



PURDUE FOOTBALL

Webster hopes to cap career in style

Punter among finalists for Ray Guy Award

By Mike Carmin
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Cody Webster spent last weekend mingling with some of the Big Ten's best football players during the league's championship game in Indianapolis.

Now, Purdue's punter is interacting with the nation's top players. Webster is in Orlando for tonight's Home Depot College Football Awards Show as a finalist for the Ray Guy Award.

"Would it be weird if I asked Johnny Manziel for a picture? I think I'm going to ask him," Webster said of the Texas A&M quarterback, last year's Heisman Trophy winner.

Tom Hornsey from Memphis and Texas A&M's Drew Kaser join Webster as finalists for the award.

Webster earned Big Ten Punter of the Year after averaging 43.5 yards on 70 punts. The Harrisburg, Pa., native produced 17 punts of 50 yards or more and placed 24 inside the opponents' 20-yard line.

"One thing I heard was (I) had a lot of opportunities this year because of the team, but there's good punters on good teams," Webster said. "You

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HOME DEPOT COLLEGE FOOTBALL AWARDS

Time: 7 p.m. TV: ESPN



Cody Webster is a Ray Guy Award finalist. PURDUE UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS

PURDUE VOLLEYBALL



PURDUE UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS

HOMECOMING

QUEEN

'Traitor' Nichol returns to Illinois to complete Final Four quest

By Sam King
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Val Nichol knows the jabs will be coming from the Illinois student section Friday night.

By now, the junior setter/outside hitter has heard them for three years.

"They like to call me traitor because I didn't go to Illinois," says Nichol, who attended University High School, about an hour from the Champaign campus.

That's fine with Nichol. She long ago decided orange was not her color and she looked better in black and gold.

She doesn't need motivation from rabid Illini

fans to win Friday's match in the State Farm Center, host of the NCAA volleyball regional. She's been on this stage before, losing in the Sweet 16 as a freshman and sophomore.

That serves as reason enough to want to take the Purdue program to the next level. The fact that Illinois, a school she took a campus visit to prior to choosing the Boilermakers, stands in the way of doing that? Sure, it's a little extra incentive.

"It'd be something special because I will have a lot of people there, but it would be just as special going to any other Final Four because that is something this group of people and this coaching staff has never done," said Nichol, a first-team

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THIS WEEKEND

NCAA Regional at Champaign, Ill. Friday

No. 16 Florida State vs. No. 13 Wisconsin, 5 p.m.
No. 19 Purdue vs. No. 18 Illinois, 7 p.m.

Webcast: ESPN3.com

Saturday Semifinal winners, 6:30 p.m. TV: ESPNU

HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS BASKETBALL

Outside shooting propels McCutcheon past Knights

By Sam King
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McCutcheon found outside shooting to be a challenge while stumbling to a 2-5 record to open the season.

On Wednesday night, the Mavericks found their shooting touch.

Led by Gabrielle Gary's five

3-pointers, McCutcheon made 11 of 21 shots from beyond the arc to down Class A No. 4 Central Catholic 63-58 in McHale Gymnasium.

"As a shooter, hitting one or two really gets you in a groove and you just want to keep getting the ball in your hands so you can put up more, and I think my team did a really good

job of getting me the ball tonight," said Gary, who scored 15 points.

The McCutcheon win put an end to CC's three-game winning streak and was the difference on a night where both teams made 23 of 50 from the field.

McCutcheon executed a 2-3 zone to keep CC sophomore

guard Cameron Onken from driving to the basket, then closed out on CC's outside shooters. The Knights made just 1 of 8 3-pointers and Onken was held to 2-of-14 shooting and seven points before fouling out.

Emily Burks and Emily Denhart were efficient under the basket, combining for 33 points on 14-of-19 shooting. Denhart

had a game-high eight rebounds and Burks pulled down six. Maggie Bobillo scored 13 to go with seven boards for CC (5-2).

McCutcheon, fittingly took its first lead on a Kerstyn Lowery 3 with 1:15 to go in the first quarter, pushing the

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COLLEGE BASKETBALL ROUNDUP

Big night for the Dakotas: Two teams pull off upsets

BROOKINGS, S.D. — Megan Waytashek and Steph Paluch scored 18 points apiece as South Dakota State defeated No. 12 Penn State 83-79 despite squandering a 20-point halftime lead Wednesday night.

The Jackrabbits (7-4) had a 23-point lead when Paluch opened the second half with a 3 and were up 21 with 14:39 left when a Dara Talyer three-point play started a 10-0 run for Penn State. The lead was still in double figures at the 5-minute mark before the Nittany Lions stormed back.

Ariel Edwards, who scored 5 straight points to pull Penn State within 78-77 with 1:19, finished with 24 points, 7 rebounds, 5 blocks, 4 steals and 3 assists. Maggie Lucas added 20 and Taylor had a career-high 19.

Mariah Clarin had 13 points for SDSU and helped the Jackrabbits, now 3-13 vs. ranked teams, out-rebound Penn St. 53-42. This was the highest-ranked team SDSU has beaten.

Men

No. 3 Ohio State 86 Bryant 48

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Lenzelle Smith Jr. scored 19 points and Ohio State pulled away early.

Amir Williams added 12 points and nine rebounds for the Buckeyes (9-0).

It was an early-round game in the Blackrock Gotham Classic which will conclude on Dec. 21 with the Buckeyes meeting Notre Dame at Madison



Notre Dame head coach Mike Brey looks on during his team's surprising home loss to North Dakota State. ROBERT FRANKLIN/SOUTH BEND TRIBUNE

Square Garden.

Dyami Starks had 16 points for Bryant (6-5), which was playing its second game in three nights. The Bulldogs lost at Notre Dame, 70-59, on Monday.

The Bulldogs hung around with the Buckeyes for a while, but then went scoreless over the last 5:25 of the first half and watched the Buckeyes close on an 8-0 run to take a 43-23 lead.

Ohio State then scored the first five points of the second half before Garvin's layup ended a drought of 6:40.

No. 4 Wisconsin 78 Milwaukee 52

MADISON, Wis. — Ben Brust scored 18 points and

Frank Kaminsky added 16 as Wisconsin remained undefeated with a victory over in-state rival Milwaukee.

Sam Dekker and Traevon Jackson scored 12 points each for Wisconsin (11-0).

Up 22-13 more than midway through the first half, Wisconsin reeled off a 23-7 run that featured five 3-pointers by five Badgers to blow the game open.

North Dakota St. 73 Notre Dame 69

SOUTH BEND — Marshall Bjorklund scored 26 points Wednesday night to lead North Dakota State to a road upset over Notre Dame in the third round of

the Gotham Classic at Purcell Pavilion.

Lawrence Alexander added 16 points and 14 rebounds to help the Bison (7-3) earn their fifth straight win. Pat Connaughton scored 21 to lead Notre Dame (7-3).

Jerian Grant hit a pair of free throws to get the Irish within one point, 67-66, after Bjorklund fouled out with 42.1 seconds left, but Taylor Braun knocked down a pair from the line, then stole the ball as the Irish pressed for a shot. He fed the ball ahead to Kory Brown, who slammed it in with 16 seconds left to seal the victory. Braun finished with 13 points.



Dee Dee Williams and her fellow Purdue seniors hope to finish their careers on a high note. BRENT DRINKUT/JOURNAL & COURIER

PURDUE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Expectations high for Boilers' seniors

By Mike Carmin
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Sharon Versyp wants her seniors to leave a legacy.

That's one reason why the eighth-year coach continues to push KK Houser, Courtney Moses and Dee Dee Williams, along with their teammates.

"She never gives up on us, so we don't want to give up on her," Williams said. "She's the type of coach who is going to get on you, but at the same time, she's teaching you. Being hard on us — we love it because that pushes us."

The 18th-ranked Purdue women's basketball team is in the middle of final exams and returns to action Sunday at Kansas. The only losses have come against a pair of top-10 teams — Stanford and Duke.

However, Versyp and her players are seeing improvement from game to game.

"I think we have great leadership — I think our three seniors do a great job of leading," Versyp said. "I think for us, in the TCU game, we got better in the post. The Duke game, we got better in the post. We're learning quite a bit from that."

"I'm hard as heck on them. I keep telling these three seniors I want them to leave a legacy. That means everybody has to keep playing for them and Purdue, but when you're a senior, that sense of urgency goes up."

With four games remaining before the start of the Big Ten season, Versyp believes the Boilermakers will continue to be challenged in fac-

ing Kansas, Green Bay, Bowling Green and Central Michigan.

The first eight games have helped her team prepare for what lies ahead.

"All I'm going to say is Stanford, TCU and Duke made us better," she said. "We've been going against zone, against 6-foot-5, 6-4, 6-3, and we're able to pass better, do a lot of different things and be extremely efficient because of the teams we've played."

Block/charge

Versyp was whistled for a technical after disputing a block/charge foul in Sunday's win over IPFW.

"I have no understanding. I don't have an understanding of it. Our players have to keep trying to adjust every game, every minute, every possession. It's really hard for them to play. They handled it; not sure how I handled it was very well," Versyp said.

Finals

The Boilermakers didn't practice Monday and Wednesday because of exams. They'll focus more on Kansas starting Friday.

Dealing with final exams is a different experience every year.

"Every year is different, because it depends on the load. Some players have two finals. Some may have just a presentation, some have four or five," Versyp said. "The toughest thing is freshmen coming in. As long as we take care of business and do what they need to do and utilize their time, we'll be fine."

NICHOL

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All-Big Ten and All-Region selection this season.

To reach this point, Nichol already has had to change her mindset and her demeanor.

Purdue attempted to run a two-setter offense a year ago, using both Nichol and Rachel Davis. It was scrapped, but brought back this season because it seemed to be a better fit. But it only worked if Nichol bought in.

"Val has a very dominant personality, and sometimes she can be set in her ways," redshirt senior Carly Cramer said. "I think it was huge of her and everybody appreciated it. It's not like one day she said, 'I am going to accept the 6-2,' but she had a great transformation from just being a setter or just being a hitter, and she has balanced it tremendously."

Coach Dave Shondell recruited Nichol on pure talent. He's seen her evolve as a volleyball player and become one of the main reasons the Boilermakers are again playing in Sweet 16 round with aspirations of making the jump to their first Final Four.

"Val ... has changed her whole approach this season from what she thought was enough to



Val Nichol helped Purdue beat previously unbeaten Missouri in NCAA tournament play last weekend. PURDUE UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS

now what she knows wasn't enough," Shondell said. "She is just going to a different level. She is a kid with great talent that was just using talent."

Nichol has been great all season, particularly in two matches against Illinois that saw each team win at home.

In front of more than 5,000 fans at Mackey Arena, Nichol put on an amazing display that nearly resulted in a triple-double. That Oct. 11 night, Nichol hit .314 with 14 kills, 23

assists and nine digs to delight the Boilermaker faithful.

Purdue was swept at Illinois' Huff Hall, but Nichol wasn't to blame with her nine kills and .300 hitting percentage.

"She was unsure where she really fit last year, even though she could easily go in and play any position and do fine," junior Kierra Jones said. "She didn't want to step too much into a leadership role because she wasn't confident in where she

was playing. Now, she is confident and knows where she is playing, what she is doing. As a setter, you have to lead the team and be a coach on the floor. She has been taking command of everyone."

Purdue is counting on the labeled traitor from Normal, Ill., taking command twice this weekend. If she does, Nichol may celebrate the high point of her volleyball career in Champaign. She just won't be doing it for the Illini.

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