, the No. 7 Purdue volleyball team lost consecutive matches, falling to unranked Michigan State and No. 9 Nebraska in a pair of late-night duels.

All five of the Boilermakers' (14-5, 6-4 Big Ten) losses have come to lower-ranked or unranked competition this season, and Nebraska was the team's third ranked loss.

Saturday's road match against the Cornhuskers (16-3, 10-0 Big



DAVID HICKEY | SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHER
Fifth-year outside hitter Caitlyn Newton hits the ball over two Michigan State players.

Ten) ended in four sets after Nebraska rebounded from a 2-point first set loss to win the next three by an average of 7 points. The Boilermakers out-blocked the Huskers 16-7 and fifth-year outside hitter Caitlyn Newton recorded a match-high 16 kills, but Purdue was undone by six Nebraska aces, a team-wide .123 hitting percentage and 11 hitting errors by Newton.

No Boilermaker other than Newton made more than 10 kills in the match, while four Cornhuskers made double-digit kills on the night. Nebraska very nearly won the first set, after going on a 7-point comeback streak down 23-13 and winning another 3 points in a row while Purdue was at set point.

From there, the Huskers controlled the match. Nebraska trailed just three more times, early in the

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Purdue stays golden, retains Golden Boot trophy

BY ELIZABETH GRIVETTI
Staff Reporter

The No. 18 Purdue women's soccer team took on rival Indiana in the last match of the season for a 2-0 finish Sunday afternoon.

With the win, the Boilers (13-3-2, 8-2 Big Ten) secured the Golden Boot trophy that accompanied this rivalry matchup for the seventh consecutive year and solidified their hold on the second seed for the upcoming Big Ten tournament.

The weather proved difficult as the on-and-off rain left the field filled with puddles and an incredibly slippery surface, resulting in a couple of slip-ups for both teams.

"You have to be even more on your toes, not your heels," senior forward Sarah Griffith said of the rainy conditions. "Your touches have to be softer, your walls have to be soft and you have to realize that change in momentum."

The rain did not stop the many Purdue fans and a large loud student section, the Folk Fanatics, as "IU sucks!" cheers accompanied every goalie kick.

"This season, in my four years, it's been the most active fans and they come to every game," senior forward

Ally Mussallem said. "It's been really exciting and they're a huge contribution to us doing so well."

A shot by the Hoosiers (9-5-4, 3-4-3 Big Ten) that didn't fully cross the goal line and technical difficulties with the replay equipment — the first time it had been used in the past two seasons, a team staffer said — resulted in a controversial offsides call and a five-minute delay with 13 minutes left in the first half.

The rest of the first half finished with no score and only four shots by the Boilermakers and two by the Hoosiers.

"IU did a fantastic job (in the) first half just not giving us time and space on the ball and I felt like every time we're in our attacking third we couldn't get numbers," head coach Drew Roff said. "Second half, I said, 'Let's get into our rhythm, find feet, get those pockets of space and deliver better passes.'"

The second half opened with two yellow cards, one for Indiana's Alaina Kalin and one for Purdue senior defender Skylurr Patrick.

Indiana responded with a strong offensive front with four shots, but none were successful.



DAVID HICKEY | SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHER
After defeating Indiana 2-0, the Purdue soccer team celebrates with the Golden Boot as it holds on to the trophy for the seventh straight year.

The first goal of the game came from Mussallem and was assisted by sophomore midfielder Emily Mathews. Griffith followed it up with the second goal only eight minutes later.

"Once we got the momentum started with Ally's moves, it never ended, and that's the way we can play every minute of every game, so it was nice to come back

and get that second," Griffith said.

The Boilermakers snagged the No. 2 seed in the upcoming Big Ten Tournament and will play No. 7-seed Ohio State in a match at Folk Field Sunday.

"I think recovery is key, we've been on a run of games against some very talented teams that have really challenged us and pushed

us," Roff said. "We're going to take a couple of days off and then we're going to re-energize and come back and just focus on whoever our opponent is."

Purdue takes the pitch against the Buckeyes (8-7-2, 3-4-2 Big Ten) at 3 p.m. The match will air on the Big Ten Network.