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by Jeff Millar & Bill Hinds



Big Ten

Michigan, Illinois cream of Midwest crop

Associated Press
You have to play to win, and these two don't play each other until next year. But that hasn't stopped Michigan Coach Bill Frieder and his Illinois counterpart, Lou Henson, from launching pre-emptive strikes.

Who's the best in the Midwest? "Take a look at Illinois," suggests Frieder. Counters Henson, "A lot of people will rank Michigan No. 1 in the country. I would."

Perish the thought. "You're not going to get me to talk about the ratings," said Frieder, not to be outdone. "They're nice for the fans and all that, but I'm not going to get caught up in it."

The nice thing about our sport is that it's all decided in March (in the NCAA Tournament's Final Four) and then there's no doubt who's No. 1.

The Wolverines — Big Ten champions and No. 2-ranked by season's end, winners of 26 games against four losses and of 17 straight victories before being derailed by eventual NCAA champion Villanova in the tourney — return all five starters.

There's no weakness to be found in a lineup that boasts 6-foot-11 senior Roy Tarpley, the Big Ten's Most Valuable Player, in the middle, flanked by a pair of guards, Gary Grant and Antoine Joubert, who are the envy of every coach.

Except perhaps Henson and the Fighting Illini.

They retain four starters from a 26-9 team, including the backcourt duo of Doug Altenberger and Bruce Douglas that some would argue is the best tandem in the conference and maybe in the nation.

But the Big Ten coaching fraternity is being a little more careful this year about those kinds of projections.

Last season, Illinois was No. 2 in preseason polls, Indiana No. 4 and the conference sent a league-record six teams into the NCAAs. But only the Illini, traveled a significant distance down tourney lane, reaching the NCAA East Regional semifinals before getting sidetracked by Georgia Tech.

If either Illinois or Michigan falter in the league, look for Iowa or Indiana to step forward.

The Hawkeyes, 21-11 last season, replace departed twin towers Greg Stokes and Michael Payne with 7-0 redshirt Brad Lohaus. But Iowa Coach George Raveling will have to solve the Hawkeyes' baffling late-season slides to go anywhere and Indiana will need bright performances from junior college transfer Andre



College Basketball Preview

Harris and freshman Ricky Calloway to fulfill the dark-horse role.

After years as the Midwest's — and the nation's — premier independent, DePaul may again be playing second fiddle to Notre Dame.

Sophomore point guard David Rivers controlled the flow for the Irish last year and one season under his belt should help him curb his occasional excesses. He'll need to, Notre Dame could be better than last year, when the Irish were 21-9, but have less to show for it with a schedule that includes North Carolina, Duke, Louisiana State, Indiana and DePaul home-and-home.

Those two contests will give Coach Joey Meyer's enigmatic DePaul team some say in the matter.

Better adjusted to their young coach, stronger with 6-9 forward Dallas Comegys having discovered the weight room, and their outside shooting game bolstered by the addition of slick ballhandling freshman Rodney Strickland, the Blue Demons could surprise the Irish and everybody else.

"I hope I'll be a better coach this year," said Meyer, who succeeded his legendary father, Ray, in the job last season. "I hope to God I'm a better coach every year."

Mid-American Conference coaches will be seeing stars all season long, and the league could get increased national attention with the likes of Ron Harper, Dan Palombizio and Kenny Battle.

Miami of Ohio's 6-6 Harper will have the best supporting cast, but Ball State's Palombizio has the best numbers — he is the nation's leading returning scorer at 26.3 points per game and No. 2 rebounder at 11.

Northern Illinois' Kenny Battle, meanwhile, may have the best future. Battle was the nation's highest-scoring freshman at a 20.1 clip.

Toledo Coach Bob Nichols needs just two victories to become the MAC's winningest coach ever, but he could be struggling to keep alive a string of 26 winning seasons.

Carl "Go Go" Golston, the 5-9 ballhandling whiz who ran Loyola of Chicago to the Midwestern Collegiate Conference and into the NCAA tournament, will need considerable help from 6-9 Andre Moore at center to repeat the conference championship.

Moore led the league in rebounds and blocked shots, but will have to add points to cover the departure of No. 5 all-time NCAA scorer Alfredrick Hughes and Andre Battle to the pro ranks.

Xavier, which returns everyone from a 16-13 club, will probably be around to pick up the pieces if Loyola comes up short. New Coach Pete Gillen has MCC Newcomer of the Year in guard Byron Larkin and an all-senior front line to ease the transition.

Illinois-Chicago will debut Division I's first working female assistant coach in Pat Denning, who has game and practice responsibilities, unlike Georgetown's Mary Fenton. But even a woman's touch probably won't stop Cleveland State from repeating as titlist in the Association of Mid-Continent Universities.

The Vikings show 10 returning players, but could end up showcasing for the rest of the nation the talents of freshman Ken "Mouse" McFadden. Coach Kevin Mackey found the 6-1 McFadden playing AAU ball rather than competing for his high school because he spent after-school hours babysitting for his large family. A rough diamond, he already is being compared with Dwayne "Pearl" Washington, another New York City ballhawker on everybody's preseason All-America list.

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NCAA to hear Baylor cage case

Associated Press
DALLAS — Officials of Baylor University, where NCAA extra-benefit rules were allegedly violated in the basketball program, will appear before the NCAA Committee on Infractions later this week, the Dallas Morning News reported Wednesday.

"The NCAA will be meeting in Kansas City, Mo., this weekend, and I expect to be going to Kansas City very shortly," said Baylor President Dr. Herbert H. Reynolds.

The six-member Committee on Infractions, which determines violations and assesses penalties in National Collegiate Athletic Association cases, was scheduled to meet in pri-

vate Friday through Sunday.

The university's basketball program could be banned from television appearances and post-season play and face other penalties following allegations it violated NCAA extra-benefit rules, officials said.

Baylor was investigated from last spring until Oct. 11 for alleged violations of the NCAA's extra-benefits rules. The allegations involved payment of money and gifts of airplane tickets to players.

"We are following the rules of the NCAA," Bill Menefee, Baylor athletic director, said. "We are not going to make any comment on the day-to-day business of the investigation."

The NCAA inquiry stemmed from Baylor's own investigation of its basketball program. Team players' disclosure of possible violations led to the resignation Feb. 22 of BU Coach Jim Haller.

NCAA officials said the coach allegedly provided several players free, round-trip airplane tickets home last Christmas. And former player John Wheeler of Dallas claimed he was given a check for \$172 for a car payment by Haller.

Baylor never has been placed on probation but was given a public reprimand in 1955, NCAA records show.

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