

# Zip City Hoosiers: How Wilson Boys Basketball are Embarking on The Trip of a Lifetime



(photo courtesy: AP Photo/Tim Reynolds)

*“Five players on the floor functioning as one single unit: team, team, team – no one more important than the other.” -Coach Norman Dale*

Imagine this: Alabama decides to overhaul the basketball playoff format. Every school is in one large bracket. 7A playing 1A, 4A playing 2A, etc. That was how Indiana did their basketball playoffs from the 1910-11 season to the 1996-1997 season. One champion for the whole state, regardless of class. In 1997-1998, they changed the format to four classes (similar to how Alabama has seven classes). However, in 1954, there was a story of a small town that would inspire generations.

Milan High School (Milan, IN) was once one of the smallest schools in Indiana, with an enrollment of 161 students in 1954. Comparable to a small 2A in Alabama. Currently, they enroll nearly 500 students, which is comparable to a 5A in Alabama. However, this story is set in the

1950s, when most places still had rural populations, so the odds of them winning a state championship are slim due to the talent pool at the school. Adding context, imagine Hoover, Auburn, Central-Phenix City versus Wilson, Central, Lexington at some point in the playoffs. Milan had a good run in the 1952-53 season, winning regionals and making the final four as a Cinderella-esque run. However, the community was expecting a tournament run in 1953-54 with most of the team returning (four starters). The coach knew the expectations and had his team play up in competition to prepare them for the playoffs. Milan began 8-0 before losing in a tournament to a bigger school. Milan finished the season, only losing two games, and would roll through sectionals (area), winning all three games by double digits. Regionals, they cruised through beating one of the teams that beat Milan earlier in the season. Milan entered the sweet sixteen as the favorite versus a school smaller than them and won by ten. They then would face and defeat future Hall of Famer and NBA star Oscar Robertson and his team (who would win the state championship the next two seasons) in the Elite Eight (Quarterfinals). Milan was back in the Final Four and won by double digits to advance to the championship game, where they would win the state championship versus a school that had won two of the last three championships.

This story of small town success would later inspire the movie “Hoosiers” (1986), and next weekend Wilson High School Boys Basketball is taking a trip to play in one of the most famous gyms in America and American Film History. Knightstown, Indiana, is where some of the movie was filmed, and Wilson is getting a chance to play there next Saturday (November 22, 2025). We had a chance to talk with Coach Corey Krieger about how the trip came together and some other plans they have around it.

**Q: What inspired this trip?**

A: I’m always searching for ways to make the high school basketball experience for the players special. When I saw that Hoosiers Gym actually hosts basketball games a few years ago I began looking into seeing if it was a reality for our program.

**Q: When did the planning for this begin?**

A: I originally called and asked about playing a game there last season around April but was told that games for the season had already been booked and to call back the following year in January. From that point we booked the game on January 2nd of 2025. In some capacity we have been planning the trip ever since. From finding hotels, looking into potential other opponents and coordinating travel logistics.

**Q: Did you have to find an opponent/referees/etc? (Did it have to be an AHSAA opponent? and AHSAA referees)**

A: I originally posted on an Indiana basketball message board looking for an opponent but didn't receive a ton of feedback. Hoosiers Gym requires you to find an opponent, scorekeeper, trainer, and clock-keeper but they run everything else like it would be part of the Indiana High School Athletic Association so they find the officials.

**Q: Does the gym hold games all year/season?**

A: I believe they begin hosting games on Fridays and Saturdays only starting in November. Games run through March. I found it to be wild that it was only \$100 to rent the gymnasium. The biggest issue is the dates book up so fast

**Q: Has your team seen the movie "Hoosiers"?**

A: Some have but not all of them. We are planning to watch the movie after our Season Tip Off dinner on November 9th. So the team is looking forward to that.

**Q: How much behind the scenes planning did this take?**

A: Like any overnight trip it's a lot of moving pieces. You have to coordinate hotel schedules, plan activities in Indianapolis for our off-day Friday, help parents get a room block, have a plan to feed 10 teenagers 3 meals a day, all while bringing all the necessary items to play basketball at a high level. I have a contact at Butler University and we plan on touring Hinkle Fieldhouse (where Milan won the state championship), exploring Indianapolis some and really making an immersive experience out of it!

**Q: Are you taking a charter bus? Or families driving their own vehicles?**

A: We plan to drive our own vehicles. Players will be welcome to ride with me, our assistant Coach Steve Smith and Hunter Rhodes or their parents. We plan to stop in Louisville on the way up.

**Q: Is this a trip for one game?**

A: Yet to be determined. I have called some teams in the area to ask about playing on Thursday and no one has committed 100% yet.

**Q: You have been around multiple high classification programs. Did that help in planning for this? How so?**

A: Yes I've been blessed to see how the planning is done for regional or state tournaments and all the moving pieces that go into that. One year we participated in the prestigious "Holiday Hoopsgiving" tournament in Georgia. Lots of things have to happen behind the scenes for those trips to be a success. I want the players to enjoy the trip but also understand that we are there to compete in a basketball game once the time comes.

**Q: Wilson plays a game on Tuesday 11/18 then leaves for this trip? Then comes back to play a Thanksgiving tournament on Monday 11/24. How do you hope this trip and quick turnaround prepares your team for late season area games and/or playoffs when it's a game every other day.**

A: The parents probably think I'm crazy but I love coaching basketball and hope our players enjoy playing basketball. My philosophy has always been that if the opportunity presents itself, let's go hoop. The reality with a place like Wilson who hasn't been to a regional tournament is that you can play your most important games of the season on a quick turnaround or at odd hours. We played Pinson Valley at 10:30 AM for a trip to the Final Four. That's not something I necessarily thought about planning this trip, but I do think it's a positive to see how the players react to not playing during their normal routine or on short rest.

**Q: Do you happen to know if this is the farthest a Wilson team has traveled for a regular season game/tournament in any sport?**

A: So while it seems like a long trip and in some ways it certainly is, our volleyball team went to play in the annual ShrimpFest tournament at Gulf Shores which is around 7 hours. It's an estimated 8 hour drive to "Hoosiers" from Zip City so if it's not the farthest road trip it's certainly close. I can say with certainty it's the longest road trip a Wilson Basketball Team has ever taken. We are also playing an excellent opponent in Section (AL) who is a perennial contender in their classification (2A). I want our players to embrace the challenge of both playing in a unique venue and versus a great opponent.

**Q: The movie Hoosiers will be 40 years old in 2026, are the players as excited as some of the parents or you to take this trip? Being as how most of the players were born well over 20 years after the movie had come out.**

A: The parents have been fired up about this trip. I believe our players just love going and competing. It's my job to explain the significance of the movie, the gym and Indiana's place in basketball lore. We watched the film this past Sunday evening and I gave them a short history lesson of Milan High School, the school the film is based on. We discussed the reverence basketball has in the state of Indiana and why the venue itself is significant.

**Q: What do you hope the players get from this trip?**

A: I hope it inspires the love of basketball in them for a lifetime! They may not realize it now but it's a once in a lifetime opportunity and my hope is through seeing a place etched in basketball lore we have a profound sense of gratitude to be able to compete and play this great sport. Hopefully it brings us closer as a team and community as we continue to grow basketball at Wilson High School.

**Conclusion**

Milan High School is located in the southeast corner of Indiana. The 1954 championship team is the only team championship Milan has to date in any sport. There is also a museum located in Milan that has artifacts about the 1954 team. The movie (Hoosiers) does not use the name Milan but it is based on the story of the 1954 Milan basketball team. While being the inspiration for the movie, the movie mostly takes place outside of Indianapolis in Knightstown. The movie has been claimed as one of the best sports movies of all time. It has also won several major awards. You can watch the movie on Amazon Prime and of course DVD/Blu-Ray.

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