

- BUSINESS, B4
- HEALTH, B5
- COMICS, B6
- CLASSIFIEDS, B7-B9
- FACES & PLACES, B10

SPORTS

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SECTION B



AP PHOTO

Orlando guard Jameer Nelson, left, drives past Pacers guard Anthony Johnson during the second quarter of their game Monday in Indianapolis.

Pacers spreading the wealth

Five players in double figures as Indiana works Magic

By Rick Morwick
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INDIANAPOLIS

David Harrison isn't exactly the go-to guy. Neither is Danny Granger.

But the Indiana Pacers went to both players often in the second half of Monday night's 97-83 win

against the visiting Orlando Magic. It's a good thing they did.

Having lost to two of the Eastern Conference's worst teams (New York and Toronto) in the past week, the Pacers (32-29) were in danger of succumbing to a third before Harrison and Granger took over.

Harrison scored nine of his 14 points in the fourth quarter, and

Granger had nine of his 22 in the third to help finally wear down the Magic (22-41), who trailed by only three with 5:08 to play.

But with an offensive and defensive lift from their bench, the Pacers virtually shut down Orlando the rest of the way.

Harrison and Granger led the charge.

"Those guys were key," Pacers

coach Rick Carlisle said. "We knew we needed a lot of contributions from a lot of different guys. Our bench helped us, no question."

The bench actually saved the day. Indiana's backups outscored the starting unit 55-42. Point guard Jamaal Tinsley joined Harrison and Granger with 12 points off the bench.

By comparison, Anthony John-

son and Peja Stojakovic were the only Indiana starters in doubles figures. Johnson had 21 points, and Stojakovic had 14. Stephen Jackson, Scot Pollard and Jeff Foster combined for seven.

"When other guys struggle, we come off the bench and help them out," said Granger, who

(SEE PACERS, PAGE B2)

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Picking a winner

Bracketology is the real March Madness as fans make their tournament predictions

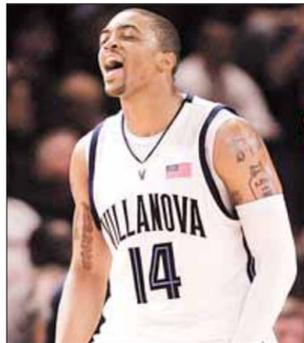
THE TOP SEEDS



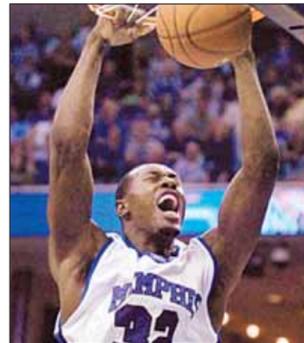
Duke
Atlanta regional



Connecticut
Washington regional



Villanova
Minneapolis regional



Memphis
Oakland regional

By Nancy Armour
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Every year about this time, Eddie Gontram's architecture firm becomes one of the most popular in the country.

Hundreds of people he doesn't know and probably will never meet check out his Web site, eagerly awaiting the latest news. And we're not talking about blueprints for that new day spa.

"It's March Madness," Gontram said Monday.

For the next three weeks, you'll find sports nuts, devoted alums and people who don't know a layup from a loose-ball foul breaking down their picks, obsessing over little-known schools like Monmouth and Pacific, and talking trash about that 8-9 matchup.

The World Series and NBA finals have their devotees, and clever ads and queso dip make the Super Bowl an all-inclusive party. When it comes to the NCAA tournament, though, there's something in those brackets that converts even the least sports-minded folk into rabid fans.

"Part of it is it's so easy to become involved," said Scott Sepich, who has run a pool for about 70 friends for the past 10 years.

Indeed, brackets are everywhere these days. Printed in virtually every newspaper. Online. Passed out in neighborhoods, hospitals and church groups.

Even the most buttoned-down of offices get the fever: Instead of talk about mergers and acquisitions or tax season, water-cooler chatter centers on the latest games, who's winning the pool and what the prospects are for the next round.

And the true beauty? No expertise is needed. You could render Dick Vitale speechless with your knowledge of college hoops, sweat for days over RPIs and power conferences, and still lose to people who make their picks based on nicknames and uniform colors.

"My 4-year-old daughter beat me last year," Gontram admitted. "She was within a whisker of winning the whole thing."

At baseball's spring training, where the start of the season is less than a month away, the real agonizing isn't over who will win the job at third base, but who will come out of the grueling Minneapolis regional.

Back in 1988, when the Dodgers were paid their annual visit by FBI agents for a talk on the evils of gambling, the

(SEE WINNER, PAGE B3)

Purdue women get No. 4 seed; Irish No. 9 seed

The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS

Purdue and Notre Dame were the only Indiana teams picked Monday for the NCAA women's tournament, leaving both Indiana and Indiana State disappointed.

Eleventh-ranked Purdue (24-6) was given a No. 4 seed in the Cleveland regional. The Boilermakers will play host to No. 13 seed Missouri State in a first-round matchup on Sunday.

INSIDE

See the full bracket for the 2006 women's NCAA Tournament.

Page B3

Notre Dame (18-11), a No. 9 seed in the Albany Regional, will play No. 8 seed Boston College (19-11) Sunday in West Lafayette.

Missouri State (17-14) upset Indiana State 64-55 in the Missouri Valley

Conference championship game on Sunday. The loss cost the Sycamores an NCAA tournament spot, despite a 26-5 record.

Indiana State was assured of a National Invitation Tournament bid because the Sycamores won the Missouri Valley Conference regular-season title.

Indiana hoped to make the NCAA tournament, but wins against NCAA qualifiers Purdue, Iowa and Minnesota weren't enough to overcome a 17-13 record. The Hoosiers qualified for the NIT.

Purdue won an NCAA bid for the 13th straight years. The Boilermakers are 12-1 all-time in first-round NCAA games, have reached the Final Four three times and won the national title in 1999.

Notre Dame started the season ranked 15th but struggled to an 18-11 record. The Irish qualified for the NCAA tournament on the strength of a nonconference schedule that included games against Purdue and Tennessee.

(SEE WOMEN, PAGE B3)

BY THE NUMBERS

The Colts have lost three players to free agency in as many days: Running back Edgerrin James, line-backer David Thornton and defensive tackle Larry Tripplett.

Here's a look at their career statistics:

James			
G	Yds.	TD	Fumbles
96	9,226	64	33

Notable: James has been selected for the Pro Bowl four times and holds several Colts team records.

Thornton			
G	Tackles	Sacks	INT
63	362	3	3

Notable: A fourth-round pick by the Colts in the 2002 draft, Thornton's new deal in Tennessee reportedly is worth more than \$22 million.

Tripplett			
G	Tackles	Sacks	INT
60	127	5	0

Notable: Tripplett was selected by the Colts in the second round of the 2002 draft and signed with the Bills on the first day of free agency.

Three for three

Colts lose another player to free agency

By Michael Marot
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDIANAPOLIS

Linebacker David Thornton has agreed to terms on a five-year deal worth more than \$22 million, becoming the third Colts player to leave the team in three days. The deal includes an \$8 million signing bonus.



THORNTON

Thornton was scheduled to meet with three other teams but after visiting with the Titans coaches decided to play for Tennessee.

"He fell in love with them and the city," said Brian Mackler, Thornton's agent. "I think they understand the value David brings and what he does."

Mackler declined to describe his contacts with the Colts.

Thornton, a fourth-round pick in 2002, became a starter in his second season and was one of the team's most visible players in the community. Last year, he was the team's fifth-leading tackler (96), had two sacks, forced two fumbles and was a key player on special teams.

Mackler said Thornton told him more than a year ago he wanted to stay in Indy, but when things didn't work out, they looked elsewhere.

"He expressed to me that the community, the city, everything about the team was a very important part of his life," Mackler said. "But you have to have two parties in this, and I made every effort to get something done with them."

(SEE THREE, PAGE B2)

Center Grove gymnast Katelyn Fernandes practices her balance beam routine during practice at the school Monday. The Trojans will vie for their first-ever state title Saturday at Perry Meridian High School in Indianapolis.

STAFF PHOTO BY SCOTT ROBERSON/roberson@thejournalnet.com



Rituals help CG gymnasts focus on winning

By John Groth
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The Center Grove High School gymnastics team will spend part of Friday thinking like a winner.

It's part of a pre-state meet routine established four years ago by Trojans coach Eric Howe.

He has the gymnasts spend 30 minutes meditating the day before participating in the IHSAA state gymnastics meet.

It's all about clearing their minds and envisioning the per-

IF YOU GO

What: IHSAA state gymnastics finals
When: Saturday
Where: Perry Meridian High School, 401 W. Meridian School Road, Indianapolis
Time: Opening ceremonies start at 12:30 p.m.; competition begins at 1 p.m.
Admission: \$6

fect routine, he said. The more relaxed they are, the better chances they have of earning their first state championship. "It works," senior Elaine

Maurer said. "It gets you thinking about your routines and how to make them perfect."

No. 3 Center Grove makes its fourth straight appearance in Saturday's state gymnastics finals at Perry Meridian High School. The Trojans are pursuing their first state title.

The team has improved on its state finish each of the past three years. Center Grove placed fifth in 2003, fourth in 2004 and third in 2005.

This year, Howe thinks the Trojans have their best shot yet because of their depth.

Center Grove has five gymnasts competing in the state finals. Senior Angela Blankenship, junior Megan Roller and freshman Katelyn Fernandes will perform in the all-around. Maurer will perform in the floor exercise, vault and uneven parallel bars, and sophomore Adrienne Cristofoli will be on the balance beam.

Blankenship, Roller and Fernandes have consistently been top all-around performers. Maurer has dominated in the

(SEE GYMNASTS, PAGE B2)