

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL: UW opens Big Ten tournament today vs. Indiana<sup>3</sup>

UW notebook  
Brewers  
INS

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SPORTS

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BADGERS 60 W I 59 ILLINI

Inside  
Cassell (left) and the Bucks  
can't stop Magic's McGrady<sup>3</sup>

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# Alone at the top



**BIG TEN'S BEST**  
BY THE NUMBERS

**79**  
Years since UW last won back-to-back Big Ten men's basketball championships. The Badgers were conference co-champions in 1922-23 and 1923-24 under coach Walter "Doc" McNameel.

**56**  
Years since the Badgers' last outright Big Ten title. That season, 1946-47, the Badgers finished 9-3 in the conference and tied overall under coach Bud Foster.

**22**  
UW victories this season, a school record for the regular season.

**16-0**  
UW's record in Big Ten home games over the past two seasons.

**41-19**  
Bo Ryan's overall record in his two seasons as the Badgers' coach. No UW men's basketball coach has won more games in his first two years.

**81**  
Victories guard Kirk Penney has been a part of in his four seasons at UW. Penney shares the career record with Travis Davis and Charlie Williams.

**4**  
UW players who average double figures in scoring this season. Before Wednesday night's game, Kirk Penney had scored 16.4 points per game, Devin Harris 12.7, Alando Tucker 12.4 and Freddie Owens 11.8. Mike Wilkerson, UW's fifth starter, was at 9.9.

**Harris' free throw seals outright Big Ten title**

By **Ve Featherhead**  
Wisconsin State Journal

There was no doubt in Devin Harris' mind after he watched his first free throw sail around the rim and fall out with four tenths of a second to play Wednesday night at the Kohl Center. All he did was cut off the options of missing the second free throw. "Harris said master-of-factly."

That's not all it did, though.

It put Harris in position to give the University of Wisconsin men's basketball team its first outright Big Ten Conference title in 56 years. He did just that when he finished his second shot to secure the Badgers' 60-59 heart-stopping victory over Illinois.

"It's an adrenaline rush through your head," basketball Alando Tucker said of standing in the free-throw lane after the first miss. "But I knew that once (Harris) had that second chance to look at the basket, I knew he was going to knock it down."

Harris was led by Ill-

**Big finish suits big-time UW**

By **Tom Oates**

The University of Wisconsin men's basketball team is no stranger to all-or-nothing home games to close out the Big Ten Conference season.

Three times in the previous six seasons the Badgers finished the regular season in must-win situations at the UW Field House or the Kohl Center. All three times the Badgers walked out with victories.

In 1987, it was Ty Calderwood's free throw and steal that best second-ranked Minnesota 66-65 to secure an NCAA tournament berth. In 2000, Duane Dancy ignited a late rally from a 12-point deficit for a 56-53 win over 14th-ranked Indiana that began UW's amazing trip to the NCAA Final Four. And last year, the Badgers were 13-for-19 from 3-point range to rout Michigan 74-54 and sneak into a share of their first Big Ten title since 1947.

Despite its familiarity with take-it-or-leave-it games, however, UW's season-ending showdown with 14th-ranked Illinois Wednesday night at the Kohl Center had a completely different feel to it.

No matter what happened in the game, there would be no surprises. No shocking upset of a highly ranked opponent, no stunning comeback against a Big Ten contender, no

**Attitude adjustment pays off for Middleton**

By **Eric Anderson**  
Wisconsin State Journal

The Cardinals shrug off a slow start, and are now favoring their first state tournament appearance.

On the line, the answers just come to Andy Rinsch.

The senior, in his fourth year on the Middleton prep boys hockey team, generally makes the right call on split-second decisions.

When to shoot, when to make the pass, when to throw his 5-foot-11, 170-pound frame into an opposing forward rushing toward the goal. But in his other role for the Cardinals, the answers didn't come as quickly.

After a 6-1 loss to Madison Memorial Jan. 7, Middleton was 4-8 and mired in a five-game losing streak. Rinsch and fellow wing captain Casey Schmitz and Brian Seifeld were charged with keeping the Cardinals' spirits up.

"It was tough. Me and the other captains were scratching our heads," Rinsch said. "We were thinking, 'Geez, we're way better than 16-6.' But we kept working hard, kept getting on the guys, letting them know we're their pal and their enforcer."

The approach worked.

Middleton is 9-1-1 since that loss, and has made some history in the process. The Cardinals will make their WIAA state tournament debut at 11 a.m. today against perennial power Superior in a quarterfinal at the Dane County Coliseum.

"These guys could have packed it in or could have made the locker room a mess," Middleton co-coach Steve Libert said of his team's rough start, which included three one-goal losses.

"Our seniors have really shown their character. They kept the locker room upbeat, came in and worked hard at practice no matter what happened... and that really helped us out for the whole second half of the season."

Libert and his brother and co-coach, Tony, also deserve credit.

**State boys hockey**

By **Tom Oates**

Where: Today through Saturday, Dane County Coliseum.

Inside: Vernon flies its chance<sup>3</sup> Preview, bracket<sup>3</sup>

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