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CHAMPIONS

THE BADGERS CHECK THE FIRST
ITEM OFF A LENGTHY TO-DO LIST
BY WINNING THE BIG TEN TITLE



STEVE GOTTER

COVER STORY

THAT'S WHY I'M HERE

Bo Ryan has spent his entire career focusing on what comes next, but the Badgers coach is also taking the opportunity to look back at — and say thanks for — what got him this far.



MIKE BRADLEY

MEN'S TRACK & FIELD

BETTER THAN THE BEST

Michael Lihрман isn't content as the world's best weight thrower in 2015. The Wisconsin product has his eyes set on becoming the best — ever.

LUCAS AT LARGE

THE RUNNING MAN

John Settle, who coached four of Wisconsin's top-10 all-time rushers in his first run, is back for more as an assistant coach in Madison.



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Having grown as a coach, Settle back at UW



DAVID STLUKA

Four years ago, Kenosha Bradford tailback Melvin Gordon was coming and Wisconsin running backs coach John Settle was going. Shortly after the Badgers announced their 2011 signing class, whose centerpiece was Gordon, Settle was moving on after five seasons on Bret Bielema's staff and chasing his professional dream by taking a job with the Carolina Panthers of the National Football League.

Reflecting on the move, Settle admitted that it was a tough decision, a tough call. "But I grew up in North Carolina," said Settle, a native of Reidsville, two hours northeast of Charlotte, the home of the Panthers, "and

I had driven past that stadium and I had thought, 'One day, I'm going to coach in that stadium' and I was afforded the opportunity to go back and do it."

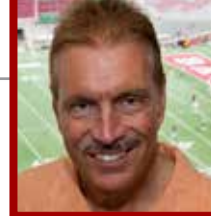
Four years later, Gordon is going to the NFL and Settle is coming back to UW. After two seasons with the Panthers and one with the Cleveland Browns, Settle rejoined Paul Chryst at the University of Pittsburgh last season. Settle had previously worked closely with Chryst when the latter was Bielema's offensive coordinator. Now, he'll be working with him again at Wisconsin.

The 49-year-old Settle will take over as the Badgers' running backs coach, replacing

Thomas Brown who returned in the same capacity to his alma mater, the University of Georgia. Settle, who was not retained at Pitt, had been exploring jobs opportunities in the NFL before UW called.

"I just believe in what he's doing," Settle said of his reunion with Chryst. "I like his offense because I played in a similar type of offense (with the Atlanta Falcons in the late '80s). Everybody wants to talk about the NFL and playing at the next level; this is an offense that prepares people to do that. We're going to be a tough team and a smart team. I'm a Paul Chryst fan. I believe in his approach."

Over his three seasons as an



assistant in the pros, Settle expanded his knowledge of the game with the help of a couple of NFL war horses in running backs Wilbert Montgomery and Earnest Byner, both of whom went on to coaching assignments in the league. “Everybody needs to have a mentor,” Settle said of their role in his development, “somebody you can call and talk to and that type of thing.”

And he picked up something from each. “Wilbert is kind of old school,” said Settle. “He has the mindset that ‘We’re going to be physical so we’ll practice that way. We’re going to make it tough for people to tackle us.’ Earnest’s thing was to build guys from the feet up. In a lot of drills, bags and ropes, we’ll increase their balance to run out of tackles, pop the knees and do things to escape tacklers.”

Settle felt like he honed his craft with Carolina and Cleveland and applied some of the things that he picked up at those stops to his coaching last year at Pitt. “It’s a no-nonsense approach, teaching the details, not a lot of fluff,” he said. “We want to make the guys understand exactly what we’re going to get done and then go out and practice that way making sure I get the message

across.”

Driving Settle has been his thirst to continue growing in the profession. “When I started over 20 years ago,” he recounted, “I always said I wanted to stay green. If you’re green you still have a chance to grow. I still like picking the minds of guys who coach in the NFL and in college. It’s very important not to ever reach that point where you think you’ve arrived as a coach.”

Among Settle’s early pupils

with the Badgers was 6-foot-1, 255-pound John Clay. Last season, he had another bellcow in 6-2, 250-pound James Conner, who led Pittsburgh in rushing with 298 carries for 1,765 yards and 26 touchdowns on his way to being named ACC Player of the Year. In adapting to his personnel, another jumbo back, Settle said, “We did a lot of things to make sure he (Conner) could clear his legs and get low to take on tacklers.”

SETTLE ON ‘STAYING GREEN’
“IF YOU’RE GREEN YOU STILL HAVE A CHANCE TO GROW. I STILL LIKE PICKING THE MINDS OF GUYS WHO COACH IN THE NFL AND IN COLLEGE. IT’S VERY IMPORTANT NOT TO EVER REACH THAT POINT WHERE YOU THINK YOU’VE ARRIVED AS A COACH.”



DAVID STLUKA

One of the first things that Settle did after moving into his Camp Randall Stadium office was watch some film on Wisconsin’s returning tailback, Corey Clement. “I wanted to see what type of runner he is,” Settle said. “And I liked everything about him. I also had a chance to meet him in person and I got a chance to see the gleam in his eyes. He’s excited to be here and he wants to be great.”

Settle will do everything within his power to make that happen. “I certainly call this Tailback U. because of the history and players who have come through here,” he said. “And it’s an honor to be able to do it a second time because of the guy (Chryst) I get a chance to work with. That’s icing on the cake.” ■



Taking a look at freshman ineligibility

Freshmen were ineligible when I played at Nebraska in the mid-'60s, so I've been through it myself and it was good for me. It helped me prepare for the next three years.

So I'm open-minded enough and willing to listen. But there are a lot of ramifications to making freshmen ineligible in football and basketball. And a lot of things have to be clarified.

Our commissioner Jim Delany got the discussion started in Chicago last week during our Big Ten meetings which included athletic directors, senior women administrators and faculty reps.

As a conference, we're going to listen, do a little more research and talk to other leagues and see where we come out. The Pac-12 and the Big 12 commissioners have talked about the same things.

It's not so much whether freshmen are ready physically as much as it is about their preparation academically. A big part of the discussion revolves around providing them with a year of readiness.

I think that's the right message to send with all the things going on in college athletics today. The message is that we're legitimately concerned about graduating our student-athletes.

You can redshirt freshmen but they're still practicing, they're still getting ready for games. If they're not involved, you can

slow the process academically as far as number of hours and classes.

What goes against that thinking is that normally the guys that played for me as freshmen did better academically. Their time management was good; they learned how to balance their time.

We were all sensitive to freshmen and maybe we gave them a little more attention. But if I'm not mistaken, our academic records show that those who played that first year had better grades.

There's a much different mindset now for student-athletes to try and get a head start in college by graduating from high school early. I don't particularly agree with it all the time. But it seems like every year we have more and more early enrollees. That's something has been going on for awhile and continues to grow.

One of the ramifications of making freshmen ineligible would be increasing scholarships. You'd have to add numbers in football and basketball while also adding opportunities in women's sports.

Like I said earlier, there is a need for clarity in this discussion and we're going to do more research and have more conversation as a conference. We're not going alone on this.

A lot of schools depend on freshmen, especially when

you're turning around a program. I know we couldn't have accomplished what we did without Ron Dayne coming in and playing right away.

For me to be supportive of any attempt now to make freshmen ineligible there would have to be a very good reason to make that decision or choice. But I'm keeping an open mind.

• • • •

Sunday was special at the Kohl Center as our fans got another chance to celebrate a Big Ten championship. I was really impressed with the energy that our team had in the Michigan State game.

How could you not be impressed with the job that Bo Ryan and his coaches and the players have been doing all season? For them to be as consistent as they have been has been most impressive.

A majority of the players were back from last year when we had that great run. But you still have to stay hungry and you still have to stay focused because you have a target on your back from the start.

You can't allow the success of last year to dictate or determine how you're going to play this year. That didn't happen with this team. Instead, it has been playing at a high level for a very long time.

And there's every reason to believe that it will continue. ■



College hoops looks to build better game

A tip of the cap to the Wisconsin basketball team for some original thinking. Last Sunday, when the Badgers clinched a share of the Big Ten title, rather than fans rushing the court, the team rushed the Grateful Red.

A nice touch to what was a very good day for the home team.

As mentioned in this space last week, as long as it's safe, I have no problem with court rushes. The game management folks at the Kohl Center were ready for one. In fact, they expected it, but it never happened. That is OK, too. The visual of the players celebrating in the student section was a refreshing change of pace.

Well done.

With that hot topic put to rest for the time being, there are other aspects of college basketball that continue to generate lively discussions. Most notably, pace of play and scoring — or the lack of either — and what to do about it.

In this year's NIT, there will be experimental rules, which includes a 30-second shot clock and a four-foot restricted arc. The Badgers will not be a part of that tournament, but what happens in the 32-team event could be interesting in regards to future rules tweaks.

Since the 1993-94 season, the shot clock has been 35 seconds.

The restricted arc, currently at three feet, has been in place since 2011-12. The idea behind the arc is to reduce the number of collisions under the basket. By moving it out another 12 inches, perhaps the offense gains a bit of an advantage. More blocking fouls and fewer offensive fouls.

Bo Ryan certainly believes that could happen.

"All the teams that have guys who can jump over the backboard and are really athletic attacking the basket, that is who they will reward," said Ryan during one of his recent radio shows.

The change you are more likely to notice is the reduced shot clock. There are those who would like to see the college game use the NBA's 24-second clock. Others believe it simply would result in more rushed — and as a result — missed shots. 30 seconds seems like a good compromise.

"I've coached a 24 (second clock), a 30, a 35 and I have coached with a 45 when it first started in the 1980s," said Ryan. "Coaches will find a way to be successful one way or the other."

"The reason they put the 3-point line in was so that normal human beings who were good shooters but were not great leapers could still play the game and be valuable to their team. There is a reason for every

rule, so you coach to it."

Ryan has coached to changes quite well. In the case of the Badgers, it is not about pace. It is what you do on each possession. As I write this, the highly respected hoops analyst Ken Pomeroy's website, kenpom.com, measures the Badgers' adjusted tempo at 59.1 possessions per 40 minutes. That ranks 345th out of 351 Division I teams.

However, the Badgers' adjusted offensive efficiency of 122.2 points per 100 possessions leads the nation.

In other words, they can shoot. Both from the field as well as the free throw line. As a result, they score 71.5 points a game.

It is amazing how good an offense can look when the ball goes through the basket.

There are many ways to play this game. Sure, run-and-gun basketball can be fun. So can a more half-court oriented team that screens, cuts and passes well (see: Wisconsin).

I think the 30-second clock and the new restricted arc can benefit the offense. But what can help even more is an increased commitment to fundamentals, such as reversing the basketball, using good fakes and hitting a midrange shot now and then.

More possessions are fine. Fewer bricks are even better. ■

WHAT'S YOUR STRANGEST ROAD TRIP STORY?



SAM DEKKER

Junior • Men's Basketball

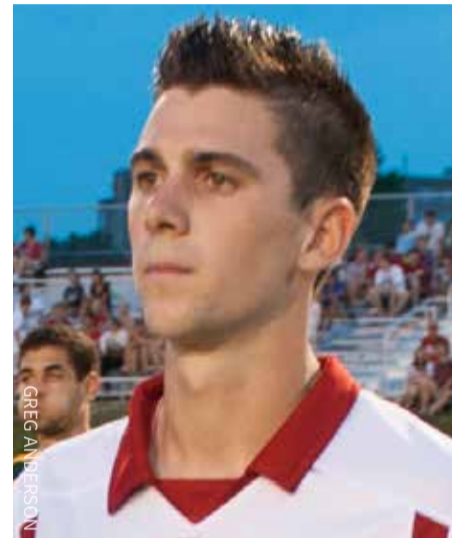
“If you would have asked me two weeks ago, I would have said getting snowed into Champaign, Illinois, last season or maybe our resort being under construction when we played in the Cancun Challenge last year. But after our emergency landing at 1 in the morning coming back from Maryland last week, that has to take the cake. Anytime you hear ‘engine malfunction’ and see ambulances and fire trucks waiting for you on the runway, it makes for a good story. Overall, we were safe, just tired.”



CASSIE ROCHEL

Senior • W. Basketball

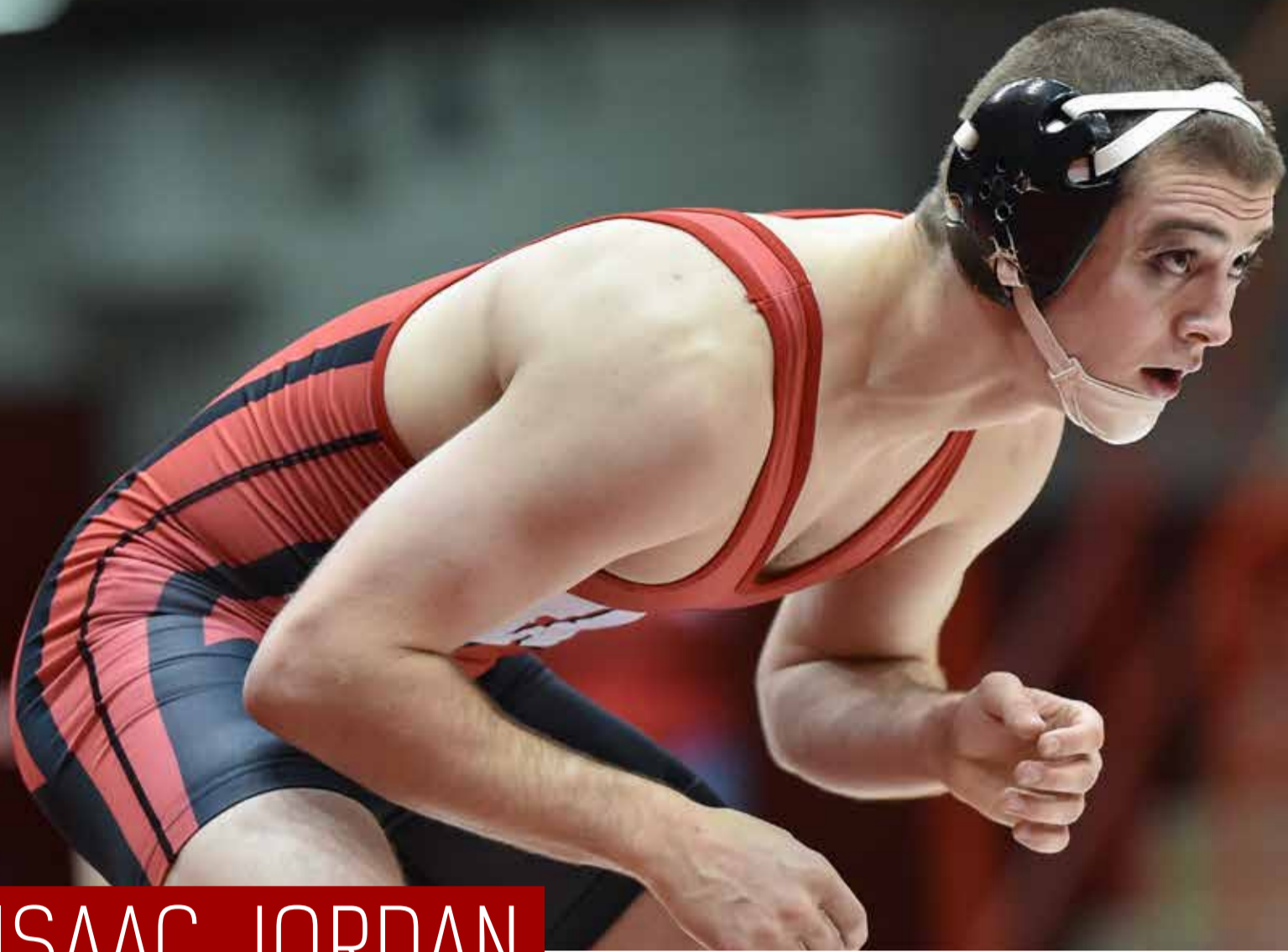
“I don't know if anything super strange has happened to us, but I remember my junior year at Penn State the fire alarms went off at like 2 a.m. and we all got up. I think we refused to go downstairs or outside, because it was so cold, so we just went back into our rooms and waited for it to go off!”



DREW CONNER

Junior • Men's Soccer

“We traveled my sophomore season to play USF and Florida Gulf Coast. Both games were supposed to be their biggest of the year and attendance figured to be awesome, but both ended up being weather delayed for 3-plus hours. Although playing Hangman in the locker room for hours on end wasn't the ideal situation, the delay might've contributed to us winning both games because of the low attendance due to all the rain.”



ISAAC JORDAN

Sophomore **Isaac Jordan** is the only returning All-American for the Wisconsin wrestling team and is in pursuit of his first national title at 165 lbs. The Urbana, Ohio, native, who is the No. 3-ranked 165-pounder in the country, holds a 19-2 overall record and stellar 12-1 dual-meet mark this season. He is also part of a UW legacy as his father, Jim Jordan, was a two-time NCAA champion at Wisconsin and holds the school record with 156 career wins.

What was the motivation for moving up to the 165 lbs. weight class this season?

“Toward the end of the year last year I was spending a lot of time cutting weight and just focusing on controlling my weight. It started to affect me and how I wrestled my matches. I would wrestle more for just one takedown and I would stand around a lot, controlling position and where I was. This year I can focus more on the wrestling and I can go into practice looking to get better rather than trying to cut weight. That was a big focus of moving up. It’s a more natural weight for sure. I don’t have to start watching my weight until about two days before matches, which is really nice.”

At 19-2, did you expect to be doing this well this season?

“Yeah, I expected to be doing this well, maybe even better. I dropped a match that I shouldn’t have early in the year, but

- SCROLL FOR MORE -

ALL ABOUT ISAAC

Year: Redshirt Sophomore

Height/Weight: 5-11 / 165

Hometown: Urbana, Ohio

High School: Graham

QUICK Qs FOR ISAAC

Your best wrestling moment of all time?

“I would say in the Field House last year beating James Green from Nebraska.”

Favorite place to wrestle at besides the Field House?

“I would say last year at UNI (Northern Iowa’s West Gym), the environment was what you want in a wrestling environment. We didn’t perform the best as a whole, but I won my match so it was pretty fun.”

Guilty pleasure TV show? “T.J. Ruschell and I have been watching *How I Met Your Mother* nonstop for the past week now so we’re really into that.”

Any non-athletic talents? “I’m the best Settlers of Catan player on the team.”

Your best road trip so far? “I would say Nebraska this year. The team performed really well and I had a pretty nice match so it all worked out.”

REASON TO REFLECT



WHILE MANY WHO FOLLOW WISCONSIN BASKETBALL ENJOYED A SHORT-LIVED BIG TEN CHAMPIONSHIP CELEBRATION BEFORE MOVING ON TO WHAT COMES NEXT FOR THE BADGERS, BO RYAN IS TAKING THE OPPORTUNITY TO LOOK BACK ON WHAT – AND WHO – HELPED HIM GET THIS FAR

BY MIKE LUCAS ■ UWBADGERS.COM



Championships can be platforms for programs to make statements beyond the obvious one that is made by clinching a title. Wisconsin's Bo Ryan may look at it a little differently than others in that he has always felt that championships are also an opportunity to say thank you.

It's part of never forgetting.

Never forgetting where you've been.

Never forgetting who helped you get to where you are.

"Absolutely," Ryan concurred, "because you know how much goes into it."

On Sunday, the Badgers clinched at least a share of their fourth Big Ten championship under Ryan. Only Ohio State (five) has won more regular-season titles since Ryan took over the UW program and put his indelible stamp on how basketball will forever be viewed in this community and state.

"I just think back to where I am now and how I personally got to where I am as a coach and teacher and I just think of all the people who affected my decision-making," said the 67-year-

old Ryan, who got understandably sentimental during the senior introductions at the Kohl Center.

"With the early development of the players that I get to coach now (at Wisconsin), there's so much that is already done before we even get a chance to work with them. I make sure they thank the people who helped them along the way and then I make sure I thank them."

That's what he was doing Sunday — he was thanking Frank Kaminsky, Josh Gasser, Traevon Jackson and Duje Dukan for everything that they have sacrificed to contribute to the team's success. As they joined their parents on stage for the annual senior video tribute, Ryan was having multiple flashbacks.

"No question," he said. "You think about the first time you saw them play; you think about the first time they visited campus; you think about meeting with the families; you think about what they looked like when they got here and how they grew physically, mentally, socially, academically."

Yes, all of the above.

“Just about everything flashes through your mind,” he said.

Since this is Ryan’s 31st season as a head coach, 14th at Wisconsin, it would be a fair question to ask, at least on the surface, if he can still recall his first senior class at UW-Platteville. “People say, ‘You’ve coached so many guys?’” he posed. “You’d be surprised what I remember. I don’t forget a lot.”

Without any trouble, he listed the building blocks from his initial Platteville recruiting class, which featured Baraboo’s Steve Showalter — whose son, Zak, is a redshirt sophomore guard on this year’s UW team — Wilmot’s Randy Kazin, Pulaski’s Rock Ripley and Adams-Friendship’s Joe Theisen.

As freshmen, they dared to dream. As seniors, they cut down the nets after winning the conference title. Ryan was reminded of that team during his Monday radio show. Theisen was in the audience along with Charlie Wills, a member of Ryan’s first Big Ten championship team at Wisconsin.

Ryan has bristled at the suggestion that he has “cloned” players to fit his system over the years. Yet they do give that appearance sometimes because of their discipline and adherence to fundamental Ryan concepts. Make the extra pass. Take good shots. Protect the ball. Don’t foul. Play smart.

“But these guys aren’t clones,” he said adamantly. “They’re all individuals playing on a team and trying to get the most out of their experience. I don’t think our guys get cheated.”

And when his “guys” win, it reverberates along the Eastern seaboard with his “guys” from Wilkes College, whether it’s with an old roommate or an old teammate; or whether it’s merely a friend of a friend of a friend of a friend. The Wilkes/Chester network has never been stronger, family strong.

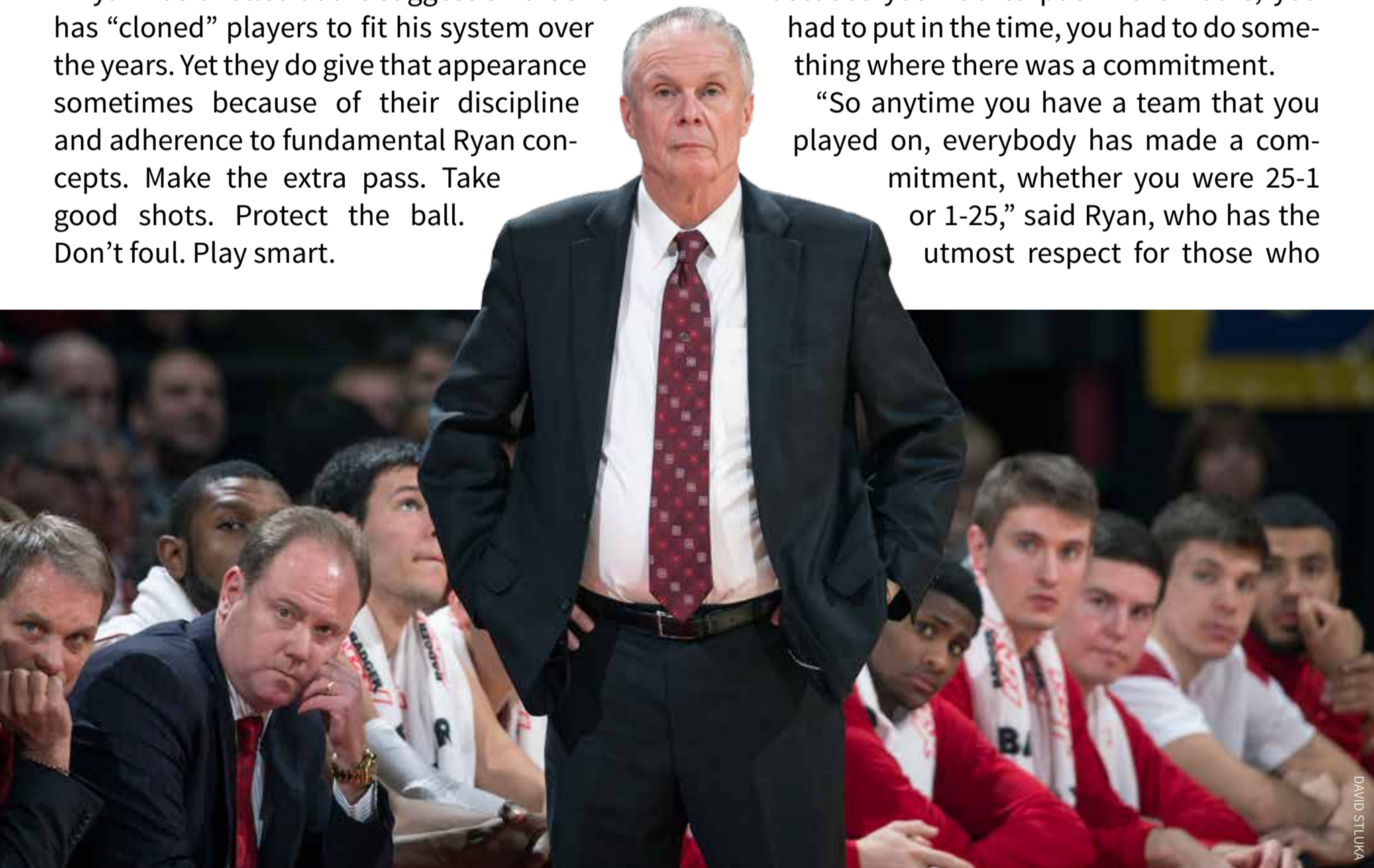
This season, they showed up in big numbers when the Badgers played at Rutgers, Penn State and Maryland. Some of them even make an annual trek to Madison where Bo and Kelly Ryan make them feel at home by inviting them into their house during their week-long stay.

“It’s a bond,” Bo Ryan said. “It’s athletics.”

It’s how a fiercely-loyal Ryan looks at those who return his loyalty.

“If you’re an actor and you do plays when you’re in high school,” he said, “you always remember the people that you performed with because you had to put in the hours, you had to put in the time, you had to do something where there was a commitment.

“So anytime you have a team that you played on, everybody has made a commitment, whether you were 25-1 or 1-25,” said Ryan, who has the utmost respect for those who



have been in the trenches and fox holes with him. “It’s all kind of neat the way they’ve followed our team and stayed in touch.”

Wisconsin associate head coach Greg Gard understands the connection better than most.

“They haven’t forgotten where they’ve come from,” he said. “Bo included.”

And that has led to an unbreakable bond between the old classmates and teammates.

“What’s neat,” said Gard, who has heard all the stories hundreds of times, “is that Bo has included those guys and embraced them and allowed them to share in some of his success. He hasn’t shut the door on his past. And he’s very appreciative of the people and the places where he has been.

“And it’s not only Chester and Wilkes,” pointed out Gard, listing Ryan’s first stint in Madison as a UW assistant, his formative years as a D-III head coach at Platteville and his D-I apprenticeship at Milwaukee. “He has always appreciated and acknowledged the people who have helped him along the way. Like I said earlier, he hasn’t forgotten where he has come from.”

• • • •

His old college roommate was Jay Holliday, now living in Long Island, New York; now 68, now retired for 13 years. He was a high school teacher, a football and lacrosse coach, an athletic director. Holliday didn’t play basketball but he was a defensive back on Wilkes teams that lost once in four years.

Holliday was the godfather to Ryan’s oldest daughter. Ryan was the godfather to Holliday’s oldest son.

“Bo and Jay are especially close,” Kelly Ryan said. “They’ve just never lost touch.”

What drew them together? What keeps them together?

“Quite a few things,” Holliday said. “It’s the way we think; pretty much the way we resolve problems. Our sense of humor is similar. Bo is certainly an intelligent human being. I like to pretend that I am, so we had that in common. And he was in my wedding; we just always got along well.”

What makes Bo Ryan tick?

“Bo is a very determined person,” he said. “Once he makes up his mind to do something, you’re best off if you get out of his way because



RYAN ON HOLLIDAY:

“We’ve been so close for so long and shared so many things,” Ryan said. “When you think you’ve known somebody since 1965 and you’ve been able to keep that connection going ... well ... not everybody gets to do that.”

he’s going to do it. He gets a lot of that from his dad (the late Butch Ryan). I didn’t know the man that well; I had met him on just two or three occasions.

“But when Butch wanted to do something, he did it. And it really didn’t matter if he was prepared to do it or if he had the tools to do it, he was going to do it and he figured out a way to do it. Bo has an awful lot of that in him.”

Holliday knows how much selection to the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame would mean to Ryan, a finalist.

“Knowing him, I would say there’s very little chance of him expressing any excitement about it,” Holliday said. “But he’s obviously honored and he would say that. And he’s obviously excited about that, but he would never say that.”

“He would prefer to keep that inside of him. But I could see him breaking down when he talked about those guys (his former players). This is not a job; this is a love affair with basketball. As these kids have benefited from him — which is astronomically — he has benefited from the kids.”

Holliday couldn’t say enough about Kelly Ryan’s role in all of this, either. “Kelly runs the show, she’s the boss,” said Holliday, one of those making the annual pilgrimage to Madison. “She lets us into her house and we do our best to take care of it, but I suspect she could tell you some other stories about that. Kelly is obviously very



important to the whole thing. Without Kelly, I think it comes unglued.”

At that, Kelly Ryan has some fond memories and examples of Holliday’s loyalty to her husband. “I remember Jay coming to Sun Valley High School (Aston, Pennsylvania) when Bo was coaching there,” she said. “And when we had our first little yellow house in Madison when Bo was an assistant, Jay and his son rode the Greyhound bus out to visit. They’ve been coming for a long time.”

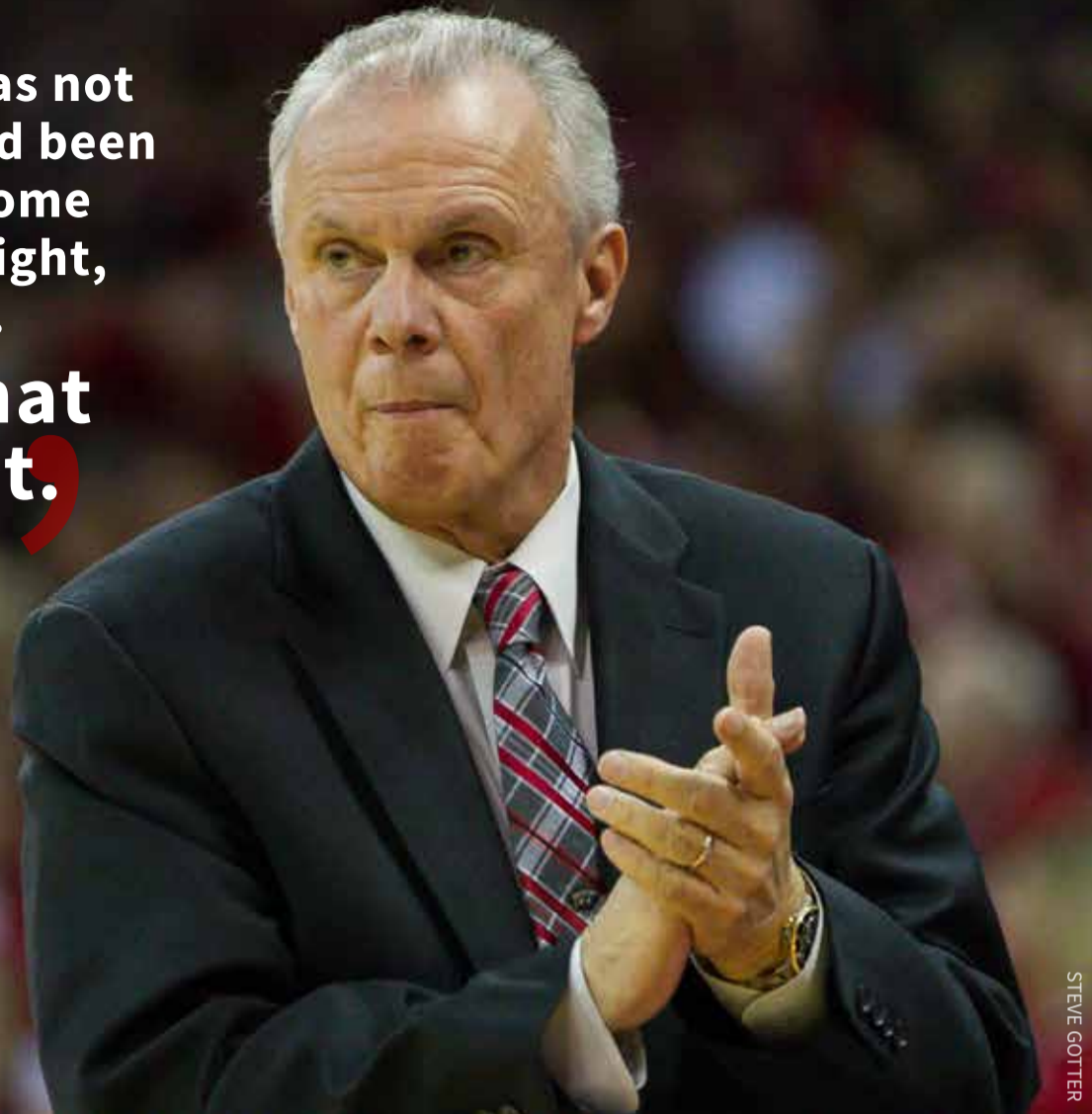
Holliday and Ryan roomed together for three years at Wilkes. “We’ve been so close for so long and shared so many things,” Ryan said. “When you think you’ve known somebody since 1965 and you’ve been able to keep that connection going ... well ... not everybody gets to do that.”

“We’ll be friends forever. Herb is the same way.”

“I knew in tight games, he was not a guy to panic because he had been in so many tight games. Some guys when the game gets tight, their game goes south.

He didn't have that issue. He loved it.”

- HERB KEMP



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His old college teammate was Herb Kemp, now living in Mount Laurel, New Jersey; now 67, now retired for three years. He was in the food service packaging business for nearly two decades; a director of sales and corporate accounts in the Northeast. He played against Ryan in high school.

“Bo was very steady, very quick hands and he was good defensively; he would really get into you, too,” said Kemp, who saw another side of Ryan when they played together at Wilkes. “I knew in tight games, he was not a guy to panic because he had been in so many tight games. Some guys when the game gets tight, their game goes south. He didn't have that issue. He loved it.”

On the night that Ryan scored 43 points against Susquehanna, Kemp had 24. The Wilkes blueprint back then was not much different from Wisconsin's today. “It was about taking ownership of the game,” Kemp said, “and taking ownership of the team. It was about making sure you got people in the right position and you got them the ball at the right time. It was

about taking care of the ball.”

That said, did Kemp have any inkling that Ryan would become a coach?

“It's funny when I look back initially I'd say no because at the time he had accepted a job with ARCO/Atlantic Richfield and I thought he was going to be an oil guy,” said Kemp, knowing that was more of a passing thought because ultimately “he was going to be a teacher and a coach like his dad.”

Over the years, Kemp and Ryan had drifted apart.

“When you have kids, you lose touch with a lot of people,” said Kemp. “But I was on a plane looking at a USA Today and I noticed where Bo was getting his second interview at Wisconsin. I'm thinking, ‘He's in his 50s, they're going to hire a Dukie or a younger North Carolina guy, some name guy.’”

“When he got the job, I was so excited for him. I sent a letter and called him and he got right back to me and we got back together. We spent some time before games talking about different things and enjoying ourselves and it kept growing and growing from there.

“Some of us got together and went to road games and supported him and he appreciated the support. That also grew and grew and we got more involved, especially as our kids got older and grown. That brought a lot of us together who hadn’t seen or heard from each other in 20 or 30 years.”

In sum, he said, “It has been a galvanizing thing for teammates and classmates.”

What was Kemp’s take on Ryan being a finalist for the Hall of Fame?

“He appreciates the accolades and all of that,” he said. “But I think he’s so caught up in the teaching, he doesn’t want to do anything to interfere. However, if his dad could be here at this time, Butch would be so proud.”

As they all are of Bo. Joining Kemp and Holliday on this year’s Madison road trip was Joe Thunell, a former Wilkes wrestler who lived next door to Holliday and Ryan in the dorms. He also showed up at Maryland and, upon prodding from Ryan, sang a few Johnny Cash songs for

the alumni gathering.


“We enjoy Bo’s success,” Kemp said humbly.

So do the wives. About 20 Chester and Wilkes couples get together every year in Atlantic City.

“Bo has done such a good job of staying in touch with his high school and college friends; they’ve been coming to our games for a long time,” Kelly marveled. “A lot of them are retired now so they’re free to travel. Badger basketball has brought them all together and they’re having a ball with it.”

What about the stories from their Wilkes days? Don’t they get a little ... old? Kelly Ryan smiled and said, “They change a little bit every year; the stories get a little more embel-

lished. But I actually heard a couple of stories this year that I hadn’t heard before, so that was a treat.”

What hasn’t changed is the storyline; never forgetting where you’ve been, never forgetting who helped you get to where you are. Championships are the perfect reminder. 

“I JUST THINK BACK TO WHERE I AM NOW AND HOW I PERSONALLY GOT TO WHERE I AM AS A COACH AND TEACHER AND I JUST THINK OF ALL THE PEOPLE WHO AFFECTED MY DECISION-MAKING,” RYAN SAID.

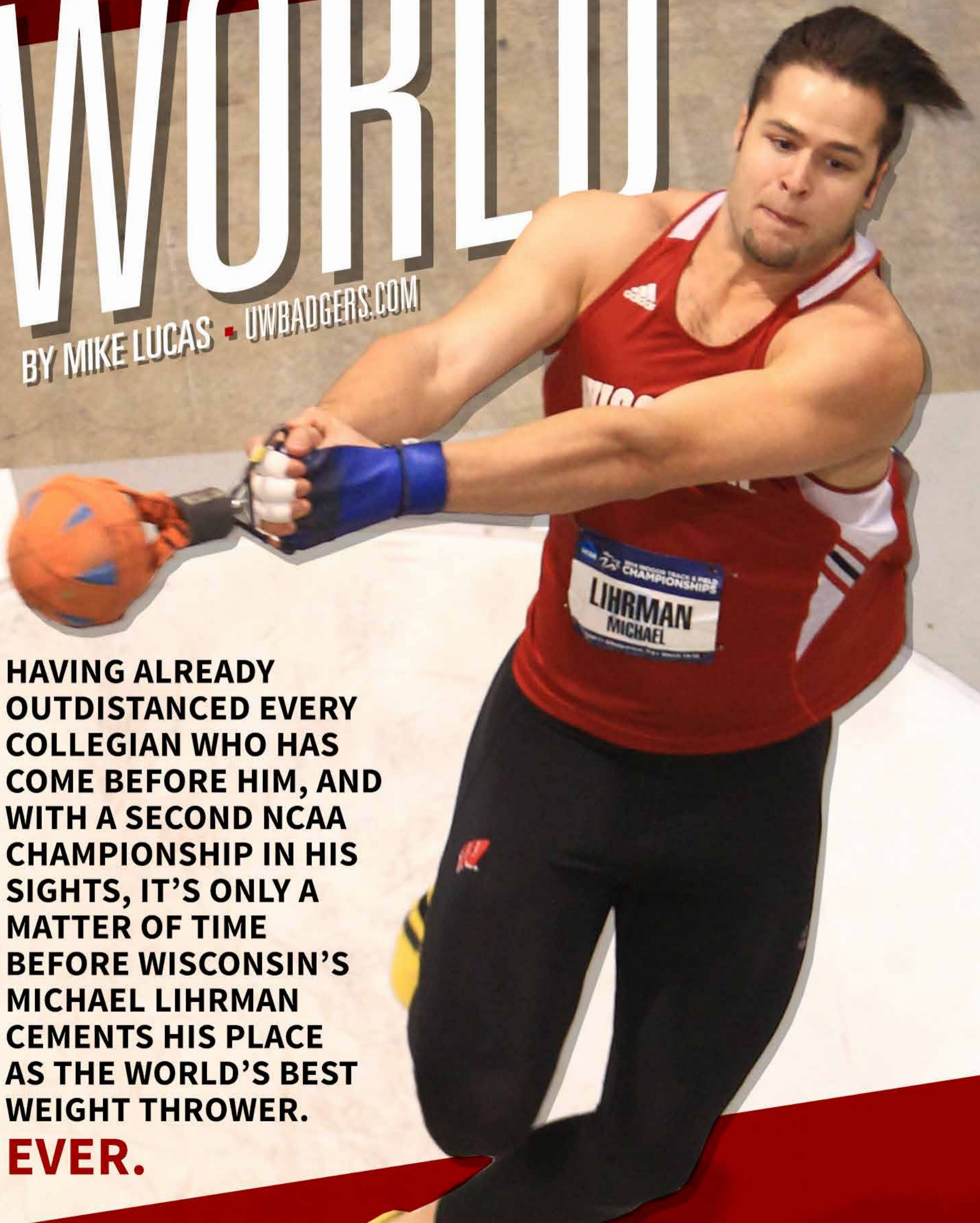


WEIGHT OF THE WORLD

BY MIKE LUCAS • UWBADGERS.COM

HAVING ALREADY
OUTDISTANCED EVERY
COLLEGIAN WHO HAS
COME BEFORE HIM, AND
WITH A SECOND NCAA
CHAMPIONSHIP IN HIS
SIGHTS, IT'S ONLY A
MATTER OF TIME
BEFORE WISCONSIN'S
MICHAEL LIHRMAN
CEMENTS HIS PLACE
AS THE WORLD'S BEST
WEIGHT THROWER.

EVER.





No one has ever gone where Wisconsin's Michael Lihрман has gone as a collegian. Yet, he can go just about anywhere on campus without anyone knowing who he is or what he does.

Lihрман isn't complaining. He's more than content to go about his business, which is rewriting the record book as a weight thrower. By doing so, he has placed himself in rarified air and company.

Only two competitors in the world have ever thrown the 35-pound weight farther. And the unassuming Lihрман is only about 11 inches — or 28 centimeters — from topping that short list, too.

Maybe we should put **WORLD** and **EVER** in upper case to accent his accomplishments. Lihрман, after all, is not far off from becoming the greatest weight thrower in **WORLD** history; **EVER**.

That's enough to get anybody's attention. Or is it?

"Probably not," said Lihрман, who estimated that "probably 15 to 20 percent" of his UW classmates have ever heard of him. He's no Frank Ka-

minsky. He's no Melvin Gordon.

"No way," he agreed.

But he doesn't begrudge Kaminsky and Gordon for their celebrity. On the contrary, he recognizes them for what they've achieved in their sports, basketball and football, respectively.

But has Lihрман ever wondered what it would be like to be in that media spotlight?

"It would be pretty awesome," he conceded. "But I can already tell where I've been — with the interviews here and there and any recognition that I've gotten — it can get overwhelming."

By the same measure, he understands why his profile is so much lower than theirs.

"I can't imagine where they're at," he said, "and how they have to worry about every single move that they make. It's probably pretty nerve-racking at that level. I think I'm fine where I'm at."

Michael Lihрман is in a good place; especially after winning his second Big Ten indoor championship in the weight throw with a record-setting toss of 83 feet, 11 1/4 inches.

Prior to this season, only one collegian in history had gone over 80 feet in the event. Ashland

“For me, it all came down to analyzing other people’s videos and applying it to myself. It’s kind of interesting now because I don’t have any video to look at. I am the top dog.”



University’s Kibwe Johnson unleashed a throw of 80 feet, 6 1/4 inches at a 2005 open meet.

In 2007, Johnson went on to win the discus and hammer at the NCAA Division II outdoor championships. Along with medaling twice in the hammer at the Pan American Games, including a gold medal in 2011, he competed for the United States at the 2012 Summer Olympics in London.

The weight throw, which is not an Olympic event, is the indoor equivalent of the hammer and uses an implement no longer than 16 inches that consists of a 35-pound ball and harness attached to a triangular handle. That it’s not viewed as an Olympic sport is kind of a bummer

for Lihрман. “But on a positive note,” he said, “some European countries are now starting to pick it up and it’s gaining interest among them.”

While Lihрман’s immediate focus is on the NCAA indoor meet (March 13-14) in Fayetteville, Arkansas — where he’s shooting to defend his 2014 title in the weight throw — he has bigger goals in mind.

“I’m hoping to end up in the Olympics for the hammer throw,” said Lihрман, also the Big Ten record-holder in that event (233-3). “Every year, there are different things that you can shoot for. This year, there’s the Pan American Games (Toronto in July) and World Championships (Beijing in August).

“Beyond this, I will continue to throw the weight and shoot for that world record. I’m hoping actually to go over 26 meters (85 feet); I’d really like to be the first to go over 26 with the weight throw. But, eventually, I’d like to make an Olympic team or just a Team USA (for international competition).”

The world record-holder in the weight throw is Lance Deal, 53, now an administrator for the University

of Oregon track and field program. Deal’s record stands at 84-10 1/4. Libor Charfreitag, 37, a Slovakian native and former SMU athlete, has the second-longest throw (84-3) in history.

While Lihрман still chases those two, he proved his current dominance by beating Purdue’s Chukwuebuka Enekwechi — the No. 3-ranked collegian of all-time who threw 80-0 1/4 in February and is the closest thing Lihрман has to competition — by a full six feet at the Big Ten meet.

Why has the 23-year-old Lihрман had so much success?

Why is he bordering on unprecedented heights and historic lengths in the weight throw?

“I’m good at it,” said the 6-5, 265-pound Lihрман.

Good answer.

“I know how it works,” he went on. “I think I understand it more than a lot of kids do in the United States. For me, it all came down to analyzing other people’s videos and applying it to myself. It’s kind of interesting now because I don’t have any video to look at. I am the top dog.”

It wasn’t always that way for Lihрман who weighed 300 as a high school sophomore in Rice Lake. “I wasn’t really made for any sport with my size,” he admitted. “But I lost about 80 pounds and my brother (Shane) was in track and field and I thought it might be cool to join him.”

As a high school junior, Lihрман threw the

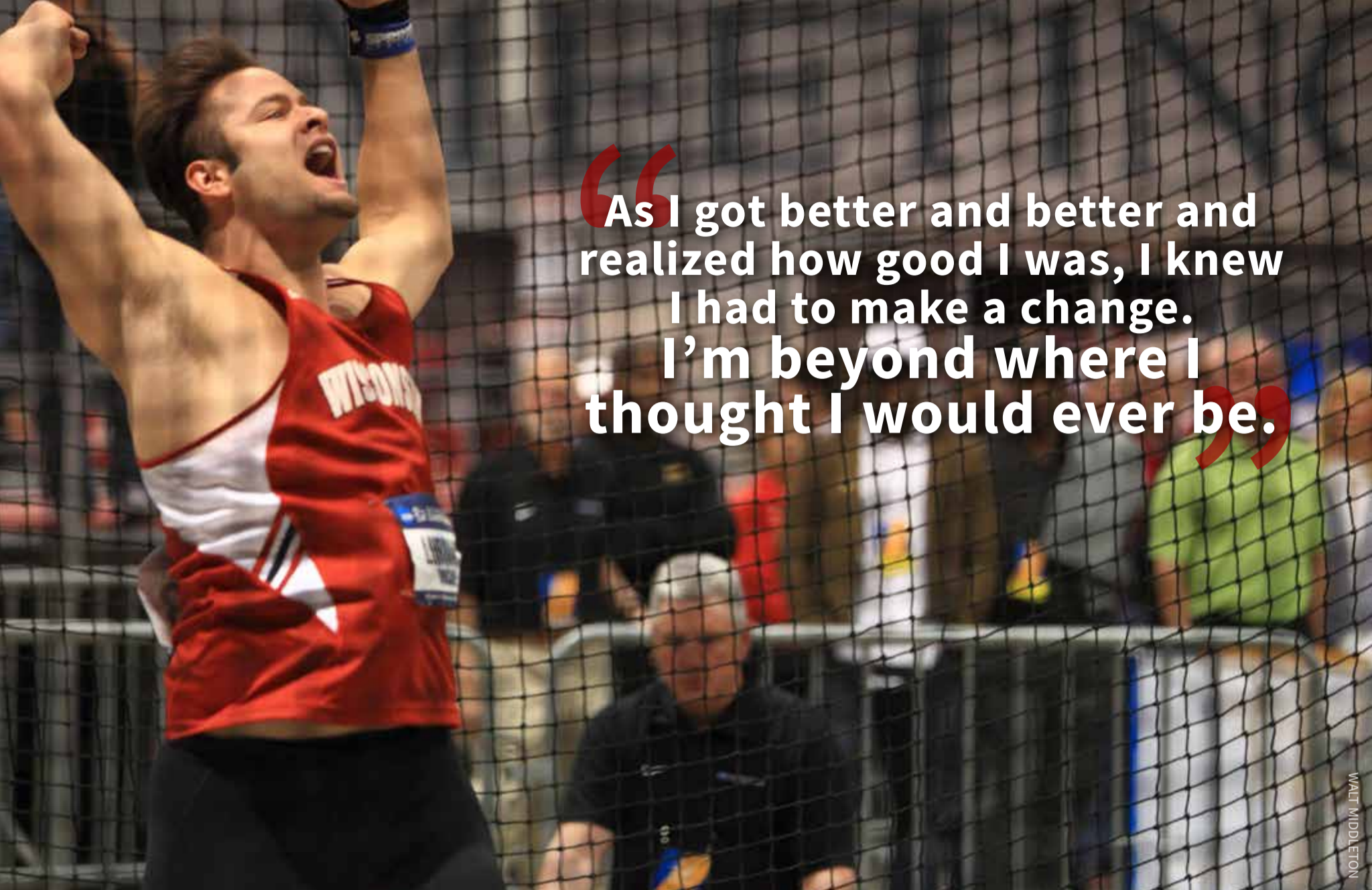
shot and discus. That got his competitive juices flowing again. He also went out for football as a senior. But as far as his specialty, or what would become his calling card, he said, “I didn’t even know the weight throw existed until I got to UW-Stout.”

Lihрман was attracted to Stout because of its curriculum. It had a hotel and restaurant management program. Lihрман’s parents own a hotel in Rice Lake and he was thinking about following that career path and maybe taking over the business someday.

That was before he found his niche in the throwing events. “And when you get to the Division III level, you kind of throw in every event,” he said. “The only thing I didn’t throw was the javelin. I started developing wrist problems

“I’M HOPING TO END UP IN THE OLYMPICS FOR THE HAMMER THROW,” SAID LIHRMAN. “EVERY YEAR, THERE ARE DIFFERENT THINGS THAT YOU CAN SHOOT FOR. THIS YEAR, THERE’S THE PAN AMERICAN GAMES AND WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS.”

▼ PHOTOS: Swipe to change • Tap to pause/play



“As I got better and better and realized how good I was, I knew I had to make a change. I’m beyond where I thought I would ever be.”

WALT MIDDLETON

with the shot because of the increase in weight from high school to college.”

And he really never got a feel for the discus. “Couldn’t quite understand it,” he said. “But there was something about the hammer and weight throw that I understood the physics behind it. I could kind of break down videos online and understand what they were doing and why they were doing it.”

After his freshman year at Stout, Lihрман ran into his old high school throwing coach at a Rice Lake track meet. They got to talking and he wondered if Lihрман had heard about Sidnie Wilder, who was doing some amazing things in the hammer at nearby Cameron High School.

Since Lihрман was looking for someone to learn from — “I had no idea what I was doing” — he made a connection on Facebook with the Wilders, most notably with Sidnie Wilder’s coach, who was her dad, Deren, a former Division II champion in the hammer. Lihрман figured that he must know what he was doing

since his daughter was setting national records; she eventually earned a full ride to LSU.

“I messaged him and asked if he would be able to coach me since I was only 15 minutes away (in Rice Lake),” Lihрман recalled. “And he was able to re-train me and start me from scratch. All along, he pushed me to go to the Division I level, but I wasn’t too comfortable with it.”

At least not initially. “But as time went on,” Lihрман said, “and as I got better and better and realized how good I was, I knew I had to make a change.” Wilder also helped him change his attitude towards competition. He trained him to think like a champion. “I’m beyond where I thought I would ever be,” Lihрман said this week. “I think in a whole different way.”

Today, he looks differently, too, at the training regimen and approach of UW coach Dave Astrauskas, who oversees the throwers. “When I first came in, I was pretty hesitant with Dave’s program because it was a lot to take on and I was tired all the time,” Lihрман said.

But the more he was exposed to Astrauskas' philosophy, the more he bought into it. "I didn't have full belief in the program but as time went on, and I was seeing results, you start to accept it more and more," he said. "Look at this year, I'm peaking at the exact time that I need to."

Has he reached his potential? "No, the average peak for a hammer or weight thrower is between ages 28 and 32 because you keep getting your man's strength," said Lihрман, who will graduate this spring in economics with a certificate in entrepreneurship. Eventually, he's planning on seeking a sponsorship, not that there's much money in such things, not for throwers. "Running is where it's at," he said.

But is there a limit, or ceiling on his throwing? "I'm not sure," he said. "The weight throw and hammer throw are such miniscule events; there's not much history behind them; there's more with the hammer (than the weight throw).


It's kind of unknown right now, especially with me because I'm the first 6-5 weight thrower to go over 80 feet. You don't really see tall weight or hammer throwers go far."

That Lihрман has already gone where no other collegian has ever gone in this event is not something that he's taking for granted. "It feels great," he said. "It has been something I've been chasing for awhile now. Back when I was at UW-Stout, I always thought that I could one day throw this far. But I didn't think it would come this soon. I thought it would come post-collegiately."

Since he has exceeded his expectations, since he has come this far, why stop now?

"I'll be chasing my dreams," he pledged, "until I feel that I have peaked."

If you're wondering when that might be, don't.

"I'm not even close to peaking," he promised. Certainly not with more history in the making. 



MIKE BRADLEY



Rumpel continues to shine amid struggles

Senior goaltender unflappable in net for UW

It is not the senior season goaltender Joel Rumpel wanted or even expected. A member of the preseason watch list for the Mike Richter Award, which goes to the nation's top goaltender, Rumpel was also a unanimous selection to the preseason Players to Watch list selected by Big Ten coaches.

One year after making the top five for the Mike Richter Award, Rumpel was not listed among the 28 nominees for this year's honor, who were announced last week. The numbers for Rumpel — who was also a top-10 finalist for the Hobey Baker Memorial Award last season — are such that he didn't belong on this year's Richter list.

However, when asked if he would exchange goaltenders with any other team in the country, Wisconsin head coach Mike Eaves' answer said it all about Rumpel.

"I don't think so," Eaves remarked. "This year will serve him well in his future. That is the biggest thing. I will make sure he understands that when he leaves.

"There was a lot of weight on him in the beginning of the year, and he put some weight on himself, and at times I think he would want some shots back because of that. He has made

[-SCROLL FOR MORE-](#)

SCHEDULE (4-22-4, 2-12-2-2)

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

RECENTLY

Feb. 20	Michigan State	W, 2-1
Feb. 21	Michigan State	L, 3-0
Feb. 27	at Michigan	L, 3-0
Feb. 28	at Michigan	L, 5-2

COMING UP

March 6	at Michigan State	6 p.m.
March 7	at Michigan State	6 p.m.
March 13	Ohio State	7 p.m.
March 14	Ohio State	6 p.m.
Mar. 19-21	Big Ten Tournament	
	<i>Detroit, Mich.</i>	

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UW hits the road for WCHA Final Face-off

Badgers meet North Dakota in semifinals

After a sweep of St. Cloud State last weekend in the first round of the WCHA playoffs, the Badgers hit the road for the 2015 WCHA Final Face-off at the Ralph Engestald Arena in Grand Forks, North Dakota.

A tough task awaits No. 3 Wisconsin, as UW meets tournament host North Dakota in the semifinal round at 5 p.m. on Saturday.

It marks the third-consecutive season UW and UND have met in the semifinal round of the conference tournament, as UND has knocked the Badgers out of the WCHA Final Face-off each of the past two years.

“It’s exciting because we haven’t beat them yet, at least in my two prior years at the WCHA Final Face-off,” junior Courtney Burke said. “It will be exciting if we go in there and are able to beat them on their home ice.”

“We’re expecting a hard-fought battle between two of the best teams in the league,” sophomore Sydney McKibbon said. “North Dakota has a lot of offense and a strong goalie, so we are going to have to play well defensively and take advantage of the chances we get. It will be important to play a strong 60 minutes and take care of all of the little things for us to be suc-

-SCROLL FOR MORE-

SCHEDULE (26-6-4, 19-6-3)

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

RECENTLY

Feb. 20	St. Cloud State	L, 2-1
Feb. 22	St. Cloud State	W, 5-0
Feb. 27	St. Cloud State	W, 5-1
Feb. 28	St. Cloud State	W, 4-1

COMING UP

WCHA Final Face-off

March 7	North Dakota	5 p.m.
March 8	Championship	1 p.m.

NCAA Tournament

Mar. 14	NCAA Quarterfinal	TBD
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FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA:





DAVID STILUKA

Hard work pays off for Badgers at Big Tens

Wisconsin impresses at Big Ten championships

The hard work and tireless effort from the Wisconsin swimming and diving program throughout the regular season paid off over the past two weeks, as both the UW men and women had strong showings at their respective Big Ten championships.

For the women, Ivy Martin put together a championship performance for the ages. The senior from Madison dove into the pool seven times and came out a champion all seven times. Claiming individual conference crowns in the 50 freestyle, 100 freestyle and 100 butterfly, the team captain also propelled UW to claim four of the five relay events at the championships (the 200 and 400 freestyle and the 200 and 400 medley).

“It’s really not surprising,” UW head coach Whitney Hite said of Martin’s dominance. “As I’ve said all along, I’ve been around some very good swimmers and she’s as good as those very, very good swimmers. I don’t think there are very many, if any, swimmers in the history of the Big Ten that have gone undefeated in the championships.

“You want to talk about a dominating performance? That’s as good as it gets. I’m really proud of her.”

-SCROLL FOR MORE-

SCHEDULE

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

RECENTLY

Feb. 18-21 **Big Ten Championships**
(Women) 4th

Feb. 25-28 **Big Ten Championships**
(Men) 5th

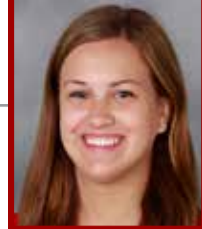
COMING UP

Mar. 20-22 **NCAA Championships**
(Women)

Mar. 27-29 **NCAA Championships**
(Men)

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JACK MCLAUGHLIN

Badgers set for stout Big Ten competition

UW has nine seeded wrestlers in tournament

“These are the two weekends that you work for all year long, Big Ten championships and NCAA championships. It’s March Madness time right now.”

Wisconsin wrestling head coach Barry Davis couldn’t have said it better. Thirteen duals. Midlands. The Badgers’ season started with a rough patch in a loss to Rider but did a complete 180-degree turn with the huge upset win at Nebraska.

And now everything they have worked for comes together at the 2015 Big Ten Wrestling Championships this weekend in Columbus, Ohio.

“Overall I think the guys developed well as the season progressed,” Davis said. “I think moving Ryan Taylor from 125 to 132 was a big plus for us. Obviously, right now he is No. 3 in the country, big plus for him; Isaac Jordan went from 157 last year to 165, and he’s top four or five in the country, so by making those moves I think was the best thing for us all. We weren’t sure at first but it worked out well for us.”

Wisconsin has nine seeded wrestlers, 10 weight classes worth of competition but one goal: to produce Big Ten champions.

“For each guy to put themselves in a good spot for the NCAA

-SCROLL FOR MORE-

SCHEDULE (9-4, 7-2)

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

RECENTLY

Jan. 11	Purdue	W, 22-13
Jan. 23	at Michigan	L, 24-12
Jan. 25	at Michigan St.	W, 34-6
Feb. 6	Rutgers	W, 19-18
Feb. 8	at Illinois	L, 20-15
Feb. 22	at Iowa State	L, 30-16

COMING UP

March 7	Big Ten Championships
March 8	Big Ten Championships

[> View complete schedule](#)

FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA:





JUST THE START

MARCH 4, 2007: The women's hockey team won its first WCHA Final Face-off with a 3-1 victory over Minnesota in Minneapolis. The Badgers went on to win the NCAA championship for the first time in program history.

-MORE THIS WEEK-



THIRD TIME'S A CHARM

MARCH 5, 1983:

UW defeated North Dakota, 6-5 in triple overtime, to advance to the WCHA playoff championship. Chris Chelios tied the game in regulation and Paul Houck won it in the third OT.



TOURNAMENT TRIUMPH

MARCH 7, 2013:

The women's basketball team beat Illinois in the opening round of the Big Ten tournament, marking Wisconsin's first win in the conference tournament since 2010.



BO'S THE BEST, AGAIN

MARCH 11, 2003:

For the second-consecutive season, Bo Ryan was named Big Ten Coach of the Year. He is the only coach in league history to win the award in each of his first two seasons.