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SPORTS

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SECTION B

Cubs hope to play spoilers

Franklin faces daunting task in regional flooded with top talent

By Rick Morwick

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If there's a tougher boys basketball regional in the state, it's a well-kept secret.

In one corner is No. 1 Lawrence North, the two-time defending Class 4A state champion. In

another is No. 2 Pike, a traditional state power with a championship pedigree.

But they aren't the only heavyweights in Saturday's Pike Regional at Hinkle Fieldhouse.

Area power Carmel is unranked but knocked out No. 6 North Central on its way to a sectional title in a highly competitive field.

Unheralded Franklin is also unranked but fought through a fierce sectional gauntlet to earn its way to the next round.

"It's kind of a who's who," said Franklin coach Dave Clark, whose team plays Pike in the 10 a.m. opener. Lawrence North and Carmel square off in the noon semifinal.

The winners will play for the championship at 8 p.m.

Of the four contenders, the Grizzly Cubs (14-10) are, based on records and rankings, distinct underdogs. But they don't mind.

In 1997, the Cubs were also unranked and lightly regarded heading into the state tournament. By the time their run

ended, they were in the Final Eight and only a handful of points away from the Final Four.

Left in their semistate wake was New Castle, which was No. 1 in the coaches poll and No. 2 in the Associated Press poll.

So the Cubs don't mind being

(SEE CUBS, PAGE B2)

IF YOU GO

What: IHSAA Class 4A Pike boys basketball regional

When: Saturday

Where: Hinkle Fieldhouse, Indianapolis

Games

10 a.m. — Pike (20-3) vs. Franklin (14-10)

Noon — Lawrence North (25-0) vs. Carmel (17-7)

8 p.m. — Championship

Admission: \$6 per session; \$9 all-session

Surge can't save Boilers

Spartans send Purdue packing in Big Ten tourney

By Steve Herman

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDIANAPOLIS

Even a less-than-sharp Michigan State was too tough for Purdue's decimated Boiler-makers.

Maurice Ager scored 20 points and redshirt freshman Goran Suton had a career-high 12 points as the Spartans held off Purdue 70-58 in the first round of the Big Ten tournament Thursday night.

"Sometimes we make stupid fouls, make poor decisions," Ager said of the Spartans' inability to keep a big lead in the closing minutes.

Michigan State coach Tom Izzo called the Spartans good in stretches, but he was otherwise not satisfied.

"I can't say I was extremely ecstatic about our play, and Purdue deserves some of the credit for that," Izzo said. "Yet in clutch times, these guys came through."

Suton, whose previous high was nine points against IPFW, had two big rebound baskets after the Boiler-makers cut a 15-point deficit to six. The Spartans then got their final six points at the foul line, including the final two by Ager with 37 seconds left.

"Spartan basketball is playing with a lot of intensity, a lot of grit. We haven't played with it as much as we'd like to. But it's a new season," said Shannon Brown, who had 11 points and four assists for Michigan State.

The victory sent sixth-seeded Michigan State (21-10) into the quarterfinals on Friday against No. 9-ranked Illinois, the third



TODAY'S GAME
Indiana Hoosiers (17-10) vs. Wisconsin Badgers (19-10)
Where: RCA Dome, Indianapolis
Time: 2:30 p.m. today
TV: ESPN

PREP GYMNASTICS

Getting a jump on things

Starting young key to becoming successful gymnast

STORY BY JOHN GROTH

PHOTOS BY SCOTT ROBERSON




When she was a child, Angela Blankenship was scared of the uneven bars. They were too high and hurt her hands. They were not her favorite gymnastics apparatus.

But the more she practiced, the more confident she became.

"I got over (my fear) by practicing," said Blankenship, a senior on the Center Grove High School gymnastics team. "(I was) taught to be competitive when (I was) little."

Performing flips and cartwheels on the balance beam, soaring head over heels on the vault, or executing flying dismounts on the uneven bars are scary propositions for the average person. But gymnasts learn at an early age to shed their fear and take on the challenge.

With a little nurturing and expert instruction, they can go from performing simple flips on the floor to performing complex aerial moves on the balance beam.

Eric Phillabaum has coached gymnastics for 29 years, the past two as the girls gymnastics coach at the Indy School of Gymnastics in Carmel. He's worked with children with varying experience and fear levels.

Some have no fear and want to try skills right away. Although you can teach skills to these gymnasts more quickly, they might perform skills they're not ready for. And they may develop a fear if they fall or have a bad experience.

Was so young that I wasn't scared to try anything."

— Angela Blankenship
Center Grove gymnast



Above: Wright's Gymnastics instructor Keyla Elliot helps 6-year-old Lyndie McGraw with a cartwheel at the Center Grove area gym. **Left:** Cassey Wright spots gymnast Anna Mariutto, 14, on the uneven bars.

GYMNASTICS GLOSSARY

- Floor exercise**
A combination of dance and tumbling to music on a 12-by-12-meter space.
- Uneven bars**
Gymnasts perform a series of moves while leaping between two bars.
- Parallel bars**
Gymnasts perform a series of swings and balances on two 6-foot bars about shoulder width apart.
- Balance beam**
A series of tumbling, turning and leaping on a beam about 125 centimeters high, 5 meters long and 10 centimeters wide.
- Vault**
Gymnasts sprint down a runway, usually about 75 feet long, before leaping on a springboard and holding their bodies straight while hitting the vault and flipping over to a standing position. In advanced gymnastics, twists are added before landing.
- Still rings**
Gymnasts swing themselves on the rings suspended 8 feet off the ground while trying to keep the rings from moving.
- Horizontal bar or high bar**
Gymnasts hold onto a 1-inch-thick steel bar 8 feet in the air. They show swings, release skills, twists and changes of direction.
- Pommel horse**
Gymnasts perform circular movements around the apparatus with their legs while allowing only their hands to touch the pommel horse.

Polian: Colts will let James test free agency

By Hank Lowenkron

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDIANAPOLIS

Indianapolis will take a close look at budget figures under the NFL's new \$102 million salary cap before making offers to Edgerrin James and other players who will become unrestricted free agents Saturday, team president Bill Polian said Thursday.

James, the Colts' all-time rushing leader, linebacker David Thornton and kicker Mike Vanderjagt, the team's all-time scoring leader, are among the Colts who would

become free agents at 12:01 a.m. Saturday.

Polian said he didn't anticipate making an offer to James or Thornton before they get the opportunity to test the market.

The Colts could declare James a franchise player like they did last year, although that move would cost them an estimated \$11 million against the cap.

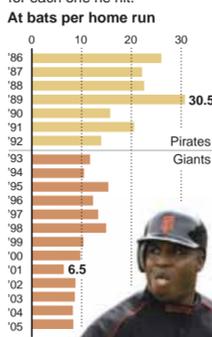
"My gut reaction is I want to see which way the market goes before we entertain any major expenditures beyond those we have already made," said Polian.

Polian said salary revisions that Peyton

(SEE COLTS, PAGE B2)

Bonds' power surge

Barry Bonds' home run pace skyrocketed late in his career. In his record-setting 2001 season when he had 73 homers, he averaged only 6.5 at bats for each one he hit.



SOURCE: Major League Baseball AP

Bonds strikes out in first spring at-bat in two years

By Janie McCauley

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TEMPE, Ariz.

Boos coming his way from all directions, Barry Bonds slowly stepped into the batter's box for his first spring training appearance in two years and struck out swinging on six pitches.

No home run yet for the San Francisco star, though he did single sharply to right in his third-inning at-bat. After that, he called it a day, leaving the ballpark in the top of the fourth inning.

Bonds, playing in an exhibition game against the AL West-winning Los Angeles

Angels, drew some cheers Thursday during the Giants' 6-5 loss, two days after the release of excerpts from an upcoming book detailing his alleged longtime steroids regimen.

When asked about the book, Bonds said, "Baseball or nothing" and "I don't worry about that stuff."

He noted his frame of mind is still strong; Bonds has become used to blocking out distractions in recent years.

"It's pretty good," a smiling Bonds said of his mind-set. "I haven't shot anybody yet."

"We love you, Barry!" one man screamed during Bonds' first at-bat against Angels

(SEE BONDS, PAGE B3)