

# Hoosier Conference expands

Four schools left over from Mid-Indiana accept invites to join in 2015

By Sam King  
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The Hoosier Conference and Mid-Indiana Conference long prided themselves on being among the elite

leagues in Indiana for mid-sized schools. When all options for keeping the Mid-Indiana Conference were exhausted, the four remaining schools were forced to find a new home.

The Hoosier Conference extended an invitation, and the inclusion of Cass, Northwestern, Western and Hamilton Heights bolsters a league that already has a strong athletic tradition.

"We're very excited for the Hoosier Conference," said Western athletic di-

rector Josh Larsh. "I think it is a great move for us. I think we bring a lot to the table, too."

The inclusion of four new schools begins July 1, 2015 and makes the league an 11-team conference with Benton Central, Delphi, Central Catholic, Twin Lakes, West Lafayette, Rensselaer and Tipton.

The league formed in 1946-47 with competition beginning in 1947-48. West Lafayette, Delphi and Rensselaer were

original members, along with Attica, Flora, Rossville and Winamac. Rensselaer withdrew in 1949 and rejoined in 1998. Delphi withdrew in 1992 and rejoined in 1998.

The schools coming from the MIC have helped make that league known on a state level.

Western won the Class 3A girls basketball state championship this winter

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## INDIANAPOLIS 500



GRAHAM RAHAL MARCO ANDRETTI

# A GIFT... AND A CURSE

Famous names mean high expectations for Andretti, Rahal

By Jenna Fryer  
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS—The cruel Twitter posts came fast and furious Friday as Marco Andretti and Graham Rahal participated in their final practice session for the Indianapolis 500.

"Would Graham Rahal have a ride in the series if his last name wasn't Rahal?" read one.

"You mean to tell me, that Marco Andretti is being a crybaby on the radio?!" read another, along with a sarcastic #surprised and #spoiledbrat.

It's May, which means the faults and failures of Andretti and Rahal are in the spotlight at Indianapolis Motor Speedway, where their famous fathers shined. Like royal watchers anxiously awaiting a wedding or a baby, open-wheel racing fans obsesses over when these two young crown princes of IndyCar will step up their games and fulfill their destiny as the American stars the series desperately needs.

Andretti is burdened by his last name. Mario Andretti, his grandfather, won 52 races and ranks second on the all-time list. Michael, his father, ranks third at 42 career victories.

Marco, in his ninth season in IndyCar, has two.

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### TODAY'S SCHEDULE

Legends Day honoring Mario Andretti

Tickets: \$10

8 a.m.: Gates open

9 a.m.: Autograph session

9:30 a.m.: Vintage car laps

10:30 a.m.: Public drivers meeting

1 p.m.: Former drivers autograph session

2:30 p.m.: Mario Andretti autograph session

3 p.m.: Mario Andretti meet-and-greet

3 p.m.: Former drivers autograph session

5:30 p.m.: Tyler Farr concert

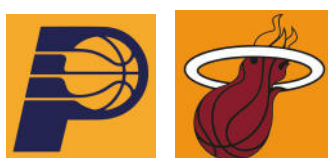
6:30 p.m.: Jason Aldean concert

# George cleared for tonight's Game 3

By Tim Reynolds  
Associated Press

Indiana Pacers All-Star forward Paul George will play in tonight's Game 3 of the NBA Eastern Conference finals against the Miami Heat barring unforeseen complications, according to a statement released by the team.

George suffered a concussion in the fourth quarter of Game 2 but has been symptom-free after undergoing the NBA's Return-to-Participation Exertion Protocol over the past three days. In consultation with Dr. Jeffrey Kutcher, the NBA's director of concussion management, the Pacers medical staff cleared



### GAME 3

Indiana at Miami

Time: 8:30 p.m. TV: ESPN

George on Friday to "return to normal basketball activity," according to the news release.

George will participate in today's shootaround at 11 a.m. and, barring any

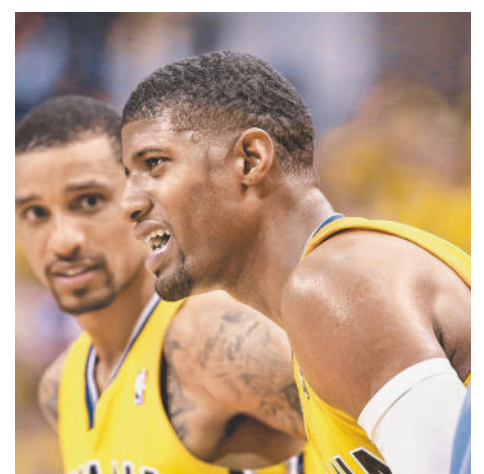
complications, will play in tonight's game in Miami.

George declared himself "ready to go" at practice Friday afternoon, but coach Frank Vogel said George's return would be a game-time decision.

"We're hopeful that he'll be able to play, but he has not cleared all the protocols to be cleared to play. He's symptom-free, but obviously you've got to go through all the testing and all that stuff to be cleared," Vogel said. "He has not been cleared yet."

Apparently George cleared the final tests after practice.

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Despite suffering a concussion Tuesday, Paul George has been cleared for Game 3. MATT KRYGER/INDIANAPOLIS STAR

## PURDUE WRESTLING

## Boilers hand reins to Ersland

Former Iowa star enjoyed success as Nebraska assistant

By Mike Carmin  
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Tony Ersland has a Big Ten background, understands the balance of academics and athletics and believes a recruiting base is already in place.

Those are a few of the reasons why Ersland, an assistant at Nebraska the last eight seasons, accepted Purdue's offer to become the school's new wrestling coach. Ersland replaces Scott Hinkel, who resigned last month after seven seasons.

"I think my background and experience lends itself to the situation," said Ersland, who has 17 years of coaching experience. "I feel like we have a recruiting base in all of the im-

portant states that we need to, and it fits my background."

Ersland wrestled at Iowa under legendary coach Dan Gable and was a part of three straight NCAA team championships (1995-97) and four Big Ten titles (1994-97). During his senior season in 1997, Ersland finished one match shy of All-America honors at 177 pounds.

During his tenure with the Huskers, the program compiled a 102-41-2 dual record and finished in the top 20 seven times at the NCAA Championships. Nebraska wrestlers earned 17 All-America honors during his eight seasons. Ersland also served as the head assistant wrestling coach at Northwestern from 2000 to 2005.



Tony Ersland

"He presented a comprehensive plan for moving our wrestling program forward both in the Big Ten and nationally," Purdue athletic director Morgan Burke said in a statement. "His résumé as a coach and as a student-athlete is impressive, and it is clear he knows the look and feel of a championship-caliber program."

The Boilermakers are coming off an 11th-place finish at the conference meet and lost seven of eight dual matches during the regular season. The Big Ten is regarded as the strongest wrestling conference in the country, featuring powerhouses Iowa and Penn State.

"Being in the Big Ten, you're going to get the kids that want to be in the limelight," Ersland said. "More than that, we're looking for kids who are willing to blaze a trail. They have the confidence and the mentality, 'I

can go. I can help turn a program around.' I'm confident we can find those kids and have them feeling Purdue is a good fit."

Ersland primarily worked with the upper weights at Nebraska and coached three-time All-American, two-time NCAA finalist and 2009 Big 12 champion and Outstanding Wrestler of the Meet Craig Brester at 197 pounds. He also coached four-time qualifiers in Josh Ihnen (184) and Tucker Lane (285).

"I feel like Purdue has been very fair with their coaches in terms of, if you're doing the right things and you're working hard, they're going to help you out and make sure you're moving in the right direction," Ersland said. "All of those factors combined give you momentum and energy so you can move this forward."

Ersland plans to have his assistant coaches in place by July 1.

## It wasn't all bad for Purdue in 2013-14

Even though last-place finishes in the Big Ten Conference by football and men's basketball cast a pall over Purdue athletics in many fans' minds, other Boilermaker sports had good seasons during the 2013-14 school year.

A 12-8 margin over Indiana in the inaugural Indiana National Guard Governor's Cup championship was due to a big boost from Purdue's spring sports, despite the Hoosiers' Big Ten baseball title.

The clinching points came from the Boilermaker men's and women's track teams, each of which proved that poor finishes in the past are not an indication of the future.

A 52-point improvement from the Purdue women boosted the Boilermakers from 11th a year ago to third in the Big Ten Championships. Coach Lonnie

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Greene's men improved four places in one year, the best turnaround in the conference.

Two years ago, Purdue scored 15½ points in the Big Ten meet. Ra-

heem Mostert scored 20 points in about 30 seconds on Sunday.

Purdue's spring sports won six of the eight points available, losing only in baseball and women's tennis, which was an NCAA tournament team for the Boilermakers. In addition to the track teams, softball, men's tennis and the men's and women's golf teams either won head-to-head matchups with Indiana or finished better in a Big Ten championship event.

The Governor's Cup victory marks the first time since the 2006-07 school year that Purdue outpointed Indiana in what was then called the Crimson & Gold Cup competition.

» Forget the four- and five-star ratings used by recruiting websites. The real rankings are released on NFL draft weekend.

Purdue's streak of getting at least one player selected reached 17 years thanks to one of the few stars of the Boilermakers' 2010 class, cornerback Ricardo Allen. But four years ago, no one would have guessed that two-star 231-pound "athlete" Kevin Pamphile would go two spots after Allen in the fifth round.

Peaking with nine selections in the 2004 draft — all of whom made NFL rosters, by the way — Purdue's decline on the football field since then can be measured by its draft picks. The Boilermakers have not had more than two players selected in a single draft since 2008, when first-round tight end Dustin Keller, Super Bowl champion defensive end Cliff Avril and linebacker Stanford Keglra were taken.

There are no sure bets on the current Purdue roster to extend the streak to 18 years. Defensive end Ryan Russell has to be more consistent. Tight end Gabe Holmes needs to be healthy and productive. Akeem Hunt and Mostert have the speed NFL scouts like, but their chances to prove themselves may rest on improvement from the offensive line.

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## HOOSIER

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and won the Class 3A baseball state championship in 2012. Hamilton Heights had never advanced to the state finals in any sport, then finished as the runner-up in the 3A football and girls basketball tournaments during the 2012-13 school year.

"The Hoosier Conference is very strong," said Cass athletic director Greg Marschand, who coached the Kings to a runner-up finish in the Class 2A baseball tournament in 2009. "Hopefully we can build on the foundation they laid."

In December, Eastern and Taylor left the Mid-Indiana Conference for the Hoosier Heartland Conference. In March, Peru and Maconaquah departed for the Three Rivers Conference, leaving the Mid-Indiana with four teams.

There was a push to keep the league alive by inviting newcomers, but ultimately, the league couldn't operate with four teams.

"It's a crying shame," Marschand said. "The MIC was a tremendous conference that fell on hard times and can't survive. With Cass being a charter member of the MIC, we tried everything we could to keep it alive and going."

Following the departures of four of the league's eight schools, talks opened between athletic directors, leading to the Hoosier Conference offering an invitation.

On Tuesday, Western's school board voted to join the conference, following Hamilton Heights and Cass in doing so.

The topic was part of the



Twin Lakes and Western met for a boys basketball sectional championship in March. Beginning in the 2015-16 school year, they will be Hoosier Conference rivals. JERRY SCHULTHEISS/FOR THE J&C

May 8 school board meeting for Northwestern School Corporation, according to the agenda.

According to the minutes of that meeting, it was reported to the board that Northwestern had been invited to join the Hoosier Conference. Northwestern athletic director Dan Armstrong said action on that matter will take place at the June school board meeting. The minutes from Northwestern's May 8 meeting state a recommendation is expected at the June meeting from Armstrong and principal Kristen Bilkey.

Because of the necessity in moving forward, the school

board agreed to have the superintendent accept the invitation but will officially approve the matter next month.

The Hoosier Conference landscape last changed prior to the 2011-12 school year, when Central Catholic joined and Sheridan exited for the Hoosier Heartland Conference.

The Knights have since won state titles in football and baseball and were the volleyball runner-up this fall, while also advancing to semistate in girls and boys basketball.

West Lafayette has won 13 consecutive girls soccer conference titles. Hamilton Heights has won 13 MIC titles

in a row and the two often collide in the regional. The Red Devils defeated Heights 2-0 in the regional championship in the fall en route to a state championship. Benton Central's girls basketball team was a state finalist in 2011 and lost to Hamilton Heights in the semistate in 2013.

West Lafayette won a 3A football title in 2009 and lost to eventual champion Andrean in the semistate last season, while Tipton and Rensselaer met in the semistate last fall for Class 2A football, with Tipton advancing to the title game.

Delphi was the Class 2A runner-up in baseball in 2010 and the Oracles, Central Catholic and Twin Lakes softball programs have all been to semistate since 2010.

"We really feel like this could be the premier mid-sized conference in the state when you look at the strengths of the schools currently in the Hoosier Conference and add four more schools that all bring their strengths," Heights athletic director Kurt Ogden said. "I feel blessed that the Hoosier Conference has allowed not Hamilton Heights, but all of us to join their conference in what is going to be an odd-numbered conference. That isn't always ideal."

Athletic scheduling details have yet to be worked out. Still, the new additions will force an even more competitive environment.

"I think there will be state champions coming out of this conference yearly in something, just because of the amount of talent some of these schools have and the way we will have to compete against each other," Armstrong said.

## HIGH SCHOOL ROUNDUP

## Cronk helps CC wrap up league perfection

Staff reports

Hayes Cronk pitched a three-hitter and struck out eight Friday night to lead Class 2A No. 4 Central Catholic to a 6-0 Hoosier Conference baseball victory over Tipton.

The Knights (21-6, 12-0) are 34-2 since rejoining the league three seasons ago.

Coy Cronk's sacrifice fly and Evan Kennedy's steal of home in the first inning gave Hayes Cronk all the run support he would need.

Jackson Anthrop went 3-for-4 with an RBI, Kennedy was 2-for-4 and Pete Metzger went 2-for-3 with an RBI for CC.

**McCutcheon 5**  
**Hamilton SE 1**

Jordan Young allowed four hits and struck out seven to give the Mavericks (20-8) a split in the Hoosier Crossroads Conference series.

Myles Hann singled home Sean Roginski and Mason Bruce's infield hit scored Logan Sowers to give McCutcheon a 2-0 first-inning lead.

**Noblesville 5**  
**Harrison 3**

Trevor Salmon's two-run single in the fourth inning gave the Class 4A No. 7 Millers the lead for good.

Harrison (13-15) took a 2-1 lead in the third thanks to an

error and Baxter's run-scoring grounder.

**South Newton 10**  
**West Central 0**

Jarrett Hammel pitched his first no-hitter, striking out 15 for the visiting Rebels (10-11).

Hammel also went 2-for-4 with a double and a triple while driving in three runs.

**Frankfort 7**  
**Crawfordsville 1**

Leo Lopez pitched a three-hitter, struck out eight and homered in an upset of the Class 3A No. 4 Athenians (22-7).

Frankfort took a 3-0 lead in the second on Jordan Campbell's RBI double, a wild pitch and a Diego Santos sacrifice fly.

**Delphi 13**  
**Rensselaer 1**

Jason Sterrett hit a three-run triple during a nine-run fourth inning for the Class 2A No. 5 Oracles (19-7). He also pitched a three-hitter and struck out nine.

**Softball**

**Faith Christian 11**  
**N. Montgomery 10 (8)**

Erica Rozenboom went 3-for-5 with three runs scored to lead a 10-hit attack.

**Carroll 12**  
**Central Catholic 1**

Carly Kingery struck out 10, and Kassandra Gilliam drove in four runs.