



The Rivalry: Indiana and Purdue and the History of their Old Oaken Bucket Battles 1925 - 2007

Robert D. Arnold

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Over a century of competition has succeeded in transforming college football from the 19th century flying wedge to today's multitude of offensive and defensive formations. What was once a contest of power has become a game of speed, deception and remarkable feats of athletic ability. But some trappings have remained inviolate through the years. For over 100 autumn Saturdays the Boilermakers of Purdue University and the Hoosiers of Indiana have played each other, usually at season end, in a game to establish annual bragging rights for the state of Indiana. In 1925, the two schools decided such a prestigious event should have some symbol of yearly dominance. An Old Oaken Bucket was chosen and, for the next 78 years, this century old bucket became the centerpiece of one of college football's greatest rivalries. Every fall, late in November, these two teams played for possession of the Bucket, no holds barred, through cold, ice, rain, mud and all other meteorological events indigenous to Indiana in late November. Fights were commonplace and feelings ran deep particularly among the respective students who had proceeded to make 'Bucket Week', a period of celebration and skullduggery. Few of the battles were of the magnitude to warrant national attention but the Bucket game had uncertainty, no matter which team was favored. It had color and unparalleled drama to compete with any college contest in the country that particular Saturday. In 1979, Indiana players revealed signs that read 'This is not just a game, this is war' And they meant it! Some of the greatest players and coaches in the annals of college football participated over the years. Many are in the Hall of Fame. These then are their stories and those of others competed during boom times and bad times; wars and student revolts and sadly, days of infamy. The greatest rivalry in the history of college football comes to life!

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