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SPORTS

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SECTION B

Franklin athletic director honored

By JOHN GROTH
DAILY JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER
jgroth@thejournalnet.com

Noel Heminger is still overwhelmed. The Franklin Community High School athletic director had no idea he'd been nominated for an award.

He never imagined he'd been named the Indiana Athletic Trainers Association Athletic Director of the Year.

"I was shocked and surprised that I was even in the running," Heminger said. "I'm overwhelmed and really tickled that I was even in the hunt."

The association's award is given to one state athletic director per year. Heminger learned he won about a month ago and will receive the award at a July awards banquet at the Marten House Hotel in Indianapolis.

Awards committee chairwoman Cheryl Montague said the award honors athletic directors who have helped further the profession of athletic trainers.

"Whether they're influential in getting equipment or supplies, the athletic director gives the (certified) athletic trainer freedom to do their job in caring for athletes," Montague said. "Noel has been very influential in helping the athletic training program grow at Franklin Community High School."

Athletic directors are nominated for the award by certified athletic trainers and Indiana Athletic Trainers Association members. Nominations are good for two years.

Heminger received two nominations in August 2005. Franklin Community High School certified

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Ex-Purdue QB fields questions on health

By BRETT MARTEL
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW ORLEANS

Drew Brees patiently fielded repeated questions about his injured throwing shoulder, then smiled when asked whether he was tiring of the subject.

"I don't mind talking about it. I've got a big smile on the inside because I know where I'm going to be in about four months," the new Saints quarterback said during his introduction in New Orleans on Wednesday. "So all this speculation, especially during this process where people just like to kind of drag you down ... they'll be eating their words."

"It's not the first time somebody said ... I couldn't do it," he added. "I'll leave the talking to my play come September."

(SEE HEALTH, PAGE B3)

Crew chief back on track at Indianapolis Speedrome

Kent Krimmel is no stranger to the Indianapolis Speedrome.

It's just been a while since he's been behind the wheel of a race car on the Speedrome track.

The longtime crew chief for Speedrome late models racer Curtis McMurtrey, Krimmel has a ride of his own this season. He's competing in the track's Hornets division, a series for low-budget, four-cylinder-powered compact cars.

Krimmel got his first taste of Hornets racing during the Speed-



Jeff Decker
FULL THROTTLE

rome's Spring Fling event Sunday. Driving a Dodge Neon, he got no practice and just one qualifying lap on a track made wet by Sunday morning's rains. He

managed an 11th-place finish in the feature race.

Krimmel, an experienced stock car driver before becoming a crew chief, hadn't driven at the Speedrome since taking a few laps in a late model at least six years ago.

The Neon he is racing is a far cry from the powerful late models that race at the eastside figure-8 track.

"It was wet and slippery, no handling," Krimmel said of Sunday's experience. "It's front-wheel drive, so there are a lot of things different about this car."

The idea of driving a Hornets car came up during an off-season trip to California. Bill Frye of Greenwood, a Speedrome late models car owner whose drivers include McMurtrey and R.J. Norton of Indianapolis, was selling his cars to Jesse James, host of the cable-TV show "Monster Garage." James is an occasional visitor to the Speedrome. He has raced there and helped sponsor Frye's cars last season.

"I asked how much one of (the

(SEE TRACK, PAGE B4)

NCAA TOURNAMENT

Nothing to lose



Indiana University men's basketball coach Mike Davis looks up at the scoreboard during the Hoosiers' Big Ten Tournament game against Wisconsin at Consecro Fieldhouse in Indianapolis on Friday.

Hoosiers haven't been pressured since Davis announced resignation

By MICHAEL MAROT
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDIANAPOLIS

With one quick sentence, Mike Davis took away Indiana's biggest distraction. Since resigning last month, the Hoosiers have been a different team, and Davis looks like a more content man.

He smiles, laughs and jokes more frequently. He even chatted with radio play-by-play announcer Don Fischer during last week's Big Ten Tournament games.

And the constant pressure-cooker that surrounds Indiana's basketball coach is no longer a big deal for Davis. What he's done is revert to his more natural coaching instincts, which has allowed his players to concentrate on what they do best: play basketball and win games.

"This is the way I should have coached all the while, no matter what people thought or said," Davis said last week. "Just focus on having fun and not putting so much pressure on our guys."

The changes on the court have been obvious. During a recent five-game winning streak, the

Hoosiers rallied from halftime deficits three straight times, won their first two conference road games and nearly reached their first Big Ten Tournament championship game since 2001.

They're playing harder, winning more consistently and enter tonight's first-round NCAA Tournament game against San Diego State with one mission: To send Davis off in grand style.

"He's the only coach I've been around who really cares about you," forward Marco Killingsworth said. "It's not just about basketball. I think, personally, that Indiana, the school, is really missing out because he's in the trenches with all of us."

For most of Davis' six seasons in Bloomington, he's been tormented by the circus environment in a state where basketball is considered more religion than novelty.

Every time a new rumor surfaced, Davis grumbled. Every time his players were booed, he complained. When mistakes were made, he assessed blame, and when people asked him to be honest, he was, often to his own detriment.

That's not the case any more.

(SEE HOOSIERS, PAGE B3)

Madness is gladness for local businesses

By JOHN GROTH
DAILY JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER
jgroth@thejournalnet.com

More bodies, more bartenders and more basketball.

Smokey Bones Barbecue and Grill manager Jeff Fuller expects to have all three today at the Greenwood restaurant and bar.

March Madness and the NCAA Division I men's basketball tournament have started. And local restaurants are preparing for a boom.

For Fuller, he expects the increase at the bar. "We've been open the last two years during March Madness," he said. "We've found that Thursday and Friday the business around the bar increases 35 to 40 percent."

"We'll maybe add a bartender during the day on Thursday and Friday. When we're that busy, the bartender is not able to handle anything but the bar."

Southside restaurants and bars expect a busi-

(SEE MADNESS, PAGE B3)

IU ON TV



San Diego State Aztecs (24-8) vs. Indiana Hoosiers (18-11)

Time: 9:40 tonight
TV: WISH-Channel 8
Radio: WFBQ-94.7 FM

TODAY'S OTHER NCAA GAMES

Washington Regional

First round
At Greensboro Coliseum
Greensboro, N.C.
Wichita State (24-8) vs. Seton Hall (18-11), 12:20 p.m.
Tennessee (21-7) vs. Winthrop (23-7), 2:40 p.m.

At Cox Arena

San Diego
Illinois (25-6) vs. Air Force (24-6), 7:25 p.m., WISH-Channel 8
Washington (24-6) vs. Utah State (23-8), 9:45 p.m.

Atlanta Regional

First round
At Greensboro Coliseum
Greensboro, N.C.
George Washington (26-2) vs. North Carolina-Wilmington (25-7), 7:10 p.m.
Duke (30-3) vs. Southern University (19-12), 9:30 p.m.

At Jacksonville Veterans Memorial Arena

Jacksonville, Fla.
LSU (23-8) vs. Iona (23-7), 7:10 p.m.
Syracuse (23-11) vs. Texas A&M (21-8), 9:40 p.m.

Minneapolis Regional

First round
At Jacksonville Veterans Memorial Arena
Jacksonville, Fla.
Oklahoma (20-8) vs. Wisconsin-Milwaukee (21-8), 12:25 p.m., WISH-Channel 8
Florida (27-6) vs. South Alabama (24-6), 2:45 p.m.

At The Jon M. Huntsman Center

Salt Lake City
Boston College (26-7) vs. Pacific (24-7), 12:40 p.m.
Nevada (27-5) vs. Montana (23-6), 3 p.m.

Oakland Regional

First round
At The Jon M. Huntsman Center
Salt Lake City
Gonzaga (27-3) vs. Xavier (21-10), 7:20 p.m.
At Cox Arena
San Diego
Marquette (20-10) vs. Alabama (17-12), 2:40 p.m., WISH-Channel 8
UCLA (27-6) vs. Belmont (20-10), 4:55 p.m.

INSIDE

Sports editor Rick Morwick, assistant sports editor Jeff Decker, staff writer John Groth and special publications editor Paul Hoffman make their NCAA Tournament picks for biggest first-round upset, lowest seed to make the Sweet 16, Final Four teams and national champion.

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Indiana Pacers forward Peja Stojakovic reacts to missing a potentially game-winning shot as time expires in Wednesday's game against the Denver Nuggets in Indianapolis.

Final shot misses

Pacers rally but fall by two points

By RICK MORWICK
DAILY JOURNAL SPORTS EDITOR
morwick@thejournalnet.com

INDIANAPOLIS

Peja Stojakovic had comfortable range and got the look he wanted.

He just didn't get the desired result.

Consequently, the Indiana Pacers gained no ground in the Eastern Conference playoff race.

Trailing virtually from start to finish, the Pacers suffered a 101-99 loss against the Denver Nuggets at Consecro Fieldhouse on Wednesday night.

Indiana (32-30) never led but had a chance to win on the game's final play.

With two seconds left, Stojakovic took the inbound pass at the Pacers' end of the floor and had an open look behind the 3-point arc. But his 25-footer, which found the cylinder, popped out as time expired.

"It felt good. I thought it was in," said Stojakovic, who had a team-high 22 points. "This was a tough loss."

In light of the Pacers' miserable start, the fact they had a chance to win at the end was itself an achievement, albeit a dubious one.

Finding no answer for Denver's prolific trio of Carmelo Anthony, Andre Miller and Marcus Camby, the Pacers trailed 32-21 after the first quarter and were down 61-47 at halftime.

They trailed by 16 twice in the second period and never had the lead throughout the game.

But thanks to back-to-back 3-point baskets by Stojakovic and point guard Anthony Johnson, the Pacers forged a 99-99 tie with 1:10 to play.

With the crowd energized, they had a chance for their first lead with 25 seconds left, but Stephen Jackson missed a 15-foot jumper that gave the Nuggets (37-29) the

(SEE PACERS, PAGE B2)



NEXT UP

Sacramento Kings (33-31) at Indiana Pacers (32-30)

Time: 7 p.m. Friday
TV: Fox Sports Midwest
Radio: WIBC-1070 AM



PHOTO COURTESY INDIANAPOLIS SPEEDROME
Kent Krimmel of Franklin will race a Dodge Neon in the Indianapolis Speedrome's Hornets division this season. Krimmel has been a crew chief in the track's late-models division for several years.