

QB experience a plus in the Big 10

Badgers' Brooks Bollinger, Zack Mills of Penn State among leading returnees

By The Associated Press

Wisconsin gets the earliest start in school history, and when the No. 25 Badgers hit Camp Randall Stadium for what should be a steamy Aug. 23 opener against Fresno State, Lee Evans will be a spectator.

After setting a Big Ten Conference receiving record with 1,545 yards last season, Evans hurt his knee in spring football and is not expected back until Oct. 5 — not quite halfway through the 13-game schedule.

That means Anthony Davis, last year's Big Ten rushing leader, will have to carry on, and quarterback Brooks Bollinger will need to do a little bit of everything — the way he has for three years.

"I don't know how many quarterbacks who are still around have a win in the Rose Bowl under their belts," said Badgers coach Barry Alvarez.

Bollinger, 22-7 as a starter, does. He's also rushed or passed for at least one TD in 25 of his 33 career games.

Bollinger is back, but Kurt Kittner, who led Illinois to the league title a year ago by throwing for more than 3,000 yards, isn't. Neither is Antwaan Randle El, who rushed for 3,895 yards, more than any quarterback in NCAA Division I history, while finishing with 42 TD passes as a thrower and 45 more as a rusher and receiver.

Zak Kustok, the leader of Northwestern's no-huddle offense, also is gone, as are Kyle McCann, who led Iowa to a bowl last year, and Steve Bellisari of Ohio State.

"Experience at quarterback is huge, whether it's high school, college or professional. It's something you can't teach in practice," Ohio State coach Jim Tressell said.

Jeff Smoker of Michigan State, the most efficient passer in the Big Ten a year ago, does return. So does versatile run-pass threat Asad Abdul-Khaliq of Minnesota, and 6-foot-6 John Navarre of Michigan.

Two players who took over as starters late last season, Zack Mills, who rallied Penn State to five wins in its final seven games after an 0-4 start, and Purdue's Kyle Orton, who threw 74 passes in a Sun Bowl loss, will now be starters from the outset.

Team capsules, in predicted order of finish:

OHIO STATE: The No. 13 Buckeyes have eight of 13 games at home. ... OSU returns 15 starters, seven on defense, including Darrion Scott, Tim Anderson and Will Smith on the line. ... S Mike Doss, the preseason league



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QB Zack Mills (7) is expected to help lead Penn State back to prominence in 2002.

defensive player of the year, would like to expand his role to kick returns and receiver. ... Craig Krenzel is battling Scott McMullen for the QB job. ... Freshman RB Maurice Clarett is in the hunt for playing time along with Maurice Hall and Lydell Ross.

MICHIGAN: The No. 12 Wolverines return 15 starters, including eight from a defense that set a school record with 50 sacks last season. DL Dan Rumishek and Shantee Orr and LB Victor Hobson are the leaders. ... Navarre looks to improve on inconsistent sophomore season when he played well early and struggled late. He threw for 19 TDs but was intercepted 13 times. ... Chris Perry should be the TB after B.J. Askew, who gained 902 yards last season, went back to FB.

MICHIGAN STATE: The No. 18 Spartans return eight offensive starters and feature the potent passing combination of Jeff Smoker to Charles Rogers. Smoker threw for 21 TDs last season and completed 63 percent of his passes. Rogers, the preseason Big Ten offensive player of the year, had 1,470 yards receiving. ... Spartans must replace T.J. Duckett, who ran for 1,420 yards last season. Dawan Moss, converted from FB, gets first shot.

WISCONSIN: Davis was the league's rushing leader a year ago as a freshman with 1,466 yards. ... The strength of the team is the OL, where all five starters are back, including Al Johnson, whom coach Barry Alvarez says might be the best center to ever play for the Badgers.

PENN STATE: The Nittany Lions are ranked No. 24. ... Joe Paterno is coming off his first back-to-back losing seasons since he started as head coach in 1966. ... DT Jimmy



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Ron Beutjer is one of the QBs vying to replace Kurt Kittner at Illinois this season.

Kennedy, who had 51 tackles, heads the defense that returns seven starters. ... Larry Johnson is the top returning RB, while Bryant Johnson and Tony Johnson are the two top receivers.

ILLINOIS: Replacing Kurt Kittner's 3,256 yards and 27 TD passes will be a tough assignment for the defending league champions. Dustin Ward or Jon Beutjer will be the starter. ... Returning receiver Brandon Lloyd caught 65 passes for 1,062 yards and 10 TDs as the Illini won 10 games for just the fourth time in school history. ... All-league T Tony Pashos anchors offensive line. ... LB Jerry Schumacher had 125 tackles, while DB Eugene Wilson broke up 30 passes and picked off six others.

PURDUE: Coach Joe Tiller says Kyle Orton has a stronger arm than Drew Brees, but needs to win a game. He's 0-3 as a starter. ... The Boilermakers have nine returning

offensive starters and eight on defense. ... Taylor Stubblefield caught 73 passes last season. ... Defense came up with 36 turnovers during 6-6 season a year ago. LB Stuart Schweigert had six interceptions and DE Shaun Phillips had six sacks.

IOWA: Hawkeyes have taken big steps under Kirk Ferentz in three years, going from 1-10 to a bowl appearance last season where they beat Texas Tech in the Alamodome. ... Iowa led league in scoring last season at 32.6 ppg. ... Brad Banks will have to replace Kyle McCann at QB. ... Huge OL led by all-league pick Eric Steinbach and Bruce Nelson.

MINNESOTA: Gophers' offense features versatile QB Asad Abdul-Khaliq, who passed for 1,393 yards last season and whose scrambling ability drives defenses crazy. ... RB Marion Barber III had 742 yards last season. ... Coach Glen Mason has eight defensive starters back from last year's 4-7 team.

INDIANA: Gerry DiNardo, the only newcomer among Big Ten coaches this season, faces a tough challenge. He doesn't have Randle El, who accounted for more than 11,000 yards and 86 touchdowns passing and running in his career. ... The Hoosiers have just 49 scholarship upperclassmen in a program that hasn't played in a bowl since 1993.

NORTHWESTERN: The Wildcats must also replace RB Damien Anderson, the leading rusher in school history. Tony Stauss hopes to be the starting QB. ... The Wildcats lost their final five games last year and their defense was porous, yielding 56 and 59 points in back-to-back losses to Indiana and Iowa. LB Patt Durr is the top returner on defense.

2001 STANDINGS

school	CONF			All	
	W	L	GB	W	L
Illinois	7	1	—	10	2
MICHIGAN	6	2	1	8	4
Ohio State	5	3	2	7	5
Iowa	4	4	3	7	5
Purdue	4	4	3	6	6
Indiana	4	4	3	5	6
Penn State	4	4	3	5	6
MICHIGAN ST.	3	5	4	7	5
Wisconsin	3	5	4	5	7
Minnesota	2	6	5	4	7
Northwestern	2	6	5	4	7

2001 STATS

returning players in CAPS

PASSING EFFICIENCY

player, school	RATING
SMOKER, MICHIGAN ST.	166.4
McCann, Iowa	146.1
BANKS, IOWA	145.7
Bellisari, Ohio State	136.0
Kittner, Illinois	135.8
ABDUL-KHALIQ, MINN.	134.6
Sorgi, Wisconsin	128.6
Kustok, Northwestern	124.5
Randle-El, Indiana	120.1
MILLS, PENN STATE	118.7

RUSHING

player, school	YDS/GM
DAVIS, WISCONSIN	133.3
Williams, Indiana	127.4
Duckett, Michigan State	118.3
Wells, Ohio State	107.8
Redmon, Minnesota	99.2
Betts, Iowa	88.3
Randle-El, Indiana	87.6
ASKEW, MICHIGAN	75.2
BARBER, MINNESOTA	67.5
HARRIS, ILLINOIS	62.9

RECEIVING

player, school	YDS/GM
EVANS, WISCONSIN	128.8
ROGERS, MICHIGAN ST.	122.5
Walker, Michigan	95.2
LLOYD, ILLINOIS	88.5
JENKINS, OHIO STATE	82.3
R. Johnson, Minnesota	81.4
B. JOHNSON, PENN ST.	78.7
STUBBLEFIELD, PURDUE	75.8
YOUNG, ILLINOIS	74.2
Simmons, Northwestern	73.4

INTERCEPTIONS

player, school	INTS
Ross, Ohio State	7
SCHWEIGERT, PURDUE	6
WILSON, ILLINOIS	6
NELSON, MICHIGAN STATE	5
SANDERS, IOWA	4
MORTON, ILLINOIS	4
Bryan, Michigan State	4

SCORING

player, school	PTS/GM
Williams, Indiana	10.4
ROGERS, MICHIGAN ST.	8.0
Wells, Ohio State	8.0
Dorsch, Purdue	7.2
KAEDING, IOWA	7.1
RAYNER, MICHIGAN ST.	6.7
two players tied with	6.5