

# SPORTS

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2021 | MADISON.COM | SECTION B

UW FOOTBALL | GAME 12

## Focus on the Axe, not about afterward

Division title would cap big turnaround, don't let Ohio State cloud your thinking

MINNEAPOLIS — Spare me any chatter that it'd be better for the University of Wisconsin football team to lose at Minnesota so it can avoid the embarrassment of getting steamrolled by Ohio State in the Big Ten Championship Game.

That's silly talk. But it hasn't stopped some fans — I hesitate to use that word — from

expressing that opinion as UW has moved closer and closer to securing a Big Ten West title.

The No. 18 Badgers (8-3, 6-2 Big Ten Conference)

can close the deal on a division crown with a victory over the Golden Gophers (7-4, 5-3) on Saturday at Huntington Bank Stadium. Look ahead to what comes after that — and, yes, it could get ugly if the UW-Ohio State matchup takes place — and you're failing to appreciate what it took for the Badgers to even reach that point.

Frankly, it'd be a pretty impressive feat.

Listen, I get that this program has reached the point where winning a divisional title is going to get the so-what treatment from some people in this fan base. But UW can't win a Big Ten title without first winning the West and doing so this time required navigating a path that was more difficult than usual.

This would be Paul Chryst's fourth division title in his seven seasons leading the Badgers and, I'd argue, it'd be the most

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MORRY GASH, ASSOCIATED PRESS

UW Jake Ferguson gets past Northwestern's Brandon Joseph for a touchdown on Nov. 13 at Camp Randall Stadium. He leads the Badgers with 39 receptions this season, averaging 10 yards a catch.

## Completely invested

Standout tight end's motivational speeches increase his value

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Tight end Jack Eschenbach can't help but laugh as he tells the story.

Jake Ferguson, Eschenbach's teammate and starter at his position for the University of Wisconsin football team, had a



### No. 18 Badgers vs. Minnesota

When, where: 3 p.m. Saturday, Minneapolis.

Line: UW by 7.

TV: Ch. 47.

Zoom class this spring scheduled for the same time as one of the team's 15 spring practices. As



Ferguson

Eschenbach tells it, rather than missing one or the other, Ferguson pulled up the class on his phone and had it on the sideline.

Ferguson would pop off his helmet and listen in on the class between reps.

Did the senior tight end and fixture in the lineup since his redshirt freshman season need

to be taking reps during a spring practice? Probably not. Could he afford to miss a day? Yeah.

But talk to UW players and coaches, and they all will tell you Ferguson doesn't miss chances to develop his skills on the field. It's why he's been one of the most consistent weapons for the Badgers throughout his career and why he's produced at least one catch in every game he's played.

The No. 18 Badgers (8-3, 6-2

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UW VOLLEYBALL

## Big Ten title share clinched

First-set loss can't derail Rettke, Hilley

DENNIS PUNZEL  
For the State Journal

The University of Wisconsin learned quickly if it was going to win its third consecutive Big Ten Conference championship, it was going to have to come up big on Friday.

After getting knocked on their

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### No. 5 Badgers 3, No. 11 Nebraska 1

Key: UW wins the second set after trailing 20-19.

Next: 7 p.m. Saturday, vs. Indiana, UW Field House.



AMBER ARNOLD, STATE JOURNAL

UW's Dana Rettke, front, and Julia Orzol react during the fourth set Friday at the UW Field House.

UW MEN'S BASKETBALL

## Maui wowie: Davis does it all in Vegas

Team personnel well aware of MVP's worth

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Johnny Davis didn't realize he was named MVP of the Maui Invitational until about a minute after it was announced.

The University of Wisconsin men's basketball team had just defeated Saint Mary's 61-55 to win the three-day tournament title. While the team posed for pictures with a big "2021 Champions" sign, Davis hugged freshman Lorne Bowman and stood there soaking in the moment.

His name was called over the speakers, but he didn't hear it in the post-win chaos. Brad Davison and multiple coaching staff members had to alert



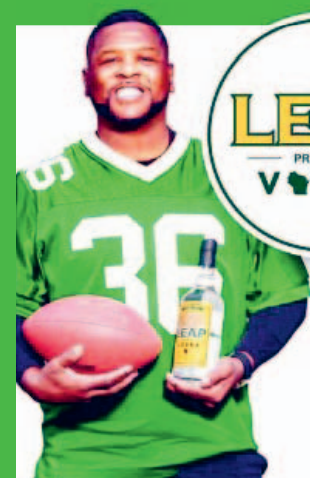
### Badgers vs. Georgia Tech

When, where: 8:15 p.m. Wednesday, Atlanta, Ga., ESPN2.

Editor's note: Due to early afternoon deadlines related to the Thanksgiving holiday, coverage of the men's basketball team's victory in the Maui Invitational was not included in the Thursday print edition. We know many readers missed this coverage and apologize for the inconvenience.

the sophomore guard. Surprise crossed his face as a tournament official placed a lei over his head

Please see **MAUI**, Page B8



LeRoy Butler

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