

2013-14 Big Ten men's basketball previews: Indiana (premium)

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With the 2013-14 men's college basketball season kicking off Nov. 8, *HawkeyeDrive.com* will give you rundowns this week on all 12 Big Ten teams. Here, we'll showcase Indiana. The Hoosiers will only play Iowa once this season on Feb. 18 at Assembly Hall in Bloomington, Ind.

Last season, Indiana fulfilled expectations to a certain degree. The Hoosiers did win the Big Ten and did so outright, going 14-4 during league play in 2012-13. But that top seed in the Big Ten Tournament didn't prevent Indiana from losing in the semifinal round to Wisconsin and despite having a No. 1 seed in the NCAA Tournament, the Hoosiers were bounced from the Sweet 16 by a Syracuse squad that reached the Final Four.

This season, the expectations aren't quite as enormous in Bloomington. Losing top five draft picks such as Victor Oladipo (who went second overall to the Orlando Magic) and Cody Zeller (fourth overall to the Charlotte Bobcats) certainly doesn't help matters and the odds of Indiana repeating as Big Ten regular season champs appear slim. But the Hoosiers are still an upper-echelon team in the conference this season.

The two key names returning for Indiana in 2013-14 are sophomore guard Yogi Ferrell and senior forward Will Sheehey. Ferrell is the only starter returning from last year's squad, but considering that he plays the point, that's a pretty important player for the Hoosiers to have back. As a freshman,

Ferrell averaged 7.6 points per game (a number that should slightly go up this year) and led Indiana in assists. He also shot close to 80 percent from the foul line, so he's someone Tom Crean will look to get the ball to in crunch time.

Sheehey will likely return to the starting lineup this year and replace Christian Watford at the 4-spot. Last year, he played an average of 29 minutes off the bench for the Hoosiers, averaging 9.5 points per game and finishing fourth on the team in rebounding with an average of 3.5 boards per contest, an average that makes him Indiana's top returning rebounder.

One thing the Hoosiers bring back this season is depth in the front-court. Two sophomore forwards that will likely play more prominent roles this season are Jeremy Hollowell and Hanner Mosquera-Perea, neither of whom started any games last season. Hollowell appeared in 33 contests and is Indiana's top returning shot blocker from last year's squad. Mosquera-Perea is another guy who will be counted on (likely coming off the bench again) to give the Hoosiers some minutes.

As far as newcomers go, Indiana brings in Arizona State transfer Evan Gordon, the younger brother of former Hoosier guard Eric Gordon. Playing one season for the Sun Devils after transferring from Liberty, Gordon averaged 10.1 points per game while appearing in 35 contests, starting 25 of them. Of the six freshmen brought in by Crean, the most highly-touted is 6-10 forward Noah Vonieh, who was a McDonald's All-American playing at New Hampton School in Haverhill, Mass.

Vonieh averaged 17 points and 12 rebounds per game as a high-school senior and was ranked as a top 10 player nationally by multiple scouting services. Two other freshmen to watch for this season are 6-4 guard Stanford Robinson and 6-11 center Luke Fischer, who was "Mr. Basketball" in the state of Wisconsin last year.

The non-conference slate features four intriguing match-ups involving the Hoosiers, none of which are at Assembly Hall. Indiana will play in the 2K Sports Classic at Madison Square Garden against Washington and possibly No. 18 Connecticut. The Hoosiers also get a rematch with No. 8 Syracuse at the Carrier Dome as part of the Big Ten/ACC Challenge and draw No. 21 Notre Dame at the Crossroads Classic in Indianapolis on Dec. 14.

Looking at Big Ten play, Indiana has two tough games to open with, playing at Illinois on New Year's Eve, followed by No. 2 Michigan State visiting Assembly Hall on Jan. 4. But the key stretch comes in the final two weeks. The Hoosiers close out the month of February with a trip to No. 20 Wisconsin, then March features a home game against No. 11 Ohio State and playing at No. 7 Michigan in the regular season finale once again.

Again, a step back this season should be expected. Indiana lost a significant amount from its team that won the Big Ten a year ago. But at some point this season, the Hoosiers should find themselves ranked in the polls and they're still going to be enough of a contender in the Big Ten that a trip back to the NCAA Tournament is likely. Throw in the Big Ten Tournament being held in Indianapolis this year, and the chance will be there for the Hoosiers to build some late-season momentum entering March Madness.