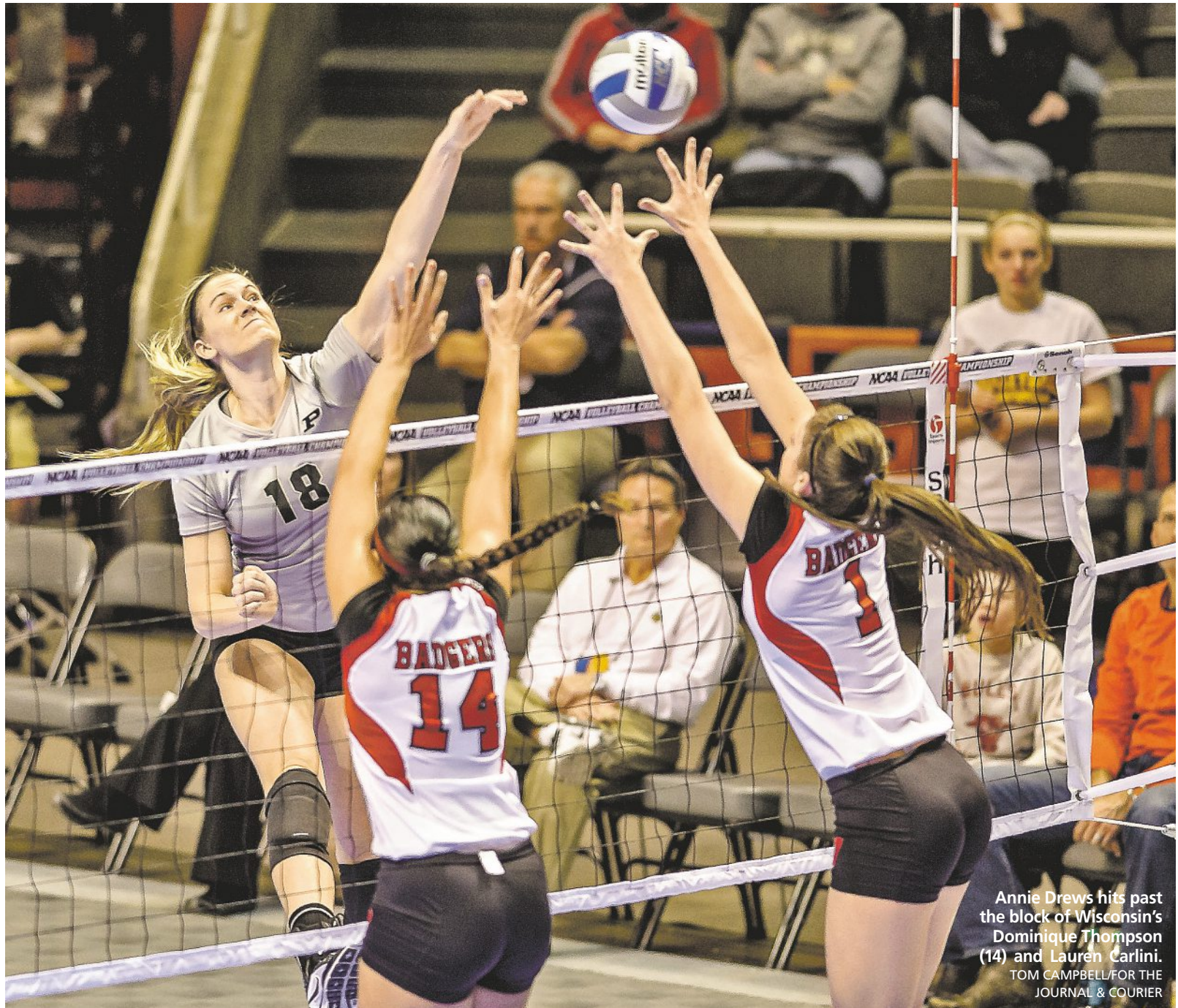




PURDUE VOLLEYBALL

Final Four dream denied

Annie Drews hits past the block of Wisconsin's Dominique Thompson (14) and Lauren Carlini.
TOM CAMPBELL/FOR THE JOURNAL & COURIER

By Sam King // sking@jconline.com

There's a mystique about the Final Four that has eluded Purdue's volleyball program despite an inordinate amount of success under the run made by its five-player senior class.

The last four seasons included two trips to the Elite Eight, two more to the Sweet 16 and a record of 99-39. But the journey never felt complete without a Final Four trip.

It is expected that a program of that caliber sets the bar high. The Boilermakers did. That achievement wasn't so much a dream as it was an expectation.

Wisconsin's defense, serving hands Purdue four-set defeat

For five years, libero Carly Cramer spilled her guts on the volleyball court, sacrificing her body to the tune of numerous injuries. She knew she would be well rewarded if she helped the Boilermakers clear the final hurdle.

With tears in her eyes, yet still composed given the circumstances, Cramer said the only thing she could do after the Boilermakers lost to a determined Wisconsin team 25-22, 23-25, 25-18, 25-21 at State Farm Center.

"We weren't meant to be a Final Four team this year, but I know deep down we were," Cramer said.

Surely, it stung Saturday night, but coach Dave Shondell said they'll realize the magnitude of their accomplishments in due time. In the coaching world, the end of one season quickly becomes the beginning of another.

"Sometimes you think it's going to be easy to turn the page and go forward, but it's not," Shondell said before speaking positively about his seniors.

The story didn't end the way Cramer and classmates Hilliary Fox, Catherine Rebarchak, Rachel Davis and Katie Griffin hoped — or thought — it would.

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PURDUE MEN'S BASKETBALL

Boilers lose cool, another game to Butler

Turnovers, fouls too much to overcome in 76-70 Classic loss

By Nathan Baird
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INDIANAPOLIS — Purdue's men's basketball team could have blamed the turnovers, the middling post production or a rough second half from 3-point range.

Following Saturday's 76-70 Crossroads Classic loss to Butler at Bankers Life Fieldhouse, the Boilermakers spoke instead of deficiencies in poise. And toughness. Grit and guts and determination.

Purdue could not interrupt a game-changing 12-0 Butler run in the second half. Its own furious rally, cutting a 16-point lead to four in the final 20 seconds, fell short.

Video: Hear from Matt Painter and Purdue players following the loss to Butler at jconline.com

The Boilermakers made the snowy bus ride back to West Lafayette still looking for their first Crossroads Classic victory, their first over Butler since 1998 and the season's first victory of consequence away from Mackey Arena.

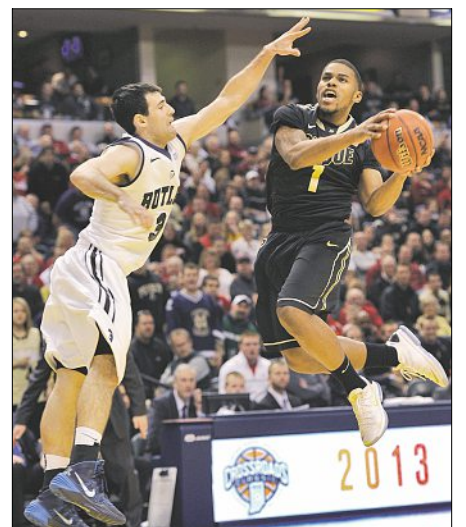
"Down the stretch we didn't do well with composure," said Terone Johnson, who scored a season-high 20 points but committed six turnovers. "We turned the ball over and we made some bad fouls there at the end. It's just something we have to work on."

Purdue coach Matt Painter spoke earlier this week of Butler's presence, comparing the Bulldogs to Big Ten Conference foe Wisconsin and calling them a "team that doesn't beat itself." Of the Boilermakers' 18 turnovers, three came in the two minutes preceding a Kellen Dunham 3-pointer that put Butler up 62-53 with 4:35 to play.

Purdue turned the ball over three more times in the following two back-breaking minutes. The flurry culminated in 7-foot center A.J. Hammons fouling out, Painter earning a technical foul and the Boilermakers standing in a 16-point crater.

"I thought Butler was tougher than us today," Painter said. "I don't want to

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Sterling Carter drives to the basket on Butler's Alex Barlow. BRENT DRINKUT/THE STAR

NOTRE DAME 79, INDIANA 72

Irish give Hoosiers a bad experience



Notre Dame guard Jerian Grant, right, draws a foul from Indiana forward Troy Williams in the first half Saturday in Indianapolis. AP

Notre Dame never trails in Crossroads Classic win over Indiana

By Michael Marot
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — The difference between Notre Dame and Indiana came down to experience.

Jerian Grant and Pat Connaughton did just enough to keep the Fighting Irish in control of the Crossroads Classic opener. Indiana's youngsters struggled to dissect the steadier, savvy Fighting Irish all afternoon.

It showed. Grant, a senior, finished with 23 points and nine assists and Connaughton, a junior, scored all 14 of his points in the second half, leading the Fighting Irish past longtime in-state rival Indiana 79-72.

"We do have an experienced nucleus that has played together and won together before in these atmospheres," coach Mike Brey said. "I'm not surprised. These old guys have been in a lot of battles like this."

That meant a lot Saturday.

The Irish (8-3) started fast and seized control, got two of Indiana's top rebounders into early foul trouble and fended off every challenge the Hoosiers (8-3) posed in the second half when the old standbys — Grant and Connaughton — combined for 24 of Notre Dame's 32 points.

They were a combined 10 of 21 from the field, 5 of 9 on 3-pointers and 16 of 17 from the free-throw line against one of the nation's best defenses.

Notre Dame shot 46.3 percent from the field as a team and even though Indiana held a 36-33 rebounding edge, the Irish played well enough inside to nullify what was expected to be a big advantage for Indiana. And when the Irish needed a late play, they urged Brey to run a play for Eric Atkins and executed the curl and pass perfectly for an easy layup to make it 73-69 with 1:21 to play.

"We hadn't run it all day,"

Brey said of the play. "That's their feel for the game."

After going 1-1 in two other uncharacteristic games at Madison Square Garden three weeks ago, the Hoosiers again struggled inside an NBA arena.

Indiana's four most experienced players all had big days. Will Sheehy tied his career-high with 22 points, Kevin "Yogi" Ferrell had 13 points and five steals, Evan Gordon scored 11 points off the bench and Jeremy Hollowell matched his career-best with seven assists.

Their less experienced teammates, however, struggled. The Hoosiers shot just 41.3 percent from the field, were 7 of 20 on 3s and had nearly as many turnovers (13) as assists (15) as they fell to 1-3 against power-conference schools this season.

"It was just a little bit too bright in there today for our young team to really step up to the task that we had with a bunch of veterans," coach Tom Crean said.

NCAA VOLLEYBALL

Penn State off to finals

Nebraska falls to national champions

Staff and wire reports

LEXINGTON, Ky. — Penn State gave the Big Ten Conference a second berth in the NCAA volleyball Final Four on Saturday night, outlasting Stanford 22-25, 25-22, 28-26, 18-25, 15-11 in the Lexington Regional final.

Seniors Ariel Scott and Deja McClendon propelled Penn State (32-2) to its 23 consecutive victory. The Nittany Lions now travel to Seattle to take on the winner of the Washington-USC match on Thursday.

Scott led the offense with 22 kills, adding eight digs, while also earning a spot on the Lexington Regional all-tournament team.

McClendon earned most outstanding player honors, recording 21 kills on .316 hitting, notching a double-double with a team-high 16 digs. Junior Micha Hancock also earned all-tournament team honors, registering a double-double with a 58 assists and 15 digs.

Senior Katie Slay tallied nine kills on a squad-best .438 hitting percentage, while also leading the team with a season-high 10 blocks, including four solo stuffs. Sophomore Megan Courtney also posted nine kills, adding 14 digs and two solo blocks. Junior Dominique Gonzalez continued her consistent defensive play, contributing 16 digs.

At Lincoln, Neb.

Haley Eckerman had 14 kills and 15 digs to lead top-seeded Texas to a 25-19, 25-22, 25-23 win over 8th seed Nebraska and into the Final Four.

Texas (27-2), the defending NCAA champion, earned the first sweep of Nebraska at home since 1989 and only the fourth sweep of the Huskers ever in Lincoln.

Kelsey Robinson led Nebraska (26-7) with 21 kills.

BOILERS

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say that they're a tougher basketball team, but they sure played tougher today."

Hammons sat down with his second foul after just four minutes of play, and starting center Jay Simpson missed all four of his first-half field goal tries. Despite a height disadvantage Butler beat the Boilermakers in rebounds (21-19), points in the paint (20-14) and second-chance points (8-5) in the first half.

Purdue was fortunate to trail just 36-33 at halftime. The Boilermakers held for the final shot of the first half, but the play fell apart. With the shot clock winding down, freshman guard Bryson Scott tossed up a wild 3-pointer that went in.

Led by new energy from Hammons, Purdue asserted itself at the rim to start the second half and pulled ahead 43-37. But just as they had when starting the game up 17-9, the Boilermakers could not sustain their success against a Butler team that came in holding opponents under 64 points per night.

"They did great getting me the ball. I just have to finish better," said Hammons, who collected 10 points, three rebounds, three blocks and three turnovers in 17 foul-plagued minutes. "There were a couple of plays down the stretch where I should have scored instead of just passing it out."

Dunham scored 25, and Painter said Butler senior forward Kyle Marshall, who totaled 18 points and nine rebounds, "got the best of our guys." He could only tip his hat to Fromm, who came into the game 6 of 29 on 3-pointers but made 3 of 6 while scoring a season-high 14 points. The 6-8 senior forward also drew the assignment on Hammons in the post for most of the night.

Purdue fell to 1-3 in neutral court games, a win over Siena at the Old Spice Classic. Next Sunday's trip to West Virginia is the Boilermakers' final opportunity to secure the kind of victory away from home that could be critical to their NCAA tournament credentials.

"We've got to try to go into the next game and get the win," Johnson said. "We've got to finish games out on the road."

BUTLER 76, PURDUE 70

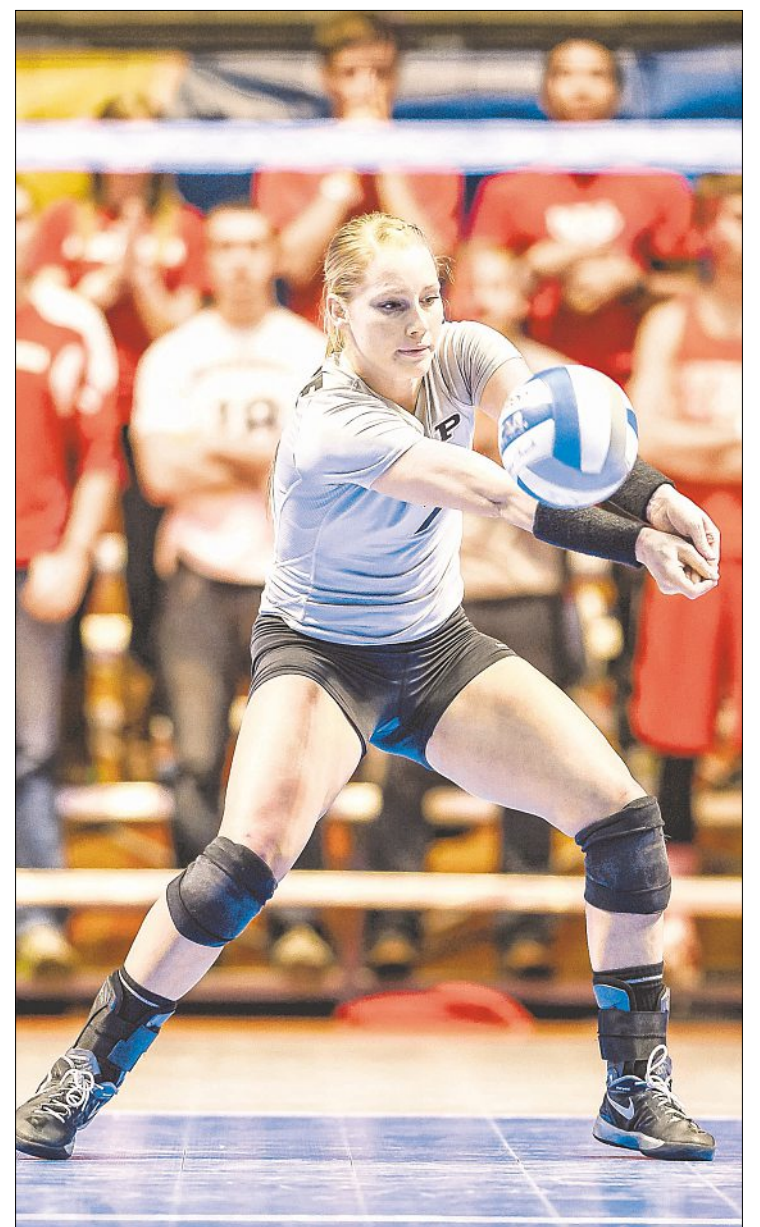
PURDUE BOILERMAKERS (8-3)

	FG	FT								
	M-A	M-A	Reb	A	S	TO	PF	PTS	Min	
Terone Johnson	8-14	3-4	6	4	0	6	1	20	33	
Ronnie Johnson	1-7	3-5	2	1	0	1	4	5	24	
Basil Smotherman	3-3	1-1	2	0	1	2	5	7	14	
Kendall Stephens	1-5	0-1	2	0	1	0	3	2	15	
Jay Simpson	1-5	0-0	4	0	0	0	0	0	2	12
Sterling Carter	1-5	0-0	0	0	0	1	3	3	10	
Bryson Scott	5-8	2-2	4	3	2	1	1	13	22	
A.J. Hammons	5-6	0-0	3	0	0	3	5	10	17	
Errick Peck	1-4	1-2	6	1	1	0	1	3	27	
Rapeal Davis	1-4	0-0	2	0	2	4	2	3	16	
Travis Carroll	1-2	0-0	3	0	1	0	0	2	10	
Totals	28-63	10-15	38	9	8	18	26	70	200	

BUTLER BULLDOGS (8-2)

	FG	FT							
	M-A	M-A	Reb	A	S	TO	PF	PTS	Min
Alex Barlow	2-5	1-2	2	4	5	3	5	5	35
Erik Fromm	4-8	3-6	3	0	1	2	4	14	36
Kyle Marshall	8-14	2-4	9	1	0	2	2	18	32
Kellen Dunham	8-16	7-10	4	1	1	2	2	25	36
Kameron Woods	2-5	1-4	12	2	4	3	2	5	37
Elijah Brown	2-8	4-4	2	1	0	2	2	9	19
Jackson Aldridge	0-0	0-0	1	0	0	0	0	0	4
Nolan Berry	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Andrew Chrabascz	0-0	0-0	0	0	1	0	2	0	1
Totals	26-56	18-30	35	9	11	15	19	76	200

Halftime score—Butler 36-33. 3-Point Goals—Purdue 4-14 (T. Johnson 1-4, Carter 1-4, Davis 1-1, Scott 1-1, Stephens 0-3, Peck 0-1), Butler 6-14 (Fromm 3-6, Dunham 3-4, Brown 1-3, Barlow 0-1). Field goal pct.—Purdue 44.4, Butler 46.4. Free throw pct.—Purdue 66.7, Butler 60.0. Blocked shots—Purdue 5 (Hammons 3, Stephens, Carter), Butler 9 (Fromm 4, Barlow 2, Marshall, Dunham, Brown). Team Rebounds—Purdue 4, Butler 2. Deadball Rebounds—Purdue 2, Butler 7. Officials—Bo Boroski, John Gaffney, Jim Burr. A—18,165.



Purdue's Amanda Neill makes a pass. TOM CAMPBELL/FOR THE JOURNAL & COURIER

DENIED

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A powerful Badgers team, led by outstanding freshman setter and regional MVP Lauren Carlini, got 20 kills from Deme Morales, 19 from Ellen Chapman and 15 from Dominique Thompson.

But strong serving and stronger defense, led by Annermarie Hickey's 23 digs, did the Boilermakers in.

"I set and I am one of the leaders on the court, but I couldn't do it without the great passing of my team. We were dropping dimes tonight," Carlini said.

Purdue tried to fight back, temporarily solving the riddle with the aid of sophomore Sam Epenesa's five kills that sparked a second-set victory.

But Purdue was right back in a hole after intermission and by the time the Boilermakers

got it going again, they were down 20-11 in the fourth set and playing for their season.

"We played a game of catch-up most of the match. We are a team that is good at rallying back," said junior Val Nichol, who was named to the all-tournament team after contributing 12 kills, 25 assists and eight digs Saturday. "But we dug ourselves a really big hole to start that set and it was just out of our reach."

Nichol and Kierra Jones became the lone seniors for Purdue's 2014 team, one that will again enter the season trying to lead the team to the next step.

"They'll tell you they've had excellent examples to follow in the senior classes before them.

"Now that we've been to the Elite Eight, we know we can do better and better," said Jones, who had 11 kills against the Badgers. "We'll use this and grow from it."