By RUSTY MILLER

The Associated Press

COLUMBUS — This has been a season of mayhem in the Big Ten.

Now Ohio State would like to scramble it even more.

The No. 14 Buckeyes travel to play second-ranked Indiana tonight as the conference's wacky regular season winds down to its final week.

It'll be a crimson-letter evening for the Hoosiers, that's for sure. They've already captured a share of the conference title. To win it outright for the first time since 1993, they need to beat the Buckeyes or win at No. 7 Michigan on Sunday.

At least half of the Big Ten will be hoping that doesn't happen.

"They're not the only ones playing for something," Ohio State point guard Aaron Craft said. "We're also playing for something, too."

Ohio State, Michigan, 22nd-ranked Wisconsin and No. 10 Michigan State all still have a shot at getting a piece of the regular season championship — but only if the Hoosiers lose their final two games.

That makes for some strange bedfellows.

A year ago, Ohio State stunned Big Ten-leading Michigan State on a last-second shot by William Buford on the final day of the regular season to drop the Spartans into a 3-way tie for the conference title with the Buckeyes and Michigan.

A week later, before Ohio State and archrival Michigan played in the Big Ten tournament, Wolverines coach John Beilein said to Buckeyes coach Thad Matta, “I’d never seen a group of Michigan guys rooting so hard when Buford made that shot.”

The Big Ten has a series of tiebreakers if two or more teams end up atop the standings. But none of those mean much if the Hoosiers (25-4, 13-3) have their way with Ohio State (21-7, 11-5) like they did in an 81-68 beatdown on Feb. 10 at Ohio State’s Value City Arena.

In that game, the Buckeyes were done in by the then-No. 1 Hoosiers’ three-headed monster of versatile swingman Victor Oladipo, who scored a career-high 26 points, center Cody Zeller, who had 24, and distance-shooting Christian Watford, who added 20, to account for 86 percent of Indiana’s offense.

That defeat was part of a swoon that saw the Buckeyes drop three out of four Big Ten games to fall out of the race for first place. A lopsided win over Minnesota (which then turned around a few days later and upset Indiana) and an important 68-60 home win over Michigan State helped Ohio State climb in the standings while one highly-ranked team after another ahead of them was upended.

Heading into the final week of play, Indiana has a 2-game lead — with Michigan, Michigan State, Ohio State and Wisconsin all hoping that they can win their final two games while the Hoosiers are losing twice.

“This league is so (good) and there’s a lot of upsets,” said Ohio State’s Deshaun Thomas, the leading scorer in the Big Ten. “Now it comes down to us. We’re in a great position now.”

There's a feeling among the Buckeyes that, since they were seemingly out of the league race just a week or two ago, this is a pleasant surprise to have so much riding on the final week.

"A couple of weeks ago we got down and kind of took a step back," added Craft, who in his two previous years at Ohio State has won two regular-season Big Ten titles. "We hadn't really been in that position since I've been in college. We've kind of always controlled our own destiny. But as a team we did a good job of really picking ourselves up and understanding there's still a lot to play for."

The Buckeyes look back at the big upset they pulled off on the road a year ago and figure why not do it again?

"We did that last year at Michigan State and we feel like we can do that again at IU," Thomas added.

Few Ohio State fans thought the Buckeyes, in the wake of their cold spell, would still be playing a meaningful game in the final week of the season. But Matta wasn't so quick to slam the door on a tight finish.

"This is my ninth year; we've won (the Big Ten regular-season title) five times and it's always come down to the last week," he added. "I had a pretty good sense it would come down to something like this."__PUBLIC__