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VARBETTY

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HOW HIGH?

THE BADGERS' VOLLEYBALL TEAM MOVES ON TO THIS WEEKEND'S SWEET 16 WITH TITLE HOPES



JACK MCLAUGHLIN

COVER STORY

DEFENDING THEIR TURF

Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year Taylor Morey's competitive spirit fuels the Badgers as they look to earn their way back to the final four.



ICON SPORTSMAN

HEISMAN

AMONG THE BEST

Melvin Gordon's record-breaking season has led him to New York as a Heisman Trophy finalist, a trip he plans to take full advantage of.

LUCAS AT LARGE

JUST WIN, BABY

On a team full of NBA prospects and All-Americans, senior guard Josh Gasser has a singular focus: winning



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Gasser focused on winning ways

Josh Gasser's circle of close friends has extended to Ostend, Belgium (Jared Berggren) and Pasvalys, Lithuania (Ben Brust). Both of his former Wisconsin teammates have continued their basketball careers professionally in Europe. Also in the inner circle is Dan Fahey, now in the UW law school.

"We talk just about every day in group chat," said Gasser, a fifth-year senior. "We'll text at 7 at night here and it's 3 a.m. over there. Ben and Jared text to keep us in the loop because it's so hard to watch their games. But I watched a couple of Ben's games the past couple of weeks."

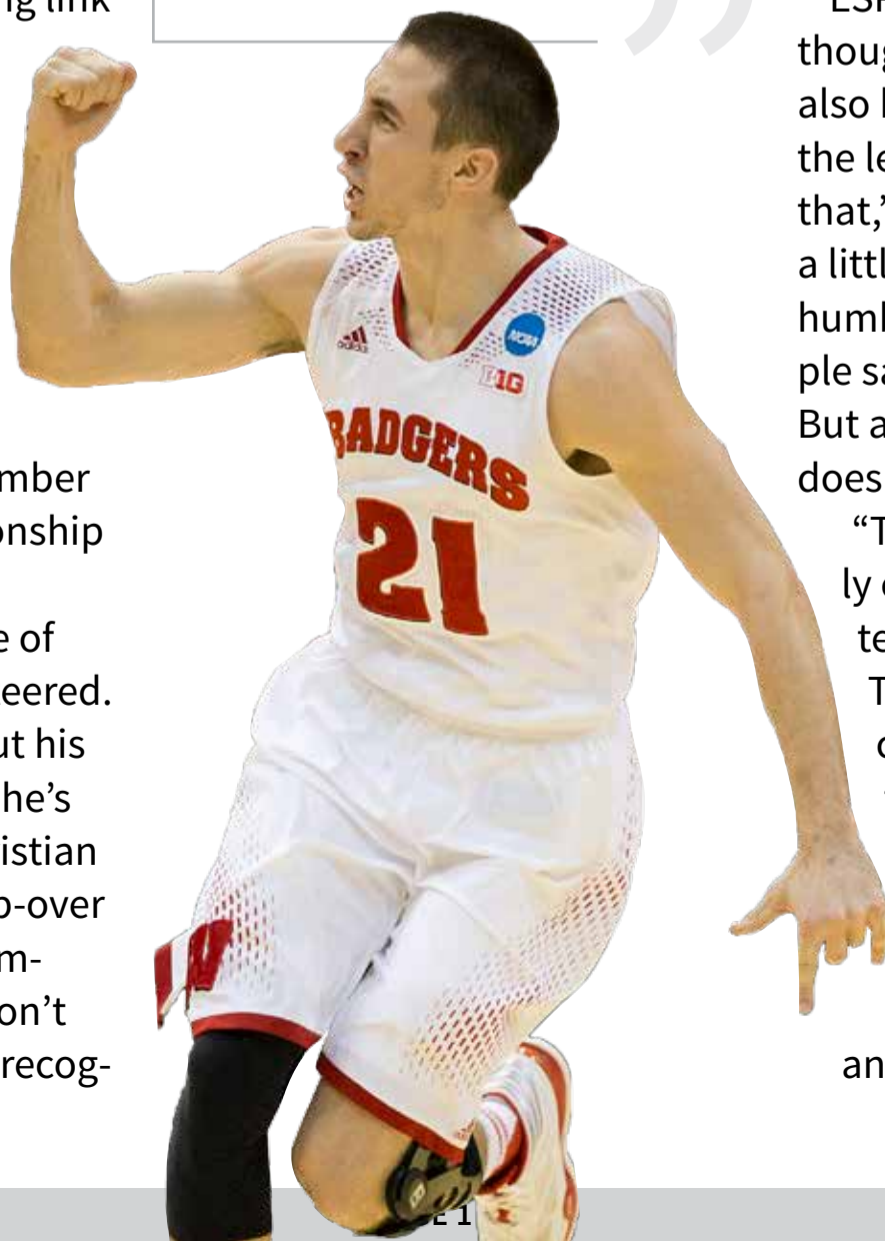
Brust, 23, the only missing link from the 2014 Final Four rotation, is playing for Pieno Zvaigzdes which has two other Americans on the roster: Kyle Lamonte, 30, a Davenport, Iowa native, who played at Southern Mississippi; and Alex Oriakhi, 24, a member of the 2011 NCAA championship UConn team.

"Have you seen a picture of Ben lately?" Gasser volunteered. "It's hilarious. He hasn't cut his hair since he left here and he's got a beard (more of a Christian Bale van dyke) and a comb-over like Z-Bo's (former UW teammate Zach Bohannon). I don't think many people would recog-

nize him."

Brust's shot is the same, Gasser assured, deadly as ever with unlimited range. But everything else is different for Brust; the venues and culture. "Ben is adjusting," Gasser said. "Some days are good, some days aren't. That's the way it is over there when you're alone and not used to the lifestyle."

“THE ONLY THING I HONESTLY CARE ABOUT IS HELPING MY TEAM WIN CHAMPIONSHIPS. THAT’S WHY I CAME TO WISCONSIN. I CAME HERE BECAUSE I WANTED TO WIN.”



Gasser also keeps in touch with Jordan Taylor, Jon Leuer and others. "That's my favorite part about being at Wisconsin; the relationships you build," said Gasser, who hails from Port Washington. "We have great teammates here and we have friendships that will last for the rest of our lives."

Leuer, a second round pick in the 2011 draft, had a double-double (20 points, 12 rebounds) last Sunday for the Memphis Grizzlies. Meanwhile over 30 NBA scouts attended the Duke-Wisconsin game at the Kohl Center. The obvious targets on the Badgers were Frank Kaminsky and Sam Dekker.

ESPN analyst Jay Bilas, though, believes that Gasser also has a chance to play in the league. "Someone told me that," Gasser said. "And I was a little surprised and a little humbled. It's good to hear people say good things about you. But at the same time it really doesn't mean that much."

"The only thing I honestly care about is helping my team win championships. That's why I came to Wisconsin. I didn't come here to try to be an NBA player. I came here because I wanted to win. If I end up playing professionally somewhere next year, anywhere in the world, I'll



take that, too.”

Gasser acknowledged that he grew up dreaming about the NBA. That’s what kids do. “And then as you go through the high school and college ranks,” he said, “and you’re watching an NBA game and realizing, ‘I covered him and I covered him and I played against a lot of these guys.’ So it’s kind of crazy.

“It’s definitely not out of my reach in any sort of way. I have a lot of teammates who are going to be playing at that level. But like I said, it’s not really what I’m worried about. It’s still good to hear someone like Jay Bilas, who’s such a smart basketball mind, say what he did. It’s cool to hear.”

No matter what you may think about your chances, Gasser acknowledged, it’s always more meaningful to hear it from someone else. “Just to know that you have a shot,” he said. “Just to know that you’re capable and a good basketball player and someone else thinks of you that way.”

Gasser knows that his UW teammates and coaches think of him that way. Always have. Always will. Especially given his dedication to recovering from knee surgery that cost him a full season of competition. Gasser spent this summer distancing himself some more from that 2012 injury.

“First and foremost, it was

about getting healthy and getting my body good, that was pretty much my whole summer,” he said. “Once the preseason came, I just wanted to make shots more consistently and make the tougher shots; shots coming off screens.”

Gasser has discarded the knee brace that he wore last season. But he’s wearing padded sleeves on each knee and he said, “It keeps them warm and if I happen to dive on the floor ...”

Timeout. Happen to dive on the floor? “I dive once or twice during a game, I’d say,” he said with a grin.

If he didn’t, it would be more startling than Brust with facial hair and a comb-over. ■





Committee role was rewarding experience

It was very difficult not being there for the Big Ten championship game. And needless to say, it was very difficult watching how we played.

We had some injuries on the offensive line and we couldn't handle their defensive front. I was really impressed with Ohio State's athletes and how they performed.

It just looked like we ran out of gas. We had three rivalry games in a row with Nebraska, Iowa and Minnesota. You put a lot into them. They also take a lot out of you.

Auburn will be a good challenge for us in the Outback Bowl. I've got great respect for them and I'm confident that our kids will bounce back. This group is very resilient.

Gary (Andersen) and I had discussions beforehand and we felt that if we didn't win the game (against Ohio State) that Tampa would be the best bowl fit for our program.

You want to play on January 1st — that's when all the attention is on the bowls. If you play between Christmas and the 31st, people have other things going on. They're not focused on bowls.

People aren't working on New Year's Day — they're watching football. I'm sure many will be watching Melvin Gordon. I'm

happy for Melvin that he was named a Heisman finalist.

It was very deserving. He could have gone out (to the NFL) but he came back and had a great year. Getting recognized for the Heisman is part of the reward.

Since last Sunday's release of the four playoff teams, I've gotten a lot of questions about my involvement on the selection committee.

IT WAS VERY THOROUGH. THERE WAS A LOT OF DISCUSSION. WE HAD CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES TO FOLLOW AND WE STAYED WITH THE PROCESS. THAT WAS OUR JOB.

Like I've said many times, it was very thorough. There was a lot of discussion. We had criteria and guidelines to follow and we stayed with the process. That was our job.

Everybody knew going in that when you're naming four teams, you're going to have issues with at least five, for sure, and maybe five and six, which happened with us.

There were hours of discussion on teams four through six.

It was intense, but well thought out. And I really appre-

ciated the people that I worked with on the committee. That was an outstanding group that all got along very well.

Everybody felt comfortable speaking their mind and many times there were contrasts in belief. But that's OK. Everybody listened and voiced their opinion and then voted.

I think we all walked out of there feeling good about our decisions.

When you hear everybody talking about the importance of strength of schedule, it's true. It's going to be a factor and if you ignore that, it may come back and haunt you.

I haven't heard much feedback on the weekly rankings. But I saw how it increased the interest in college football. There was an unbelievable conversation and dialogue every week.

I think all of us on the committee will probably have some suggestions on the overall process to make it easier and to make it flow a little better.

When I have a little time, I will jot down some of my thoughts. It was definitely a grind; everybody will tell you that, especially the five sitting athletic directors who lost work days.

But I made a three-year commitment and I will stick to it. Plus, I enjoyed doing it. ■



Opportunity awaits B1G in bowl season

For the Badgers and the other bowl eligible teams in the Big Ten, this is a critical time of the season. Ten teams from this proud conference will play in the post season. One of them, Ohio State, will be a part of the first College Football Playoff.

These next few weeks will give the Big Ten a golden opportunity to quiet its critics and prove that its teams can play with the best programs college football has to offer.

Clearly, the league will be judged by the most high-profile of the bowls. The Buckeyes have the formidable task of facing top-ranked Alabama in the Sugar Bowl, which is one of the national semifinal games. The winner will play either Oregon or defending national champ Florida State. The Big Ten is looking for its first football national crown since 2002, when OSU outlasted Miami in an overtime thriller.

Other games that can improve the Big Ten's national reputation include the Cotton Bowl, which has Michigan State facing Baylor. The Spartans were hoping for more, but losses at Oregon plus a home setback to Ohio State cost MSU a chance at making the four-team playoff. And yes, it might be fair to assume the Baylor Bears will head into the post season in a foul mood. In this new system, every year there will be a team or two that

believes it has been slighted by the selection committee. Baylor and TCU have the "honor" of being the first two programs to feel that way.

The Citrus Bowl is intriguing as Minnesota plays Missouri. Early in the season, the Tigers were stunned by Indiana, which is an underrated victory for this conference. Missouri bounced back to win the SEC East, then lost to Alabama in last week's conference title tilt.

IF THE BADGERS CAN EARN ONE MORE PIECE OF HARDWARE ON NEW YEAR'S DAY AGAINST A VERY GOOD SEC TEAM, IT WOULD BE A VERY GOOD ENDING TO A VERY GOOD SEASON.

Then there is Wisconsin, which will play Auburn in the Outback Bowl. After running into a buzz saw last Saturday in Indianapolis, the Badgers have the challenge of dusting themselves off, hopefully getting healthier, and then getting ready to play a Tigers team that — much like Ohio State — features a versatile offense with weapons all across the field.

Auburn, which came within seconds of winning last year's BCS title game, roared out of the gate this season, winning its first five games. The Tigers stumbled late, losing three of their final four games, including a wild 55-

44 decision to Alabama in the Iron Bowl.

Auburn features a very good dual-threat quarterback named Nick Marshall, who passed for 2315 yards and 18 touchdowns and just seven interceptions. He also is the team's second-leading rusher with 780 yards and 11 TDs.

A Badgers-Auburn matchup should bring back some good memories in this part of the world. The last time the programs met was on Jan. 2, 2006. It was Barry Alvarez's final game as head coach. Most of the pundits gave his team little or no chance of winning.

The pundits whiffed.

The Badgers won, and dominated the game. The final was 24-10. It could have been 31-10, but Barry opted for his team to take a knee near the Tigers' goal line in the final minute.

Yes, that was nine years ago and the circumstances were a bit different. But hopefully this year's Badgers can quickly move on from last Saturday's result and prove people wrong again. Not many had this group winning 10 games to begin with. Far more often than not, the Badgers have played well, and they have a few trophies to show for it.

If they can earn one more piece of hardware on New Year's Day against a very good SEC team, it would be a very good ending to a very good season. ■

KEEP IT UP

THOSE THREE WORDS

DRIVE THE ULTRA-COMPETITIVE TAYLOR MOREY TO EXCEL IN HER DEFENSIVE ROLE FOR THE BADGERS.

BY MIKE LUCAS
UWBADGERS.COM

BEFORE A RECENT VOLLEYBALL PRACTICE, Taylor Morey dutifully put on her ankle wraps, which she had personally customized to fit more comfortably into her battered gym shoes.

Morey was not about to replace the worn shoes, not now, not out of superstition. There was just not enough time to break them in during Wisconsin's NCAA tournament run to the Sweet 16.

That she would even wrap her ankles was a little bit out of the norm for a libero, or someone who doesn't play on the front line and rely on her jumping ability at the net.

Even though she doesn't get off her feet, Morey still depends heavily on a sturdy base to go along with her aggressive instincts. Her job description is much different than others, she explained.

"Basically," she said, "I just prevent the ball from hitting the ground."

It doesn't get any more basic than that for the 2014 Big Ten Conference Defensive Player of the Year.

"That is my one goal," said Morey, a 5-foot-5 junior from Muncie, Indiana. "When a team hits it at us, I do not want it to hit the ground — unless it's out of bounds and then we let it go."

If she does her job, she added, others can do theirs because "if it's in the court, I want to give my team as many opportunities to score as possible."

Practice reps are at the core of Morey's preparation. As they were earlier this week in anticipation of Wisconsin's match Friday against Ohio State in the Louisville NCAA Regional semifinals.

"You can practice (defensive) movements without the ball on the court," she said. "But having someone hit balls at you and making floor moves over and over is really important."

Last spring, Morey tweaked her mechanics with the help of assistant coach Brittany Dildine.

"A big part that we eliminated from my game was false steps," Morey said.

Any such flaws are exposed because of the



speed of the game and the velocity of the hit.

“The ball comes so quick that your reaction time has to be really quick,” she said. “So if you’re still moving when they are hitting, you have no chance to dig certain shots.”

Another element to her success is “just reading the other side of the net” she said. In particular, she has to have a feel for the tendencies of the setter, not unlike a linebacker on a quarterback.

“What is most likely to happen next?” she posed. “That’s what is always going through my head. When we watch film, we’ll go over that a lot (in the scouting report). What do you see here?”

Morey nearly saw “stars” during an earlier practice this season.

“I got hit the hardest I’ve ever been hit,” she said. “Square in the face, all ball, all face. I flew backwards and hurt my back. I was fine but I had a little bit of a headache.”

There was a bottom line to her facial.

“Even though I got hit in the face, I was kind of upset that the ball didn’t go up, instead it went somewhere behind me,” she said. “I don’t even know where it went. I just wanted to make the play.”

That competitive fire is characteristic of Morey’s personality. Her telling answer to a UW questionnaire on fantasy job/career punctuated her gung-ho spirit. She answered, “Navy Seal.”

In September, Morey went diving after a ball into the bleachers at Colorado State with such force that it shook up Wisconsin coach Kelly Sheffield after seeing her “helicopter and flip.”

Upon reflection weeks later, Sheffield said, “It was brutal. It was the only time in my coaching career that I’ve run after a kid when they went down and I’ve seen a lot of bad injuries.”

Sheffield feared the worse.

“I was scared for her,” he said. “But she got right back up and I said something to her about

being overly dramatic and she threw some curse words at me and was angry.”

He laughed. “She was angry that she didn’t make the play,” he said, “and that’s Taylor Morey.”

And that’s all in a day’s work — that’s defending your turf as a libero.

“If you’re asking me if there needs to be a little crazy in that position, yeah,” Sheffield said, “and Taylor Morey’s got a lot of crazy in her. I love it. There’s a fearlessness about her.”

Morey’s competitiveness, in part, can be traced back to her family.

“We’re just super competitive,” she said. “Game nights at our house tend to get heated because no one likes to lose. It’s more about not wanting to lose than it is about wanting to win.”

That includes her mom and dad, Ingrid and Jack, and her five siblings — Andrew, Ashley, Allyson, Ryan and Jenny. If you’re keeping score — three sisters and two brothers. She’s third youngest of six.

“The only time we all get together is during Christmas break,” said Taylor Morey. “We’ll play Euchre or Taboo, stuff like that. We’ve had people leave the table because the talk gets too much.”

The talk? “We like to talk crap to each other quite a bit,” she said. “It doesn’t matter if we’re all together or if we’re on the phone or what. That’s just what we do. It’s so fun though.”

Morey’s first love growing up was softball. And she was very good at the sport, winning three NSA World Series titles with the Indiana Shockwaves.

“A lot of the girls that I played with are playing (softball) collegiately now,” she said. “Ultimately, I ended up choosing volleyball. And the more I play, the more I love it.”

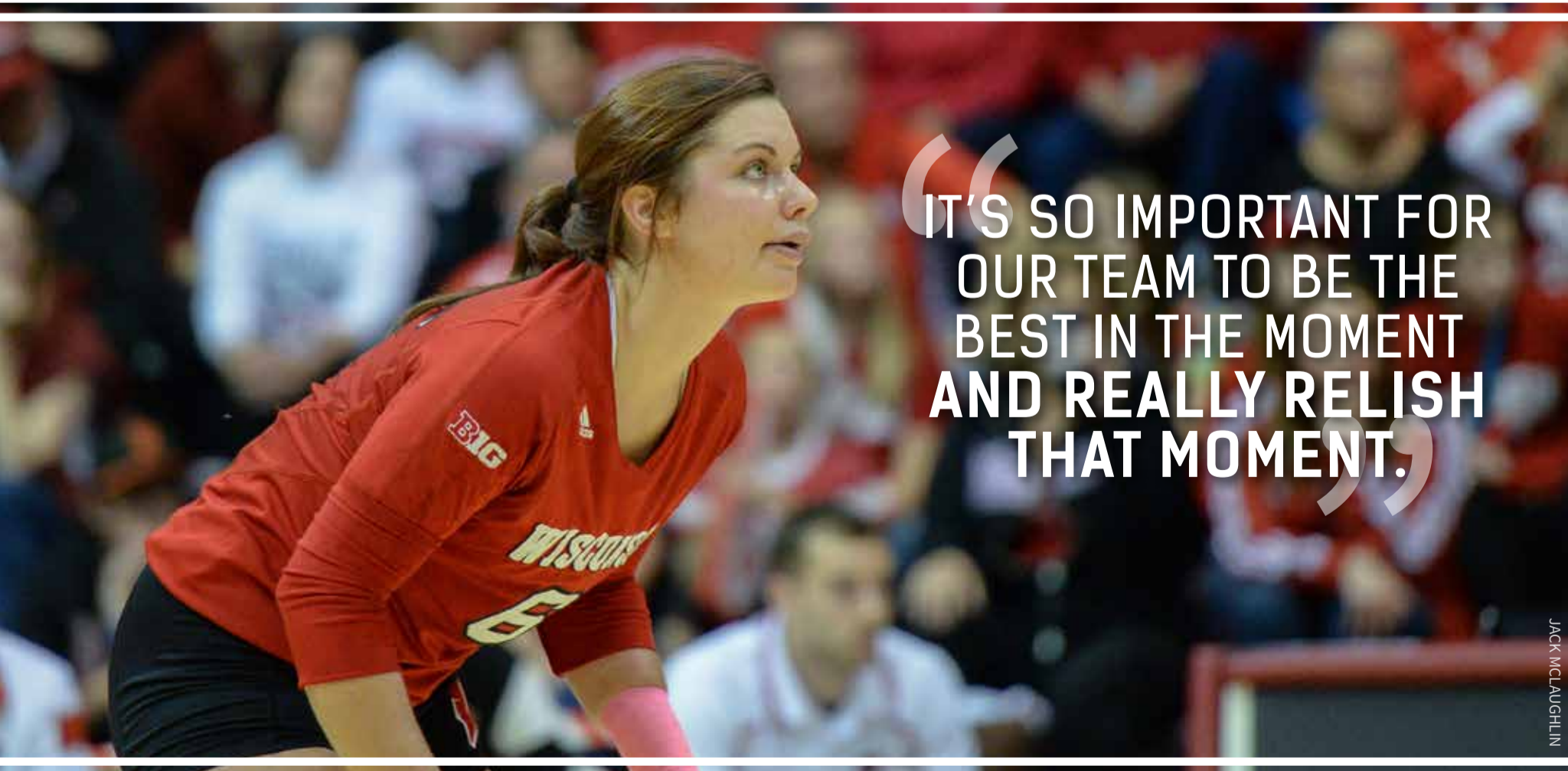
Her passion for the sport was stoked on some fiercely competitive club teams.

“We play hard and there’s no ball you can’t get,” she said of the ingrained mentality. “Whether that means going into the stands or lying out across the court, it doesn’t matter.

“There’s no ball you can’t get. And how do you know if you can’t get it, if you don’t try?”

Overall, Morey was so proficient as a Burriss High School athlete in Muncie that she was featured in the “Faces in the Crowd” segment of Sports Illustrated in December of 2009.

While there was no preconceived direction that she was going to take during the recruiting process she was a Notre Dame fan as a young-



“IT’S SO IMPORTANT FOR OUR TEAM TO BE THE BEST IN THE MOMENT AND REALLY RELISH THAT MOMENT.”

FIFTEEN STRONG

▲ TAP TO WATCH - Fifteen Strong: Episode 2

ster and “fell in love with the campus” on her visit.

Morey played in all 30 matches as a true freshman and led the Fighting Irish in digs. “But I knew ultimately I wanted to play at an elite level,” she said. “And the Big Ten is the best conference.”

Sheffield had coached Morey’s older sister, Allyson, at Dayton. And when Sheffield became the head coach of the Badgers, it created a natural frame of reference for someone looking to transfer.

“That’s kind of why I looked into it (transferring to the UW),” she said. “But I knew nothing about Wisconsin, the program, the state, nothing.”

That all changed after her visit. “I came and loved Madison,” she said, “and I really liked my teammates; I had played against a couple of the girls in club, so I just kind of fell in love with it all.”

Still it was a difficult transition last season. “It was just hard because it was so far away from home and I’m definitely a family girl,” she said,

adding that she found strength from those around her.

“My teammates were awesome; they’re my best friends. And the coaches were great. Their support helped so much that the distance didn’t matter after awhile.”

There’s not much that can sidetrack Morey these days. There’s too much at stake after the Badgers swept Western Michigan and Illinois State to advance to the Sweet 16 of the NCAA tournament.

“I felt we started off with solid first and second-round matches,” she said of last week’s home matches. “Illinois State is a team that is going to battle, it’s very experienced. That was good for us.

“We battled and had to go through some long rallies. Obviously, we love our fans and there’s no better place to play than the Field House when the fans are rocking.

“One of my favorite parts was to be able to see the seniors go out of here with a win and everyone in the stands doing Varsity together and that was pretty cool.

“We know every day is a new day,” she said quickly turning her attention to Ohio State. “Serving-wise, they have players who can put a lot of movement on the ball.

“They also have a really great setter and some good attackers. Overall, they’re a solid six-rotation team.”

The Badgers and the Buckeyes are not strangers. They will be meeting for a third time this season with Wisconsin sweeping the first two matches, home and away. Who will have the edge Friday?

“Throughout the year,” Morey said, “teams get better and develop their game a little further. The scouting reports aren’t necessarily the same. I don’t think there’s an advantage or disadvantage.”

She also doesn’t believe in the adage that it’s nearly impossible to beat someone three times.

“I believe the best team that comes out to play every night comes out on top,” she said. “We’ve prided ourselves on being consistent and we’re going to continue to do our job that way.”

Morey stressed the Badgers won’t get caught

looking ahead to a potential Penn State match-up in the regional final.

“You can’t look to the future because if you do, it ends up biting you in the butt,” she said. “It’s one match at a time. We have to come in focused and just live in the moment.


“That’s something Kelly talked about so much last year and even throughout this year. It’s so important for our team to be the best in the moment and really relish that moment.”

Being named Defensive Player of the Year is one of those moments; a moment to savor.

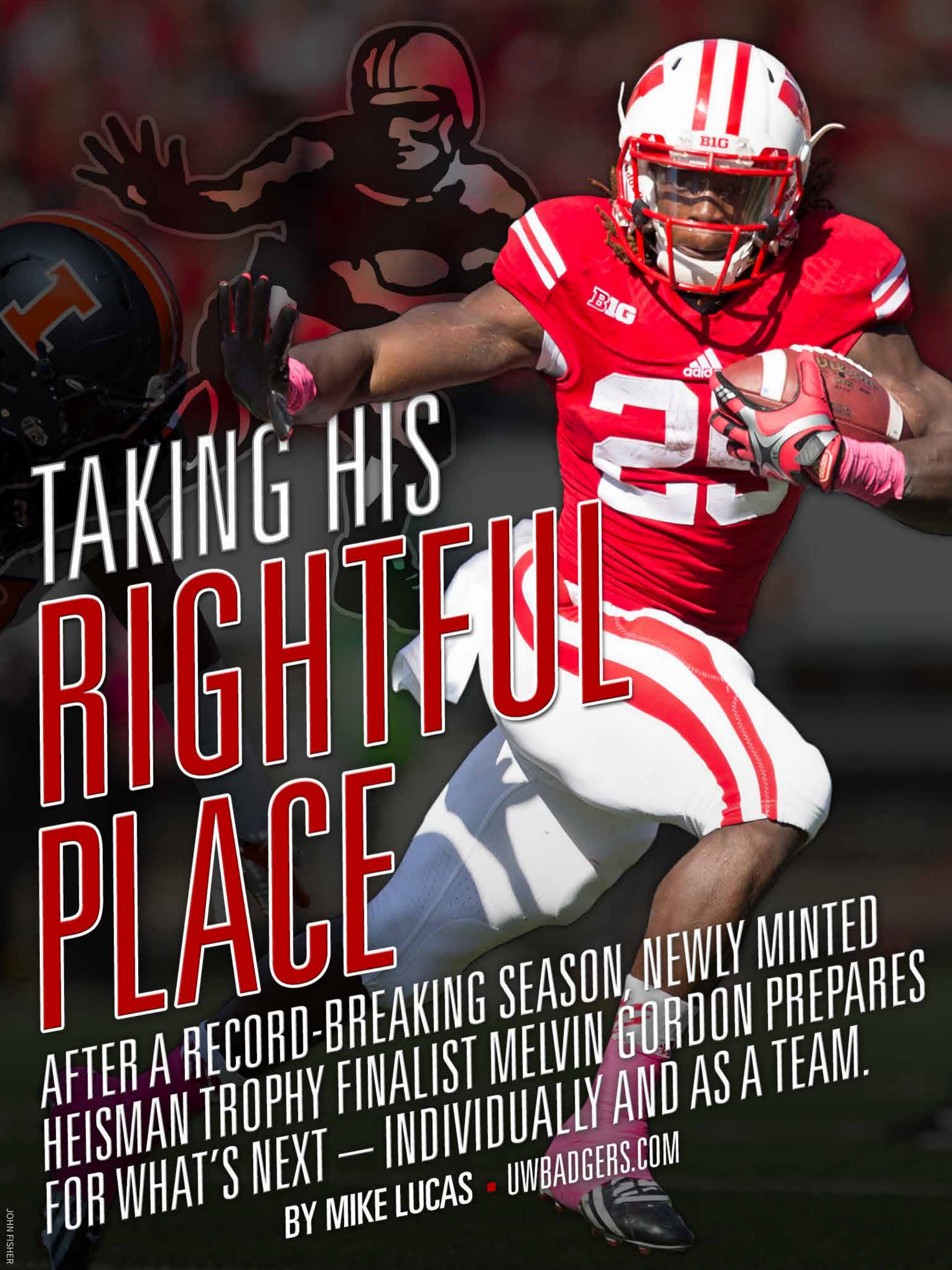
“Obviously it’s an honor playing with such elite players and being able to get that award,” Morey said.

“But ultimately the individual

awards don’t mean as much without the team award. So my focus is 100 percent on the national championship.

“We fell short of our goal last year and this year we all have that mentality that we want to get right back where we were (the NCAA finals) and have the confetti fall on our side this year.” 

“I BELIEVE THE BEST TEAM THAT COMES OUT TO PLAY EVERY NIGHT COMES OUT ON TOP,” MOREY SAID. “WE’VE PRIDED OURSELVES ON BEING CONSISTENT AND WE’RE GOING TO CONTINUE TO DO OUR JOB THAT WAY.”



TAKING HIS RIGHTFUL PLACE

AFTER A RECORD-BREAKING SEASON, NEWLY MINTED HEISMAN TROPHY FINALIST MELVIN GORDON PREPARES FOR WHAT'S NEXT — INDIVIDUALLY AND AS A TEAM.

BY MIKE LUCAS • UWBADGERS.COM

FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF former Wisconsin tailback Montee Ball was always more of a challenge than a cliché; more of a bonus than a burden for Melvin Gordon.

From the time that Gordon was a UW freshman, he looked up to Ball and kept an eye on how he handled the preseason hype, the in-season expectations and the post-season awards.

Gordon recounted how he went from “seeing him going through this process and being a Heisman finalist” during Ball’s junior season in 2011 to “thinking how it would feel to be in his shoes.”

Monday, he got his answer.

“Now I’m actually in them (those shoes),” Gordon said, “and it’s a good feeling.”

After putting up historic rushing numbers during his junior season, Gordon was one of only three players invited to New York City for the prestigious Heisman presentation Saturday night.

Gordon will be joined by Oregon quarterback Marcus Mariota and Alabama wide receiver Amari Cooper.

Since Wisconsin tailback Ron Dayne won the Heisman in 1999, only two running backs have walked off with the trophy: USC’s Reggie Bush in 2005 and Alabama’s Mark Ingram in 2009.

The proliferation of spread offenses has inflated many of the statistical resumes for quarterbacks, who have won 12 of the last 14 elections.

As the only tailback among the 2014 finalists, Gordon pointed out that “different people have different opinions” on who’s the best at his position and “it depends on who you talk to.”

But certainly nobody could match his 2,336 rushing yards and 29 total touchdowns.

“It’s a good feeling to know I achieved and did the things that I wanted to do,” he said. “I wanted to rush for the most yards. I wanted to showcase that I was the best running back.

“And this year I showed that ...”

After a pause, he added modestly, “to me.”

Gordon is also one of three finalists for the Doak Walker Award — which goes to the nation’s top running back — joining fellow Big Ten tailbacks Ameer Abdullah of Nebraska and Tevin Coleman of Indiana.

The winner will be announced Thursday on ESPN during the Home Depot College Football Awards Show from the Disney World Resort at Lake Buena Vista, Fla. The presenter will be Floyd Little.

A three-time All-American at Syracuse, Little is a member of both the college football and professional football Hall of Fames. He accounted for 4,928 all-purpose yards in 30 college games.

Syracuse has retired the No. 44 worn by Little, the late Ernie Davis and Jim Brown, among others. On Monday night, Gordon admitted that he would love to cross paths with the legendary Brown.

“That’s who I really want to meet,” he said, “one of the best running backs ever.”

Brown never won the Heisman. Didn’t come close. Many wondered why. Still do.

Despite rushing for 986 yards and 13 touchdowns in eight games, Brown finished fifth on the 1956 Heisman ballot. The upset winner was Notre Dame quarterback Paul Hornung.

The Irish went 2-8 and Hornung had 13 interceptions to three touchdown passes. Yet Hornung, Johnny Majors, Tommy McDonald and Jerry Tubbs all outpolled Brown that season.

What piqued Gordon’s curiosity about Brown was something Ball had posted: a photo of Brown and Ball taken during the Doak Walker Award banquet in 2012. Brown was the Legends Award recipient.

“I was a little jealous,” Gordon said smiling.

Ball won the Doak over Oregon’s Kenjon Barner and UCLA’s Johnathan Franklin. In 2011, he had been one of the finalists with Oregon’s LaMichael James and Alabama’s Trent Richardson, who won.

While the Doak winner will be revealed Thursday, the banquet won’t take place until Feb. 20, 2015 in Dallas. If things align, Gordon is still

hoping to meet Brown, 77, somewhere down the road.

For now, he’s looking forward to visiting with Abdullah and Coleman in Orlando.

“I’ve never really got to talk with Tevin in person,” he said of Coleman, who rushed for 2,036 yards in 12 games, “and it would be cool to sit down and just talk about our experiences.”

Besides the Doak Walker award, Gordon is a finalist for the Maxwell Award that honors the top player in college football. Mariota and Mississippi State quarterback Dak Prescott are the other finalists.

The Maxwell will also be announced Thursday



JOHN FISHER



▲ **TAP TO WATCH:** Gordon's Heisman Trophy finalist reaction

night. Lou Holtz will be the presenter.

Gordon will then fly from Orlando to New York City for the Heisman ceremony.

"I was told maybe some past Heisman winners will be there," said Gordon, who has never been to the Big Apple, "so I'm anxious just to meet some legends. I think that will be special.

"Regardless if I win or not, I want to make the best of this trip because not everyone gets this experience and I've got to make the best of it."

Barry Sanders, the 1988 Heisman winner, is atop his wish list.

"I would love to talk to Barry Sanders and actually meet him," said Gordon. "He was one of the first guys that I started watching (on film). My dad showed me (Sanders highlights).

"His record is a little far away now (from reaching)," he said of Sanders' single-season rushing mark of 2,628 (sans bowl). "It would be great to beat his record. It would be an honor.

"He's a special player. Everybody knows that. If I get a chance to meet him that would honestly change my day and definitely put me in a better mood."

Gordon was relatively subdued at his Monday news conference.

"I feel good," he said. "It's just that I'm not showing it right now."

Asked whether he felt the Heisman invitation had validated his decision to return for another year of college eligibility rather than turning pro, he said, "I guess so. It was a goal of mine.

"It just shows what type of year I had and how hard I worked," he went on. "I came back to help my team and do some things and to become a better player as well and I think this is showing that."

Gordon conceded that he may have a delayed reaction to the magnitude of being a Heisman finalist saying "it probably will really hit me" when he gets to New York.

In 2011, Ball was one of five finalists, including Robert Griffin III, Andrew Luck, Trent Richardson, and Tyrann Mathieu. The Heisman went to RG3, Ball was fourth and Russell Wilson was ninth.

"Montee went through it and he never complained about it at all," Gordon said of the travel

demands that come with the award shows. “He did what he had to do.”

And so will Gordon, especially from the perspective of helping get the Badgers back up on their feet after Saturday night’s knockout punch from Ohio State in the Big Ten championship game.

“Right now,” he said, “we’re just trying to get ourselves back together.”

Wisconsin will return to action Jan. 1 against Auburn in the Outback Bowl.

“Auburn is a good team, everybody knows that,” Gordon said. “They’re better than their record (8-4) shows. They have playmakers across the board. We understand that, we know that.”

After watching the video of the Ohio State loss, Gordon drew some of his own conclusions.

“Their players made more plays than we did,” he said.

“They had a fire to them and it was one of our bad days. You have some good days, you have some bad days.

“Unfortunately our bad day happened to be on one of the biggest days of our lives. It hurt watching the film. It just wasn’t us on both sides of the ball.

“It wasn’t how we play or how we do things. We’re going to bounce back though. We’re going to get it together. We’re determined and I promise you we’re going to change things.”

Some of his teammates

promised the same things Saturday night. “It hurts, we’ll remember this feeling,” said safety Michael Caputo. “But we’ll keep these guys heads up and learn from the mistakes.”

Sophomore cornerback Sojourn Shelton is confident in the team’s leadership.

“We follow their lead, especially the seniors,” he said. “I know those guys will let this hurt for a little bit but they’ll put it past them.

“Going into the bowl, we have to understand

we’re going to be playing another great team and they’re not going to feel sorry for us.


“In order for this to not happen again, we just have to put this game behind us and prepare in the right direction for the bowl game.”

Shelton was alluding to a senior leader like linebacker Marcus Trotter.

“This is definitely going to make us stronger,” Trotter said. “We are a group of guys who love to fight, who love to have their backs to the wall.

“So when adversity strikes, that’s when we’re the strongest. We’re going to learn from this. Same thing as Northwestern. Maybe if we didn’t lose, we wouldn’t have come this far.”

Trotter’s message was that this season’s journey is not yet over. Gordon agreed saying it was all about “working on our identity, getting our guys healthy and fixing our mistakes.”

Gordon made another promise. “We’re going to turn things around,” he said. 

“It wasn’t how we play or how we do things. We’re going to bounce back though. We’re going to get it together. We’re determined and I promise you we’re going to change things.”





Badgers ready to play best in regionals

Wisconsin one of remaining 16 teams

Out of 334 Div. I women's volleyball teams across the nation, only 16 remain. The fourth-seeded Badgers are one of those teams.

"We are very fired up and fortunate to still be playing as one of 16 teams," head coach Kelly Sheffield said at Monday's news conference. "We don't take that for granted. There's a lot of really good programs around the country whose seasons have already ended."

Wisconsin heads to Louisville, Kentucky, this weekend to compete in NCAA Regional play. The Badgers (30-2) face Big Ten Conference opponent Ohio State (23-11) in the semifinals at 4 p.m. on Friday. Fifth-seeded Penn State (32-3) takes on UCLA (22-11) in the second semifinal at 6 p.m. Semifinal winners advance to the regional championship on Saturday at 3 p.m. for a trip to next weekend's NCAA Championship in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

UW has faced Ohio State twice this season, sweeping them on both occasions with the most recent win coming in Columbus, Ohio, on Nov. 21. Penn State handed the Badgers their only Big Ten loss of the season back in late September while Wisconsin

SCHEDULE (30-2, 19-1)

Home events in **bold**. All times CT.

RECENTLY

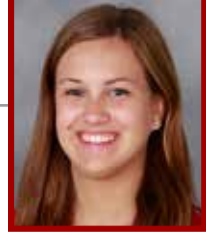
Nov. 28	Purdue	W, 3-0
Dec. 4	NCAA First Round vs. W. Michigan	W, 3-0
Dec. 5	NCAA Second Round vs. Illinois State	W, 3-0

COMING UP

Dec. 12	at NCAA Regional Semifinals vs. Ohio State	4 p.m.
Dec. 13	at NCAA Regional Final TBA	3 p.m.

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Loss of captain is midseason motivation

Michala Johnson suffered a torn ACL at Miami

In the wake of devastating news, losing senior captain Michala Johnson midway through the season, the Badgers have rallied around her to post their two biggest wins of the season. Nine minutes into the contest against Miami, Johnson tore her ACL and will now miss the rest of the season as a result.

In the face of bad news, the Badgers have stepped up for their fallen captain. Last weekend, Wisconsin snapped a five-game losing streak by taking down I-94 rival Marquette, 89-64. The Badgers scored a season-high 89 points and shot 53.2 percent (33-of-62) from the field with four players scoring in double figures.

“The kids are very sad for her but we showed some resilience and some toughness by coming out and playing Marquette and taking care of business in that game,” Kelsey added. “But again, her loss we’re going to feel it a little bit but I think the kids are encouraged by the fact that we did come out against Marquette and not just squeak out a win but we really had a definitive win.”

Four days later, UW posted its most impressive win of the season, pulling out a 51-48 road win over Florida Wednesday

-SCROLL FOR MORE-

SCHEDULE (3-5, 0-0)

Home games in **bold**. All times CT.

RECENTLY

ACC/Big Ten Challenge:

Dec. 4	at Miami	L, 66-54
Dec. 6	Marquette	W, 89-64
Dec. 10	at Florida	W, 51-48

COMING UP

Dec. 13	at Green Bay	7 p.m.
Dec. 20	Oral Roberts	5 p.m.
Dec. 28	Michigan	3 p.m.

2015

Jan. 1	at Northwestern	1 p.m.
Jan. 4	Minnesota	2 p.m.

> Complete Schedule | Buy Tickets

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The future of hockey comes to Kohl Center

A pair of Badger signees will skate in Madison

Names like Patrick Kane, Blake Geoffrion, Erik Johnson, Adam Clendening and others have visited the Kohl Center in the past as members of the U.S. Under-18 Team, and this Friday, a new group of future NCAA and NHL stars will skate against the Badgers.

Led by a pair of Wisconsin signees in goaltender Luke Opilka and forward Luke Kunin, Team USA brings in a talented squad that is 20-6-1 this season, including 2-3-1 against NCAA Division I hockey programs. Among those college results are victories over Minnesota and Miami, both schools currently ranked among the nation's top seven teams.

Wisconsin is 4-0 all-time against the U.S. Under-18 Team, but two of the four meetings were close calls. The Badgers' 2006 NCAA championship team needed a five-goal third period to upend the U.S., 6-5, in the first meeting between UW and USA on Dec. 16, 2005, while the 2011-12 Badgers held on for a 4-3 victory on 2011 New Year's Eve. Two other championship-caliber teams sailed past the Americans, winning 7-1 on Jan. 9, 2010 and posting a 5-0 shutout victory on Oct. 6, 2012.

Current Badger freshman forward Ryan Wagner and freshman

-SCROLL FOR MORE-

SCHEDULE (1-10-1)

Home games in **bold**. All times CT.

RECENTLY

Nov. 28	Ferris State	T, 1-1 (OT)
Nov. 29	Ferris State	W, 5-3
Dec. 5	Penn State	L, 5-2
Dec. 6	Penn State	L, 4-2

COMING UP

Dec. 12	US U-18 (Exh.)	7 p.m.
Jan. 2	Michigan Tech	7 p.m.
Jan. 3	Michigan Tech	7 p.m.
Jan. 9	Boston Univ.	7 p.m.
Jan. 10	Boston Univ.	7 p.m.
Jan. 16	at Minnesota	8 p.m.

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No. 3 Badgers ready for semester break

Badgers head into break with 17-2-1 record

Heading into last weekend's series at home against North Dakota, Mark Johnson and the Badgers looked to end the first part of their season on a high note. Mission accomplished as UW claimed a 2-1 overtime win on Friday before a 2-0 shutout on Sunday.

No. 3 Wisconsin now heads into its hiatus riding a 12-game unbeaten streak, a nine-game winning streak and has allowed only six goals during its winning streak.

Looking back on the first part of the season, the Badgers have now enjoyed an eight-game winning streak as well as its current nine-game streak, and rank in the top-five nationally in scoring offense and scoring defense.

"The chemistry has gotten a lot better," sophomore Mikayla Johnson said about the team's improvement over the first stretch of the year. "We have spent a lot of time with each other the past few months, which has made us a lot better team."

The team will have a few weeks away from hockey before returning to Madison for the New Year, but Wisconsin head coach Mark Johnson hopes the players are ready when they return.

"The responsibility on the players is to make sure they stay

SCHEDULE (17-2-1, 13-2-1)

Home games in **bold**. All times CT.

RECENTLY

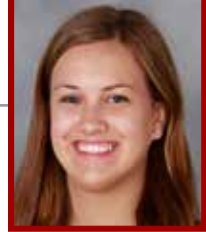
Nov. 29	at New Hampshire	W, 5-0
Nov. 30	at New Hampshire	W, 5-0
Dec. 5	North Dakota	W, 2-1 (OT)
Dec. 7	North Dakota	W, 2-0

COMING UP

Jan. 10	#2 Minnesota	4 p.m.
Jan. 11	#2 Minnesota	2 p.m.
Jan. 16	#9 Bemidji State	7 p.m.
Jan. 17	#9 Bemidji State	3 p.m.
Jan. 24	#10 Clarkson	2 p.m.
Jan. 25	#10 Clarkson	Noon

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Lineup changes bode well for Badgers

Badgers look forward to conference season

After a relaxing week off from competition, the Badgers will return to the mat at home to pick back up on the Big Ten schedule. The Badgers will first take on Indiana on Thursday in the UW Field House before heading to Lincoln, Nebraska on Saturday to face a tough opponent in eighth-ranked Nebraska. The rest of the team will travel to the UNI Open at Northern Iowa on Saturday.

The Badgers are 1-0 in conference duals after defeating Maryland in the first home dual of the season, 28-12. UW held a 3-2 record in home duals last season.

Indiana boasts the Big Ten Wrestler of the Week (Nov. 25), Taylor Walsh. At 165 lbs., Walsh is 10-0 on the season and has recorded eight pins. Walsh will undoubtedly be one of the biggest competitors Wisconsin's All-American and sixth-ranked Isaac Jordan will face this season.

The competition doesn't get any easier as UW then faces Nebraska (4-0) on their own turf. The Huskers have six ranked grapplers right now, including No. 2 Robert Kokesh at 174 lbs.

The Badgers are coming off of a very successful double-victory road trip where they posted wins over North Dakota State

SCHEDULE (3-1, 1-0)

Home events in **bold**. All times CT.

RECENTLY

Nov. 14	Maryland	W, 28-12
Nov. 20	at Rider	L, 20-19
Nov. 22	Navy Classic	4th place <i>Annapolis, Md.</i>
Nov. 29	at S. Dakota St.	W, 26-9
Nov. 30	at N. Dakota St.	W, 25-9

COMING UP

Dec. 11	Indiana	7 p.m.
Dec. 13	at Nebraska	6 p.m.
Dec. 13	at UNI Open	All Day
Dec. 29-30	at Midlands	All Day

[> View complete schedule](#)

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CHAMPIONSHIP BOUND

DECEMBER 14, 2013: The 12th-seeded volleyball team became the lowest seeded squad to advance to an NCAA national semifinal after downing Purdue, 3-1, in the Champaign (Illinois) Regional Final.

-MORE THIS WEEK-



FOUR-MINUTE MILE

DECEMBER 11, 1978:

Senior Steve Lacy set the Wisconsin school record for the indoor mile with a time of 4:00.4. He went on to finish fourth in the event at the NCAA championships.



GREATEST GAP

DECEMBER 13, 1978:

The women's basketball team scored a 115-50 win over Milwaukee, setting the Badgers' single-game school record for the largest margin of victory, at 65 points.



STRIKE THE POSE

DECEMBER 11, 1999:

Ron Dayne was awarded the 65th Heisman Trophy. Dayne finished with 586 first-place votes and 2,042 points, becoming the second Wisconsin player to win the award.