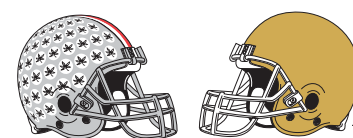
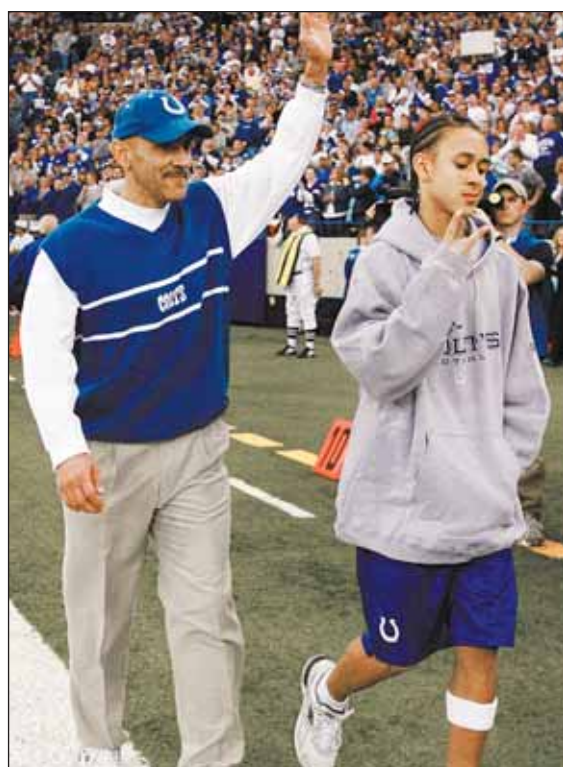


Colts rally around coach



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



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.

By Andrew Smith
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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.

"I had chills. I was excited to see the smile on his face, and just how he's handled this whole tragedy," said receiver Troy Walters, one of 20 Colts players who have been around since Dungy became the Colts' head coach in 2002.

"He's really comforted us in the middle of all of this. It's been a long week, bittersweet, in the fact that there was a loss of a life, but we rallied as a team around our coach. That's brought us close together. To cap it off with a win, that makes it special," Walters said.

The outpouring of affection for the Colts' coach came immediately from the RCA Dome crowd, which gave him a standing ovation when he arrived on the field moments before the game.

Several players said they've grown closer as a team during the past week, largely because of the way they've rallied around their leader. Veteran linebacker Rob Morris said he was excited when he saw the light on in Dungy's office when he arrived at the Colts' practice complex Thursday.

"I wonder how many players feel that way about their coach," he said.

"You don't hear a lot of us talk about him as our coach. You hear us talk about our leader."

They wanted to give him a victory. And after they did, they began celebrating with him. On the final play, Arizona quarterback Josh McCown fumbled near the goal line, and the Colts recovered in the end zone. It was called a touchdown but was reversed on the replay.

As he stood on the field waiting for the review to be completed, Doss told umpire Ed Coukart that he wanted the ball if the play was overturned so he could give it to his coach.

Dungy appreciated the gesture. "I didn't think about it during the game, but what it symbolized to me is what a close-knit group we have, what a tight family we have," he said. "I think they wanted to win it for me, and they came up with the effort to do it. (The ball) will be a reminder of how much I will be proud of these guys from here on out."

Manning confident starters won't be rusty in two weeks

By Rick Morwick

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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 Okeazor 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 touchdown, 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.

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Sox

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1)

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."

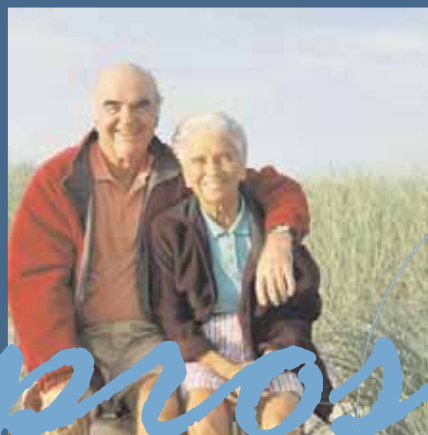
BY THE NUMBERS

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.