



Wisconsin running back John Clay hauls in a ball during practice on Saturday, August 9, 2008, at Camp Randall Stadium in Madison, Wisc.

JOE KOSHOLLEK Milwaukee Journal Sentinel/MCT

Big Ten Sneak Peek: Last year as we know it?

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Can anyone dethrone Ohio State? Anyone? Anyone?

The Buckeyes have won five straight Big Ten titles, but this year Wisconsin and Iowa emerge as valid championship contenders to win the last title before the league adds Nebraska, forms two divisions and holds a conference championship game next year.

Here's a preview of all the teams, ranked in order of how they're likely to finish.

Ohio State, 11-2 last year
Coach: Jim Tressel

The Buckeyes could be destined for their first National Championship since 2002. Sixteen starters, including a three-year starter at quarterback, return from a team that won the Big Ten crown last season. OSU will face an early test in Week Two of the season when 13th-ranked Miami visits the Horseshoe.

Wisconsin, 10-3
Coach: Bret Bielema

Running back John Clay returns as Big Ten Player of the Year after thrash-

ing through defenses for 1,517 yards and 18 touchdowns last year. Clay, and quarterback Scott Tolzien will team up to try to win Wisconsin's first conference title since 1999.

Iowa, 11-2
Coach: Kirk Ferentz

The Hawkeyes are coming off a very successful 2009-10 season, and look to continue their Big Ten dominance in 2010. Returning several starters, the Hawkeyes may have the best defense in the country. Defensive end Adrian Clayborn is their big playmaker, and may just be the best defensive player in the Big Ten.

Penn State, 11-2
Coach: Joe Paterno

Penn State doesn't return many starters on offense or defense, but it still has plenty of talent. Senior running back Evan Royster will carry the load for this relatively-young Penn State team. The Nittany Lions face two certain losses in Ohio State and Alabama, but the rest of the schedule may have this team looking toward a January bowl game.

Michigan State, 6-7
Coach: Mark Dantonio

The Spartans finally found a

starting quarterback last year with Kirk Cousins. He threw for 2,990 yards and 19 touchdowns to only nine interceptions. Star middle linebacker Greg Jones (2009 Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year) anchors the defense once again.

Northwestern, 8-5
Coach: Pat Fitzgerald

Fitzgerald has turned the program around and made winning at Evanston a consistent reality. The Wildcats schedule begins awfully fluff, with just two teams (Central Michigan and Illinois State) with winning records from last year in their first eight games. November will be the real test for Northwestern facing Penn State, Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin.

Michigan, 5-7
Coach: Rich Rodriguez

While waiting to get the hammer struck down by the NCAA, Rodriguez needs to silence doubters in his third season in Ann Arbor. Last year, he had a stellar offense that scored an average of 29.5 points-per-game, which was the third-best in conference.

Wolverine faithfuls will look at the Connecticut season opener to find an answer to the quarterback question. Last year, Tate Forcier owned the job, but Denard Robinson has come on

strong in the spring. And Devin Gardner is a highly-touted recruit coming in.

Purdue, 5-7
Coach: Danny Hope

The big story surrounding the Purdue program is how transfer quarterback Robert Marve performs in his first eligible year in a Boilermaker uniform. Marve is the ideal quarterback for the Purdue offense, but the real question will be whether or not the weak Purdue defense can succeed.

Indiana, 4-8
Coach: Bill Lynch

Quarterback Ben Chappell returns under the helm with weapons on the outside to make Indiana's offense very versatile.

The Hoosiers scheduled Towson, Western Kentucky, Akron and Arkansas State on their non-conference slate. If IU can take care of that easy part of the schedule, it'll take just two conference wins to earn a bowl bid.

Minnesota, 6-7
Coach: Tim Brewster

Minnesota returns just two starters on the defensive side of the ball, and as a result will continue to struggle entering the 2010-11 season. Offensively,

the team has the potential to be solid. The school's all-time leader in passing, Adam Weber, returns again to lead the offense.

Illinois, 3-9
Coach: Ron Zook

There's no questioning that the Illini have struggled since their 2008 Rose Bowl berth. This year shouldn't be any different. The Illini will come into the 2010 season with a running back by committee system, with Mikel Leshoure as the starter and Jason Ford receiving a good number of carries. The biggest problem could come with freshman Nathan Scheelhaase manning the quarterback duties.

Welcome next year to Nebraska, 10-4
Coach: Bo Pelini

The Cornhuskers are playing their last season in the Big 12 before jumping ship and heading to the Big Ten. Although strangely enough, that'll leave the Big 12 with 10 teams and the Big Ten with 12. Nebraska is ranked ninth in the USA Today preseason poll. Pelini has the Cornhuskers playing a brand of football the Big Ten is very open with, winning with defense and a strong rushing attack. Sound familiar?

Former cadet fighting to make Lions' final roster

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From the time he was young, Caleb Campbell dreamed of becoming a professional football player. On April 27, 2008, his dream came true. The young Army officer and West Point linebacker was selected by the Detroit Lions in the seventh round of the 2008 National Football League draft.

However, just three months later his dream would be put on hold for a higher calling.

Campbell was ordered by the United States Army to serve his military service time before joining the NFL.

When he was ordered to report for military duty, Campbell didn't hesitate, even if it meant putting his football dreams on hold.

"Serving my country and my God will always be my most-important role," Campbell said.

While Campbell was not considered a must-have prospect, his career in college suggested a nice upside for whatever

team drafted him. Campbell was a 2004 Conference USA All-Freshman team member. Three years later, in his senior season, he was named a team captain and competed in the East-West Shrine game, which is an All-Star game, held each year for college players.

After serving his two years, Campbell returned to the Lions this season and was offered a one-year contract and a chance to try out for the team.

"Physically I feel fine; it's the mental aspect that I'm adjusting to. Getting back into that

mindset of playing football is the hardest part," said Campbell.

The physical training Campbell puts in has impressed linebacker Zack Follett.

"When he got here, he asked if he could catch a ride with me, and when I saw that he gets up at 5:30 a.m. and is ready to work, I knew he could keep up with me," said Follett.

Head coach Jim Schwartz has also been impressed with Campbell's conditioning.

"If there was one guy I wasn't worried about being in shape it was Caleb. You don't

make it through the Army without being in top condition," said Schwartz.

However, being away from the game is not the only challenge for Campbell. He is also being asked to switch positions, from safety to linebacker. While making the change has been tough, Campbell has been getting help from some of his teammates.

"He's in the exact same position I was last year," said Follett. "We're both seventh-round picks, trying to make an impact on the team. I've been working

with him, helping him out any way I can."

Campbell's teammates see a guy who works hard but also has fun while he's on the field or in the locker room.

"Caleb is guy that if you're down, is always right there as a pick me up and gets you ready," said rookie running back Jahvid Best.

Whether or not Campbell makes the final roster remains to be seen. For now he's content with the chance to make his dream come true, knowing it has been worth the wait.