

THE OFFICIAL DIGITAL MAGAZINE OF THE WISCONSIN BADGERS

# VARSITY

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## *POISE AT THE POINT*

EXPECTATIONS WERE HIGH FOR BRONSON KOENIG, WHICH IS EXACTLY WHAT THE BADGERS' POINT GUARD EXPECTED





COVER STORY

# ON GUARD

Dating back to his days at the YMCA in La Crosse, Bronson Koenig has never been one to back down from a challenge. His confidence has helped carry Wisconsin back to the Sweet 16.



WEST REGIONAL PREVIEW

## HOLLYWOOD ENDING?

Can the Badgers once again get through the West Regional and back to the Final Four? The challenge starts Thursday in Los Angeles.

LUCAS AT LARGE

## FRIENDS ARE FOES

Once on the same side as Playground Warriors, Sam Dekker and J.P. Tokoto will battle in the Sweet 16 when UW and UNC face off.



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# VARSIITY

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# Matchup pits friends Dekker, Tokoto as foes

**W**hile the Southern Cal women played Pepperdine in a sand volleyball match at Merle Norman Stadium, located on the east corner of the USC campus, the Wisconsin basketball team practiced across Figueroa Street at the Galen Center, the last known whereabouts of Andy Enfield, the “hot” coach with the model wife and the darling of the 2013 NCAA Tournament.

Remember when Florida Gulf Coast, a lowly No. 15 seed, hijacked the first weekend of the Big Dance and advanced into the Sweet 16 before flaming out? Enfield used that run to market himself nationally and found a buyer in the Trojans, who have yet to show any of that same magic under his guid-

ance; they were 11-21 in his first season and 12-20 this past year. How soon they fade and forget.

North Carolina borrowed Enfield’s practice facility for their Tuesday workout and the Badgers were on the other side of the partitioned wall in the women’s gym. In a couple of days, they will clash at the Staples Center in a Sweet 16 matchup that will serve as a reunion for two good friends, the Tar Heels’ J.P. Tokoto, who hails from Menomonee Falls; and Sam Dekker, the UW junior from Sheboygan.

“I’ve known him since my freshman year of high school; I met him during our first practice for AAUs,” Dekker said. “I knew he was one of the best players in the state and we hit it off right

away; we liked playing ball. Our coaches were good about having practices in different cities, so sometimes we practiced in Sheboygan, sometimes we’d practice in Milwaukee; so we’d go all over the place.

“And we’d end up bunking together,” Dekker went on. “I can’t tell you how many times I spent the night over at the Tokotos’ house or he was over at our place. We took care of each other. Our families got along great. We still stay in touch all the time. I talked to him today (Tuesday). I didn’t get a chance to see him but we’re supportive of each other, we like to see each other do well. It’s good.”

When the Badgers played Milwaukee in early December, Dekker pointed out that Toko-





to's dad attended. "He went to the game just to say hi and show some support, which really shows the type of people that they are," said Dekker. "We probably won't text before the game (Thursday). But we may try to meet up later tonight; just to see him, just to say hi and see how he's doing."

Anticipating possessions where the 6-foot-6, 200-pound Tokoto and the 6-9, 230-pound Dekker may be matched against each other is an intriguing sidebar to the main story. "He's one of the best defenders in the ACC," Dekker said. "He likes to get up into guys and he has

always been able to do that. We know each other's game pretty well, so it will be fun to be out there and compete."

Asked if their AAU days together with the Wisconsin Playground Warriors seemed like eons ago, Dekker smiled and said, "It does a little bit but at the same time you still have so many memories that are so clear; me and him and Bronson (Koenig) played a lot of games together and won a lot of games together. It was always fun to be on the court with them and now it's a little different scenario."

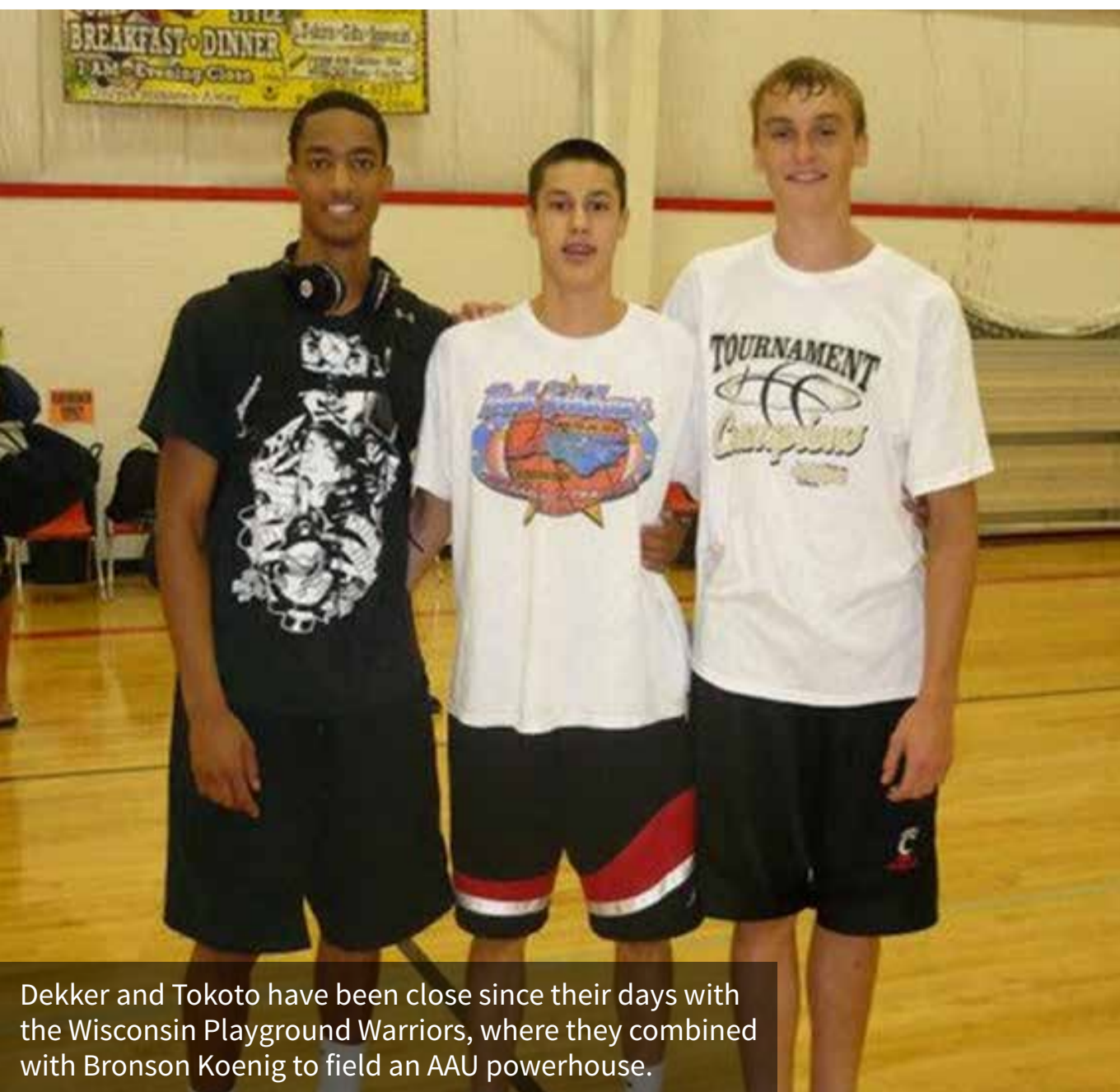
Over the years, AAU ball has come under intense scrutiny

and even criticism from college and high school coaches. But Dekker has no regrets. "It did a lot for me," he said. "I played at a smaller high school so I didn't get the exposure, so AAU did a lot for me in terms of getting my name out there. For different people, it works different. In our system, we were very organized, it wasn't just chaos.

"So it all depends on who you're playing with and who your coaches are; there's no politics, you have to be with the right unit, the right group that actually teaches basketball. But I would agree that there are some (AAU) teams that don't do it the right way and don't play basketball the right way."

The Badgers and the Tar Heels have never fallen in that group. Dekker not only respects Tokoto but the way the Heels play the game. "Obviously, they like to get it up and down," he said. "They like playing an up-tempo style of basketball and they're going to try and throw that at us. But we can play that way, too. We like to play our own way. Some people might say it's a clash in styles but we like to get it and go as well. They will put a lot of athletes on the court. But we're not too bad physically either."

A smile returned to his face. ■



Dekker and Tokoto have been close since their days with the Wisconsin Playground Warriors, where they combined with Bronson Koenig to field an AAU powerhouse.



# Pressure's on? That's news to the Badgers

**E**arlier this week, I heard something on a national college basketball show that struck me as a bit odd, or at least different from what those of us who follow the Badgers are used to hearing.

When breaking down Thursday night's Sweet 16 matchup between Wisconsin and North Carolina, one of the commentators declared the Tar Heels are playing with house money — the pressure was on the West Region's No. 1-seeded Badgers.

Really? Ever believe you would hear something like that?

I'm not sure I completely agree with the assessment, but it says something about Wisconsin basketball.

For one thing, if the Badgers are feeling pressure, they do a masterful job of hiding it. From riding go-karts, to having fun with a stenographer at a news conference, to the daily cackling that goes on with this group, I tend to believe Bo Ryan's team simply likes being together.

Naturally, they want to keep the season going as long as possible. When it is time to work, they work. When it is time to step away, they step away and have some fun in the process. Nothing wrong with that. This is college, right?

For those of us old enough to remember when NCAA tournament trips were not part of the Badgers' annual schedule,

a statement declaring a blue-blood program such as North Carolina as an underdog is striking.

Underdog or not, the Tar Heels are good and they are deep. Coach Roy Williams can play a variety of combinations. As usual, they like to play quickly. And they rebound like crazy, especially on the offensive glass. Yet the Tar Heels have lost 11 games. Williams has said his team can be unpredictable. Not just from game to game, but from media timeout to media timeout.

**THE BADGERS HAVE BEEN ON THE BIG STAGE LONG ENOUGH TO KNOW THEY BELONG.**

In their Round of 64 matchup with Harvard, Carolina started fast and looked as though it would cruise to an easy victory. Then the Heels became sloppy, committing 17 turnovers before hanging on to win 67-65.

Two days later against Arkansas, the Heels and the Hogs were close for most of the evening before UNC pulled away to win by nine. Guard Marcus Paige showed his ability to take over a game, scoring 20 of his 22 points in the second half.

Wisconsin and North Carolina have met a grand total of two times, with UNC winning on both

occasions — by a combined total of nine points.

In 2011, the Tar Heels held off the Badgers 60-57 in Chapel Hill. Ten years ago, Carolina's run to the national title (the fourth of five the school owns) went through Syracuse, where it beat Wisconsin in a thriller of a regional final, 88-82.

Fair or not, fans tend to expect North Carolina to be playing during the second weekend of the NCAA tournament. Since 1975, when the NCAA tracked Sweet 16 appearances, this is the 26th time UNC has made it to the regional weekend. While this year's edition may be flawed at times, the Tar Heels have big-time talent. So what else is new?

Then again, this is the Badgers' fourth Sweet 16 appearance in five years. Fair or not, more and more college hoops fans figure the Badgers are a team they expect to see well into the tournament. They, too, have big-time talent.

I will stop short of saying either team is playing with house money, but I will say the Badgers have been on the big stage long enough to know they belong.

Whatever happens here in Los Angeles, it sure is a kick to know the Badgers are considered one of the sport's elite programs. To the point where at least some believe a tradition-rich opponent is the one with nothing to lose. ■



# WHAT ARE YOUR SPRING BREAK PLANS?



**TAYLOR FRICANO**  
Sophomore • Volleyball

“ I’ll be going to Kentucky to visit family and then after that I’m flying down to Tampa, Florida, to meet up with (teammates) Haleigh Nelson and Kelli Bates for some Florida sun. I’ll also be visiting a friend who attends USF, but Badgers will be in Florida!”



**ANDREW ENDICOTT**  
Sophomore • Football

“ I’m going to Maui with my family. We try to go every two years and the last time was after my (high school) graduation with my best friends. I flew straight from there to Madison to start school. I’ll be playing golf all week with my dad. We golf a lot when I’m home and golfing in Hawaii is a must. It probably won’t be fair since he’s been able to practice all winter, though.”



**SAWYER SMITH**  
Fr. • Men’s Track & Field

“ Our team is going out to Santa Barbara, California, to train over break, and I want to enjoy the nice weather and get some good training outdoors. I’m also looking forward to competing in my first decathlon ever and seeing what I can do.”



**CAITLYN CLEM**  
Fr. • Women’s Soccer

“ Every year since I was 3 years old I’d gone to Cancun, Mexico, with my family. But that was until I was a senior in high school, because my spring break was no longer at the same time as my family’s. But, this year, our spring break synced up so now I can go back to our condo in Mexico with my whole family. I look forward to having some quality family time because I barely see them all year.”



## AMANDA MORRIS

*A four-year high school swimmer at Middleton High School, Wisconsin sophomore rower **Amanda Morris** grew up in the Madison area. A third-generation UW student-athlete, Morris has taken a fancy to helping others during her short time as a Badger.*

### **What is it like going to school so close to where you grew up?**

“Growing up in Madison, I always knew that I wanted to come to UW-Madison and be a Badger. There’s really no place like it. It’s nice to be so close to home and to be somewhere so familiar.”

### **Describe your pre-race mentality.**

“I always try to stay loose, whether that’s joking around with teammates or listening to music. I’m always the one joking around and laughing, but once it’s time to warm up, it’s time to focus. We always have a planned warmup that we go through before each race, which helps create a sense of routine.”

### **How do you manage winter training, knowing that Lake Mendota isn’t going to thaw for quite some time?**

“When we first come off the water, it can be a hard transition knowing we have months of indoor training ahead of us. But

**- SCROLL FOR MORE -**

### **ALL ABOUT AMANDA**

**Year:** Sophomore

**Height:** 5-7

**Hometown:** Madison, Wis.

**High School:** Middleton

### **QUICK Qs FOR AMANDA**

**Favorite thing to do outside of rowing?**

“Does taking naps count?”

**Favorite place to eat on State Street?**

“Chipotle.”

**Favorite song to erg to?**

“It’s a tie between ‘GDFR’ by Flo Rida and ‘Shut Up and Dance’ by Walk the Moon.”

**What has been your favorite trip?**

“My favorite trip thus far would be our trip last year when we traveled to Michigan for our first Big Ten race of the season. We got there a few days early and got to go to Laine’s (Maher) house for dinner, where we were treated to a buffet of delicious food and a bagpiper. Yes, a bagpiper. It was also our first race wearing the Motion W. The venue and weather were beautiful, and it was a great first experience racing as a Badger. It was a blast.”



ON

GUARD



# The Badgers have missed Traevon Jackson's on-court contributions, but that doesn't mean they've missed a beat with **BRONSON KOENIG** at the helm. Living up to high expectations has come to be expected from Koenig, who has never been one to back down from a challenge.

BY MIKE LUCAS ■ [UWBADGERS.COM](http://UWBADGERS.COM)

Like most impressionable kids, most aspiring young athletes, Bronson Koenig had posters on his bedroom wall. The one that commanded the most space, especially in his heart, was the Michael Jordan poster. Although he was only 8 when Jordan retired for a final time in 2003, he was well-versed on his exploits as the result of the Ultimate Jordan highlight reel DVD that he watched all the time. It was a gift from his parents and Koenig, a second grade prodigy, tried to emulate Jordan's special gifts. "I loved his demeanor," he said, "and just his heart and passion for the game."

Years later, when he was being recruited by some of the traditional heavyweights in college basketball, Koenig listened a little more intently to the recruiting pitches from his home-state school Wisconsin and, of course, from Jordan's school, North Carolina. During that time, he developed a relationship with two coaches, UW's Bo Ryan, a finalist on the 2015 Naismith Hall of Fame ballot, and UNC's Roy Williams, an active Hall of Famer. In the end, he picked the Badgers over the Tar Heels and the field which included Duke and Kansas. But he couldn't bring himself to tell Williams of his decision.

"I committed to Wis-

consin and I felt bad in my heart for not having called him (Williams) because of the relationship that we had built," said Koenig, who led La Crosse Aquinas to two WIAA Division 3 state championships. "Months after I finally did gather up the courage to tell him, he handled it like I figured he would handle it; he handled it like a gentleman, he handled it really well. He was definitely the one coach that I had built the strongest relationship with — of the coaches that recruited me and I didn't go to their schools — and I definitely felt that need to call him for sure."

In the sports world, a small world, for sure, these recruiting narratives tend to be revisited at some point when the recruiter and recruitee cross paths. Whether it's with Koenig and Williams or with Menomonee Falls' J.P. Tokoto, a North Carolina starter, and Ryan, it will be a storyline here Thursday when the Badgers and Tar Heels meet in the Sweet 16 of the NCAA tournament. (The games will be staged at the Staples Center, the home court of Lakers superstar Kobe Bryant, who's currently injured. Koenig holds Bryant in the same



high esteem as Jordan. “Same kind of passion and demeanor,” he said.)

Koenig and Tokoto were AAU teammates on the Wisconsin Playground Warriors — along with Sam Dekker — and Tokoto’s verbal commitment to Williams preceded Koenig’s to Ryan. During the recruiting process, Williams showed Koenig some video of one of his former Kansas players, Kirk Hinrich, who was a part of two Final Four teams with the Jayhawks and had his jersey (No. 10) retired. Williams believed they had similar tools. “They (the Tar Heels) pretty much told me I would be one of three guards on the court at a time,” said Koenig. “So I could be bringing the ball up or whatever.”

Ryan recruited Koenig to be a point guard, period. “Coach Ryan told me that he wanted me to have the ball in my hands,” Koenig said. “I had also played the 2 (shooting guard) and the 3 (small forward) spots. But I’ve been a point guard pretty much all of my life ... From a young

age, I was always pretty flashy, I guess you could say; that came from just watching Pete Maravich DVDs and highlights and what he brought to the game. I’d watch them a few times and then go and work out myself.”

The late, great Pete Maravich, floppy socks and all, was arguably the most creative guard ever; he’s still the NCAA’s all-time scoring leader with a 44.2 points per game average to go along with countless behind-the-back and through-the-legs passes, jaw-dropping assists. With Maravich in mind, Koenig would hone his ball-handling skills at the local YMCA, a home away from home in La Crosse. “Strangers would see me in there,” he recalled, “and they’d come back hours later and I would still be there and they’d ask, ‘Do you have a bed in the back?’ It was just a fun place to be and hang out.”

The YMCA was five minutes from his front doorstep and he would ride his bike there sometimes. Or his dad would just drop him off. “I



would live there; I wouldn't be playing basketball the whole entire time but most of the time I would be shooting," said Koenig, who acknowledged that it could get competitive. "I played against a lot of older guys, high school guys; I'd play them one-on-one; I'd play 21 and all those other basketball games. I remember when I was in the sixth grade, I played against someone who was on the high school team and I beat him and he was a little upset."

Koenig earned the starting point guard assignment during his freshman year at Aquinas High School and led the team in scoring. But there were some bruised egos. "I guess you could say I had some pressure put on me from a young age, being a freshman point guard starting over some upperclassmen," he said. "You know how high school is; there was some jealousy and politics and stuff like that, so I kind of had to work through that. But I thought I did a pretty good job. I would probably say my sophomore year, when we won state, I really came into my own as a player."

Scoring came relatively easy for Koenig, who nonetheless credited an Aquinas assistant, Dave Donarski (now the head coach of the women's team), with shaping his shooting techniques. When he got to Wisconsin, Koenig came under the wing of Ryan, a former high school and college point guard, and

Traevon Jackson, a former shooting guard who was running the point for the Badgers; the offshoot of the graduation loss of Jordan Taylor and a season-ending injury the year before to Josh Gasser.

**KOENIG ON BO RYAN:**

**"I've learned so much from him. He puts the ball in my hands, which tells me that he has the utmost confidence in me and in my ability to make plays for myself and my teammates."**

Ryan and Jackson have had a significant impact on Koenig's game. "Coach Ryan is awesome," he said. "I've learned so much from him; he taught me how to be a solid, fundamental, sound point guard. I pride myself on

not turning the ball over and getting my teammates in positions to score and I've definitely learned a lot of that from him. He puts the ball in my hands, which tells me that he has the ut-



BOB CAMPBELL



most confidence in me and in my ability to make plays for myself and my teammates.

“But it is a little different in college,” he said of his transition from high school to college, “especially playing for Coach Ryan under his system. Trae (Jackson) has obviously been there so he knows what it’s like.

People don’t give him enough credit for being the kind of guy that takes the last shot all the time.

“He has the confidence in himself to take that shot, and he has hit a lot of them. And he has given me some of that confidence, to be honest, and I know if that opportunity ever presents itself I know that I will be ready for it.”

Koenig can’t understand why some fans have been so critical of Jackson on Twitter or on

message boards. “I see it and I shake my head and I ignore it,” Koenig said. “I don’t understand why. He means so much more to this team than sometimes the box score or even what you see on the court. He’s a great vocal leader, a leader of this team.”

Since injuring his foot at Rutgers, since being relegated to the sideline for the last 18 games, Jackson has been solidly in Koenig’s corner. “He’ll be on the bench and I’ll look over to him and he’ll be mouthing,

**“He’ll be on the bench and I’ll look over to him and he’ll be mouthing, ‘Shoot the ball’ or ‘Be aggressive,’”** Koenig said of Jackson. **“That gave me a lot of confidence. In college sports, you have to kind of get it from yourself or from someone like Trae.”**

‘Shoot the ball’ or ‘Be aggressive,’” Koenig related. “A guy went under the screen on me in a recent game and before that, he (Jackson) told me, ‘If they go under it, shoot it.’ As I was starting to shoot, I could hear him from the bench screaming, ‘Yeah.’ That gave me a lot of confi-

dence. In college sports, you have to kind of get it from yourself or from someone like Trae.”

Before the start of the NCAA tournament, Jackson advised Koenig, “Play the same way you’ve been playing. Don’t worry about the bright lights. At the end of the day, it’s still a basketball game. Go out there and play. Be aggressive and be yourself and have some fun.”

Not that he ever had any doubt about Koenig. “I was confident that he would do that for sure,” said Jackson, who has been offering instruction and encouragement from the bench, “By getting mad at him when he’s not aggressive, by getting mad at him when he’s not shooting. And when I mean mad, I don’t mean physically mad. I mean, ‘C’mon, you’re better than that. You need to do this or need to do that. You need to be more aggressive.’ When he’s doing that, we’re a better team.”

Since taking over as the starter, Koenig said, “I’ve just developed a lot as a player and a point guard and that’s a credit to my coaches and my teammates, especially Trae because he has been teaching me how to be a point guard and I’m really thankful for that. I definitely like having the ball in my hands; just getting the (end of shot clock) opportunities that Trae used to have and now he’s kind of teaching me how to work those, how to play those situations.”

More minutes, more confidence.

“It’s pretty much exactly what it is,” Koenig said.

During the 13 non-conference games, when he was coming off the bench, Koenig shot only 39 percent from the field and 28 percent from beyond the 3-point arc. In Big Ten games, and he didn’t start the first three, he shot 42 percent overall and 45 percent on 3-pointers. “Coming off the bench, I didn’t know when my next shot was going to be,” he said. “And I wasn’t very confident in myself, to be honest. I was worrying about missing a shot or turning the ball over and then coming out of the game. I don’t get that anxiety anymore and that’s nice.”

Koenig is 20. But he feels like he has grown up a lot this season. “Oh, my goodness, a ton,” he



said. “It’s kind of like a 180. At the beginning of the year, I was going through a slump, no doubt, and I didn’t have any confidence in myself. It was kind of a low point in my career almost.”

He snickered at that last statement given that his college career is all of 73 games. On the subject of confidence, he said, “It’s something you have to build in yourself over time and it comes from repetition and it comes from being a mentally tough person. Through my slump, I always told myself that my confidence will come back and my shot will come back. Every player goes through it.”

In a very impactful sense, Bronson Storm Koenig is not every player; he stands for much more as a Native American player, a representative of the Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin. It’s a responsibility that he does not take lightly. Multiple media outlets, regional and national, have documented this side of the Koenig story; illuminating the pride that he has in his heritage and the disillusionment that he has shown in the public debate over inappropriate nicknames and mascots.

“It has been mostly positives,” he said of the general reaction to his comments, including those decrying the use of “Redskins” by the NFL team in Washington. “I’ve had a lot of Native Americans and Caucasian people reach out to me over social media to just tell me that they

support me on my stance. A lot of Native American athletes have wished me good luck in the tournament. There has definitely been more tribes that have asked me to come and speak to their youth after the season.”


Like a point guard reading the defense, Koenig has a good handle on all of this.

“With the platform that I have,” he said, “I definitely want to be a good role model.”

He has some of his own. “Right now, I would have to say Shoni Schimmel is one of my biggest role models,” Koenig said of the former Louisville women’s basketball star. “She’s a Native American woman who has made it to the professional level (WNBA) and who’s doing really well.”

Koenig has tried to reach out to other Native American athletes. After the Badgers made their Final Four run last spring, they were honored at a game between the New York Yankees and the Milwaukee Brewers. Koenig attempted to talk with Brewers pitcher Kyle Lohse and Yankees outfielder Jacoby Ellsbury, both of whom are Native Americans. “That they have made it to the professional level is pretty special,” he said. “That would have been really meaningful to me.”

Except that he never got a chance to meet them; a security guard stopped his advance.

If the Badgers keep winning, keep advancing, another trip to Miller Park may be in the offing. 

**JACKSON’S ADVICE TO KOENIG:**

**“Play the same way you’ve been playing. Don’t worry about the bright lights. At the end of the day, it’s still a basketball game. Go out there and play. Be aggressive and be yourself and have some fun.”**



BOB CAMPBELL



WILLIAM PURNELL / ICON SPORTS WIRE

# When going got tough, Badgers got tougher

Not counting style points in Oregon win, Wisconsin counts down hours to Sweet 16

BY MIKE LUCAS • [UWBADGERS.COM](http://UWBADGERS.COM)

**B**eyond a penchant for pushing the ball in transition and sharing green as a team color, Michigan State and Oregon have rarely been mistaken for playing the same game, especially when it comes to toughness.

But facing one (the Spartans in the finals of the Big Ten tournament) before the other (the Ducks in the round of 32 in the NCAA tournament) had benefits for Wisconsin here Sunday. Might have toughened everybody up a little bit more.

That the Badgers were able to rally from an 11-point second half deficit and blank Michigan State in overtime for an inspired win in Chicago still resonated with Nigel Hayes. “There was definitely some carryover in our resiliency as a team,” said the UW sophomore. “We were able to fight back and get ahead (of the Spartans). This time, we didn’t have to fight back (against the Ducks). But we had to fight them off and I

think we did a good job of it.”

After the pesky Ducks, who were 8-0 in games decided by four points or less, drew into a 52-52 tie with 5:54 remaining, the Badgers showed more resolve, maybe more toughness, by coming up with all of the right answers on both ends of the CenturyLink Center floor. By outscoring Oregon, 20-13, including a 14-4 run, they put a punctuation mark on a 72-65 victory in which they never trailed but never looked No. 1 seed dominant, either.

The lack of style points meant nothing to senior guard Josh Gasser, who was focused only on advancing to the Sweet 16 for a fourth time during his “playing” career. Gasser has settled for nothing less, save for the 2012-13 season when he was injured and the Badgers failed to get past their first game, a loss to Ole Miss. His focal point now is North Carolina, the opponent Thursday in a West Regional semifinal in Los An-



**"IT'S REALLY GOING TO BE ABOUT HOW WE PLAY, OUR ENERGY," GASSER SAID. HE COULD CARE LESS IF THE OREGON PERFORMANCE WAS ARTISTIC OR NOT. "AS LONG AS WE WIN," HE SAID.**



WILLIAM PURNELL / ICON SPORTSWIRE

geles. "It's really going to be about how we play, our energy," Gasser said.

In retrospect, he could care less if the Oregon performance was artistic or not. Or if it met the standards of a team that won the Big Ten regular season and tournament championships. "As long as we win," he said of the time-honored bottom line. "We did some good things. We did some bad things ... we didn't shoot very well and they ran some good stuff offensively. I thought we did a good job on defense for the most part of not letting them do what they wanted to do specifically. Overall, we did OK."

The Badgers handled the win in businesslike fashion, outside of a brief pillow fight on the flight home.

That was in contrast to last season's come-from-behind thriller in Milwaukee. "Last year, we were definitely excited and thrilled to be there (Sweet 16)," Hayes said, noting that Sunday, "We were not as much in awe or shock as we were last year. You can remember us jumping around the court and celebrating, whereas this time, it was 'Good job, guys. Now we have the next game to take care of.'"

Oregon coach Dana Altman was most impressed with the way the Badgers took care of the ball (only six turnovers) despite seeing different types of defensive pressure. "We couldn't get 'em to turn it over against our press," Altman lamented. "I thought that was a key. We expended a lot of energy trying to get 'em out of their rhythm but their experience and their guards handled it very well."

"We did outrebound them which gives me an indication that we played awfully hard and were aggressive. But we just didn't finish a few plays that we had to make down the stretch both offensively and defensively."

Altman felt good about the way his team played defense against Frank Kaminsky, who still finished with 16 points on 6-of-13 shooting from the field. "Our guys did a pretty good job of taking away easy baskets from him," he said. "But the last rebound put-back was kind of a dagger."

Kaminsky rebounded a missed free throw by Hayes and upped UW's lead to 66-56 with 44 seconds left. He also flexed for the crowd. When brought to Gasser's attention during postgame interviews, he pondered his teammate flexing, i.e. the gun show, and posed, "With what? Just kidding."

Truth is, Kaminsky flexed some defense by stripping the ball from Oregon's Dillon Brooks after the Badgers had grabbed a 53-52 lead. The Badgers converted the turnover into points with Kaminsky assisting on a Sam Dekker score.

"Just trying to make a play," Kaminsky said. "That's what it came down to. I was getting tired of them scoring off the ball screen, so I was able and lucky enough to be in the situation where I was able to get a steal and then Josh came down and got another one and it kind of really helped us win the game."

Gasser's steal came with 4:15 to play and the Badgers clinging to a three-point lead. UW coach Bo Ryan called a timeout erasing the continuation of the play which was a pass to Dekker and a dunk. "At first I kind of gave Coach the look, like, 'What are you doing (calling a timeout)?" said Dekker. "But we just set up our offense

again and someone got me a nice fade screen ... Josh found me for a good pass and I was able to knock it down (a 3-pointer). So in getting one more point, maybe Coach knew something that I didn't and the basketball gods worked in our favor there."

That spelled the end for Oregon, which was led by the incomparable Joseph Young who had 30. "When we needed to get a stop, when we needed to make a play, we did," Gasser said. "That's a sign of a good team. They made some shots to get back in it and we were able to stop that momentum and make some plays on the defensive end (the steals by Kaminsky and Gasser) that led to good offense. That's what you need to do."

What the Badgers also needed to do was get some production from their bench and Zak Showalter provided it with five points, five rebounds and two assists in 15 minutes of playing time. In addition, he made a 3-point shot for only the second time this season; it was his fourth in 24 career attempts from beyond the arc. "We'd work on that drill so many times," Showalter said, "where you catch it, ball fake to the corner and the defender goes to the corner, which he did, and I'm wide open and ready to take the



JASEN VINILOVE / USA TODAY




**We get a chance to play against one of the all-time programs and one of the great coaches (Roy Williams). And it's another opportunity to reach our goal.**

the scouting report on the Tar Heels. “I don’t think there’s anything that they do that we haven’t seen. They’ll push in transition and they’ve got players who can make plays in the open floor. Marcus Paige (whose sister, Morgan, played basketball at Wisconsin) does a tremendous job of running that team at the point.”

Wisconsin and North Carolina have only met twice before. In 2011, the Badgers lost, 60-57, in the Big Ten/ACC Challenge in Chapel Hill. The Tar Heels led by just one point at halftime but had a couple of difference-makers in Harrison Barnes, who had 20 points, and John Henson, who had 17 rebounds. Jordan Taylor led UW with 18 points, four assists and zero turnovers in 39 minutes.

In 2005, North Carolina held off Wisconsin, 88-82, in an Elite Eight game that was staged in front of 30,123 in Syracuse’s Carrier Dome. The Badgers created a 44-44 halftime tie on the strength of a 11-0 run but the Tar Heels countered in the second half with a 14-0 run, fueled largely by Sean May, who had 29 points and 12 rebounds. Alando Tucker had 25 for a gritty UW team that surprised many by playing and scoring with North Carolina, which went on to win the national championship.

Thursday’s matchup in Los Angeles will send the winner to another Elite Eight, likely against Arizona, the No. 2 seed in the West Region.

“Just like when we played against Duke (earlier this season),” Hayes said, “we get a chance to play against one of the all-time programs and one of the great coaches (Roy Williams). And it’s another opportunity to reach our goal.” 

shot ... that’s what any kid dreams about, knocking down a big shot in the NCAA tournament, so to be able to do that was awesome.”

His teammates couldn’t say enough about Showalter being ready when called upon. “He really set the tone with his energy,” Gasser said. “When you have a guy off the bench come in and give you that spark, it fires us up.” Added Hayes, “Our bench contributions are huge. He came in and brought energy and, according to Coach Ryan, he had the play of the game when he dove on the ball at the end of the first half and stopped them from getting off a shot at the buzzer.”

The Badgers will now be challenged by North Carolina, a more talented team than Oregon by most accounts. “Very talented, very talented,” confirmed Gard, who’s putting together



# Badgers ready to hit international stage

World championships await eight with UW ties

**A**lthough Wisconsin's season is done after falling in the NCAA Frozen Four, three Badgers will join five former UW standouts and represent their countries at the 2015 International Ice Hockey Federation Women's World Championships in Malmo, Sweden, this week.

UW freshman and National Rookie of the Year Annie Pankowski will compete on Team USA with former Wisconsin stars Brianna Decker, Meghan Duggan, Hilary Knight, Alex Rigsby and Jessie Vetter. Pankowski, who also played for the U.S. at the 2014 Four Nations Cup, is coming off of a successful rookie campaign in which she scored a team-high 21 goals to go along with 22 assists. Her 43 points led the team, making her the first freshman to lead Wisconsin in scoring since Sara Bauer during the 2003-04 season.

Duggan, Team USA's captain during the 2014 Winter Olympics, will again captain this year's unit, while Decker will be one of two alternate captains for the U.S. The duo each received the Patty Kazmaier Memorial Award during their time at UW, Duggan in 2011 and Decker in 2012.

UW freshman Emily Clark and sophomore netminder Ann-Re-

-SCROLL FOR MORE-

## **SCHEDULE (29-7-4, 19-6-3)**

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

### *WCHA First Round*

Feb. 27 **St. Cloud State** W, 5-1

Feb. 28 **St. Cloud State** W, 4-1

### *WCHA Final Face-off*

March 7 #8 North Dakota W, 4-1

March 8 #10 Bemidji St. W, 4-0

### *NCAA Quarterfinal*

March 14 **#5 Boston Univ.** W, 5-1

### *NCAA Frozen Four*

March 20 #1 Minnesota L, 3-1

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DAVID STLUKA

## Badgers look for strong finish at NAAs

Season comes to a close with national meet

**A**fter a standout dual-meet season and an impressive showing at the Big Ten championships, the Wisconsin men's swimming and diving program heads to Iowa City, Iowa, to compete at the 2015 NCAA Championships this Thursday through Saturday.

The Badgers will face the nation's toughest competition in the grand finale of the college swimming season. Coming off a dual-meet season that included wins over No. 11 USC, No. 13 Arizona, No. 22 Minnesota, Arizona State, Northwestern, Notre Dame, Green Bay and Milwaukee, UW has no shortage of experience when it comes to racing elite teams. In total, No. 19 Wisconsin faced 12 teams currently ranked in the national coaches' poll, including five of the top 10 squads.

Wisconsin is coming off a fifth-place finish at the Big Ten championships, marking the program's best finish since 2004. In all, seven school records fell as UW took home two Big Ten titles.

Competing in his final collegiate competition, senior Drew teDuits will represent Wisconsin in the 100- and 200-yard backstroke. The 2013 NCAA champion in the 200 backstroke, teD-

### SCHEDULE

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

#### RECENTLY

Feb. 18-21 **Big Ten Women's Champ.**  
4th, 448 pts.

Feb. 25-28 **Big Ten Men's Champ.**  
5th, 382 pts.

Mar. 19-21 **NCAA Women's Champ.**  
13th, 103 pts.

#### COMING UP

Mar. 26-28 **Men's NCAA Champ.**  
*Iowa City, Iowa*

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-SCROLL FOR MORE-



## Wisconsin wrestling is a team on the rise

Three All-Americans returning next season

**T**he Wisconsin wrestling program finished off a successful 2014-15 campaign with three All-Americans, seven NCAA qualifiers and one Big Ten champion. UW's three All-Americans are the most in a single season since 2011 and ties for the fifth-most in program history.

Let's put some things in perspective to show the progress of the program:

In 2012, just three years ago, the Badgers finished last at the Big Ten championships with a mere nine points and 41st at the NCAA championships with 7.5 points. UW only had two wrestlers, Ben Jordan and Cole Tobin, qualify for the NCAA meet. Ben Jordan was the only wrestler to earn All-America honors that year and three years later his brother, sophomore Isaac Jordan, just became a two-time All-American after qualifying for his second NAAs.

Wisconsin finished in eighth at this year's Big Ten championships with 73.0 points and 17th at the NCAA championships with 32.5 points, more than quadrupling its team score from 2012.

What's the best part about all of this? All three of Wisconsin's

**-SCROLL FOR MORE-**

### SCHEDULE (9-4, 7-2)

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

#### RECENTLY

Jan. 25	at Mich. St.	W, 34-6
Feb. 6	<b>Rutgers</b>	W, 19-18
Feb. 8	at Illinois	L, 20-15
Feb. 22	at Iowa State	L, 30-16
Mar. 7-8	Big Ten Championships	8th, 73 pts.
Mar. 19-21	NCAA Championships	17th, 32.5 pts.

[> View complete schedule](#)

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# Badgers again boast a complete program

UW men third in Program of the Year standings

**W**ith the cross country and indoor track seasons complete, Wisconsin is one of four teams in the country to have both its men's and women's teams ranked in the top 10 of the U.S. Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association (USTFCCA) NCAA Division I Program of the Year standings.

The in-progress standings are the combination finishes at the NCAA cross country and indoor track and field championships. Teams earn points based on their finishes at the NCAA meets, with a win worth one point, a second-place finish worth two points, and so on. The school with the lowest combined score from cross country and indoor and outdoor track earns Program of the Year status.

The Wisconsin men's team leads the Big Ten with its third-place standing and overall score of 29.5 points. UW earned 10 of those points with their 10th-place finish at the 2014 NCAA Cross Country Championship. Sophomore Malachy Schrobilgen placed 10th individually to pace UW.

The remaining 19.5 points were earned via UW's tie for 18th place at the NCAA indoor championships, thanks in large part

**-SCROLL FOR MORE-**

## SCHEDULE

Home meets in **bold**.

### RECENTLY

March 13-14 **NCAA Indoor Championships**

### COMING UP

April 3-5 **Stanford Invitational**

April 3-4 **Sam Adams Invitational**

April 18-19 **LSU Alumni Gold**

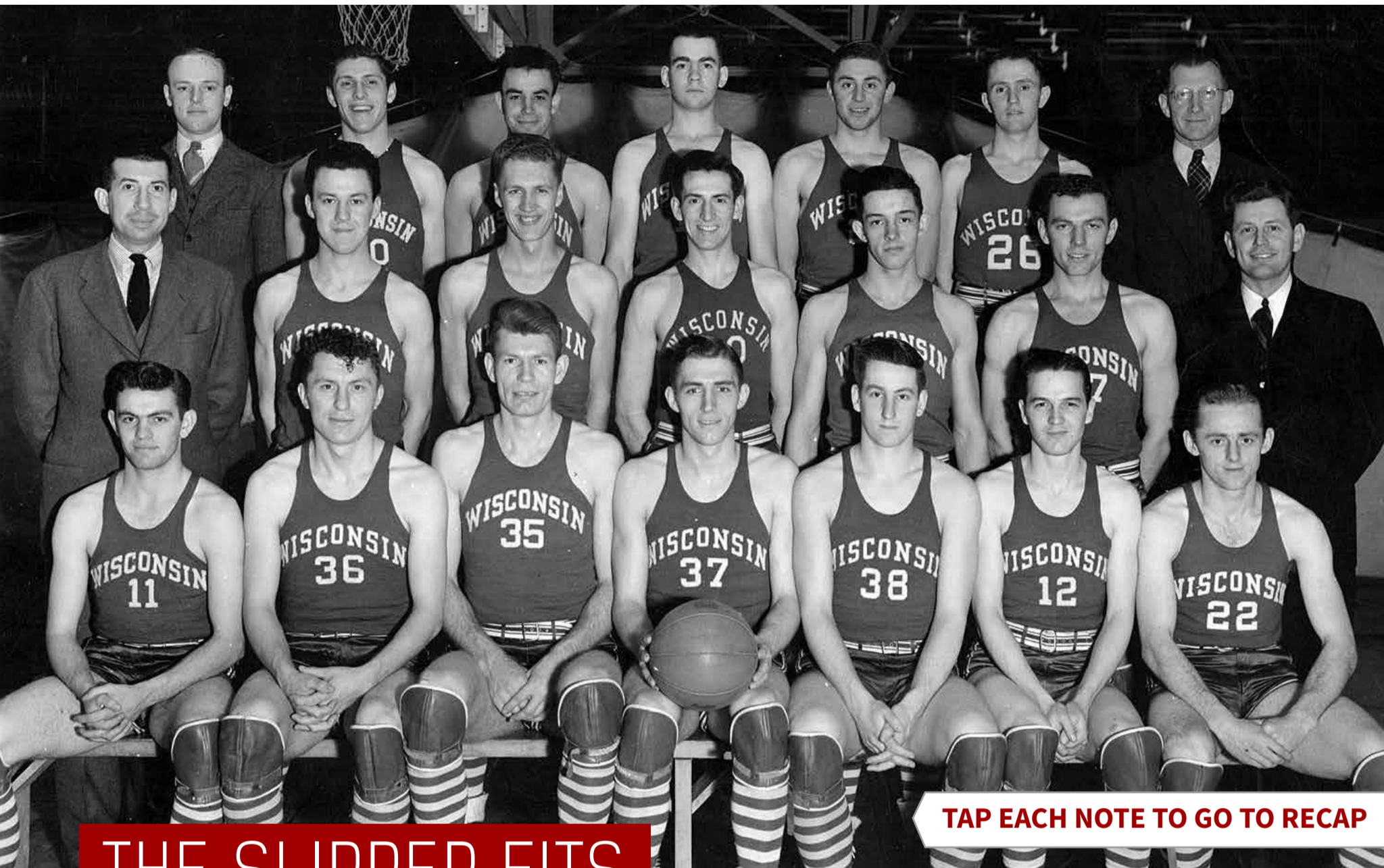
April 23-26 **Drake Relays**

April 23-26 **Penn Relays**

April 23-26 **Triton Invitational**

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TAP EACH NOTE TO GO TO RECAP

## THE SLIPPER FITS

**MARCH 29, 1941:** The “Cinderella” Badgers topped Washington State, 39-34, to win the NCAA tournament in Kansas City. UW’s John Kotz was named tournament MVP, while team captain Gene Englund was the Big Ten MVP and earned All-America honors.

### -MORE THIS WEEK-



#### FINDING FRANK

**MARCH 29, 2014:**

Frank Kaminsky’s 28 points helped No. 2 seed UW secure a spot in the Final Four with a 64-63 overtime win over No. 1 seed Arizona in the West Regional final in Anaheim, California.



#### BEST IN THE WEST

**MARCH 25, 2000:**

Behind All-West Region honorees Mike Kelley and Andy Kowske, UW downed No. 6 seed Purdue in the West Regional final to secure its first Final Four berth in nearly 60 years.



#### ALANDO’S ALL IN

**MARCH 25, 2005:**

Alando Tucker’s game-high 22 points helped the Badgers rally past NC State in a Syracuse Regional semifinal, earning Wisconsin an Elite Eight date with No. 1 seed North Carolina.