

FOOTBALL

INDIANAPOLIS

Pair of injured Colts return to practice

Indianapolis Colts right tackle Ryan Diem and defensive tackle Corey Simon both returned to practice Wednesday.

Diem, a starter, had been out since spraining a ligament in his left knee Dec. 18 against San Diego. It was the first time he'd practiced since the injury. He is listed as probable for Sunday's divisional playoff game against Pittsburgh.

Simon, a former Pro Bowl player, also practiced after recovering from a sprained left foot. Simon was hurt Dec. 11 against Jacksonville and sat out the final three games. He, too, is probable.

"I feel good; I feel 100 percent," said Simon, the Colts' run-stuffer. "It's playoff time, and I'm ready to go."

The Colts (14-2) had 14 players on the injury report, all listed probable.

Backup tight end Ben Utecht went home early Wednesday because of the flu, and backup defensive back Kelvin Hayden missed the final part of practice after injuring his right ankle.

DENVER

Other USC running back to enter NFL draft

Southern Cal running back LenDale White declared himself eligible for the NFL draft Wednesday, saying he had accomplished everything he wanted to for the Trojans.

White said the decision was difficult.

"I wouldn't say it was a slam dunk" to leave USC, he said.

The 6-foot-2, 235-pound junior leaves USC as the school's career leader with 57 touchdowns. He had 541 carries for 3,159 yards in three seasons, during which the Trojans won two national championships.

He scored three touchdowns in USC's 41-38 Rose Bowl loss to Texas last week.

Fellow Trojans tailback Reggie Bush, who won the Heisman Trophy and will announce his plans today in Los Angeles, told his teammate to follow his instincts.

Wie gauges PGA progress

Teen trying to become first woman since '45 to make cut at men's event

By DOUG FERGUSON
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HONOLULU

For a girl with such grandiose dreams, even Michelle Wie thought the bar was set too high.

It was one of her first exercises late last year with Paul Gagne, a fitness guru who spends most of his time with hockey players, and the task was a simple pull-up. Wie jumped up to grab the bar, and her 6-foot frame dangled in the air for a few seconds before she tried to lift herself. She barely moved a few inches.

When the workout was over, Wie said she was so sore she couldn't lift her arms to wash her hair in the shower.

"It was way too painful," she said. "My New Year's resolution is to cut down on sugar and not be as lazy. That means going to the gym a lot more. My goal is to get fit, get stronger and prevent injury."

Her ultimate goal remains the same: Play golf against the best in the world.

The next chance comes today in the Sony Open, the first full-field event on the PGA Tour where Wie has become a regular fixture. It will be her seventh time competing against the men and fourth time on the PGA Tour as she tries to become the first woman since Babe Zaharias in 1945 to make the cut.

But the junior at nearby Punahou School no longer emphasizes getting to the weekend. The older she gets, the farther along in her unique journey, she has paid less attention to results and more on hitting the right shots.

How does she measure success? "If at the end of the week I felt good about the week, I had a lot of fun and I played as hard as I can," she said.

Her newfound dedication to fitness is one example of Wie seeing a bigger picture.

Swing coach David Leadbetter



Michelle Wie tees off on the 18th hole at Waialae Country Club during the Sony Open pro-am in Honolulu on Wednesday. AP PHOTO

said her upper body strength was woefully lacking, and he brought in Gagne for help. In the past few months, he said Wie has increased her ball speed about 5 mph to 161 mph, which he compared favorably with the 166 mph ball speed of Justin Rose.

Wie has added about eight pounds of muscle, which Leadbetter says has given her more strength to hold the club in the proper position at the top of the swing.

"Look at what strength training did for Annika (Sorenstam)," Leadbetter said. "Michelle tended to shy away from it. But once we pointed out the benefits, it's a full program she has to work on. When you've got the talent she

has, it's a matter of getting your ducks in a row. She's game for it. She's starting to enjoy it."

Even so, Wie will be measured this week by the scores on her card and whether she finishes among the top 70 players and ties over the first two rounds.

The defending champion is Vijay Singh, and the field includes three-time Mercedes Championships winner Stuart Appleby, Mike Weir, David Toms and Adam Scott.

Scott finished behind her two years ago and paid dearly. When he got to Bay Hill, swing coach Butch Harmon had plastered pictures of Wie inside his locker.

"It's a big week for us, a big week for me," Scott said with a

smile. "Two years ago she almost made it. If she putts really well, she can make the cut."

Even so, the novelty is wearing off the more she plays, and the older she gets.

Three players at the Sony Open have never played a PGA Tour event, having earned their way through qualifying school. Wie already has played four tour events, and dozens of rounds at Waialae getting ready for this week.

"I was expecting a good player, but not a seasoned player," said Sean O'Hair, the PGA Tour rookie of the year, after playing a practice round with Wie on Tuesday. "She seems like she's been doing this a while."

Switching channels: PGA on three networks

HONOLULU — The PGA Tour will be found on only two of the three major networks starting in 2007 under six-year deals announced Wednesday with CBS Sports and NBC Sports, with the first two rounds of every tournament and selected other events relegated to The Golf Channel.

The deal culminates a massive shake-up on the PGA Tour, which began last year when commissioner Tim Finchem unveiled a new schedule that will include a season-long points race that leads to a play-off system of three blockbuster events and the Tour Championship.

The Players Championship, as expected, will move from March to the second week in May starting in 2007, and Finchem said there would be no more than five minutes of commercials every hour, similar to the Masters.

Finchem did not release how much CBS and NBC paid for the rights, or the cost to The Golf Channel for its 15-year deal with the tour. He said benefits to players, including prize money, would increase about \$100 million a year in the next six years.

But he conceded that total prize money, which has increased from \$96.4 million to \$255 million under the past two four-year TV deals, would level out.

"The purse increases year to year will not be as steep in the next six years as they have in the last six," Finchem said in a conference call. "Retirement benefits will actually go up more steeply, but our purses ... will flatten a little bit."

Missing from the contract was ABC Sports, which walked away from negotiations late last month, and cable partner ESPN, which televises the first two events of the year and had picked up most of the fall schedule when fan interest turned heavily to football.

— The Associated Press

• Anglers

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1)

The expo will include guest speakers who will discuss techniques and give presentations about fishing in Indiana.

Event coordinator Ray Rigby of the Indiana Smallmouth Club wants to educate people about local fishing spots, conservation and how to catch fish.

"It's a learning experience," said Rigby, founder of the Indiana Smallmouth Club. "The show is multispecies. If it swims, there's a conservation group that's going to be there."

"We want to give people an education on what's ailing Indiana waters, (with) pollution, sedimentation and farmers plowing up to the edge of rivers."

"We're hoping to enlighten people on why our waterways have went to hell. They've needed fixing for a long time."

But smallmouth fishing remains Rigby's passion. It's the only species he pursues when fishing for recreation.

Rigby, 41, caught his first smallmouth bass with his grandfather on the Tippecanoe River when he was 9 years old. He got hooked on the fight.

"The fight is unparalleled by any means," Rigby said. "There's not a fish anywhere that fights harder or stronger than a smallmouth. They take long, hard dives to the bottom and jump three to four feet in the air. They never give up."

In Johnson County, there are a number of places to fish for smallmouth bass.

"Bayou" Bill Scifres, a long-time outdoors writer whose column appears weekly in the Daily Journal, recommends the Blue River and Sugar Creek.

Both streams run through the southeastern part of the county.

Scifres said smallmouth prefer high-quality water and shallow, swift moving water with pools, gravel and sand bars.

"Sugar Creek is one of the best smallmouth streams," Scifres said. "It has high-quality water, and the fish are there. If you

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Ray Rigby
Indiana Smallmouth Club founder
on catching smallmouth bass

don't have high-quality water, you're not going to have them.

"You will have largemouth bass."

Although Franklin resident Eric Hardesty likes Sugar Creek, he prefers the fork of Flatrock River in Johnson County even more.

Hardesty, 33, has fished for smallmouth for the past 10 years. He enjoys wading into streams on hot days in pursuit of the feisty fish.

"In the summer, you can just wear shorts," Hardesty said. "You wade out into the water and are free to roam wherever you want to fish. It's very peaceful and tranquil."

Hardesty has waded the Sugar Creek, Flatrock and Blue river bottoms in Johnson County. He also makes sure to wear waders, or rubber boots. They keep his feet dry and warmer in the cool water and keep minnows from biting his legs.

"It's very peaceful," Hardesty said. "You don't have boats running around. There are typically not many people out there. It's very inexpensive."

As for Volz, Hardesty's friend and fishing partner, he just enjoys being outdoors.

Volz's dad, Dick, owns property in Connersville, where the White River is located. He and his dad fished together on it when he was younger.

"My dad showed me how to do everything," Volz said. "I owe everything to him. It's just the enjoyment of being outside, being out with nature and out on the water."

"For me, I don't get to do it enough."

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