

By Andrew Smith
DAILY REPORTER (GREENFIELD)
asmith@greenfieldreporter.com

INDIANAPOLIS

In the euphoria following the final defensive play in the Indianapolis Colts' 17-13 victory against Arizona, Mike Doss brought Tony Dungy a gift: the gameball. Smiling from ear to ear, Dungy held the football aloft and soaked in a deafening roar from the RCA Dome crowd. In a normal week, it was a meaningless game, one that had no bearing on playoff position and one that saw second-stringers get more snaps than the starters in many cases. But this wasn't a normal week. Six days earlier, six busloads of Colts players and staff mourned at a funeral for 18-year-old James Dungy, the eldest son of the Colts coach. On Thursday, two days after the funeral, Dungy returned to the team and directed practice. On Sunday, he was back on the sidelines. The bigger gift was the victory. The ball was just a representation of it.

AP PHOTO

Colts coach Tony Dungy and his son, Eric, acknowledge an ovation from the crowd at the RCA Dome in Indianapolis before the start of Sunday's game against Arizona.

Colts rally around coach



FIESTA BOWL

At Tempe, Ariz.
No. 4 Ohio State (9-2) vs.
No. 5 Notre Dame (9-2)
Time: 5 p.m. today
TV: WRTV-Channel 6

Irish

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There has been some mention about the danger Ohio State quarterback Troy Smith poses for the Irish defense. But there has been little mention of the problems the Notre Dame defense presents for the Buckeyes.

The Irish defenders say it's nothing new.

"I think this whole year we've been trying to prove something, that Notre Dame is not just an offensive ballclub, that we can bang some helmets, too," tackle Trevor Laws said. "I definitely think people are overlooking our defense. We want to go out and show them."

The Irish have been a bend-but-don't-break defense most of this season. The Irish defense is ranked 62nd nationally, by far the worst rated defense in a Bowl Championship Series game. The next worst is USC, which is 35th, followed by Penn State, which is 16th.

The Irish defense gives up 377 yards a game, 102 yards a game more than the Buckeyes, who are fourth in the nation in total defense. The Irish are 45th in scoring defense giving up 23.6 points a game, compared with 14.8 points a game by the Buckeyes.

Coach honored

Weis received the Eddie Robinson Award as the nation's top college football coach on Sunday.

Weis guided Notre Dame to a 9-2 record in his first season at the school after being lured from the New England Patriots, where as offensive coordinator he helped the team win three Super Bowls in four seasons.

He praised the school for providing him with the means to be successful.

"It all started after they hired me," Weis said, "giving me the resources to go hire what I feel was the best group of assistant coaches. Those guys, together with me, I thought, provided some pretty good guidance for a great group of kids who really stepped up and had an admirable year."



WEIS

Manning confident starters won't be rusty in two weeks

By Rick Morwick

DAILY JOURNAL SPORTS EDITOR
rmorwick@thejournalnet.com

INDIANAPOLIS

Peyton Manning has played only three offensive series in the past two games.

His outing Sunday was particularly short. He took three snaps, the final of which he fumbled deep in Indianapolis territory.

Manning, like all Colts starters who saw limited action the past two regular-season games, will have to wait another two weeks get back on the field.

Does he fear a rust factor? No way.

After winning their first 13 games, Manning is confident the Colts won't forget how to play between now and the AFC divisional playoffs on Jan. 14 and 15.

"I don't really buy into that theory," said Manning, who completed 1 of 2 passes for 5 yards on Sunday before exiting after the first series. "I think we'll be ready to go."

Manning was one of a host of starters who barely played or didn't play at all. On offense, running back Edgerrin James and offensive tackle Ryan Diem were inactive, as was slot receiver Brandon Stokley.

On defense, linebacker Cato June, safety Bob Sanders, defensive end Robert Mathis and defensive tackles Montae Reagor



AP PHOTO

Colts quarterback Peyton Manning, center, watches the ball roll away after being sacked by the Cardinals' Chike Okeakor in the first quarter of their game Sunday in Indianapolis. The Colts recovered the ball but lost four yards on the play.

and Corey Simon were inactive.

Although the Colts struggled offensively, they had few problems on defense. They gave up only one touchdowns, had three sacks, forced two turnovers and came up with a pair of critical stops in the red zone.

Offensively, Indianapolis had only 218 total yards, including 11 net rushing yards, and only 15 first downs.

But the result was a victory, and the Colts are confident the momen-

tum of it will carry over into the playoffs, regardless who did or who did not play much in the final two regular-season games.

"We still want to get that momentum and get that win," said defensive end Raheem Brock, who had five tackles and 1½ sacks. "I think our young guys did a great job coming in there and playing the rest of the second half and shutting them down."

"We want to get that momentum going into the playoffs."

Form

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couple of years, records will always be broken, and each year is a different set of circumstances.

Indianapolis sits and waits for a week. Will Jacksonville, New England or Pittsburgh come to town?

No matter who advances to face the Colts, the outcome of the Jan. 14-15 weekend AFC divisional playoff game will come down to whether Indy's starters rescue the crisp execution they had through the season's first 13 games (and have lost in the past three games).

Having the reserves pull out a glorified exhibition was a little New Year's present for all the season-ticket holders who paid richly for the right to see Jim Sorgi perform a three-hour workout on his right shoulder.

We'll learn much more from how healthy the Colts' key no-shows are in two weeks than we will by seeing McCown stuffed at the goal line.

Can Corey Simon and Montae Reagor regain their disruptive presences? Will Cato June be as good in coverage?

Will Bob Sanders be back to lower the boom? And can Ryan Diem return to plug the holes in a leaky offensive line?

When the playoffs finally come around to Indianapolis in two weeks, it will have been almost a month since the Colts' starters last saw meaningful minutes.

The Colts can go through drills day and night at practice, but

nobody knows how they'll react when they get back to playing at game speed.

On Sunday, Indianapolis didn't even give us a real chance to assess how the first-string offense is performing these days.

Peyton Manning played all of a three-and-out before donning the headset.

Edgerrin James wasn't even active.

They made two more cheerleaders in the RCA Dome for Sorgi and others who don't have their jerseys for sale at the mall.

Offensive coordinator Tom Moore seemed bent on making up for all the lost time Sorgi spent at Wisconsin handing off to running backs out of the I-formation.

Clearly, the Colts weren't going to give away any secrets or display any new formations, even with the backups playing during what amounted to a game's worth of garbage time.

Same goes for the defense. How many big plays did No. 55 make? Do you know who No. 55 is?

That's Kendyll Pope, who would otherwise be relegated to special teams if he was lucky.

Instead, he and Gilbert Gardner looked like vintage Derrick Brooks or Ray Lewis against Arizona's meandering all-pass offense.

Here's betting Pope and the other less-familiar jersey numbers have significantly lower profiles in the Colts' next game, the first one in a long time that actually will count for something.

Jason Martin is a sports correspondent for the Daily Journal. Send comments to rmorwick@thejournalnet.com.

Sox

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remember that," Reinsdorf said. "So this is the first time this has happened in almost everybody's lifetime. And the impact has just been incredible. Baseball makes people think about their ancestors, their parents and their grandparents."

Chicago's victory received 552 points in the voting. Hurricane Katrina displacing the NFL's New Orleans Saints, the NBA's Hornets and college teams was second with 465 points, followed by Lance Armstrong's record seventh straight Tour de France title (455) in third place. The furor over steroids in baseball was fourth (448), followed by the New England Patriots' Super Bowl victory (259), Southern California's attempt to win its third straight college football title (243) and Baltimore's Rafael Palmeiro getting his 3,000th hit and then getting suspended for steroids.

Chicago went an AL-best 99-63 during the regular season, holding on to win

the AL Central after a September slump nearly dropped the White Sox into second place behind Cleveland. Chicago then went 11-1 during the postseason, matching the 1999 New York Yankees for the best mark since the postseason expanded to three rounds in 1995.

"This was truly a team triumph," Reinsdorf said. "We didn't have a single .300 hitter. We only had one man who drove in 100 runs and it was just 100 runs. We didn't have a 20-game winner. Everybody contributed to it. It certainly was a tribute to our scouts, too. Think about how they jumped on Bobby Jenks."

Jenks was claimed on waivers from the Angels in December 2004, and the portly 270-pounder with the 100-mph fastball became Chicago's closer in the second half of the season.

Paul Konerko led the White Sox with 100 RBIs. While he became a free agent after the World Series, he resigned with Chicago, which appeared to get even stronger this offseason by adding pitcher Javier Vazquez and designated hitter Jim Thome.

"Konerko didn't come up through our organization, it was a trade with Cincinnati after the Dodgers and the

Reds had given up on him," Reinsdorf said. "But our scouts saw something in him. You can go around the whole lineup, if you will, and the scouts had so much to do with it."

Reinsdorf's Chicago Bulls won six NBA titles from 1991-98. This championship meant far more, he said last week from the Phoenix area, where he spends much of the offseason.

"Basketball is a great sport. Baseball is a religion, and I truly believe that," Reinsdorf said. "Ask 10 people what was the first basketball game they went to and whom did they go with, then ask them what was the first baseball game and whom they went with, and there's a good chance that all 10 will remember the baseball and none of them will remember the basketball, or the football or the hockey."

Despite the sweep, the White Sox outscored Houston by just six runs in the World Series, matching the smallest run differential in a sweep, a mark set by the 1950 Yankees against the Philadelphia Phillies.

Had it not been for a few controversial calls in the AL championship series that went Chicago's way, the Angels could

have been in the World Series seeking their second title in four seasons.

"In order for a team, an ordinary team, to win the World Series — by ordinary team, that's everybody other than the Yankees — all sorts of things have to happen, the stars really have to line up in the right order," Reinsdorf said. "You have to have a lot of breaks, and we got them. I can think of a zillion breaks that we got in the postseason."

Reinsdorf's group bought the White Sox in 1981 and endured a quarter-century wait just to make it to the World Series. The joy he saw from the people of Chicago awed him.

"This could only happen in a city that has a long history in baseball that hadn't won for a long time," he said. "New York had parades when the Yankees won, it was not the same thing. When the Diamondbacks won the World Series here a few years ago — what was it, their third or fourth year? — it wasn't the same thing. When a whole generation or several generations have failed to see a winner and then finally saw that winner, the joy is beyond belief. If we were to win again next year, I can't imagine it would be the same thing."

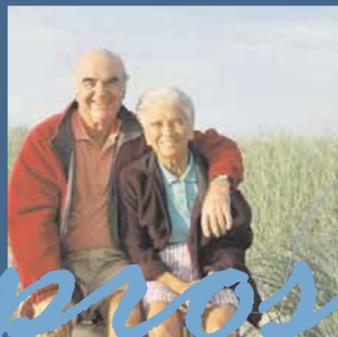
BY THE NUMBERS

Here's a look at voting for The Associated Press sports story of the year:

Story	Pts.
White Sox win first Series since 1917	552
Hurricane Katrina-New Orleans teams	465
Armstrong wins another Tour de France	455
Baseball steroids scandal	448
Patriots win another Super Bowl	259
USC aims at third straight national title	243
Palmeiro gets 3,000th hit, drug suspension	238
BALCO guilty pleas, steroids hearings	202
Terrell Owens suspension upheld	167
NHL returns	147
Roy Williams, UNC win NCAA basketball title	137
Tiger Woods dominates majors	134
Danica Patrick, Indy 500, IRL rookie of year	123
Jose Canseco book and steroid accusations	116
Colts approach perfection	100
Weis leads Notre Dame to Fiesta Bowl	92
Tedy Bruschi returns to Patriots after stroke	89
Annikka Sorenstam dominates women's golf	56
Jack Nicklaus retires	55
Pat Summitt passes Dean Smith	52

prosper (pros'per) v.
1. to be fortunate or successful; thrive
2. to grow stronger

live. play. prosper.



Savings Bonds
Time Deposit Accounts
Money Markets

FDIC Insured

LINCOLN BANK: A New Year. A New Perspective.