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WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN?

LAUREN CARLINI

IS ONLY CONCERNED
WITH WHAT SHE & THE
BADGERS CAN BECOME



COVER STORY



GREG ANDERSON

'I CAN GET A LOT BETTER'

Lauren Carlini's mark on Wisconsin's volleyball program is unmistakable, but the junior has no interest in looking back at the legacy she's building. Her focus is squarely on the future.



WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

TOP 'TEN' TALENT

The decathlon is a long, grueling event. Zach Ziemek's rise from a Big Ten champion to a Beijing-bound member of Team USA happened fast.

DAVID STLUKA

PAUL CHRYST: PART TWO

A START, NOT AN END

Paul Chryst's coaching career may have come full circle with his return to Wisconsin, but that doesn't mean he's crossed the finish line just yet.



DAVID STLUKA

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Ogunbowale hits right notes in backfield

There may not be another quarterback-tailback combination in college football that can measure up with Joel Stave and Dare Ogunbowale — on the keyboard. Both have played the piano since they were youngsters. “I’ve taken lessons since I was 7 and still play all the time,” said Ogunbowale. “At the bowl game, they had a beautiful grand piano in the hotel and Joel and I played a duet.”

Ogunbowale enjoys playing the blues, which matched his mood at about this time last year. The Badgers were still in training camp and about 10 days out from their opener against LSU in Houston and Ogunbowale wasn’t making much headway as a reserve defensive back. (At about the same time last August, Stave was singing the blues after unceremoniously losing his starting job to Tanner McEvoy.)

“I was still a DB and still fighting for a special teams spot,” recalled Ogunbowale, who was then an obscure walk-on from Milwaukee wearing No. 18 and trying to draw some positive attention. “My mindset was on making a splash on special teams and taking advantage of every rep. I got lost on the depth chart a little bit, so I just wanted to make sure I made an impact where I could.”

A year later, he’s still

trying to make a splash and an impact — about 10 days out from the opener against Alabama in Dallas — only now it’s on offense as Corey Clement’s backup. “I’m just trying to play football,” he said. “I don’t try to think about the difference in the position that I’m in now. Last year, I was competing. This year, I’m competing. Not much has changed. Just my jersey number.”

Ogunbowale, who now wears No. 23, has been pushing himself while getting a push from Taiwan Deal, a redshirt freshman, also vying for game reps as a backup. There’s an interesting dynamic

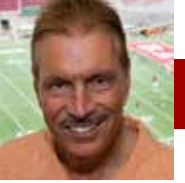
at work between Clement and Ogunbowale given the latter was a good friend and roommate of Melvin Gordon, whose departure to the NFL has brought Clement and Ogunbowale closer together.

“Me and Corey did a lot of extra work in addition to the summer conditioning,” Ogunbowale said. “It was a lot of mental stuff, whether it be working out late at night or just watching a lot of film. We definitely put in some extra hours to make sure that we were ready to go in (training) camp. Corey’s one of my best friends, I’m always with him. He works hard and he’s a good person.”

When a wide-eyed Gordon was still figuring out his role within the offense — he had 82 carries through his first two seasons in a combined 17 game appearances because of an injury as a freshman — he was schooled on the Wisconsin running back tradition by Montee Ball and James White. Gordon was conscientious, a student of the game, and passed his knowledge on to Clement and Ogunbowale.

“Obviously, me not having a lot of running back experience,” said Ogunbowale, who last played the position when he was in the fifth grade, “it was nice to have Melvin help me out with just the mentality of a running back — thinking like a running back and having





DAVID STLUKA

the vision and the patience (to succeed at the position). Understanding the tradition here is something that you have to uphold.”

If you’re wondering what that entails, Ogunbowale singled out the “toughness that comes with it” — playing tailback for the Badgers. “You have to want to be the best, and me and Corey and Taiwan talk about that,” said Ogunbowale, adding the “standard being the standard” is part of their commitment. “That’s how we see it because that’s how the running backs who came before us saw it.”

Ogunbowale, a redshirt junior, stands out in this crowd because of his unique background. His dad, Greg, played football, the international brand of football, soccer, in Nigeria. His mom, Yolanda, played softball at DePaul. His sister, Arike, was not only the best high school basketball player in Wisconsin last year, maybe

the best ever, but one of the best in the nation. She’s now at Notre Dame.

“We’re extremely competitive; we’d be in church and trying to compete to get the Bible first,” said Dare Ogunbowale who reluctantly conceded, “She’s definitely a better basketball player than me. Throughout high school, I would say, ‘No, she’s not better.’ But I’ve come to terms with that now and I can’t wait to watch her play (for the Irish) to see what she can do.”

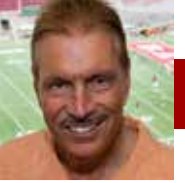
SHEEHY ON OGUNBOWALE:
“HE’S REALLY ATHLETIC, AND HE’S A REALLY SMART GUY WHO PICKS UP THE GAME QUICKLY.”

The hoops connection has pretty deep roots. One of Ogunbowale’s cousins, Ryan Evans, was a mainstay on the Wisconsin basketball team from 2009 to 2013; he appeared in 138 career

games, then a school record, including 71 starts. Another cousin, Diamond Stone, was the Player of the Year in the state of Wisconsin and one of the top prep prospects in the country. He’s headed to Maryland.

Two of Ogunbowale’s closest friends, outside of football, are Sam Dekker, the first-round draft choice of the Houston Rockets, and Zak Showalter, a returning letterwinner with the Badgers. Ogunbowale spent time this summer with Dekker at his home in Sheboygan. “I’m excited to see what they do this season,” he said of Dekker and Showalter. “And I know they’re excited to watch me play.”

Ogunbowale didn’t play much through the first two games last season. He was on special teams and an afterthought on defense, a spare cornerback. Lacking depth behind Gordon and Clement — Deal and Caleb Kinlaw were injured; so were fullbacks



Derek Watt and Derek Straus — then-UW coach Gary Andersen moved Ogunbowale to tailback based on his effort in a “speed in space” drill.

The only time that Ogunbowale ran with the football at Milwaukee Marquette high school was on kick returns. But he’s a fast learner; at that, he’s a biomedical engineering major. UW sophomore nose guard Conor Sheehy wasn’t surprised his old Marquette teammate could make the transition. “He’s really athletic,” Sheehy said, “and he’s a really smart guy who picks up the game quickly.”

On the final play of the third quarter against Bowling Green (Sept. 20), Ogunbowale ran onto

the field and replaced Clement at tailback. On his first collegiate touch, he picked up seven yards. He finished out the series, which resulted in a Rafael Gaglianone field goal. And he finished the game, a 68-17 rout, with 14 rushes for 94 yards. “That was a lot different than I’m running now,” he said.

The difference? “I’m definitely more confident,” said Ogunbowale, who gave a “shout-out” to former UW running backs coach Thomas Brown, now at Georgia, for teaching him the ropes last year. “The biggest influence on where I’m at right now is Coach (John) Settle. He has kind of taken me under his wing and made sure I knew that I was doing; he’s

definitely helped me out a lot.”

Off training wheels, but still raw, he has been getting up to speed by watching others. “I try to find running backs that are comparable to my size,” said the 5-foot-11, 200-pound Ogunbowale, who has put on more than 10 pounds during the offseason. In general, he likes to watch elite NFL players like LeSean McCoy and Jamal Charles because “I’m just trying to have more dimensions to my running style.”

More importantly, Ogunbowale said that he hasn’t forgotten what Gordon taught him about preparation and “I’ve tried to emulate his work ethic.” By doing so, he’s striking the right note, something that he has experience with. ■



DAVID STILKA



WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A FRESHMAN TEAMMATE ABOUT STARTING OUT AT UW?



JOE SCHOBERT

Senior • Football

“Time management is the biggest thing you have to get used to. There’s no Mom and Dad watching you every step of the way. You have the coaching staff and football staff that do a great job of making sure you have a structure but, still, you have a sense of independence that you’ve never had before. So you have to be able to study when you have time, practice when you have time and wake up on time for your classes. That’s the biggest thing you have to learn.”



MOLLY HANSON

Senior • Women’s Cross Country

“My advice to my freshmen teammates is to embrace all of the changes and to chill out. If you’re not screwing something up, you are not doing freshman year right.”



EDDIE WITTCHOW

Senior • Men’s Hockey

“My best advice for incoming freshmen will fall in a few different categories. Academically, my best advice is to get off to a great start. Classes only get tougher as you get closer to graduation, so exceeding in your early, ‘easier’ classes will be critical. Athletically, I suggest taking everything day by day. Yes, you will have plenty of ‘off’ days, everyone understands that, but if tomorrow is determined by how you performed yesterday, you will find yourself trying

-SCROLL FOR MORE-



CAITLYN CLEM

Sophomore • Women’s Soccer

“My advice is to keep a positive mind. Things aren’t always going to fall the way people would expect their freshman year. Rely on teammates and family to keep you going. There will be a lot of new things and experiences in freshman year. Just roll with it and enjoy it because it’s a privilege.”



DAVID STLUKA

TROY FUMAGALLI

Playing in all 14 games as a redshirt freshman last season, TE Troy Fumagalli emerged as a consistent receiving threat for the Badgers and finished the season with 14 catches. The Naperville, Illinois, native lost his left index finger shortly after birth due to a circulation disorder but became a sure-handed receiver — and a successful left-handed pitcher in high school. This year, he'll be asked to help fill the shoes of TE Sam Arneson, who was UW's second-leader receiver in 2014.

Sam Arneson was a very productive tight end at UW. Does replacing his production fall on you this year?

"I would say not specifically, but me and Austin Traylor together pick up that tight end role. Coach is going to put us out there to do what we're best at and there will be specific situations for the both of us to pick up the slack. I don't think there is one of us in particular that has to do more."

Coach Paul Chryst has a reputation for utilizing tight ends on offense. Does that excite you?

"It's definitely exciting. There's a reason why a lot of his players are at the next level. He thinks highly of the tight ends and uses them very well. It's all exciting stuff. I watch Lance Kendricks and Garret Graham all the time to see what they did. Now we run a similar offense that they did. It's nice to see how they played their game and take a few things from their game to put it in mine. I talk to Coach Chryst about them. They were All-Americans and there is a reason why they were so successful. He does help me and try to tell me what they did when they

ALL ABOUT TROY

Year: Sophomore

Hometown: Naperville, Ill.

Height / Weight: 6-6 / 247

Position: Tight end

QUICK Qs FOR TROY

Favorite teammate to sing a duet with?

"I would go with Jordan Fredrick, and we would probably sing that *Stepbrothers* song that they sing in the car (Sweet Child O' Mine). He's always singing and he's got a good voice. I could just jump in and let him kind of take over and I'll just be in the background singing."

Favorite emoji?

"Probably the '100' one because it's awesome."

What does your locker say about you?

"I keep it pretty clean for the most part. It's pretty boring. You get a lot of people that have stuff everywhere but mine is just kind of clean and that's it."

Nickname?

"They call me Fuma for short. I've been called it my whole life."



TO BE CONTINUED...

HALFWAY THROUGH HER COLLEGIATE CAREER, LAUREN CARLINI'S IMPACT ON THE WISCONSIN VOLLEYBALL PROGRAM IS UNMISTAKABLE. BUT HER LEGACY? THE REIGNING BIG TEN CONFERENCE PLAYER OF THE YEAR ISN'T READY TO CONSIDER THAT QUESTION — THERE'S TOO MUCH LEFT TO ACHIEVE.

BY MIKE LUCAS // UWBADGERS.COM

A thinly-veiled “legacy” question was served up to Lauren Carlini who could have easily spiked it. After all, she’s only 20 and halfway through her Wisconsin volleyball career; making her too young, and it too soon, to ponder what she has left behind when there is still so much ahead.

“I can get a lot better,” proposed Carlini, the Badgers’ second first-team All-American. “It really annoys me when people say, ‘You’re really good; you’re about maxed out.’ No, I have places I still want to go and I have things that I definitely need to get better at.”

But there’s no mistaking the impact that she has already had on the program over the past two years by helping guide the Badgers to back-to-back top-five finishes nationally — No. 2 in 2013 and No. 4 in 2014 — after memorable runs that ended in the NCAA championship game and a regional final.

Additionally, with a rise in volleyball’s popularity, the school has embarked on a fundraising campaign to make improvements to the UW Field House, starting with the home locker room. Last year, the Bad-

gers averaged 4,933 fans, third best in the nation. This year, they’ve already sold all reserved seats for the first time in program history.

Carlini has taken notice. With the future prospect of reopening the building’s upper balcony to spectators, she said, “I’ll come back here in 10 years and this place is going to be sold out with 11,000 fans and there will be pride in knowing me and my teammates and the coaching staff were part of it.”

This is where she addressed the sport’s resurgence in Madison and her legacy, if you will.

“I think it’s just awesome to be a part of such big changes in the program,” she said. “That’s one of the main reasons why I came to Wisconsin — I wanted to be a program-changer and I wanted to make this program great and I think that we’re on the path. It has been a great ride so far.”

Beyond acknowledging the journey is just beginning, not ending, she stressed the importance of her teammates, past and present, on UW’s volleyball renaissance and cited the influence of head coach Kelly Sheffield, who has orchestrated the turnaround.



“

I WANTED TO BE A PROGRAM-CHANGER AND I WANTED TO MAKE THIS PROGRAM GREAT AND I THINK THAT WE'RE ON THE PATH. IT HAS BEEN A GREAT RIDE SO FAR.

She called him the “catalyst.”

Under the 45-year-old Sheffield, the Badgers were 28-10 in his first season, an 11-win upgrade, and 31-3 last season during which they won the Big Ten championship with a 19-1 record and swept most of the individual awards, including Coach of the Year, Player of the Year and Setter of the Year (Carlini).

When asked about the interest that his program has been generating among supporters, young and old alike, Sheffield answered a question with a question. “How can you not be inspired by watching a player like her (Carlini)?” he posed rhetorically. In the same breath, he said, “She’s not the only one.”

Many have affected many. “It’s all these kids who watch a player like Lauren and so many of the others and they see that they’re playing with purpose and they’re playing with energy and they’re playing together,” he said. “Their athleticism, their grace and their skill is unbelievable.”

There’s one more thing that needed to be mentioned. “They’re good people,” Sheffield said. “And the young kids are saying, ‘One of these days, I want to be them.’ People can feel their passion. As a fan, that’s what you want. People want to be around a winner, but it’s not just that.”

Without using the word, Sheffield suggested that Carlini was also a catalyst in this context.

“Lauren is just one of those people,” he said, putting her in a special category. “Forget about male or female, forget about revenue or non-revenue sport, she’s truly one of the great athletes that I think the college game, in any sport, has ever seen. I’m incredibly fortunate that she’s here.”

Everybody benefits from her presence, too.

“Badger fans,” he pointed out, “have two more years to enjoy her.”

Carlini is on board with that sentiment.

“I enjoy the college experience,” she said, “and I like being able to be a kid for two more years.”



.....

Before last December's showdown with Penn State in the NCAA regional final in Louisville, Kentucky, Carlini felt like the Badgers were in the right frame of mind for the Nittany Lions, who had beaten them in the 2013 title game in Seattle and had won five of the last seven national championships.

"We had a really tough match the night before against Ohio State and won in five sets (rallying from a 2-1 deficit)," she said. "We were all very tired but we were ready to go (for Penn State). We had played them before so we knew what we had to do.

"We were prepared and confident in our ability. You can have only so many shots (against someone like the Nittany Lions) before it turns out in your favor. We felt that it was going to be our chance and there was almost nothing that was going to stop us from getting to the Final Four."

Almost nothing, that is, except an injury to Carlini that would limit her effectiveness.

"It was 8-8 in the first set," she recalled. "(Penn State's) Ali Frantti came for a swing, landed right on the middle line and I came down on top of her. I went to turn and sprained my ankle. There's always that initial shock. But in my head, I'm thinking, 'Get up, you're fine, you just twisted it a little.'"

It was much worse than that.

"There was not much feeling in my foot," said Carlini, who tried to walk it off. "When I got back to the locker room, it was already swelling. But there was no question in my mind (to keep playing). I said, 'You'd better tape me up because I'm going back in, period.'"

Carlini returned to the court and ended up with her 18th double-double (38 assists, 10 digs) of the season. It wasn't enough, though, not nearly enough to slow down the Nittany Lions, who rolled to a victory in four sets and went on to defend their national championship with a 3-0 win over BYU in the NCAA final.

"I didn't have any pop off of it (her ankle), I couldn't get off the ground," Carlini conceded. "I had minimal blocking and moving ability. Most of my sets were on the floor, I wasn't jump-setting like I usually do. So I knew at that point I had to locate really well and do the best I could for the team.

"Courtney (Thomas) helped me a lot. If I couldn't



get to a ball past the 10-foot line, she would step in and grab it; she was blocking down the line for me so I wouldn't have to play a lot of defense. My teammates really picked it up when I couldn't give it all that I've got."

But she was adamant about not using the ankle as an excuse.

"Things happen," she said, shrugging, "and everything happens for a reason. It was just a bad time for it to happen. If we would have won that match (against Penn State), there was literally zero percent chance of me playing in the Final Four."

Carlini suffered a high and lower ankle sprain. She also tore some ligaments.

"The doctor said she would have been better off if she broke it," Sheffield noted.

Which is what UW basketball guard Traevon Jack-

son did, he sustained a Jones fracture.

“Since she didn’t (break it),” Sheffield added of Carlini’s rehab, “this was longer.”

Much longer than Carlini anticipated.

“Longer than I wanted,” she said.

She was on crutches for a few weeks and in a boot for a few weeks after that.

“I had hoped to be back in early May,” she said. “That ended up not happening.”

Carlini was cleared at the beginning of June. By then, the injury had prevented her from training with the U.S. national team like she did for three weeks in the summer of 2014. She talked with coach Karch Kiraly in October and he broached the possibility of putting her on a Pan-American Games roster.

“But the rosters had to be set in May,” she said. “It didn’t work in my favor. And that’s OK.”

Instead, she stayed on campus and made daily trips to the training room. Everybody told her the

same thing. “Take the time to rehab and get that ankle back to 100 percent,” she related, “because you don’t want to come back at 75 percent and tear something else.”

Per usual, Sheffield was impressed with how she went about her business.



SHEFFIELD ON CARLINI:

“FORGET ABOUT MALE OR FEMALE, FORGET ABOUT REVENUE OR NON-REVENUE SPORT, SHE’S TRULY ONE OF THE GREAT ATHLETES THAT I THINK THE COLLEGE GAME, IN ANY SPORT, HAS EVER SEEN. I’M INCREDIBLY FORTUNATE THAT SHE’S HERE.”

tacks it (the rehab).”

Sheffield admitted that with intense, competitive athletes like Carlini that it’s only natural “to protect people from themselves.” In other words, he explained, “She’s wanting to go 100 miles per hour and maybe one part of her body says, ‘You should go 70 right now.’”

“She’s a very purposeful person,” he said. “She just gets locked in on what needs to be done. You see that with her grades, you see that with her in a match and she does the same exact thing with injuries. She got locked in and said, ‘All right, let’s go,’ and then at-



JACK McLAUGHLIN

Tapping the brakes is not in her makeup; she knows only one speed.

“She’s not somebody,” he said, “who likes to be told, ‘Hey, you’ve got to pull off the gas.’”

It’s what makes accomplished players all the more special; they’ve never accomplished enough.

“With the truly elite people, in whatever walk of life, they look at all the different things that they can get better at it,” Sheffield said. “She’s wired that way, man. She’s wired that way more than any person — forget about volleyball players — more than any person I’ve ever been around. She’s constantly looking for ways to get better and it’s not just a volleyball thing. Really, it isn’t.”

Sheffield has seen Carlini treat everything in her life in that manner, in attack mode. And he can relate because he’s wired that way, too. “When people want to be great at what they’re doing,” Sheffield said, “I don’t think they ever sit around and say, ‘Man, look at all the things I’m great at.’”

In retrospect, besides Carlini’s disappointment in losing to Penn State, not advancing to the Final Four and the ankle injury, there’s the realization that she won’t get another opportunity, at least collegiately, to compete against Penn State star Micha Hancock, who has finally graduated.

“I loved playing against her because I believe we were two of the best setters in the country,” she said. “I think if we weren’t sworn enemies, I would actually like her as a person because I think we have very similar personalities. We’re super competitive and we’ll do whatever it takes to win.”

It’s reasonable to assume that winning will be more of a challenge this season for the Badgers because of

their own graduation losses: Thomas, Dominique Thompson, Ellen Chapman, Kt Kvas, Julie Mi-kaelsen, Deme Morales and Caroline Workman.

Meanwhile, the returning nucleus will feature Carlini, Taylor Morey, the Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year; Kelli Bates, a member of the league’s all-freshman team; and Haleigh Nelson, an honorable mention All-American.

“Last year was great for different reasons,” Sheffield said. “You’re returning just about everybody from the season before (2013) and there’s some things to get really excited about with that. This year, we’ve got 60 percent of our team that is brand new.

“But what gets you excited is not necessarily if it’s a bunch of new players or a bunch of returners. What gets you excited is if your athletes are excited and they’re willing to put in the work and they’re willing to grow and do the things necessary to become a great team.

“A critical element is leadership,” he continued. “Your best players have to echo the coach, they have to have the same goals and dreams and understand the process and the work that goes into it. With a player like Lauren, there’s never a worry that the team isn’t behind me.”

That speaks, in part, to Carlini’s role.

“A lot of it is going to be about making connections,” she said. “The freshmen don’t really know how to take Kelly (and his coaching approach). He likes to joke around in practice but there are also times when he’s serious.”

And the new players have to differentiate between the two sides of Sheffield. The one constant is that Sheffield is going to demand that all of his players, experienced or otherwise, adopt



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IT DOESN'T MATTER IF WE HAVE SIX FRESHMEN ON THE FLOOR OR SIX SENIORS, WE STILL EXPECT THE SAME OUT OF OURSELVES.

GREG ANDERSON

a “bring it mentality” which pretty much rules out the potential for any complacency.

In the spring, for instance, Carlini observed some “really intense” practices. “They were gritty, they were hard,” she said. “He (Sheffield) wants everyone to know how to play every position and that’s valuable to the team. Part of it was building the mentality that we have to have for the freshmen.

“They’re going to be different people on the court this year and vital roles have to be taken. We’re not going to have the same exact personalities. But I think it will work because everyone is learning what our culture is like, how we communicate with each other and how we play.

“As long as they (the freshmen) are watching the older girls, they’re going to latch on.”

As far as how Sheffield envisions Carlini’s role, he said, “It’s always evolving. She had a huge motor when she came in and I think that drive and passion is only becoming more and more enflamed. She was a strong leader for us early-on and she’s learning how to sharpen those skills even more.”

To this end, Carlini has noticed some changes in Sheffield since her freshman season.

“He’s more aware of our personalities and how he


can interact with each of us,” she said. “He’s a guy who doesn’t treat everyone the same. I have a lot of respect for that. It takes a lot for a coach to care for someone that much to make them not only a better player but a better person.”

In the American Volleyball Coaches Association preseason poll, Wisconsin got one first-place vote and was ranked No. 5, overall, tied with Nebraska. In a vote of Big Ten coaches, the Badgers were picked for fourth behind Penn State, Nebraska, and Illinois, which was No. 8 in the AVCA poll.

“I don’t care what position we’re in,” Carlini said. “Every single year, we expect ourselves to win a Big Ten championship and — moving forward — a national championship. It doesn’t matter if we have six freshmen on the floor or six seniors, we still expect the same out of ourselves.”

What about Carlini’s personal expectations?

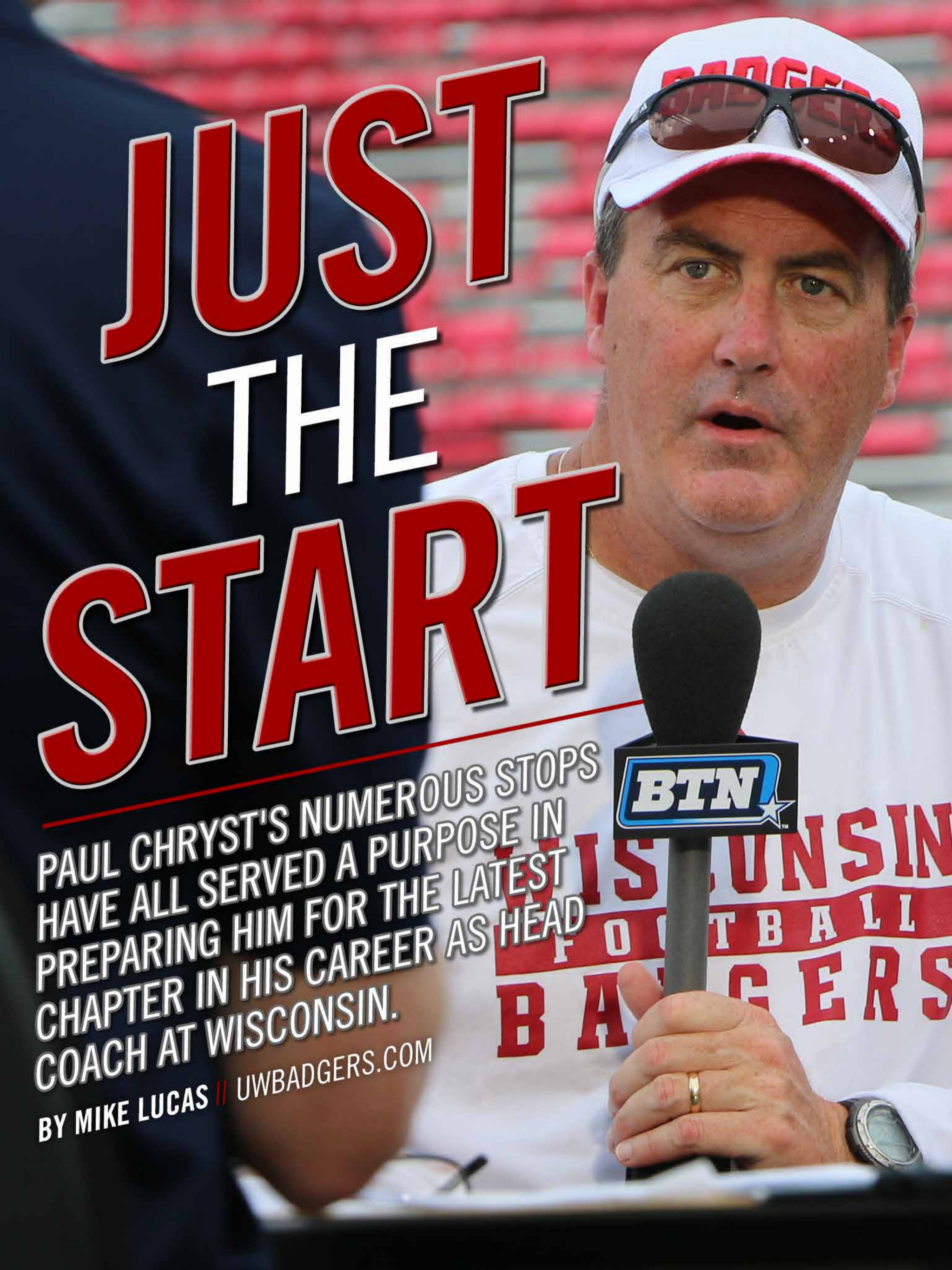
“I’m still going to be an energizer for the team. I’m still trying to inspire other people to be passionate on the court, and that’s not going to stop,” she said. “That’s just who I am, and I hope other people latch on to it as well. A lot is going to be informational — always asking, ‘What can I do better?’”

A legacy in the making. 

JUST THE START

PAUL CHRYST'S NUMEROUS STOPS
HAVE ALL SERVED A PURPOSE IN
PREPARING HIM FOR THE LATEST
CHAPTER IN HIS CAREER AS HEAD
COACH AT WISCONSIN.

BY MIKE LUCAS || UWBADGERS.COM





It's a two-hour drive on I-76E from Lakewood, Ohio, to Pittsburgh. Rick Chryst knows the route well after making frequent trips from his home in the Cleveland suburb to the Pitt campus to see his younger brother, Paul Chryst, head coach of the Panthers the last three seasons.

"It worked out neat for me as a brother and a dad; it gave my little guy a chance to have a team (to root for)," said Rick Chryst, who often traveled with his 3-year-old son. "I enjoyed being around it (the Pitt program) ... Paul wasn't a (head coaching) candidate for every place. But he was Pittsburgh."

Since it marked the first time that he was calling all of the shots and running his own football program — dating to 1989 and his first step in the profession as a graduate assistant — it's fair to ask how Paul Chryst has grown as a head coach through his experiences in the lead role after laboring seemingly a lifetime as a quarterbacks coach and offensive coordinator.

"What struck me," said Rick Chryst, 54, "in some of the areas that people might have thought would have been an acquired taste for him, I saw him both welcome and enjoy the non-football parts of the position. But the locker room is still first and foremost."

So while Paul Chryst, 49, has made inroads in han-

dling everything that comes across his desk along with appeasing the alums and dealing with the media demands, he's still most comfortable in the locker room, film room and on the practice field.

"The one thing that he's learning is there's always a legitimate function to go to (as a head coach)," said Geep Chryst, the second oldest in the Chryst clan. "But, right now, he isn't signing off on the X's and O's. Right now, he still loves rolling up his sleeves even if he has to get into the office early."

Arrive early; leave late, the Chryst creed.

Whereas Rick Chryst, a senior vice president at Dietz Trott Sports & Entertainment Management, was able to keep a close eye on the Panthers' development, it was more logistically challenging for Geep Chryst, 53, who's entering his fifth season as a San Francisco 49ers assistant.

"The dynamics (time zones) are interesting and I don't think me and Geep ever got in sync when he went out to San Francisco like we did other places," said Paul Chryst, who coached with his brother for the San Diego Chargers. "We definitely stay in touch and what they both say is important to me."

"The thing I appreciate about Rick, he sees things a little bit different because of our backgrounds

(Rick is a former commissioner of the Mid-American Conference) and that's really helpful. If I'm talking with Geep, we're going to naturally see something — a majority of the time — one way and he'll have a different angle at it."

Geep Chryst, who has taken over as the 49ers offensive coordinator, has his thoughts on the coaching maturation and growth of Paul Chryst during his head coach apprenticeship at Pitt. The record (19-19) doesn't accurately measure the progress that has been made, he insisted.

"The Pitt program is in a better position than when Paul walked in through the door; he was happy where it was headed," he said. "Paul knows what he's doing. He draws energy from the players. That has always been true. He doesn't become a coach until the players are in the room. Now, when you're the head coach, the players in the room are offense, defense and special teams.

"Making all of that work, there's a natural growth. Paul stayed involved with the X's and O's on offense (at Pitt). There are a lot of coaches, especially in the NFL, who delegate X's and O's to their staff so they can get on top of all the things that come across the head coach's desk.

"There's also a natural learning curve," he continued. "You learn in every game situation. How do you want to handle this? You're at the edge of field goal range, do you trust the kicker? Should we punt them deep and try to play good defense? Should we go for it on fourth down?"

"These are all traditional decisions that you have to make as a head coach. I would say the transition from an offensive coach or coordinator to a head

coach in those situations are a little bit easier than for a defensive coach."

If Pitt was a good fit for Paul Chryst, Wisconsin is a better one, the older brothers agreed.

"Watching Wisconsin on tape (under Gary Andersen)," Geep Chryst said, "they were getting away a

little bit from what we would associate with Barry's (Alvarez) style or brand of football. Paul has a relationship with Barry and enjoys the mentoring that Barry will offer, that's a huge thing."

Rick Chryst cited an exchange at Paul Chryst's introductory news conference.

It was the second question asked, "Is this a destination job for you?"

Chryst's response: "When you're talking about a destination job, I think you've got to earn the right to stay that long where people qualify it (as such)." Referring to Alvarez and Bo Ryan, he said, "They've earned the right to make it a destination. I sure hope to work to try to make it that."

Earn was the operative word. "I thought it was pretty authentic and honest and true to who Paul is," Rick said. "He really respects the scale of it and respects the people who have worn the jersey there. You know how deep that runs ... and he definitely feels a part of that ... I know that he has been energized reconnecting."

In particular, Paul Chryst feels a kinship with the high school coaches in the state.

"I remember talking to Jim Harbaugh about recruiting with Stanford," Geep said of his former head coach with the 49ers. "He felt that he made more inroads to 3- and 4-star kids who worked really hard and developed toughness and a work



GEEP CHRYST ON HIS BROTHER:

"PAUL KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING. HE DRAWS ENERGY FROM THE PLAYERS. THAT HAS ALWAYS BEEN TRUE. HE DOESN'T BECOME A COACH UNTIL THE PLAYERS ARE IN THE ROOM."





▲ TAP TO WATCH - Paul Chryst: Welcome Home

ethic, which still exemplifies Stanford's play today."

That's in Paul Chryst's wheelhouse and compatible with the Badgers model. "Barry has always had a developmental program," Geep said, "with kids who weren't maybe the highest recruited or rated athlete. The walk-on program has always been phenomenal at a place like Wisconsin."

To date, Chryst's hiring has been a rallying point for the alumni. But it's not limited to one group.

"You see it through the eyes of the players and how they respond to Paul," said Geep Chryst. "It's not just the quarterbacks, not just Russell Wilson, Scott Tolzien or John Stocco. But you also see it in the eyes of the linemen; they gravitate to Paul and really embrace it, 'OK, we've got work to do.'"

Because of his NFL profile, Geep Chryst has fielded many questions about his brother.

Especially regarding his "frame of mind" returning to Wisconsin.

"His frame of mind is that he's at the start of the journey, not at the end," he said. "The end of the journey was not that he came back and became the coach at Wisconsin. He feels like he's at the start of the journey and, at the start of any journey, you have to get organized, pack well and prepare."

....

Preparation is the essence of Paul Chryst's game plan.

It's why practices tend to last longer than scheduled. He doesn't want to leave the field.

"It's fun, it's a blast," he enthused. "You can really grow them (players) in practice. You grow by doing; you grow by screwing up and correcting it. These guys love the game. They wouldn't do all of this, they wouldn't spend this much time on it if they didn't love it."

Chryst is a realist. He knows that not everyone may love it as much as he does.

"Still there are some common foundations," he said. "It's the game."

And he's adamant about preparing accordingly.

"I do love the preparation," he confided. "And that's where I do feel the pressure. But I love that pressure. I think you could tie that back to when I was here as a player and not having that. The only thing that matters on game days is who is between the lines. It's the players, right? So good coaching is having those players prepared."

Chryst is not a big fan of labels. Especially if applied to his offense. "I have never wanted to or tried

to describe the offense,” he said. “I’ve never wanted to label the offense. To me, it’s ultimately the players’ — they’re the artists.”

But there are some clearly, defined objectives.

“You hope to be fundamentally sound where you can teach the techniques,” he said. “I believe in balance — in being able to run the football and throw the football. I believe in playing to the players’ strengths. If you’re going to be a good offense, in my opinion, you have to be able to do those things.”

One of the Chryst staples has been pre-snap movement, the shift-motion game, involving a liberal use of tight ends and/or H-backs, a trademark of his offense.

“I think it can help but there are times when it can also hurt you, so you have to be smart, that’s where experience helps,” he said of keeping the defense off-balance with formations. “I remember one year we committed to this one shift and every run averaged at least two yards.

“Mike (Riley) and I were exposed to Norv (Turner) early on and again in San Diego,” he said of his former head coach and offensive coordinator with the Chargers. “That was one of the assignments given by Mike; I had to learn everything I could about the shift-motion game.”

Per usual, the personnel will dictate how much it will be used, and how effectively.

“I do believe that it can be a good asset,” Chryst said.

Of course, there’s no greater asset than a quality quarterback and Chryst has had some good ones. Asked if he was one himself at Wisconsin, he laughed and

“I was able to truly see him from start to finish,” Chryst said of Tolzien. **“You talk about self-motivated. I had a part in it, but he did it. I’m proud of what he did here and what he’s doing now (in Green Bay) and what he will do in the future.”**

said, “Those who can ... do. Those who can’t ... coach. I was OK but not a great one, no. I’ve coached a lot better ones.”

Russell Wilson, Scott Tolzien, John Stocco and Tyler Donovan are on most short lists. Wilson, for one, can come off scripted in public. To which Chryst related,

“The first time, I talked to Russell, I said, ‘C’mon, man, it’s just you and me.’ Had another meeting and it was all behind us. There were times when he was talking to the press.”

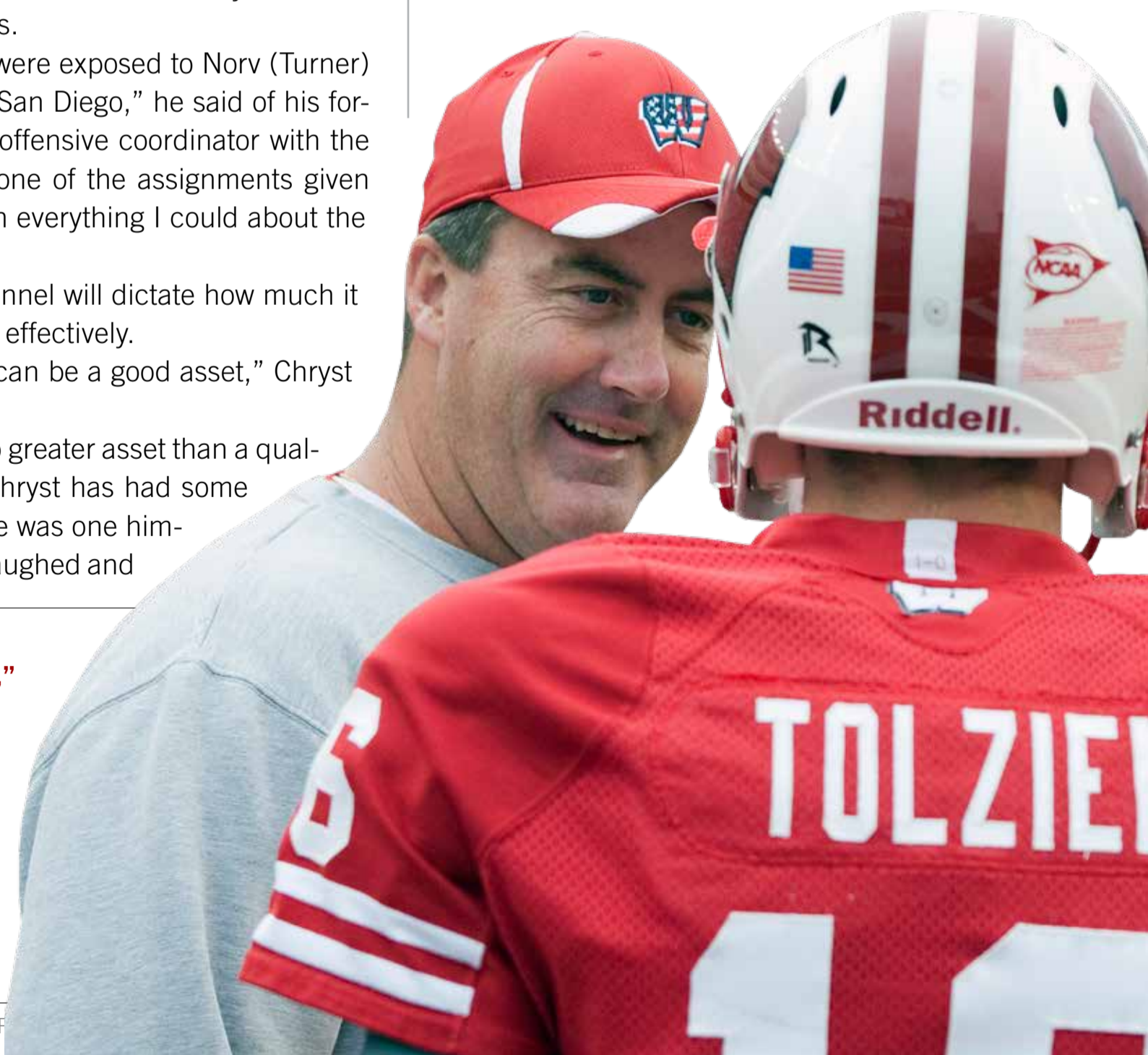
This was fine, except in the meeting room. Yet

Chryst has nothing but praise and respect for Wilson, especially because he possesses so many exceptional traits. Chryst listed, “Competitiveness, confidence, talent, smarts. He loves it (the game) and he believes in it (preparation). I got spoiled.”

In this context, Tolzien holds a special place in Chryst’s heart. “Absolutely,” he said. “I was able



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to truly see him from start to finish. You talk about self-motivated. I had a part in it, but he did it. I'm proud of what he did here and what he's doing now (in Green Bay) and what he will do in the future.”

This spring, Chryst was reunited with one of his former UW recruits, Joel Stave; then a walk-on.

“I've enjoyed getting back with him and getting to know him, like truly know him,” Chryst emphasized of his starting quarterback for 2015. “Heck, I'm excited for all of the seniors. How can they have the best year? They have one senior year and you want to help them maximize that opportunity.

“Right before finals last spring, I got a chance to meet with every player,” he went on. “It was not long enough, 15 to 20 to 25 minutes, but it was a window of opportunity for me. I made the mistake at Pitt of doing that too soon.


“I met with them right away and I didn't know them well enough to even know what to ask them, so you couldn't pull back many layers. I like getting a feel for the players. Every guy's story is different. Every guy has different motivations and different stresses.”

It's the same with coaches, he allowed. “I've always kind of made that analogy that coaching is like surfing,” Chryst said. “You ride the wave as long as you can and then you have to paddle back out and find another wave. I've been around really good people and learned from players and coaches.”

UW basketball coach Bo Ryan has been a friend, a confidant, a mentor.

“The best way to put it — every time I'm around him I'm learning,” Chryst said. “If you ask me, ‘What is the one thing you've taken from Bo?’ I would say every time I'm with him, I pick up something. It's not that one lesson. And that's pretty cool, pretty unique.”

Chryst felt the same way about purchasing Ryan's home. The latter has moved into a condo.

“The one thing I asked, ‘Bo, you didn't take all the wins out of this house, did you?’” Chryst recounted. “Once again, Bo being Bo, he said, ‘Paul, the address is Champions Run.’ So the pressure is on me now so they don't have to change the name of the street.” 



A NEW WORLDVIEW

BY MIKE LUCAS // UWBADGERS.COM

Qualifying for track and field's world championships is a career-defining accomplishment. Earning one of the United States' spots in the decathlon field — an event Americans have dominated over the last decade — is even more remarkable, especially for a 22-year-old Wisconsin senior who just 15 months ago was saying 'I'm really just focused on the Big Ten right now.'



DAVID STLUKA

The conversation between the prescient assistant coach, Nate Davis, and the unassuming decathlete, Zach Ziemek, took place before the 2014 Big Ten Outdoor Track and Field Championships. That's when Davis shared his vision with Ziemek.

"I said, 'Zach, I think next year, 2015, you've got a real shot at making the World team and in 2016 one of those three spots in the Olympics could be yours,'" Davis recounted.

Ziemek was definitely caught off guard by the timetable.

"He kind of looked at me with this blank stare," recalled Davis. "And he said, 'I'm really just focused on the Big Ten (meet) right now' because he didn't know what else to say."

The World team? The Olympics?

"It never entered his mind," Davis said. "That was the thing. Part of it was getting him to realize how good he could be and training to be at that level."

Ziemek went on to defend his Big Ten title in the decathlon with a score of 7,659, bettering his point total (7,640) from 2013. He was also receptive to what Davis was saying. "I'm really starting to learn the events," Ziemek said, "and even more I'm starting to learn about myself, which is huge."

The World team? The Olympics? One down. As one of four decathletes on the United States team competing at the IAAF World Championships in Beijing, China, the 22-year-old Ziemek has begun to fulfill his promise and Davis' projection for him.

In late June, Ziemek qualified for the worlds by breaking the Big Ten record in the decathlon with 8,107 points at the USA Outdoor Championships. In the process, he also met the 'A' qualifying standard for the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Making the U.S. team is an accomplishment unto itself given that Americans have won five of the last six World titles in the decathlon.



DAVIS ON ZIEMEK:

“THERE HAVE BEEN ONLY 75 MEN IN THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES THAT HAVE SCORED OVER 8,000 POINTS (IN THE DECATHLON) SO HE OBVIOUSLY HAS A SKILLSET THAT MOST ATHLETES DON’T HAVE.”

Davis paused before adding, “That’s sometimes good and sometimes not so good because sometimes I want him to ask, ‘Why? Why are we doing this?’ I want to teach him because you build confidence over the long term teaching as opposed to just doing — doing this because I said, ‘Do this.’”

Over the summer, Ziemek has asked more questions and more of himself. “A coach’s goal is to be able to teach me,” he said. “But then I need to be able to teach myself and start picking out mistakes. Asking Nate, we can work as a team picking out the stuff I need to do and what I shouldn’t be doing.”

Ziemek admitted that he wasn’t very inquisitive during his formative stages as a decathlete. “I was just kind of out there,” said Ziemek, a native of Itasca, Illinois, a Chicago suburb. “I was really young when I was learning about the events. I was 16 for some of them and 18 when I came to college.”

Ziemek is aware of the fact that most competitors don’t peak in the decathlon until they’re 27 or 28. “For a 22-year-old like Zach to make the Worlds,” Davis said, “he’s probably one of the five youngest to ever make the decathlon team. So for him, it’s going to be a huge learning experience.”

Ashton Eaton is the odds-on favorite in the Beijing decathlon. The world record-holder won Olympic gold in 2012 and World Championships gold in 2013. Hardee, a two-time world champion, and Canada’s Damian Warner, who won the Pan American Games, will be in the medal chase.

Between the Olympics and World Championships, Eaton and Hardee have combined to win every gold medal in the decathlon since 2009.

“I’ve looked up to Trey and Ashton,” Ziemek said. “I look up to them as role models.”

They’re far more advanced. So, what is Davis’ expectation for Ziemek in China? “Experience,” he said. “It’s the meet, it’s the World Championships, it’s once every two years and it’s a great accumulation of men in the sport. So the learning curve is

“It was awesome and I was kind of speechless,” Ziemek said of his third-place finish behind Trey Hardee and Jeremy Taiwo at the meet in Eugene, Oregon. “Our goal has been making the World team and I’ve been working all year on it and with it actually happening, it’s kind of unreal.”

Davis brought some perspective to Ziemek’s achievement. “There have been only 75 men in the history of the United States that have scored over 8,000 points (in the decathlon) so he obviously has a skillset that most athletes don’t have,” he said.

But there’s more to it than just his physical gifts. “Mentally, he’s different,” Davis said. “He does everything in his life the right way; he lives the right way. One on one with people, he’s very respectful, very coachable. He blindly trusts you because you’re the authority figure.”

really what we're looking at."

It's part of the Davis timetable; so is trusting the plan. "Last year was really about getting his foundation down, teaching him all the basics of the event," Davis said, "and getting to know him as far as what I can expect when he trains and when he competes. Lastly, it was building confidence in him."

Davis will be at Ziemek's side in Beijing's National Stadium, aka the Bird's Nest, the site of the 2008 Olympics. "It's huge just having him there to coach me," Ziemek said. "With his coaching and support, we can do this as a team. All year we've been a team."

Team Ziemek is a handful, and they all made the trip to China, all five of them.

That includes his mom and dad, his sister, his girlfriend and, of course, Davis.

Rick Ziemek got his son started in track. "His dad, my grandpa, who passed away, was a hurdler, pole vaulter and long jumper," Zach Ziemek said. "It was my dad who got me started in the pole vault when I was in the eighth grade. After that I started doing

everything else and that led to the decathlon."

Victoria Ziemek has always looked after her son. "She has taken care of my whole life," he said. "Her dad, my grandpa, was a professional football player with the old Chicago Cardinals. He was an influence on me as well. Everyone in my family has influenced me."

Amanda Ziemek realizes the sacrifices that her brother has made. A former college volleyball player, she's currently studying nursing. Victoria Paulson recognizes the commitment that her boyfriend has made. She's a former UW middle distance runner.

They will round out Team Ziemek in Beijing.

Through such a collaboration, he said, "Hopefully, we can all do something special."

When he was 2 or 3, he couldn't remember the exact age, Ziemek's grandmother used to tell everyone that her grandson was going to be an Olympic champion. In a gag snapshot, he was pictured wearing a couple of fake medals around his neck.

"Maybe now it's not a joke," Zach Ziemek said.



DAVIS ON ZIEMEK:

"FOR A 22-YEAR-OLD LIKE ZACH TO MAKE THE WORLDS, HE'S PROBABLY ONE OF THE FIVE YOUNGEST TO EVER MAKE THE DECATHLON TEAM. SO FOR HIM, IT'S GOING TO BE A HUGE LEARNING EXPERIENCE."



DAVID STILUKA



“Hopefully those dreams come true.”

But he doesn’t want to go there, not yet, because he’s not ready to think about such things.

“I’ve obviously thought about the future and trying to go pro and making the Olympics,” he said. “But I’m just trying to take it day-by-day. I want to be the best that I can be at the Worlds. I don’t want to jump too far ahead. The decathlon is really mental and I want to make sure I’m focused all the time.”

Ziemek is looking forward to one thing and that’s returning to school for his final year of eligibility with the Badgers. “Just knowing I’ll be competing for Wisconsin again and I’ll have a full indoor and outdoor season is really exciting,” said Ziemek, who red-shirted this past year.

“The whole year I couldn’t wear a (UW) jersey because I was unattached. It was kind of lonely. I didn’t have a coach helping me out (at meets). When I competed at Drake (Relays), my dad was coaching me; he knows a little bit, but he can’t spot what I was doing wrong.”

Yet he doesn’t regret taking the redshirt. “When I talked to Nutty,” he said of former head coach Ed Nuttycombe, “we knew it was going to be a five-year plan. And last season was my season to do it so in my last year (2016) I could lead this team to some special things.”

He spelled it out. “Some Big Ten titles and a trophy for nationals would be amazing,” he said.

The World Championships should serve nicely as a springboard into his senior year regardless of the decathlon results. In preparation for his trip to Beijing, Ziemek watched a documentary on the Great Wall of China. If nothing else, he should already know that there are no barriers that he can’t scale.




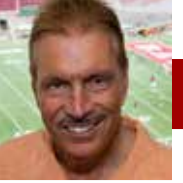
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“The thing that really sticks out about Zach,” Davis said, “he’s in it for as long as he can do it.”

And he has so many more years in front of him to hone his craft as a decathlete.

“I’m just a guy,” Ziemek said, “that works every day to be the best that I can be.”

That translates the same anywhere in the world. 



Always-improving Stave leads by example

Senior quarterback confident in himself and in his teammates heading into 2015

Anticipation skills are crucial for any quarterback. Take it from Joel Stave. Prior to attending Big Ten Football Media Days in Chicago in July, he anticipated the line of questioning to revolve around a stretch last August and September when he struggled to complete even the most routine pass in practice after losing his starter's job to Tanner McEvoy.

Stave is OK, though, with the conversation and revisiting the topic.

"That's not an issue for me anymore," he said. "That was kind of a unique thing that I went through. But I don't have an issue talking about it or anything like that. I understand it's a compelling storyline. If that's what people want to talk about, if that's what they want to write stories about ..."

So be it. Stave has already moved on while learning more about himself ("I really have") and benefiting from the experience, however unexpected and painful. The No. 1 benefit? "Just knowing I was able to go through that and come out on the other side and be fine," he said.

Moreover, he noted, "I was able to play some of my best football against Iowa and Minnesota when we really needed big games

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GREG ANDERSON

Questions remain as Badgers open season

Wisconsin hosts HotelRED Invitational on Friday and Saturday in UW Field House

A lot of questions remain for the Wisconsin volleyball team as it opens the season this weekend by hosting the HotelRED Invitational. The fifth-ranked Badgers welcome Western Kentucky, Colgate and College of Charleston for the round-robin tournament on Friday and Saturday in the UW Field House.

Despite fans getting a look at the 2015 Badgers for the first time last Saturday in the team's annual intrasquad scrimmage, third-year head coach Kelly Sheffield still has questions about his lineup.

"From an evaluation standpoint, it's really hard when you're playing yourself — you don't know which numbers are real and which ones aren't real," Sheffield said. "I thought we passed the ball really, really well, so does that mean we're a great passing team or not a very good serving team?"

"I thought we came out, had good energy, (and) it looked like everyone was having a lot of fun. There were some players who might not get a lot of playing time this season and got a taste of it today so it was a win, win, win."

Nearly 1,200 fans watched the scrimmage and got a look at the eight newcomers on the Badgers squad.

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EVAN HALL/POP

Offense looks poised for improved season

Wisconsin generated a number of scoring opportunities in exhibition vs. Drake

A young group last season that had as many as four freshmen in its starting lineup, Wisconsin ranked last in the Big Ten for shots, goals and points in 2014.

It appears things could be turning, however — and quickly.

Wisconsin hosted Drake for an exhibition and one final tuneup Saturday before the regular season begins this weekend. Things appeared to be firing on all cylinders for the Badgers, who racked up 20 shots over the course of the game. For comparison, Drake tallied just seven shots.

Even more impressive was that of UW's 20 shots, 13 were put on goal. Getting so many shots on frame led to a number of threatening scoring chances. Given a different bounce of the ball, many of those opportunities could have been goals.

While UW managed to score just once and lost 2-1, it was a game that those in attendance came away from feeling like it could have just as easily been a 4-2 win.

Sophomore midfielder Mike Catalano had the moment of the game offensively, getting the Badgers on the board after he collected a ball in the box, turned and delivered a quick strike past the opposing goalkeeper for the score.

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JACK MCLAUGHLIN

Badgers resilient during opening weekend

Wisconsin pulled out back-to-back overtime wins to begin the 2015 season

The Wisconsin women's soccer team got its season off to an undefeated start last weekend, but it wasn't without effort, grit and resiliency.

Two games and two overtime wins later, the Badgers are 2-0-0.

Both games went extra minutes, including a double-overtime battle against Western Michigan. McKenna Meuer delivered a game-winning header on Friday night and Rose Lavelle scored a game-winner of her own Sunday afternoon.

In both cases, the Badgers were forced to dig deep and work for late results. Showing resiliency and toughness was something that head coach Paula Wilkins preached to the team all last season.

In fact, UW is now undefeated over its last eight overtime games. The Badgers hold a 6-0-2 record in overtime contests dating back to last season.

Wilkins is encouraged that there are signs of a growing culture within the program.

"We talked about being resilient, especially going into overtime, and I'm happy with the response of the team," Wilkins said. "We're happy to get the result. Anytime you get a result, you get

TAP TO VIEW SCHEDULE

[Tweets by @BadgerWSoccer](#)

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DAVID STLUKA

Badgers set up camp in Door County

Teams will spend a week in northern Wisconsin to prepare for 2015 season

The Wisconsin cross country teams will wrap up their summer training in northern Wisconsin by spending a week in scenic Door County in preparation for the 2015 season.

A variety of activities are on the docket for the 40-plus runners making the trip, including morning and afternoon runs, time at the different parks and beaches and a fish bake on Friday night.

“My favorite part of the trip is being there as a team with not many distractions to solidify a team bond going into the season,” senior Emma-Lisa Murphy said. “This is also a big advantage because when we go home after a week well spent getting to know new teammates and working hard together, it begins to build confidence in each other that we will carry throughout the year.”

This marks the second year Wisconsin’s combined men’s and women’s program will embark on the Door County trip. The men’s team has been making the trek since 2012.

“It is an awesome experience,” UW Director of Track and Field and Cross Country Mick Byrne said. “It’s a chance for them to get away from Madison and relax in a real training camp environment. It is beautiful scenery, and they have incredible trails on Lake Michigan.

TAP TO VIEW SCHEDULE

[Tweets by @Badger_Track](#)

SOCIAL MEDIA:



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Summer hockey wraps up for the Badgers

Six UW student-athletes ended their summer by playing for their national teams

While many college students spend their last month of the summer relaxing, many Wisconsin women's hockey student-athletes gained valuable experience with their respective national teams.

Nine Badgers began the month attending national camps, as six Badgers spent almost two weeks in Calgary at the Canadian National Women's Development Team Camp and three others were in Lake Placid, New York, at the USA Hockey National Women's Festival.

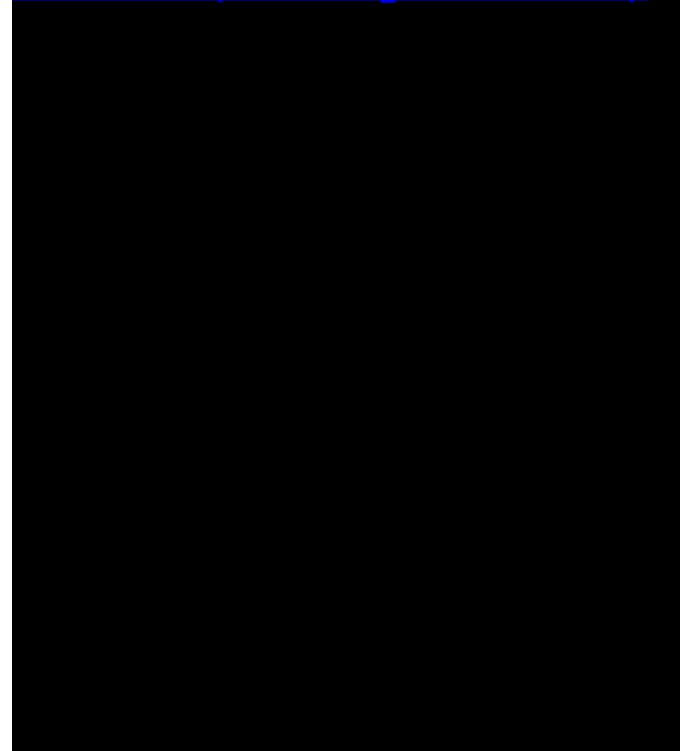
"At these camps, you learn so much, not just from coaches, but from other players as well," junior Mellissa Channell, a Canadian player, said. "Learning from other players is something I always enjoy about these camps."

"Each set of coaches brings a unique set of skills or techniques," American junior Jenny Ryan said. "I was able to learn some new defensive tips from the U.S. coaches that will help me moving forward."

Follow the camps, the United States and Canada each selected a team that would face each other last week in Lake Placid. Courtney Burke, Annie Pankowski, Ryan and the U.S. earned a

TAP TO VIEW SCHEDULE

[Tweets by @BadgerWHockey](#)



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Road to Rio '16 runs through Worlds '15

Four Badgers rowing in France to qualify boats a year ahead of Olympics

With the Olympic Summer Games in Brazil less than a year away, the upcoming year in the world of rowing will be spiced up with battles for the coveted spots on the U.S. national team.

Four former Badgers are among the hopefuls in the mix for those spots, and all look to compete at the 2015 FISA World Rowing Championships, set for Aug. 29 to Sept. 6 in Aiguebelette, France.

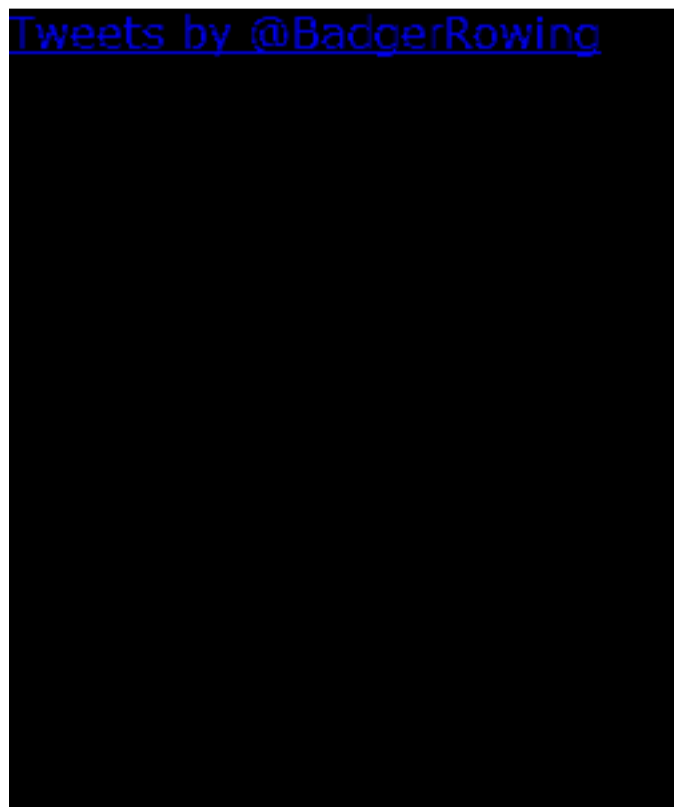
Vicky Opitz returns to the women's eight in search of her third-consecutive world championships gold medal and does so in a boat in which Team USA boasts nine consecutive world championships. The Middleton, Wisconsin, native will be in the mix to become UW's first women's openweight rower to make an Olympic team since 2000.

She won't be the only one vying for a spot next year as Grace Latz, who was teammates with Opitz at Wisconsin when UW captured its first Big Ten title in 2010, will race in the women's four without coxswain at this year's world championships. She won bronze at last year's worlds in the women's quadruple sculls.

An Olympian in 2012, Grant James looks to return to the Games

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MEN'S

WOMEN'S

WOMEN'S LT.

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