

# Burton wins pole at Daytona

By Mike Harris  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

## DAYTONA BEACH, Fla.

Richard Childress locked Jeff Burton in a bearhug and didn't want to let go.

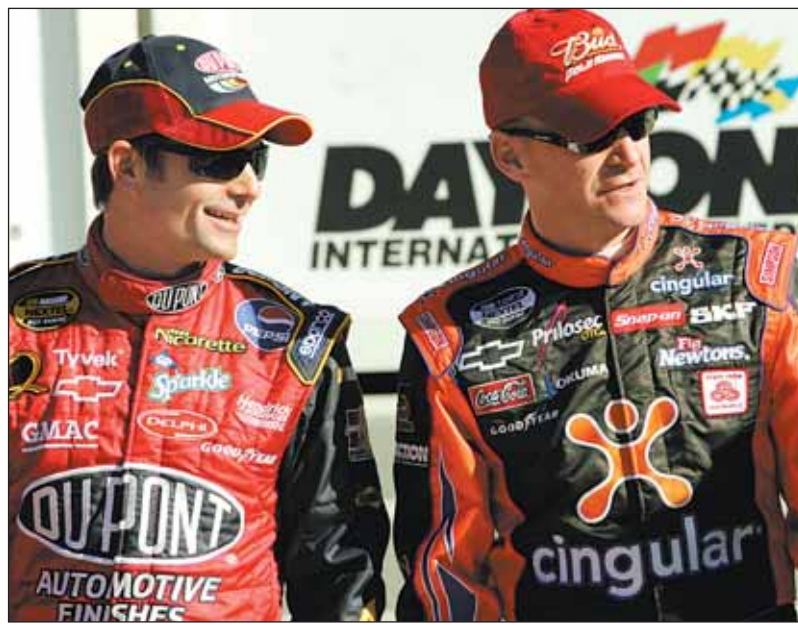
The NASCAR Nextel Cup team owner made a big financial and emotional investment during the winter to get his team back to the sport's top echelon. The changes paid their first dividend Sunday, with Burton putting his Richard Childress Racing Chevrolet on the pole for the Daytona 500.

"It's big," said Burton, who hadn't won a pole in more than five years. "Hopefully, it's another sign that this team is getting ready to turn things around."

Childress had one of the strongest teams in the sport until longtime driver and friend Dale Earnhardt was killed in a crash during the 2001 Daytona 500. Kevin Harvick had a good season for RCR after replacing Earnhardt the following week at Rockingham, but the team has struggled in the years since.

Childress was determined to turn things around, making numerous personnel changes and radically improving the team's equipment since the end of the 2005 season. This was the first big test.

"Yeah, it's emotional," Childress said. "We've struggled for the last few



NASCAR drivers Jeff Gordon, left, and Jeff Burton talk after qualifying in the top two spots on Sunday for the Daytona 500 in Daytona Beach, Fla.

years. We've got to put it all together and we've got to start winning."

Burton outran 57 other competitors to earn the top starting spot for the Feb. 19 race, his third career pole and first since the fall 2000 race in Richmond, when he was driving for Roush Racing.

His fast lap of 189.151 mph on a windy, chilly day at Daytona International Speedway was the fastest qualifying run on the

2.5-mile, high-banked oval since Dale Jarrett's 191.091 in February 2000.

"We knew we had a fast car yesterday, we just didn't know how fast these other guys really were," Burton said.

Three-time and defending Daytona 500 winner Jeff Gordon, one of the last drivers to take to the track on the windy afternoon, came close to knocking Burton's Chevrolet off the top spot with a lap of 188.877 in a

Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet.

Harvick, the star of the team's driving trio, was among the fastest in practice on Saturday and was one of the favorites to win the pole. But he wound up 13th in qualifying. Teammates Burton and rookie Clint Bowyer both made it into the top 10, though.

Bowyer led the large 2006 first-year class at 187.786, good for seventh.

"RCR has always been pretty good at plate racing," the youngster said. NASCAR requires horsepower-sapping carburetor restrictor plates at Daytona and Talladega to keep the cars under 200 mph in the interest of safety.

Burton's success in Sunday's qualifying came as no surprise to the pole winner.

"After we tested down here (in January), I went home and told my wife, 'You know, we have a shot at the pole in Daytona.' She said I was crazy," said Burton, whose only victory at Daytona came in the July race in 2000. "But we were a little lucky, too. We caught the wind just right. I looked up and saw one flag was almost laying flat and the other one was blowing across the track. I thought, 'This could be big.'"

Only the top two qualifiers locked in starting positions in the 500. The rest of qualifying results are used to set the lineups for Thursday's two 150-mile qualifying races.

# Season another positive one for county swimmers

It's hard to believe, but another swimming season has come and gone. It feels like I should just

be writing my first column; however, it truly is my final one. It's been a privilege to be able to share my thoughts and feelings about this season.

Swimming is a sport that doesn't always get the recognition it needs and deserves. I was happy to be the one chosen to write about the Warriors' season. I hope that by reading my columns, more people would understand all the hard work and dedication swimmers, families and coaches put in.

Sectional finals were conducted Saturday at Indian Creek High School. The girls swam well. I placed fifth in the 50 freestyle and fourth in the 100 freestyle. Senior diver Jami Sears advanced to the state finals.

I would like to congratulate all the seniors from all of our county schools and wish them good luck in the future. I would also like to thank Indian Creek High School for doing a great job of hosting the event. Most of all, I would like to congratulate Franklin coach Kurt Hass for dedicating 30-plus years to an awesome swimming program.

Throughout the season, our coaches and families have always been behind us. Our families support our team so much and it's been a comforting feeling to know that they are there, cheering us on. Our coaches: Mr. Tom Addington, Mr. Bill Kovacs, Ms. Sarah Higgins and Mr. Corey Ervin not only prepared us, but also gave us their complete dedication the entire season.

The girls team got closer this year. As captain, it was my job to be a good example, and get us moving into the right direction; bonding as a team. We supported each other, had fun and learned what we need to improve on for next year.

Who can forget our boys? They sure helped us out a lot! They supported us all the way. For sectionals they showed up in bleached hair, painted bodies; ready to cheer us on. We will return the favor for their sectionals next weekend.

For us girls, it's already been a week since the end of the season and a week out of the water isn't good for me, because I've already put on about five pounds. So, back in the water I'll be, starting this whole cycle over again. Like I've said, swimming isn't just a seasonal sport. I will soon begin training for next year.

Thanks to all of my special teammates: Megan Dougherty, Rishia Gragg, Nora Hubler, Abby Hunsucker, Samantha Mahin, Kelsie Mascari, Richelle McKinzie, Chelsey Moore, Erin Morton, Danielle Raine, Whitney Ronk, Jami Sears, Brittany Sighting, Abby Whitaker, Stephanie Widener and Brittany Vance for making this season happen.

See ya next year, girls! Oh, I almost forgot, until next season, we will just keep swimming.

Emily Hubler is a junior on the Whiteland Community High School swimming team. Her Winter Sports Diary entries appeared weekly in the Daily Journal.



Emily Hubler  
WINTER SPORTS DIARY

## SUNDAY'S COLLEGE BASKETBALL ROUNDUP

The Associated Press

### WOMEN

#### No. 10 Purdue 63

#### No. 11 Minnesota 31

WEST LAFAYETTE — Purdue got physical and Minnesota paid the price.

Aya Traore scored 22 points, and the No. 10 Boilermakers used a 23-0 run spanning halftime to beat the 11th-ranked Gophers and remain in first place in the Big Ten. It was Minnesota's worst conference loss in six years.

"In the second half, we were very, very aggressive," Purdue's Katie Gearlds said. "We had the lead (in the first half) but we weren't playing our best basketball."

"It's so hard to put into words," she said, trying to explain the turnaround after halftime. "We just dominated in the second half."

The Boilermakers (20-3, 11-1) led only 22-21 with less than 2 minutes left in the first half but scored the final three points of the period and the first 20 after the break, turning a close game into a rout. Minnesota's physical play — Purdue guard Cherelle George was decked on a hard screen at one point in the first half — made the Boilermakers play even harder, too, Gearlds said.

"We knew it was going to be rough. They're very strong, but our post players did a great job."

#### Indiana 60 Northwestern 46

BLOOMINGTON — Cyndi Valentin scored a game-high 22 points as Indiana beat Northwestern.

The Hoosiers led 31-26 at the break and opened the second half with a 10-3 run to take control the rest of the way.

Jenny DeMuth sank a 3-pointer with 4:41 left to play to give Indiana its biggest lead, 51-37.

DeMuth scored 14 and Angela Hawkins had 11 points and nine rebounds for Indiana (14-10, 8-5 Big Ten).

It was the home finale for seniors Valentin, Hawkins, DeMuth, Brigett Branson and Kail Kullberg.

Sophomore Melissa Miller led the Wildcats (6-18, 2-11) with nine points.

#### No. 17 DePaul 79 Notre Dame 50

CHICAGO — Allie Quigley had 26 points and seven rebounds to lead No. 17 DePaul to a victory against Notre Dame.

Khara Smith added 12 points and 19 rebounds for DePaul (20-5, 7-5 Big East).

DePaul held Notre Dame without a field goal for the first 6 minutes and led 13-3, but Notre Dame had a 14-1 run to take a 24-21 lead with 3:17 remaining. DePaul answered

with an 8-2 run to make it 29-26 at halftime.

Notre Dame (14-9, 5-7) got 15 points and six rebounds from Charel Allen. Megan Duffy had 12 points and Courtney LaVere added 10.

DePaul extended its lead with a 11-2 run midway through the second half to make it 40-31. A 15-0 run minutes later extended DePaul's lead to 21.

### MEN

#### Miami (Ohio) 67 Ball State 63, 20T

OXFORD, Ohio — William Hatcher hit a jumper with 27 seconds left in the second overtime to give Miami (Ohio) the lead for good in the RedHawks' win against Ball State.

Hatcher, who didn't make a shot during regulation, also had two of Miami's six free throws in the final period. He finished with nine points.

Miami (13-8, 10-3 Mid-American) got 12 points apiece from Nathan Peavy, Josh Hausfeld and Monty St. Clair, and withstood a 20-point, 10-rebound performance by Ball State's D'Andre Peyton. Seven of Peyton's rebounds were on the offensive end.

Skip Mills had 14 points for Ball State (8-13, 4-9) after going scoreless in the first half and scoring six points in the second half. He shot 5 of 22 overall. The Cardinals shot 34 percent for the game.

## • Defense • Pacers

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1)

Michael Strahan on the game's final play.

AFC teams have won five of the past six Super Bowls including Pittsburgh's 21-10 triumph against Seattle on Feb. 5, and the NFC had lost four of the past five Pro Bowls entering this one.

The game was tied 10-10 after an ugly first half. The AFC's Peyton Manning threw three interceptions, the NFC's Hasselbeck and Michael Vick one each, and there were several false starts and overthrows.

Almost as if on cue, a steady rain began falling at kickoff time, although it subsided early in the second quarter.

After all the questionable calls in the Super Bowl, another one popped early in this game.

Manning threw a 16-yard touchdown pass to Chris Chambers to cap a 45-yard AFC drive following John Lynch's 40-yard interception return. Chambers landed with one foot inbounds after a leaping catch, but field judge Scott Steenson ruled DeAngelo Hall pushed Chambers out.

It didn't appear the Miami receiver could have landed with both feet inbounds had he not been touched, and many in the crowd booed when the play was shown on the video screen.

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1)

weak. He's been playing with pain in his foot for a lot of games. We've got to step up and take some pressure off him. We did pretty well."

Stephen Jackson led the Pacers with 17 points, and Peja Stojakovic added 16.

Duncan had 10 points and 11 rebounds, despite being held to 4-for-15 shooting. Parker had 17 points and six assists and Bruce Bowen had 16 points and eight rebounds.

The Spurs improved to 6-0 on their eight-game road trip that ends Wednesday at Philadelphia. They also snapped the Pacers' four-game winning streak.

"That's a tough one, a tough one to lose," Indiana coach Rick Carlisle said. "It's too bad, the guys really fought hard. If we had gotten a couple more stops the last couple of minutes, it would have been a different story. It's a great team that did great things down the stretch to win the game."

The Spurs led 90-88 in the closing seconds and the Pacers had the ball with a chance to tie or go for the win, but Duncan forced Fred Jones to miss everything on a layup attempt with 5 seconds left. Duncan said he thought Jones was trying to draw a foul,



The Spurs' Tim Duncan, left, and the Pacers' Peja Stojakovic battle for a loose ball during their game Sunday in Indianapolis.

so he backed off intentionally and used his 6-foot-11 frame to disrupt the 6-2 Jones.

"I've just tried to do my part as best I can, and down at the end there, I was lucky enough to get that stop and rebound and seal the game," Duncan said.

Ginobili made two free throws at the other end to provide the final margin.

The Pacers took an 86-81 lead on a 3-pointer by Jackson with 1:35 left. The Pacers then were called for defensive three seconds, a technical foul. Ginobili made the free throw, then drained a 34-foot 3-pointer with the shot clock winding down on the ensuing possession to cut Indiana's lead to 86-85 with 1:12 left.

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