

Schedule tough on Hoosiers

IU facing series of key games in Big Ten chase

By STEVE HERMAN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BLOOMINGTON

Indiana is in a unique spot to judge the relative strengths of the nation's top college men's basketball teams and conferences.

No other school in the nation has played both Duke and Connecticut, the only teams that have been ranked No. 1 in the weekly Associated Press poll all season.

Indiana lost to both of them, but by just eight points each, and coach Mike Davis believes that experience can only help make the Hoosiers better.

"We have eight (regular-season) games left, three at home and five on the road," Davis said. "We feel like our guys made some strides this past week."

"We still need to improve on some areas, but we definitely feel

WHERE THEY STAND

Big Ten men's basketball standings:

Team	Conf. W-L	All W-L
Iowa	7-2	18-5
Illinois	6-3	20-3
Michigan	6-3	16-4
Michigan State	5-3	17-5
Indiana	5-3	13-6
Ohio State	5-3	16-3
Wisconsin	5-4	15-7
Penn State	3-6	11-9
Northwestern	3-6	10-10
Purdue	2-8	8-13
Minnesota	1-7	10-9

Tonight's games

Indiana at Wisconsin, 7 p.m., ESPN
Iowa at Northwestern, 7 p.m.
Purdue at Michigan State, 8 p.m., WHMB-Channel 40
Minnesota at Penn State, 8 p.m.

Thursday's game

Ohio State at Michigan, 7 p.m.

good about the last eight games."

No. 24-ranked Indiana (13-6, 5-3 Big Ten) is tied with No. 19 Ohio State and No. 12 Michigan State for fourth in the conference, a

half-game behind No. 10 Illinois and No. 22 Michigan and a game and a half behind No. 18 Iowa.

The Hoosiers, the only team in the Top 25 with six losses, have already beaten Illinois, Ohio State and Michigan but have lost to Iowa and Michigan State.

They will visit Wisconsin today. Then, after hosting Iowa on Saturday, they'll visit Penn State and Illinois, return home for Penn State and Michigan State and close out the season at Purdue and Michigan.

With six Big Ten teams among the nation's top 25, compared with Connecticut and three others in the Big East and Duke and three others in the ACC, Davis' allegiance is close to home.

"I'm always going to say the Big Ten is the toughest conference because that's the conference we play in," he said. "UConn, playing them can make you think a lot of things, but I think our league is great."

In Saturday's game, the Hoosiers led early and rallied twice in the second half before losing 88-80 to UConn. Even then, Davis was pleased with the play he received at point guard from Earl Calloway.

"We got back to our transition

game, with Earl Calloway coming into the game," he said. "And we had defensive play that we had at the beginning of the season. I thought UConn just made some big-time shots."

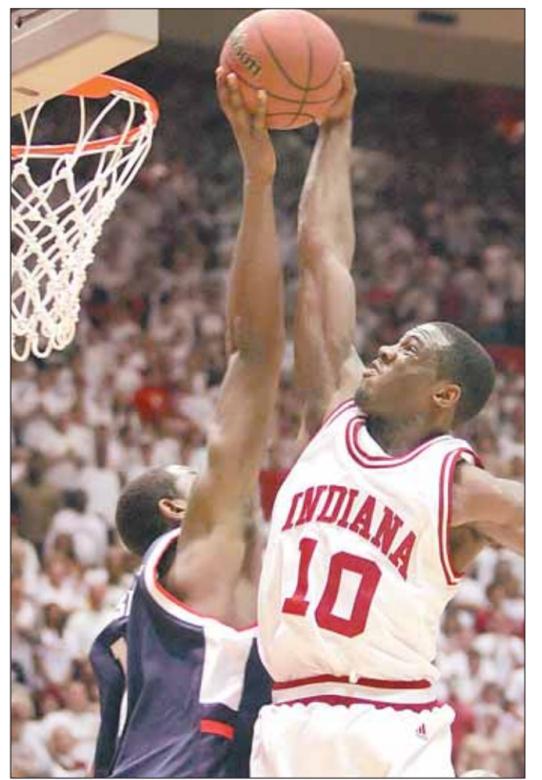
By the end of the year, St. John's and Georgetown also will have played both Duke and Connecticut.

For now, the losses to the Blue Devils and Huskies have been the only defeats for the Hoosiers in 10 games this season at Assembly Hall. Away from home has been a different story, with a 5-4 record in games on their opponents' courts or at neutral sites.

In the Big Ten, Indiana is 0-3 on the road, but the Hoosiers still are in contention for the conference championship and a berth in the NCAA Tournament after a two-year absence.

"Our guys' mind-set hopefully is better now," Davis said. "So our guys understand what they're up against. We want to make a run, and we know we have to win some games on the road to make that."

"We have an opportunity (tonight) to get it turned around, and if not, we still have to win three road games, I think, and take care of home to be in the hunt."



Indiana's Roderick Wilmont, right, has his shot blocked by Connecticut's Hilton Armstrong during the second half of their game Saturday in Bloomington. No. 1 Connecticut defeated Indiana 88-80.

Villanova hangs on to defeat Notre Dame

The Associated Press

SOUTH BEND

Jenna Viani scored 22 points, including making three free throws in the final 22 seconds of overtime, as Villanova survived blowing a 21-point lead in the second half to beat Notre Dame 69-65 Tuesday night.

Megan Duffy had a chance to

tie the game on a 3-pointer with 8 seconds left, but the shot didn't get close to the rim.

Liad Suez-Karni had 14 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists for the Wildcats (13-8, 4-6 Big East). Kate Dessart Mager and Jackie Adamshick had 10 points each.

Lindsay Schrader led Notre Dame (14-8, 5-6) with 16 points, Duffy had 15, and Charel Allen

had 14 points, all in the second half.

The Wildcats, who led 32-20 at halftime, opened the second half with a pair of 3-pointers by Adamshick and Suez-Karni, who hit from NBA range, to move ahead 38-20. After a 3-pointer by Viani, a layup from Dessart Mager gave the Wildcats their biggest lead at 43-22.

• Zapp

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1)

Zapp spent last season with the Louisville Bats, the Triple-A affiliate of the Cincinnati Reds. He struggled from the start and never recovered.

Appearing in 125 games, he hit .243 and struck out 113 times in 399 at-bats. Worse still, he had only 40 RBIs and six home runs, which paled in comparison to his production the previous two seasons.

In 2003, Zapp hit .278 with career-high totals of 26 home runs, 92 RBIs and 35 doubles for the San Antonio Mission, the Double-A affiliate of the Seattle Mariners.

Promoted to Seattle's Triple-A team in 2004, Zapp had another career-best season. He hit .291 with 29 home runs, 101 RBIs, 27 doubles and two triples and came tantalizingly close to getting a big-league call-up at season's end.

When it didn't happen, Zapp felt snubbed. So he signed a Triple-A deal with the Reds and spent all of last season in Louisville.

He's still not sure why he struggled.

"I got off to a slow start, and it kind of snowballed," Zapp said. "I got kind of mentally drained. I guess you would say, just trying to do some quick-fix mechanical issues with my swing, and nothing panned out."

"I got hot here and there, but nothing significant."

At the advice of his agent, David Taylor, Zapp took nearly three months off from baseball at the end of the season. For the first time in 10 years, he didn't play winter ball or attend instructional league. He didn't even pick up a baseball or swing a bat.

Instead, he lifted weights, conditioned and worked twice a week giving hitting lessons to

THE ZAPP FILE

Name: A.J. Zapp. Full name is Andrew Joseph Zapp.
Occupation: First baseman in Los Angeles Dodgers' minor-league system.
Residence: Greenwood
High school: Center Grove
Birth date: April 24, 1978
Age: 27
Position: First base
Size: 6-foot-3, 190 pounds
Throws: Right
Bats: Left
Experience: First-round draft choice (27th overall selection) of

Atlanta Braves in 1996; played six seasons in the Braves' organization; signed free agent contract with Seattle Mariners in 2002; spent two seasons in Seattle's minor-league system before signing free-agent deal with the Cincinnati Reds in 2004; spent last season with Cincinnati's Triple-A affiliate in Louisville; signed free-agent contract with Los Angeles Dodgers on Monday; expects to start the 2006 season with Double-A Jacksonville (Fla.) Suns.

Personal: Is married to Nikki Zapp; couple have a 16-month-old son, Evan.

Year	Team	Career stats							
		G	AB	Avg.	H	2B	3B	HR	RBIs
1996	Gulf Coast Braves	47	161	.149	24	9	0	0	5
1997	Danville (rookie league)	65	234	.338	79	23	2	7	56
1998	Macon (A)	20	73	.260	19	6	1	3	12
1999	Macon (A)	119	428	.229	98	24	1	22	65
2000	Myrtle Beach (A)	107	385	.268	103	28	1	8	49
2001	Greenville (AA)	75	292	.233	68	17	0	8	34
2002	Greenville (AA)	85	300	.237	71	15	0	14	46
2002	Richmond (AAA)	34	92	.185	17	3	0	4	7
2003	San Antonio (AA)	137	528	.278	147	35	1	26	92
2004	Tacoma (AAA)	136	509	.291	148	27	2	29	101
2005	Louisville (AAA)	125	399	.243	97	28	0	6	40
Totals		950	3,401	.256	871	215	8	127	507

kids at LTD in Perry Township.

And for a refreshing change, he spent more offseason time with his wife, Nikki, and their 16-month-old son, Evan, in their Greenwood home.

"Getting away from baseball just a little bit was nice, because I haven't had an offseason for quite some time now," Zapp said. "It was nice to just spend time with my wife and son."

In the meantime, Zapp awaited offers from other major-league teams. He wasn't overwhelmed with calls.

Seattle, Tampa Bay and Toronto expressed interest around the Christmas holiday, but none offered a contract.

As a result, Zapp was prepared

to continue his career in Korea, Japan or Mexico.

But he got another lease on pro-ball life last week when he was contacted by the Dodgers, who offered him a concrete opportunity to continue pursuing his big-league dream.

Zapp, who is building a home in Greenwood, expects to make the most of it.

"I've had some really, really good years," he said. "I've had a really, really good year in Double-A, and I've had a really, really good year in Triple-A. I just had an off year last year."

"I told my wife and family that I want to continue playing until nobody wants me anymore. So I'm looking forward to it."



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