FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

DONOR SPOTLIGHT: ALL IN THE FAMILY
Rohrman family gift kicks off Ross-Ade Stadium campaign in a big way

IN TUNE WITH LIFE
Singing softball player Alexa Binckes aims for work-life balance

SHIFTING GEARS
Find out how the football equipment staff keeps up with the ever-changing trends in uniforms

HUMBLED
Robbie Hummel reflects on his basketball career upon enshrinement into the Purdue Athletics Hall of Fame

MEET THE 2020 HOF CLASS
Stories about the latest class of Purdue’s best and brightest

STAFF SPOTLIGHT: PEYTON STOVALL
Helping student-athletes prepare for their post-athletic career is job No. 1

LESSONS FROM LARRY
Longtime radio announcer Larry Clisby’s life journey provides perspective to be shared

EXIT INTERVIEW: BLAKE MOHLER
Volleyball All-American hopes to be remembered as a good leader

Forge is published quarterly by Purdue Athletics. Co-Editors Alan Karpick and Tom Schott / Contributing Writers Rachel Coe, Tom Dienhart, Tim Newton, Cory Palm and Brian Peloza / Editorial Assistance Laurie Silverstein and Rachel Coe / Graphic Design Paul Sadler / Photography Charles Jischke
The Rohrman family and Purdue football under coach Jeff Brohm are cut from the same cloth.

Both know that success is self-made, leadership is key and family is everything. They both are competitive to the core, always striving to be better.

So when the family of auto dealership icon Bob Rohrman considered stepping up and making the largest gift ever to Purdue Athletics, the decision to support the Ross-Ade Stadium project was a deeply personal one. For the Rohrman family, it is all about the importance of Purdue football as it relates to the local community and beyond.

“My dad has always had a love for Purdue football,” J.R. Rohrman says. “Having been around the Purdue community for all these years, he knows the impact of having a 21st-century facility and what it can mean to this community. Everyone knows the stadium is a great facility in need of restoration, and we are privileged to take the lead.

“Our family knows we owe a lot to Purdue and the Lafayette area community. Both have been so good to our family since my dad purchased his first dealership way back in 1963.”

For Tim House, senior associate athletics director/assistant vice president for development, it was important for the proposed $120 million stadium project to have someone so ingrained in the community to be the first to step forward.

“On any major project, someone needs to be a leader,” House says. “With the $15 million Rohrman family gift, the Ross-Ade renovation feels like more of a reality. Their generosity has already had an impact as we look for others to follow the Rohrman family lead and help bring this project to fruition.

“I remember when I was a kid, dad telling me he sold a car to Len Dawson,” J.R. says about the deal with the former Purdue quarterback and Pro Football Hall of Famer. “Dad always talked about the impact of Dawson, Bob Griese, Rod Woodson and Drew Brees and how important they were in our community.

“Dad loves all Purdue sports, but he really loves Purdue football.”

WHY THE FIELD?

J.R. Rohrman is one of Bob Rohrman’s five children and the family has been involved in the entire process of
supporting Purdue Athletics in this major way. They previously had been approached about supporting the now Kozuch Football Performance Complex and other smaller projects.

While J.R. knew his siblings were on board to do something, he assumed naming the field was more than would interest the family.

While J.R. moved back in the Lafayette area and became involved in the Lafayette and Purdue communities, Randy and Rhonda live in Chicago and Indianapolis, respectively, and weren’t as focused on Purdue on a daily basis. They had looked at naming the student section or maybe the south end zone.

“I remember asking them what they thought,” J.R. Rohrman says. “My brother and my sister, said, ‘No. We want the field.’

“I about fell out of my chair.

“That’s the last thing I thought they would say. We went back to talk to Mike (Bobinski) and Tim and said we wanted it. Up to that point, I didn’t know if anything was going to happen.”

FAMILY TIES = FAMILY GIFT

J.R. Rohrman said it was critical to his dad and J.R.’s siblings that the gift be from the family. The Rohrman Auto Dealerships have been strong supporters of Purdue Athletics with corporate opportunities in Mackey Arena and Ross-Ade Stadium, but this is different.

“The dealerships have their own deal, like what you see in Mackey has to do with our corporate initiatives. All of that is totally separate,” J.R. says of the gift that consists, in part, of real estate holdings. "Is there a carry over? Yes, because dad’s name is on the dealerships in Indiana, but this is very different from a corporate deal.”

Speaking of family, J.R. Rohrman says the family atmosphere that Brohm’s football program exemplifies was critical in the family’s decision. So is that competitive nature of the fourth-year Boilermaker coach, who can’t help remind one of the patriarch Rohrman.

“I know coach Brohm through my son Trey," J.R. says. "Trey (who heads up the Toyota dealership in Lafayette), speaks very highly of his character, his family and their beliefs. Obviously, faith is a very big part of that. Faith is at the center of us, too.

“We think he’s a good football coach. His program will flourish. Despite all the injuries this past season, I thought we won some games we shouldn’t have won. What impressed me most was that we didn’t always have the best team on the field, but they never gave up. Those kids were playing their hearts out in the fourth quarter, and I was like, ‘Wow.’

THE ROHRMAN WAY

J.R. Rohrman admits that he has had his ups and downs working with his dad. And he didn’t encourage any of his four children to get in the business, though they have. Even his son Trey found out recently that his dad’s competitive edge is alive and well.

“Trey had just become the general manager (a few years ago) at Toyota,” J.R. Rohrman says. “My dad called Trey at 1 a.m. Dad says, ‘Hey Trey. What are you doing?’

“Trey had just become the general manager (a few years ago) at Toyota,” J.R. Rohrman says. “My dad called Trey at 1 a.m. Dad says, ‘Hey Trey. What are you doing?’

“Trey thought, ‘It’s 1 in the morning!’ Dad says, ‘Well she’s up! I just got off the phone with her!’

“Trey thought, ‘It’s 1 in the morning!’ Dad says, ‘Well she’s up! I just got off the phone with her!’

So Trey called her. And yes, she was up. And yes, they solved the problem.”

Bob Rohrman will go down as one of the most competitive people to walk this earth. One has to be in order to build an automobile empire from a simple used car lot that began in Lafayette. It can be sensed that Rohrman, by making such a historic gift, is asking others to step up to his level.

Competitive, attentive to detail, hardworking – it is what the Rohrman family is all about, and what the Boilermaker football program is constantly working to achieve.

ON ANY MAJOR PROJECT, SOMEONE NEEDS TO BE A LEADER. WITH THE $15 MILLION ROHRMAN FAMILY GIFT, THE ROSS-ADE RENOVATION FEELS LIKE MORE OF A REALITY.
HERE, THERE ARE NO DIVAS OR PRIMA DONNAS. NO FAME CHASERS OR ATTENTION SEEKERS. JUST DEDICATED MEN AND WOMEN UNAFRAID TO HUSTLE, GRIND, AND FIGHT LIKE HELL BOTH FOR THE WIN AND FOR EACH OTHER. ALWAYS.
ONLY THE STRONG
As she walked to the center of Keady Court, microphone in hand, senior softball player Alexa Binckes was visibly nervous. Not in a shaking-and-freaking-out sense, mind you. There was just a bit of an uneasy look on her face. She had sung in front of people before. Just never 15,000 people – another sellout crowd for a Purdue men’s basketball game.

As the Mackey Arena crowd fell silent and the Purdue ROTC Color Guard stood at attention to her right, Binckes paused and looked around, wondering what had brought her to this moment.
It was all Dougie’s fault.

Her teammate, roommate and best friend Madison Douglass first heard her sing a few years back, quietly here and there. Douglass, or Dougie as her teammates call her, would sneak short recordings of Binckes whenever she could, mindful that her roomie was a bit bashful.

“She’s very good, very talented,” Douglass says. “I’d always beg her all through sophomore year to sing.”

“I’ve loved to sing since I was little, but I’ve always been very selective who I sang to and who I let know about it,” Binckes says. “My family and I would always watch American Idol, and I would sing around the house and on car rides, things like that.”

Singing at home was fine because she was comfortable in front of her family. In fact, it became a bit of a family activity with Alexa and her older brother, Nicholas, staging their own make-believe American Idol contests, their parents as the judges.

And that’s as far as it went. That is, until she got a little bit of a push.

“… WHAT SO PROUDLY WE HAILED …”

The thing you need to know about softball teams, they spend a lot of time on buses. That means team members find a lot of different ways to pass the time on road trips. One method is karaoke contests.

“Of course, Dougie knows I sing,” Binckes says. “She kept telling me to go up there and do a song.”

“I was like, ‘Go up there!’ because she hadn’t really sang in front of anybody but me,” says Douglass, separately relaying the exact same story. “She did that first song, and everybody immediately got quiet. Then they all asked her to do another song so they could get recordings of it.”

“It has kind of taken off from there,” says Binckes with a grin.

Binckes has been wowing her teammates on road trips ever since. Last fall, she was invited to sing at the Old Gold & Black Dinner hosted by the John Purdue Club.

“A lot of people have been very supportive,” Binckes says. “I just really want to make the most of the opportunities that I have here at Purdue.”


“… THROUGH THE PERILOUS FIGHT …”

Binckes had her first knee surgery during her junior year at Briar Woods High School in Ashburn, Virginia, and returned as a senior to hit .400 and lead her team to the state tournament, where it would lose to the eventual state champions.

She committed to Purdue prior to her senior season, then arrived on campus looking to make an immediate impact behind the plate. Binckes started 43 games as a freshman and batted just a shade below .300.

As a sophomore, Binckes started 51 games and was second on the team with eight doubles. Yet, more than a decade of crouching behind home plate started to catch up with her. She had her second knee surgery in the summer after her sophomore year at Purdue and a third procedure just five months later.

Lingering injuries led to a drastic reduction in playing time last season. She had a fourth knee procedure just days after the conclusion of the 2019 campaign. With her athletic future in doubt, a reevaluation of priorities in life was on the table.

Binckes had known she wanted to work in the medical field from a young age. But upon seeing first-hand the profound impact doctors and technicians could have, things came into focus.

“I built great relationships with the doctors and have seen the impact they’ve had on my career and my life,” Binckes says. “My main goal now is to give back to someone in that same way. It’s completely changed my outlook on life.”

Binckes enrolled in Purdue’s pre-med program in the College of Health and Human Sciences. She later transitioned to the pre-physicians assistant program before graduating in three and a half years.

As her career at Purdue unfolded, she understood the importance of having a family and aiming for good work-life balance, concepts rarely championed by student-athletes (or anyone) in their early 20s. It caused her to change her focus from becoming a surgeon to becoming a physician’s assistant, though that doesn’t mean she works any less towards the ultimate goal of helping others.
“Once I set a goal, I do whatever it takes to get it done,” Binckes says about graduating with a degree ahead of schedule in a challenging field. “Plus, we are blessed with such incredible resources here. Being able to get my degree early and start on a master’s degree is just amazing.”

“... THAT OUR FLAG WAS STILL THERE ...”
Binckes knows that she didn’t get to where she is by herself. Life is a team sport and she has some all-stars on her squad, beginning with her parents, Brian and Lisa.

“They are my world,” she says, tears welling in her eyes. “We talk every day and it’s never negative. Great day, bad day, doesn’t matter, they are there. Having their support means everything.”

Binckes talks about developing a second family in her time at Purdue. She and Douglass know that, although they are part of a small senior class, they have a bond that will extend far beyond West Lafayette.

“I know if there’s a gap in time down the road, I’ll be able to call her and she’ll pick up right away,” Douglass says. “It’s one of those relationships where the distance will never matter between the two of us.”

Binckes agrees. “Miles don’t matter, we’ll find a way,” she says. “I’ve been very blessed to be able to play here, and I know I’m never going to lose these friends. Who you surround yourself with, who you rely on, can really make an impact on your time here.”

The classmates are certainly talking like a couple of seniors who hear the real world calling. But they know, too, that there is still the matter of their final season, one where they have clearly defined goals: to build on last year’s late-season success and return the program to the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2009.

“... AND THE HOME OF THE BRAVE?”
As Binckes lets go of the final notes of the national anthem, the sellout crowd erupts in applause. And you can tell where the softball team was sitting, as their cheers were louder than the rest.

As the Color Guard makes its way off the court, Binckes pauses for a few second, taking it all in. Then she follows them off toward the tunnel, triumphant.
It used to be so simple.

When College Football Hall of Fame quarterback Mark Herrmann played at Purdue, the team had two uniform combos. Gold helmets, black jerseys and gold pants at home; gold helmets, white jerseys and gold pants on the road. At least, that was the case until his last game in 1980.

“For the Liberty Bowl, we wore black pants with our white jerseys. The guys got excited,” Herrmann admits.

Fast forward to 2020. The Boilermakers can choose from any combination of black, white and anthracite jerseys; black, gold, light grey, anthracite and white pants; and/or black, white and gold helmets, with a chrome gold option added in. It’s a common practice with schools across the country to provide uniform variety, and YouTube videos abound of players nearly losing their minds when they see their new threads.

MODERN MIXED WITH TRADITION

Kyle Gergely, associate director of equipment, says the process of uniform design starts with the head coach.

“Nike has a conversation with each coach and they discover what they’re looking for,” says Gergely, who has also worked in football equipment with the University of Minnesota and San Francisco 49ers. “They ask the coach on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being a school with traditional design like Alabama to 10 a school like Oregon, where they want the designs to land. Most wind up somewhere in the 3-to-7 range.”

The jersey/pants design combination—considered the “chassis” by Nike—is redone every five to seven years for each school. Purdue is currently in the fourth year of its current style. Changes don’t happen overnight; it’s about an 18-month process to get a new design from the drawing board to the field.

“We’re not too flashy, but we also have to keep in mind that we’re trying to come up with designs that will appeal to 17-year-old athletes,” Gergely says. “I talk to players to try to get their
feedback and stay ahead of the curve.”

Interest in each week’s wear has grown to the point that the uniform combinations are unveiled the day before the game in sponsored social media posts. The combinations to be worn for each week are sometimes decided well in advance, and often reflect where the team is playing.

“We tend to wear the traditional gold-black-gold at Homecoming, and we avoid wearing white pants if we’re playing on natural grass fields like Northwestern,” Gergely says. “The chrome helmets look especially good at night.”

TO THE MOON
One notable exception to tradition came in last season’s Homecoming game against Maryland. The team wore white jerseys and pants, and a white helmet that celebrated both Purdue’s 150th anniversary and the 50-year anniversary of Neil Armstrong’s moon landing.

Brainstorming with Tyson Street, assistant director of football recruiting, and with input from head equipment manager Mike Shandrick and others, Gergely and company designed a helmet with moonboot footprints and the numbers 2/25/64. Those reflected the two Purdue astronauts who walked on the moon (Armstrong and Gene Cernan), 25 total astronauts from Purdue and 64 total space missions involving Boilermaker astronauts. The words “One Giant Leap” appeared on the back of the helmet.

Paul Sadler, director of creative services - design, created a uniform patch that featured a griffin from the university seal planting a Purdue flag on the moon. The entire ensemble drew national attention and was hailed as the “Uniform of the Year” by sports business analyst Darren Rovell.

No moonshots are planned for 2020, but don’t be surprised to see a new tweak here and there. “We’re looking at different ways to incorporate Purdue into the helmet … maybe some decals with lyrics from the fight song, or something along those lines,” Gergely says.

FORM AND FIT
The look of the uniforms is important. Equally crucial is how they perform.

“Every version Nike comes up with is a little better than the last,” Gergely says. “The last version had less seams than before, which makes them more flexible. They also don’t hold water as much as they used to. It’s amazing how dry they are when we take them out of the washing machine.”

The fit is important to players like George Karlaftis. The freshman All-America defensive end wants a uniform that’s tight, which makes it more difficult to be grabbed and held, but also breathable and flexible.

“I love the jerseys we have,” says Karlaftis, who admits to a preference of the black jersey/black pants combination. “They’re comfortable no matter what the weather. Our equipment guys are our unsung heroes. They do a great job.”

ROAD SHOW
It takes a small army to transport the uniforms and other equipment to road games. The Boilermakers have 12 student managers, with each assigned to a specific coach and position group. For a Saturday game, the managers help load the 53-foot semi after Thursday’s practice and then unload in on Friday. Within 90 minutes, the visiting locker room is as close to home as the group can make it.

After the game, the locker room is emptied and all of the cases are loaded back onto the truck, under Gergely’s supervision. “It’s not good if you have a full truck and four cases still to load,” he laughs. Then it’s back to the Kozuch Football Performance Complex for laundry and repair.

Artificial surfaces, such as FieldTurf, can pose their own equipment challenges. Some of the older surfaces, such as at Wisconsin and Nebraska, are somewhat dirty, and uniforms may need extra washing or care. The uniforms pick up pellet burns and snags and threads need to be clipped.

“Sometimes, I just close the door, put on some music and sew tiny uniform holes for hours at a time,” Gergely says.

Uniforms can help in recruiting, and fans spend a great amount of time debating the merits of their favorite team’s combos on message boards and social media.

But Karlaftis takes a more practical approach.

“My job is to play football,” he says. “Whatever they give me is fine.”
HUMBLED

HUMMEL SURPRISED BY PURDUE HALL OF FAME SELECTION

BY TOM DIENHART

Photo by: Paul Sadler
Glenn Hummel still can envision little Robbie draining shots on his Little Tikes hoop in the family house in Valparaiso, Indiana.

“He was about 2 years old when we got it, and we set it up in the family room,” Glenn Hummel says. “The Chicago Bulls were in their heyday, and we didn’t miss a game. With his Little Tikes basket in the corner, he would play basketball and watch games at the same time.”

Now, Robbie Hummel is all grown up. And he’s going into the Purdue Intercollegiate Athletics Hall of Fame after draining a lot of shots in West Lafayette ... and beyond.

“It certainly is humbling, and I am very honored to get to do that,” Hummel says. “I think Purdue is a special place and those in the hall of fame are very special. I am honored to be part of that group.”

The Valparaiso High School product became a beloved Boilermaker during a run in West Lafayette from 2007 to 2012 when he starred with the likes of Chris Kramer, E’Twaun Moore, JaJuan Johnson and Keaton Grant. During that time, Hummel scored 1,772 points (14.0 per game), won a lot of games and made many memories.

“They must be letting anyone get in,” jokes Kramer when told of Hummel’s election to the Hall of Fame. “Seriously, the thing about Robbie – obviously, he’s an unbelievable talent. Unbelievable work ethic. You can say Robbie Hummel the basketball player is all of those things. But Robbie Hummel is a better man than a basketball player.”

Adds Johnson: “Robbie is a special player who I still talk with today. That still was the most fun I ever have had playing basketball. I look back on it fondly. We had a special group of players. And Robbie was a huge part of it. He was special.”

Hummel’s Purdue resume teems with accomplishments. He was first-team All-Big Ten three times (2008, 2010, 2012) and third-team all-conference on another occasion. (2009). And Purdue won a Big Ten championship and league tournament title during his tenure, reaching the NCAA Tournament Sweet 16 twice. Now, this induction to the Purdue ultimate shrine serves as a perfect punctuation to a spectacular career that saw Hummel leave as a beloved figure. Not bad for a former Valparaiso University ball boy who grew up watching hometown hero Bryce Drew.

“When you are playing, you always have goals,” Hummel says. “When I was playing at Valpo High School, I always wanted to play on the varsity and make the Indiana All-Star Team.

“And I always thought it would be really cool to have your jersey hanging in the rafters and to go in a hall of fame of any kind. So, it is kind of surreal to have that phone call where they tell you that you are going in.”

Hummel is only 30 years old. He’s officially a “young, old-timer.”

“It makes me feel like I am kind of old,” Hummel says. “You don’t see people just out of college in the hall of fame.”

While Hummel has been out of Purdue less than 10 years, he remains dialed in to the Boilermakers and college basketball as an analyst for BTN and ESPN.

“It is fun to see him on TV,” Glenn Hummel says. “To hear his voice, it’s like being with him. I am watching more basketball now than ever. Sometimes when he is in the studio, we’ll notice his tie may not be straight and we’ll send him a text. Next time we see him, his tie is straightened.

Hummel can do more than talk about hoops. He still can play, too. He has found a second life in the sport playing 3-on-3 for USA Basketball after an NBA career that spanned two seasons followed by overseas stints in Italy, Spain and Russia.

Hummel got involved in 3-on-3 through former Northwestern player and friend, Craig Moore, who was involved. Moore convinced Hummel, who took part in his first three-on-three tourney in South Korea and was sold.

“It has been some work and reinvigorated me as a player,” says Hummel, a second-round pick of the Minnesota Timberwolves in the 2012 NBA Draft. “I really enjoy it.”

In 2019, Hummel helped lead USA Basketball team to victory in the 3-on-3 World Cup in the Netherlands, where he earned tournament Most Valuable Player honors. Then, USA Basketball named Hummel its 2019 Male Athlete of the Year. Next up could be a trip to the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo.

“It has been a really cool deal,” Hummel says. “I had a sour taste in my mouth with the way my career ended in Russia. I said if I wasn’t going to play in the NBA anymore, I don’t care about playing, I was ready to move on. It was kind of a fluke how I got into 3-on-3. It has progressed to where we are knocking on the door of the Olympics. I really enjoy it. It has been a ton of travel.”

And fun. Just like his playing days at Purdue under head coach Matt Painter.

“Coach Paint has been so awesome throughout my whole experience, recruiting me, playing for him,” Hummel says. “I think when you are playing, there are always days when you are like, ‘Man, my college coach is a jerk.’ He is yelling at you, on you, whatever. But it never was personal with Paint. When practice was over, you could go talk to him. He was there for you. He genuinely cares about his players and how they do not just in school but afterwards, too.”

Hummel enjoyed some big games while playing for the Old Gold & Black. He loved the two wins over Wisconsin as a freshman. And there was the 2010 New Year’s Day triumph vs. West Virginia that resonates, too. But no discussion of Hummel’s Purdue career can take place without wondering ... what if? The Boilermakers looked poised for a deep NCAA tourney run in Hummel’s junior season of 2009-10 before he suffered the first of two knee injuries.

“He faced two career-changing knee injuries,” Kramer says. “Just the way he dealt with all of that was impressive.”
Hummel still thinks about what could have been. "My junior year, that was my most fun year ever playing basketball," Hummel says. "It was a really special group of guys who loved each other and loved playing together. It's unfortunate we didn't get a chance to see how far we could go because of my knee. It was just a really special time in my life, and my five years at Purdue were outstanding."

If Hummel hadn't gotten hurt, does he think Purdue would have reached the Final Four in 2010? "I have no doubt," says Hummel, who watched the season end with a Sweet 16 loss to Duke. "This has been the thing that probably has stayed with me. It's the hardest thing for me to get over. We all wanted to go to the Final Four. We broke every huddle that year saying 'Final Four.' We had beaten four teams in the top 10 that season, two on the road, one on a neutral site and one at home. We were rolling."

"I would have liked our chances against anybody that year. It always will be disappointing, but it is what it is. It happened. You roll with the punches..." Hummel may have missed out on a Final Four trip. But he's still a Purdue immortal.

"I am really happy for him," Johnson says. "I have known Robbie since we were in high school. He's just a great person. He's very deserving of this honor."
**ARIEL (TURNER) GEBHARDT**

**Volleyball: 2009-12**

**Wanting the ‘best in both’**

She heard a clear message during a recruiting visit to Purdue: The Boilermakers were going to become competitive with the top teams in the nation.

Ariel (Turner) Gebhardt felt connected with that mentality, but knew playing volleyball wasn’t going to last forever. She needed to prepare for life after sports, which made her collegiate choice clear.

“That’s exactly why I chose Purdue and not another school – because I wanted the best in both,” Gebhardt says. “I wanted to be in a volleyball program that was tops in the country and fighting to go to a national championship, but at the same time have this great engineering degree once I was finished and then be able to use that later in my life.”

Gebhardt ranks second in program history with 1,906 kills and is one of just seven players ever to compile 1,000 kills and 1,000 digs. There are plenty of individual honors: All-American selection in 2011 and 2012; Big Ten Medal of Honor recipient; and only two-time national player of the week honoree.

But those individual honors came with something greater: team success. In 2010, Purdue advanced to the NCAA Elite Eight for the first time since 1982. That was followed up by consecutive Sweet 16 appearances during the last two years of Gebhardt’s career.

Gebhardt played professionally in France and Germany, finishing as the top point scorer in the French League during the 2014-15 season, and her team won the German championship in the 2016-17 season.

As for the engineering degree, she has put it to good use. Gebhardt earned her master’s degree in aerospace engineering while working as a volunteer assistant coach at the University of Colorado. She works with orbit analysis and trajectory design at an aerospace job in Colorado. All those long hours balancing being an elite volleyball player and studying for an engineering degree paid off for Gebhardt.

“I enjoyed the challenge of the school and a really tough engineering program,” she says. “I think I would have been bored doing something else.”

---

**SHAUN GUICE**

**Track & Field: 2000-04**

**Guice visualized success before achieving it**

As athletes were warming up prior to each practice, the high jump bar would be set at the provisional height needed to qualify for the NCAA Championships.

The symbolic gesture served one purpose: visualize success.

Shaun Guice did more than just visualize success, finishing his career as Purdue’s most decorated male track & field athlete. He was a seven-time high jump All-American from 2000 to 2004.

He didn’t need much time to show his potential. Guice was the Big Ten Indoor Track and Field Freshman of the Year in 2001, winning conference titles during the indoor and outdoor seasons, before capping the season with a ninth-place finish at the NCAA Championships.

Guice went on to earn All-American honors four times at the NCAA Indoor Championships, finishing as high as second in 2001 and 2003. He was a three-time All-American at the outdoor championships, finishing fifth in 2000, 2001 and 2004.

So, about the height of that high jump bar before practice? That was the idea of assistant coach Lissa Olson, a person Guice credited for his success along with his decision to attend Purdue.

“She was all about visualizing it first,” Guice said. “I really bought into everything she brought as a coach. She’s an amazing person, a born optimist and really knows track. She was a high jumper herself, so I felt comfortable going to Purdue.”

Guice was a four-time Big Ten champion, and his victory at the 2003 outdoor championships might have been his most satisfying. After missing a season due to injury, Guice had finished second to Minnesota’s Kevin Netzer at the indoor conference championships that year.

Guice cleared 7-foot-3 inches to win the title on his last jump. If he had missed at that height, Netzer would have won because he cleared the previous height without any misses.
CHUCK KYLE
FOOTBALL: 1966-68

Finishing with a record

He made the most of his final collegiate game, setting a record that still stands five decades later.

Indiana was insistent on running up the middle in the 1968 Old Oaken Bucket game. Purdue defensive middle guard Chuck Kyle was just as insistent on stopping them.

Kyle tallied 27 tackles in Purdue’s win over its intrastate rival that year, a program game record that still stands. The Hoosiers kept running fullback Terry Cole, coincidentally a fraternity brother of Kyle, up the middle but not with much success.

“I didn’t know I had that many tackles until the game was over,” Kyle says. “The coach came up to me and said I might have set a record for tackles in a game.”

The record-setting performance was a fitting end to an award-winning career. Kyle is one of just four Purdue players to earn first-team All-Big Ten honors on three occasions. He also is one of 21 players to achieve consensus All-American honors.

But his most proud accomplishment was being a key member of the 1966 squad, the only Purdue team to win a Rose Bowl, beating USC 14-13. Kyle was selected to Sports Illustrated’s All-Bowl Team afterward.

“It was an incredible honor,” Kyle says. “To go to California and play in the Rose Bowl was something that was beyond belief and comprehension as a sophomore.”

At one point, Kyle also held the single-game interception record – which since has been broken – with three against Iowa in 1968. Those were the only interceptions of his career at any level.

“They could not run the ball against us, and at one time it was one of the longest games ever played because they kept throwing the ball,” Kyle says. “I can’t tell you how or why, but I was in the right place at the right time. I had my hands taped up, so how I caught those balls is beyond me.”

BRUCE PARKINSON
BASKETBALL: 1973-77

Passing was Parkinson’s craft

Bruce Parkinson would gently swipe his hand across the front of his jersey as he dribbled down the court.

The innocuous move was rarely noticed by opponents. Parkinson’s teammates, though, knew what that slight gesture meant: Fake moving toward the wing, cut quickly for a backdoor layup and Parkinson would take care of the rest.

“I thought of it as my craft — throwing the ball in exactly the right place at exactly the right time,” Parkinson says.

During his career as a four-year starter for Purdue from 1973 to 1977, Parkinson was one of the best at his craft. He still holds the program record for assists in a single game (18 vs. Minnesota, 1975), season (207 in 1974-75) and career (690).

Not bad for a guy who put his shooting shirt on backwards prior to his first collegiate game.

Parkinson was one of the first players to get pregame treatments prior to Purdue’s 1972-73 season opener, leaving him plenty of time to reflect before his debut. Aside from realizing he had been sitting with his shooting shirt on backwards, Parkinson reflected on words his high school coach at Yorktown – Don Rogers – had offered previously.

“He said, ‘Bruce, if you pass and can play defense then you can play anywhere at any level,’” Parkinson says. “That was the attitude that I took to Purdue.”

Parkinson showed he could pass. And his defense was pretty good, too, finishing with 65 steals in the 1976-77 season, sixth-most ever in program history.

And he also was a prolific scorer, compiling 1,224 points in his career. Parkinson helped Purdue win the 1974 NIT and qualify for the 1977 NCAA Tournament, and he was captain of the U.S. gold-medal winning team at the 1975 Pan-Am Games, playing with Robert Parish, a future NBA Hall of Famer.
**CASEY (MATTHEWS) SPITZ**  
**DIVING: 2009-14**

**Just like practice equals championship**

She didn’t want to think about the significance of the dive.

Casey (Matthews) Spitz just told herself she was at practice. She ignored the crowd of thousands watching the 2013 NCAA Championships, and she sure didn’t think about the ramifications of her last dive of the event.

She was in first place going into the last round of dives of the 3-meter platform finals. And while she wasn’t positive what score she needed to win the title, Spitz knew she needed one more good dive.

That’s why Spitz chose to have her best dive – an inward 2 ½ tuck – as the last one on her list.

“A goal of mine starting out freshman year in 2009 was to eventually win NCAAs,” Spitz says. “I had a really good routine down when I was practicing and competing. I just told myself to pretend this was a regular practice. Don’t get in your head that this is an important competition. Just do what you normally do. Your body knows what to do, and you’ve practiced these dives a million times.”

As soon as she hit the water, Spitz felt like she had executed the dive well. Her score on the dive—a 67.50—proved that true as she solidified a national championship with 386.66 points.

“I knew I did it well, but I didn’t know if it was good enough to win the competition,” Spitz says. “I was surprisingly shocked when I turned around and saw the scores, and I did what I needed to solidify it.”

Spitz was the first Purdue female athlete to win an NCAA individual championship.

“I didn’t even realize that until after I won that competition,” Spitz says. “That was the icing on the cake hearing that I also had made history in my sport. It’s very humbling.”

**SHEREKA WRIGHT**  
**BASKETBALL: 2001-04**

**Wright never stopped working**

She began her freshman season as a reserve but ended it as a starter in the national championship game.

Shereka Wright’s career didn’t slow down from there, finishing as the only three-time All-American in women’s basketball program history. She scored 2,551 career points, second-most in program annals; and is one of just three Boilermakers to score at least 2,000.

Purdue won a Big Ten championship all four years of Wright’s career—regular-season crowns in 2001 and 2002 and tournament titles in 2003 and 2004.

There’s a banner hanging inside Mackey Arena with Wright’s name and her No. 50 jersey number, recognizing her All-America status. When people glance towards the rafters and see her name, Wright hopes they have one main thought.

“For me, the biggest thing was that I left it all on the floor,” Wright says. “Every single game I wanted to make sure nobody ever questioned my effort. Whether or not I scored a point, they knew I played hard every possession.”

There are plenty of prolific scoring numbers on her resume, but one statistic exemplifies Wright’s worth ethic: She has a program-record 350 offensive rebounds.

“I just wanted to come in and make an impact any possible way I could and find a role that I could do,” Wright says.

Wright arrived to a program that was established, winning the national championship two years prior and boasting several returning standouts.

But the dynamics of that 2000-01 team changed when starter Erika Valek tore her ACL in the NCAA Tournament regional semifinals, which pushed Wright into the starting lineup. Wright responded by averaging 14 points and 4.6 rebounds over the final three games of the postseason. She was named to the Final Four All-Tournament team after scoring 17 points in a two-point loss to Notre Dame in the title game.
Peyton Stovall remembers sitting at the breakfast table with tears in his eyes as he read the morning newspaper. His beloved Boilermakers, led by Glenn Robinson playing in his final game at Purdue, had lost in the NCAA regional finals the day before to Duke, and the 9-year-old was trying to absorb the disappointment. “I couldn’t stand Grant Hill for a long time after that game,” he admits, with a smile.

Today, Stovall is helping the current crop of Boilermakers prepare for life after their final competitions. Hired last July as assistant athletics director for student-athlete development, he leads all activities related to career advancement, from resume writing and mock interviews to personal branding.
“We’re trying to emphasize that the Purdue experience isn’t a four- or five-year journey. It’s a 40-to-50-year lifetime opportunity,” Stovall says. “No matter how talented you are, at some point you have to hang up your uniform and move on to the next phase of life. We want to do everything we can to prepare our athletes for that next step.”

LOCAL ROOTS
A Lafayette native, Stovall was destined for athletics from birth. Named for Chicago Bears legend Walter Payton, he starred at Lafayette Jefferson High School alongside future Purdue football star Dustin Keller. His older brother, Prentice, was a Purdue track standout, and younger sister Lanae ran track for Ball State.

Stovall, who says he was at Mackey Arena “a million times” growing up, was offered a walk-on basketball spot with the Boilermakers. With urging from his parents, he instead chose to take advantage of a full scholarship offer at Ball State. He was a four-year letterwinner for the Cardinals, scoring 1,383 points while serving as team captain, and was inducted into the Ball State Athletics Hall of Fame in 2017.

Stovall also saw his dream of playing in Mackey come true. As a senior, his Cardinal team came to Mackey Arena to take on the Baby Boilers, led by freshmen Robbie Hummel, E’Twaun Moore and JaJuan Johnson. The Cardinals lost 70-57, and Stovall was held to 14 points (“Chris Kramer,” he laughs), but a bucket list item was checked off.

Stovall gained experience in sports administration at Ball State, and he credits sports information director Chris Taylor for opening his eyes to the importance of networking. He earned both a bachelor’s and master’s degree and interned briefly for the NCAA before deciding to begin work at the high school level. He spent three years at Evansville North High School, eventually becoming athletics director, before deciding to return to his alma mater.

CHANGING CULTURE
Stovall was named athletics director at Lafayette Jeff in 2013. And he inherited a department that was struggling.

“Our athletic program was probably at the lowest point in school history,” Stovall says. “We changed leagues, going back to our roots in the North Central Conference, and then we slowly started building confidence.

“It was imperative to turn around our football and basketball teams, because they funded our other sports. I was proud to work alongside my assistant athletics director, Paul Leaf, and our department staff at Lafayette Jeff. To see both programs ranked in the top five this year for the first time in over a decade certainly paid tribute to all the hard work and collaboration from the entire staff.”

During his time at Lafayette Jeff, Stovall became acquainted with Purdue athletics director Mike Bobinski. The high school hosted a couple of basketball games for the men’s program, and Lafayette Jeff played a home football game at Ross-Ade Stadium.

When Stovall saw a newly created job at Purdue, he thought the timing and opportunity were right. “I was ready to break into college athletics, and I thought my experiences would be useful in the role here at Purdue,” he says.

The fit was right on both sides.

“Given Peyton’s status as a former Division I men’s basketball student-athlete who competed at an elite level, he was the ideal choice for the position,” says Ed Howat, senior associate athletic director for student services. “Peyton has lived the life of a student-athlete and understands the importance of higher education and what a degree can do to enhance their lives.

“He had dreams of competing at the next level, but due to injuries was not able. Because of that, he had to rely on his degree to help secure a great career. He is a role-model, and we’re fortunate to have him on our staff.”

MAPPING THE FUTURE
The student-athlete development team plans to take a multi-pronged attack to career preparation. They will start by giving incoming student-athletes a strength-finder assessment to see what motivates them. Student-athletes then will spend time on personal branding, and in particular, their use of social media. They also will be exposed to career seminars and networking events.

Beginning this semester, Stovall will work with Cathy Wright-Eger, leadership advisor, and Lacee’ Carmon-Johnson, director of professional development and associate director of academic support services, on offering “Moonshot Mondays.” The emphasis will be on how to network and maneuver through a career, financial literacy, and resume preparation and interviewing skills.

“Our goal is to make sure all of our student-athletes leave here with confidence and are prepared for the real world,” Stovall says. “We want them to be intentional and aggressive in what they do.

“The majority of them won’t continue their athletic careers once they leave here. But even for those who turn professional, it’s important for them to be able to sit in front of a coach or general manager and tell them why they should invest large amounts of money in their future.”

Stovall says he’s been overwhelmed by the response he’s received from Purdue alumni in his new role. Although technically not a Boilermaker alum, Stovall is learning that the university’s network and reach extends everywhere.

“I was recently flying home, proudly wearing my Purdue shirt, and I decided to play Hail Purdue on my phone as I got off the plane in Indianapolis,” he says. “Within seconds, I had a few people join along, and we walked through the concourse singing like we were long-lost friends. It was amazing.

I think a couple of Indiana fans boomed us, but that was pretty cool, too.”
If one pays attention, learning can come from any moment.

And for a quintet close to the Purdue men’s basketball program, there is much reflection going on.

Forge spoke with five individuals who are among the many to have had their lives touched by hall of fame broadcaster Larry Clisby. Former players Ryan Cline, Grady Eifert, Troy Lewis, broadcast engineer Wes Scott and operations director Elliot Bloom serve as a sample of all in the Boilermaker basketball world: Players, coaches, fans and administrators whom Clisby has had an effect.

And when Clisby, the long-time voice of Purdue basketball was diagnosed with Stage 4 Cancer in July 2018, it caused many to reflect on his career and his overall impact.
Here are six common lessons that Clisby's life and times have provided:

**LESSON 1: KEEP IT REAL**

Clisby is authentic. It's his calling card. It doesn't take a listener long to know how the Boilermakers are faring when tuning in.

“He can’t hide it in his voice when we are doing well,” says Lewis, a two-time All-Big Ten guard in on Big Ten title teams in 1987 and 1988. “The thing I like about Larry is that he keeps it real. He didn’t sugarcoat things.

“Larry means it if he says it.”

But Clisby has been real off the air, as well.

That was especially important to Cline, when the Carmel, Indiana, sharp-shooter struggled with off-court issues early in his Boilermaker career. It was the words Clisby didn’t say that made all the difference to Cline.

“He didn’t actually sit down and talk to me, but he was one of the only people that I knew didn’t change his perspective on me,” Cline says. “I could tell that he thought I was a good guy and that I was young and made mistakes.

“He was always level-headed whether it was before I got in trouble or after. He never changed the way he looked at me. I am grateful for that.”

**LESSON 2: PERSEVERE AND OTHERS WILL HELP YOU**

Clisby had a choice to make after learning of his difficult illness.

Naturally, those closest to him mattered more than ever. His wife, Michelle; his Purdue basketball family, including Bloom; his fans – they all mattered.

“It’s been rough on him. Physically, it has really taken a toll,” Bloom says. “He never once has complained. He’s always pushing through it. I certainly see it, and I know others see it.”

Bloom shares the story of a recent trip to Maryland and the selfless acts of the Purdue players when helping Clisby navigate road trips.

“Eric Hunter Jr. was walking by, and I just told him to go around us,” Bloom recalls about helping Clisby get on the bus after losing to the Terrapins. “Eric just stopped and jumped right in front of Cliz, grabbed one of his arms, and led him up the stairs.”

No one asked Hunter to do it. He just did it. Clisby’s willingness to fight on has affected others and given them reason to step up.

“He shows up with what he can bring to the table and goes to work,” says Eifert, now a graduate assistant coach. “That’s kind of just the Boilermaker way. Even when you’re going through stuff, you can still show up to work and do your job. I have learned from watching.”

**LESSON 3: BE WELL-ROUNDED**

Clisby has other interests than basketball.

He is reader of eclectic authors like Bill Bryson. Long before his illness, Clisby dabbled in constant philosophical examination of the intricacies of life.

“It’s always been that old sage wisdom that Larry provides,” Bloom says. “People might be surprised, but Larry provides good talks about a lot of deep subjects. I know he’s done that with coach Painter and with a lot of guys on our staff. It helps us all keep our wits about us and helps all of us keep our perspective.”

**LESSON 4: MAKE THE MOST OF LONGEVITY**

Clisby has been announcing Purdue basketball games since the late 1970s, when he was hired by Purdue Athletics Hall of Famer and fellow local broadcaster Henry Rosenthal. It has been a long road, but Clisby has quietly used his experience to help provide perspective.

With that longevity comes great stories, and Clisby has told his share. But they seem to be more impactful now.

“He’s got a way of telling stories, and he does a really good job of it,” Eifert says. “He hits every detail. He always has a joke or two within the story, or else it wouldn’t be a Clisby story. I think that’s kind of how he draws you in.”

**LESSON 5: FAMILY FIRST**

Purdue basketball has been Clisby’s second family.

When Larry and Michelle were married this past June, Bloom and head coach Matt Painter were standing up for the couple. When Painter tied the knot seven months earlier, Clisby was there.

But any good family member is there in good times and in the worst of times. Such is the case with Scott, who has worked alongside Clisby for 20 years. Clisby was there when Scott’s family endured the tragic death of Scott’s son a few years back.

“The first time I left the house after the loss of my son was a Purdue trip,” Scott says. “I was comfortable doing that because it was with my family. I consider Larry part of the family.

“When I talk about my family, he’s someone that always comes up. He’s been constant; he’s been present. I was one of the first people he called when he was diagnosed with cancer, and we had some serious tears.

“We have shared a lot, and not all of it has been in good times. That is what friends and family do.”

**LESSON 6: DON’T TAKE YOURSELF SERIOUSLY**

Clisby’s medical condition is no laughing matter. Yet, Clisby’s desire to not take it all too seriously seems to be his secret sauce of embracing it each day.

“I think the thing with the three of us (Clisby, Painter and Bloom) is I don’t think any of us take ourselves very seriously.” Bloom says. “I think we really enjoy having a good time and laughing. For some reason, we really make each other laugh a lot.

“It’s the common denominator that gets us through all things. And Larry has given us that gift. We can’t pay him back for all he has meant to us.”

"W e can’t pay him back for all Larry has given us that gift. "
During her collegiate career, Purdue volleyball’s Blake Mohler has spent more than 270 hours studying, over 60 weeks in the classroom, been a part of 164 Purdue volleyball games and countless more hours spent in the weight room and at practice. But the legacy she leaves behind is more than numbers.

Yes, she has received two AVCA All-America honors, led the team to the 2019 NCAA Regional and posted 876 kills and 446 blocks during her Purdue career. However, the numbers fail to illuminate the heart, leadership and resilience the four-year starter brought to the Boilermaker squad.

After five years spent in Holloway Gymnasium, Mohler has evolved with the program. “I have learned a lot more about myself and pushed past limits I never knew I could,” Mohler says.

From redshirting as a freshman to keeping injuries at bay throughout the years, Mohler is no stranger to the grind that is the volleyball season or the hard work that is required to earn her place in the starting lineup every match. While her game has refined since that initial 2015 season, even her final year felt the sting of injury.

Through it all, Mohler understands how it all comes together. “Success is more gratifying when you overcome big challenges,” she says.

Those challenges came throughout her career and in more than just the physical variety. Heading into her final season in the old gold & black, a need emerged on the team, and Mohler was called upon to fill it.

The role she was asked to take on? Leader.

“I have always been a ‘do’ type of leader,” Mohler says. “I would rather work the hardest and show people the way things are done instead of having to talk about it. But this year I had to get over that and be able to do both. It was overwhelming at first, but I got the hang of it quickly.

“I’ve learned a lot about myself. I have learned how to be a leader, to push past adversity and to deal with setbacks and come out stronger.”

Stronger indeed. The proof is in the 19-kill game Mohler posted in a five-set victory over Ohio State. Or the 13 stuffs she recorded at No. 8 Penn State the match prior. Not to mention her team-best .556 hitting percentage against No. 5 Nebraska in a thrilling five-set home victory – a night that is sure to be remembered by Purdue volleyball fans for years to come. After all, that evening is also home to one of Mohler’s favorite memories (and No. 1 coach Dave Shondell moment) as a Boilermaker: the postgame locker room celebration.

Through the collective performances and the outstanding statistics Mohler generated during her career, what matters most to the Mississippi native is her legacy.

“I want to be remembered as a good leader,” Mohler says. “It’s been something I’ve been working on for the past five years/ I hope I inspire someone on the team the way (former teammate) Danielle Cuttino did for me.”

Now that Mohler has hung up the Purdue jersey with both third-team and honorable mention All-America accolades in tow, she’s ready for the next challenge: playing professionally. Then, when she’s finished playing, Mohler wants to attend law school.

But before she leaves the comfort of the red brick buildings and the land of peanut butter burgers that is Purdue, she has a message for the Boilermaker community:

“Thank you for making West Lafayette home for the last five years. I still hate the cold, but I am beyond grateful for everything this place has given me. I know whatever I do and wherever I go, there are Boilermakers all over this world, and I can’t wait to meet the ones whose paths I cross.”
After several near misses in previous seasons, head coach Devon Brouse’s women’s golf program made history in 2010. With a four-day total of 1-over par – and a final victory margin of just one stroke – the Boilermakers joined the 1999 women’s basketball and 1961 men’s golf teams as NCAA champions in school annals. All six members of the squad came from outside the United States, giving this national championship an international flavor.
Drawing up your business plan?  
WE CAN HELP

With 135 years of experience, our commercial lenders can help you take the first steps toward your business.