

# 2014 Big Ten football previews: Indiana (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

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After examining [Penn State](#), [Rutgers](#), [Michigan](#), [Ohio State](#) and [Michigan State](#), we now take time to discuss the upcoming 2014 season for the Indiana Hoosiers. Iowa plays its Homecoming Game against Indiana at Kinnick Stadium on Oct. 11.

Last season was set up favorably for Indiana, yet despite having eight games in Bloomington, the Hoosiers found themselves with a 5-7 mark at season's end and were unable to become bowl-eligible. Entering 2014, Indiana is in a rather unique situation. On one hand, this team has a boatload of starters returning on both sides of the ball and that experience should result in more veteran leadership. But with a more grueling schedule this fall, the Hoosiers still might find themselves home for the holidays.

Offensively, Indiana should remain prolific under head coach Kevin Wilson and one of the biggest reasons why is its quarterback. With Tre' Roberson transferring to Illinois State this summer, the starting nod belongs entirely to junior Nate Sudfeld. Last season, Sudfeld threw for over 2,500 yards and that was while splitting time with Roberson. He also tossed 21 touchdowns to nine interceptions. Now that he's the guy, those numbers should all go up in 2014 given the Hoosiers' system.

Junior Tevin Coleman returns at running back for Indiana. He rushed for 958 yards and 12 touchdowns on 131 carries in 2013. Coleman may also become a bigger threat in the passing game this season. His sophomore receiving numbers went up by nine catches and 144 yards from what they were his freshman campaign.

At receiver, the good news for Indiana is that senior Shane Wynn returns. His production in terms of receptions and receiving yards were down a year ago from what they were in 2012. What improved though was he caught 11 touchdown passes last season after hauling in six of them two seasons ago.

But with Cody Latimer and Kofi Hughes both gone, the Hoosiers will need other receivers to step up this fall. Senior wideouts Isaiah Roundtree and Nick Stoner are the likely candidates to fill those voids, but at least one underclassman will need to have a big year so Indiana isn't going into 2015 totally inexperienced.

Up front, the Hoosiers pretty much return their entire offensive line from 2013. The left side of the line is set in stone with junior Jason Spriggs back at left tackle, senior Bernard Taylor back at left guard and senior Collin Rahrig back at center. The right side carries a little more intrigue. Junior David Kaminski started the first five games of last season at right guard, but is now competing with sophomore Dan Feeney for that spot. Then at right tackle, junior Ralston Evans started every game in 2013, yet will battle with junior Peyton Eckert, who started every game there in 2012.

Defensively, there's plenty of experience with 15 of Indiana's top 17 tacklers returning. But this is also a unit that was the Big Ten's worst in nearly every meaningful defensive statistical category. No defense gave up more yards per game or more touchdowns last season than Indiana did. It was the sieve that kept the Hoosiers from bowling.

Along the front four, the one loss is Ryan Phillis, who also happened to be the only defensive lineman to start every game last season. Junior defensive end Nick Mangieri is the best of the bunch returning after he had 26 tackles and three sacks. Senior Bobby Richardson started the last 10 games at defensive tackle in 2013, but is moving over to end this season to fill Phillis' void. That makes sophomore Ralph Green III the most

experienced D-tackle Indiana brings back.

If any part of this defense is considered strong, it's at linebacker. Senior strong-side 'backer David Cooper returns after leading the Hoosiers with 85 tackles a year ago. Also returning is sophomore middle linebacker T.J. Simmons, who had 68 tackles and like Cooper, started every game in 2013 for Indiana. The weak-side spot is the unknown with senior Forisse Hardin and sophomore Clyde Newton competing for that spot. Hardin started the first eight games of 2013, while Newton took over for the final four contests.

The secondary loses its best player from last season in safety Greg Heban, who led the Hoosiers with three interceptions and also compiled 82 tackles. While an underclassman will likely replace Heban, Indiana does return senior safety Mark Murphy, who was second on the team with 84 tackles a year ago. The Hoosiers also return both of their starting corners in senior Tim Bennett – who had 20 pass break ups in 2013 – and junior Michael Hunter. Bennett also had 73 tackles, including a team-high 61 unassisted.

On special teams, punter Erich Toth returns for his junior season while Indiana will be counting on one of two freshman kickers – Aaron Del Grosso or Griffin Oakes – to replace Mitch Ewald. Wynn will more than likely handle punt return duties again, while kickoff returning is more up in the air.

Now getting to Indiana's schedule, it's more daunting than it was a year ago. The Hoosiers had both MAC champion and SEC East champion Missouri at home last season. This year, they have to play both teams on the road and do so in back-to-back weeks during the month of September. Indiana also has a non-conference home game against North Texas, who won the Heart of Dallas Bowl last season.

In Big Ten play, it doesn't get much easier and the conference opener at home against Maryland on Sept. 27 might very well

dictate Indiana's fate. The Hoosiers have two difficult games in October – Oct. 11 at Iowa and Oct. 18 at home against defending Big Ten champion Michigan State. November features trips to both The Big House and The Horseshoe for the second consecutive year, but the Hoosiers also have some winnable games down the stretch at home against Penn State and in-state rival Purdue and then at Rutgers on Nov. 15.

Again, there should be more than enough in place for Indiana to make the jump many in the college football world thought it would make last year, especially if the defense improves. The Hoosiers are going to score enough points every week. But given how their schedule's shaped, it's easy to question whether or not getting to six wins and becoming bowl-eligible can actually get done.

#### **AUDIO:**

Indiana quarterback Nate Sudfeld –

<http://hawkeyedrive.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Nate-Sudfeld-2014-B1G-Media-Days.mp3>