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SPORTS

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SECTION B

BASKETBALL

Disappearing art



Indian Creek High School junior Zach Poindexter, center, makes a free throw in a game against Whiteland during the Johnson County Boys Basketball Tournament at Center Grove on Tuesday. Free-throw shooting seems to have become a lost art as players struggle from the foul line.

Foul-shooting skills seem to be on decline

By JOHN GROTH
DAILY JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER
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Franklin College men's basketball coach Kerry Prather has a solution to fix a common basketball problem.

His remedy to cure poor free-throw shooting is simple.

Grizzlies players have to make their foul shots or they won't be playing at the end of a close game.

"If you're a guy that wants to be in the game at a critical time, you have to be able to make free throws," said Prather, in his 23rd year as coach. "I've had to take kids out at the end of a game because they can't make a free throw."

"I'm not going to put a suspect free-throw shooter on the floor at the end of a game."

Free-throw shooting has become a lost art at all levels of basketball. One of basketball's fundamental skills has

turned into one of the toughest to develop.

Local college and high school coaches agree that many players aren't using proper shooting techniques.

Some coaches attribute that to the inception of the 3-point line. Franklin Community High School basketball coach Dave Clark has noticed that instead of trying to get fouled and earn free points, players are shooting from farther away and out of their range.

"The first thing most kids want to do now is step out behind the arc and start shooting it," Clark said. "A lot of times they don't have the strength to get it there, and that's where bad habits begin to take place. They're straining to get the ball up there and consequently use poor technique. I think that equates to poor free-throw shooting."

Curing poor shooting techniques and bad free-throw shooting habits is hard.

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ON TARGET

During the 2000-01 season, Franklin College led all NCAA Division III schools in free-throw shooting percentage. The Grizzlies hit 570 of 713 free throws (79.9 percent) that season. The record for NCAA Division III is 81.7 percent by Wisconsin-Oshkosh in 1998-99.

Franklin College men's basketball coach Kerry Prather offers these three steps for better free-throw shooting:

Step 1: Convince players they're going to get to the free-throw line

Step 2: Develop simple and consistent free-throw shooting routine

Step 3: Practice, practice, practice

"The concept of the game where time is spent developing individual skills in the gym has been lost," Prather said. "More kids are choosing to spend time in competition rather than in development of their skills."

"You're not going to fix it in 10 minutes. You're going to fix it with tens of thousands of free throws."



Center Grove senior Traci Lippold, right, drives past North Central senior Maggie Orzeske during Thursday's Metropolitan Interscholastic Conference game at North Central.

Trojans knock off defending champs

By GREG DODDRIDGE
DAILY JOURNAL SPORTS CORRESPONDENT

INDIANAPOLIS

Hillary Bowling picked the right game to start shooting.

Making all five of her field goals and 5 of her 6 free-throw attempts, the Center Grove junior scored 18 points and grabbed six rebounds to lead the visiting Class 4A No. 9 Trojans to their 10th straight victory, a 52-46 win against Class 4A No. 5 North Central on Thursday.

"Everything started clicking, and we got into the flow," Bowling said. "My coach has been telling me to shoot for the past month, and I finally did tonight."

After no points in the third quarter, Bowling decided to come

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INSIDE

Find out how Edinburg and Indian Creek fared in their girls basketball games Thursday.

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out firing in the fourth. She hit back-to-back 3-pointers early in the fourth quarter to give the Trojans a five-point lead.

The Panthers clawed their way back behind the efforts of Any Sutton, who led her team with 14 points.

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SUNDAY'S GAME

Steelers (12-5) at Colts (14-2)

Time: 1 p.m.

TV: WISH-Channel 8 Radio: WFBQ-94.7 FM



Colts letting Steelers do trash talking

Players not taking Porter's bait

By MICHAEL MAROT
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDIANAPOLIS

Joey Porter can talk all he wants, but the Indianapolis Colts aren't about to get into a shouting match with the Pittsburgh linebacker.

On Wednesday, Porter criticized the Colts for playing soft in their first meeting this season and challenged them to play smash-mouth football in Sunday's divisional playoff game. On Thursday, Colts players responded quietly, letting the usually stoic Tony Dungy handle it.

"I'm going to have to go back and watch the tape again after what Joey Porter said because I guess I didn't see it the same way he did," Dungy said Thursday as he held a yellow videotape in his hand. "But I don't think you can beat Pittsburgh without being a tough team."

Porter enjoys jousting with opponents.

In 2004, he was ejected before a game against Cleveland when he and Browns running back William Green started throwing punches in warmups.

When the Steelers visited Indy in November, Porter apparently taunted Colts players in warmups, too, something the Colts later cited as motivation in their 26-7 rout.

This time, Porter started sparring even earlier. He criticized the Colts for relying on trickery to win games rather than slug-ging it out and called Edgerrin James'

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"They don't want to just sit there, line up and play football. They want to try to catch you off guard. They don't want to play smash-mouth football, they want to trick you. ... They want to catch you substituting. Know what I mean? They don't want to just call a play, get up there and run a play. They want to make you think. They want it to be a thinking game instead of a football game."



Joey Porter
Pittsburgh Steelers
linebacker on the
Indianapolis Colts

Coaches handle different losses

Playoffs haven't been friendly to Cowher's teams

By ALAN ROBINSON
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PITTSBURGH

Pittsburgh Steelers coach Bill Cowher was talking to reporters when one mentioned his team scored a season-low seven points in its previous game against the Colts.

"Thanks for reminding me. Please don't stop now," Cowher said of that 26-7 loss Nov. 28.

And the touchdown came with a short field created by an interception.

"Another great point," Cowher said.

The good-natured by-play continued for several minutes but didn't mask the unspoken theme: It's January, it's the playoffs, and that means Cowher's Steelers are supposed to lose again.

These circumstances are different than any of Cowher's previous nine playoff appearances in 14 seasons as Pittsburgh's coach. The Steelers are road

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Boys should pay attention when Dungy speaks

By BILL REYNOLDS
THE PROVIDENCE (R.I.) JOURNAL

INDIANAPOLIS

I still think about his words. It's now been five weeks

COLUMN

since Tony Dungy's son died, but Dungy's words at his son's funeral service shortly afterward still hang in the air, as though suspended in time. Words that go beyond the Colts, beyond the playoffs, beyond football.

Words for a generation.

He was speaking at the funeral, speaking publicly for the first time, when he turned to his players who had flown from Indiana to Florida for the service.

"You're some great guys, you really are," he told the players, no doubt touched by their commitment to him. "I want to urge you to continue being who you are because our young boys in this country, they need to hear

(SEE DUNGY, PAGE B3)

Trade rumors abound, but Artest still hasn't been dealt

The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS

The Indiana Pacers are getting accustomed to all the trade rumors involving Ron Artest.

The stories have come so fast, and without substantiation, the Pacers are just ignoring them.

"It's good for us to get a rhythm and stay with the guys we have and understand that these are the guys who are going to be here," Stephen Jackson said Thursday. "We have to get it done with these guys. We can't worry about who is coming in and when

they are going to make a trade."

The Pacers need to just play basketball, said Jackson, who has usually been the team's No. 2 scorer in the 16 games since Artest last played in early December.

"I've heard of some trades, but none of them have probably been true," Jackson said. "I've talked to Ron, but it really hasn't been on my mind. I wish him the best and hope for the best for this team."

The latest rumor had Artest, who has been inactive since last month, heading to the Los Angeles Clippers in a trade for

(SEE ARTEST, PAGE B2)



Southern California tailback Reggie Bush, shown at a news conference in Los Angeles on Thursday, will skip his senior season and will enter the NFL draft, where he is expected to be the top selection.

No surprise: USC's Bush to skip senior year, go to NFL

By KEN PETERS
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES

Reggie Bush is skipping his senior season at Southern California to enter the NFL draft.

The Heisman Trophy winner made the expected announcement Thursday, a day after running mate Lendale White made his decision to leave early and turn pro.

Bush is expected to be one of the first players taken in the draft, with many projecting him going to the Houston Texans with the No. 1 pick.

The electrifying running back had 1,740 yards rushing and 2,890 all-purpose yards this season for the Trojans, who fell short of an unprecedented third national title when they lost 41-38 to Texas in the Rose Bowl last week.

"It's a happy day; I don't think it's a sad time," Bush said at a campus news conference. "It was tough. ... You want to please everybody. You want to return for your senior season."

Trojans coach Pete Carroll said Bush made the right decision.

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