

GOLF



AP PHOTO

Sam Saunders, grandson of Arnold Palmer, tees off on the fourth hole in the first round of the Bay Hill Invitational in Orlando, Fla., on Thursday.

ORLANDO, Fla.

Bryant, Wilson leaders in Bay Hill Invitational

Bart Bryant already won Jack Nicklaus' tournament. Opening with a 6-under 66 on Thursday in the Bay Hill Invitational allowed him to think about adding Arnold Palmer's trophy to his collection.

Bryant surged to the top of a crowded leaderboard with a 3-iron into 12 feet for eagle on the 16th hole and a string of good iron shots for a share of the lead with Dean Wilson.

It was the first time Bryant broke par in the first round this year, a sign that he is finally feeling comfortable after having surgery on his right knee at the end of his stellar 2005 season.

Ernie Els played well on a sunny, balmy day at Bay Hill by conquering the par-5 sixth hole with a 3-wood over the water and a bending, 50-foot eagle putt on the sixth.

Els wound up with a 67 and had company. He was joined by former British Open champion Ben Curtis, former Bay Hill winner Chad Campbell, Lucas Glover and Jason Gore.

Despite struggling with his driving and approach shots, Tiger Woods was poised to join them until late in his round. He was at 4 under until back-to-back bogeys put him at 70.

FOOTBALL

PHILADELPHIA

Garcia will back up McNabb as Eagles' QB

The Philadelphia Eagles signed quarterback Jeff Garcia on Thursday.

The 36-year-old Garcia, a three-time Pro Bowl selection during his five seasons in San Francisco, played for Cleveland in 2004 before going to Detroit last year. He threw for 937 yards, three touchdowns and six interceptions in six games with the Lions.

He is expected to back up Donovan McNabb. Mike McMahon played poorly in seven starts after McNabb had season-ending surgery for a sports hernia last year. The Eagles went from NFC champions to a 6-10 season.

In other NFL news:

• Quarterback Joey Harrington seems on the way out of Detroit after the Lions agreed to terms with Josh McCown, a part-time starter with Arizona the past two seasons. McCown joins veteran Jon Kitna, second-year-man Dan Orlovsky and the recently signed Shaun King on the Lions' roster along with Harrington, who is due a \$4 million bonus if he is on the roster June 15.

• New England released 33-year-old cornerback Tyrone Poole, the latest veteran to leave the three-time Super Bowl champions.

Linebacker Willie McGinest signed Wednesday with Cleveland, and wide receiver David Givens joined Tennessee on Tuesday.

• Pittsburgh re-signed several veterans, including center Jeff Hartings and quarterback Charlie Batch.

• Baltimore released offensive tackle Orlando Brown, who missed three seasons after being hit in the eye by a referee's flag in 1999 while playing for Cleveland.

SKIING

ARE, Sweden

Miller finally takes first in final race of season

Bode Miller won a race, just a little later than expected.

Miller and Daron Rahlves led a 1-2 American finish in the World Cup super-G finale Thursday after both failed to medal at the Turin Olympics last month.

Miller covered the Olympia course in 1 minute, 27.78 seconds for his first super-G win of the season and second podium finish at the World Cup finals. He was second in Wednesday's downhill.

"I was as physically and mentally fit as I could be at the Olympics," Miller said. "Maybe I was over-amped in the sense I would get so fired up I would detonate."

Aksel Lund Svindal of Norway clinched the super-G title with a third-place showing.

Janica Kostelic of Croatia captured the women's World Cup title with a fourth-place finish in a super-G won by Nicole Hosp of Austria in 1:19.45.

Franklin grad's leap ties record

BY WALT VANDERBUSH

DAILY JOURNAL SPORTS CORRESPONDENT

Franklin Community High School graduate **Jessie Stringer**

tied the Ohio State women's high-jump record with a jump of 6 feet during the NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championships at Fayetteville, Ark. The Big Ten outdoor and indoor champion finished fifth and was named to the Indoor Track and Field All-American Team.



STRINGER

Franklin

• Manchester College left fielder **Melissa Bower** had two hits in five at-bats, including a double, and two RBIs in a 12-9 season-opening softball loss to Rose-Hulman. In Game 2 against the Engineers, a 9-1 Manchester win, she was 0 for 3 and scored a run.

• University of Indianapolis baseball player **Tom Bingham** has started all 10 games for the 6-4 Greyhounds and is batting .250 (8 for 32) with three RBIs and six runs scored. He has one double.

Center Grove

• The University of Southern Indiana softball team won eight games and lost two on its Florida trip to improve its record to 11-8. Catcher/first baseman **Angie Davis** had 16 hits in 34 at-bats and 10 RBIs in 10 games and raised her batting average to .362

COLLEGE UPDATE

(21 for 58). She has a total of 15 RBIs. **Jennifer Mullikin** was 4 for 21 in eight games and is now hitting .150 (6 for 40).

• Indiana State softball pitcher **Darcy Wood** struck out 26 batters and walked none in losses to Liberty (4-2) and Charlotte (1-0) during the Holiday Inn 49ers Classic at Charlotte, N.C. She yielded 11 hits and four earned runs in 15 innings, as her record fell to 4-4. In the first game of a doubleheader with Marshall, Wood struck out nine and walked none, allowing two hits and no runs in shutting out the Thundering Herd 2-0, improving her record to 5-4. The Sycamores dropped Game 2 and are 8-8 for the season.

• Freshman softball pitcher **Alyssa Grimm** gave up three hits and two runs in two innings in the Grizzlies' 5-0 loss to DePauw. The Grizzlies lost two games to the Tigers and are 0-2.

• **Leslie Smith** was named to the second NCCAA Division II All-American team. The 5-foot-10 Manhattan Christian College senior was seventh in the nation in 3-point shooting percentage (42 percent), 10th in steals (3.8) and 13th in field-goal percentage (46 percent). The Crusaders finished third in the national tournament.

• Toccoa Falls College senior **Kelly James** was given honorable mention in the NCCAA Division II All-American selections. She was 21st in the nation in free-throw percentage (74.47 percent) and

23rd in rebounds per game (9.1).

• University of Indianapolis freshman **Greg Jarvis** was named to the NCAA Division II All-American team as a result of being a member of the fifth-place 200-yard freestyle team in the NCAA championships.

• University of Indianapolis freshman swimmer **Casey Owens** participated in the NCAA Division II Women's Championships. Her best showing was a ninth-place finish as a member of the 400-yard freestyle relay team.

• After seeing action as a pinch-runner in three of Tri-State's first six baseball games, **Chris Osborne** was the leadoff batter and left fielder in a 6-5 loss to Geneva at Disney World in Florida. He was 1 for 4 and scored a run. Tri-State is 1-6.

• **Daren Johnson** had three hits in 12 at-bats as the University of Indianapolis baseball team (6-4) split four games with Southern Illinois-Edwardsville. He has started all 10 games and is batting .306 (11 for 36) with a double and four RBIs.

• **J.B. Paxson** had a home run and two RBIs in four at-bats in Walters State's 9-3 win against Rockingham.

• UNLV defeated the Ball State tennis team 6-1. **Joe Epkey** won 7-5, 6-0 at No. 2 singles and 8-6 at No. 1 doubles. **Tony Epkey** lost 6-0, 6-3 at No. 3 singles; and **Jarrod Epkey** lost 6-0, 6-2 at No. 4. Tony and Jarrod lost 8-6 at No. 2 doubles.

• The Evansville women's tennis team (6-5) defeated Western Carolina and Northern Kentucky

7-0 and lost 4-3 to Kennesaw State. **Stephanie Millis** won by default against Western Carolina and 6-1, 6-0 at No. 5 singles against Northern Kentucky. She lost 6-4, 6-0 against Kennesaw State. The freshman won at No. 2 doubles in both victories (9-8 and 8-4) and lost 8-1 against Kennesaw.

• The University of Indianapolis women's tennis team opened its season by defeating St. Leo 7-2 and Florida Southern 5-4. **Megan Farley** lost 8-5 at No. 3 doubles to St. Leo.

• The Evansville golf team finished fourth at the 10-team Fort Lauderdale Spring Classic. **Alex Kopko**, competing as an individual, was sixth for the Aces with scores of 79-76-155.

• Ball State gymnast **Natalie Hesler** finished 12th on the balance beam (8.125) in the Cardinals' loss to Western Michigan.

Whiteland

• **Megan Liffick** is one of six players named to the 10-team Missouri Valley Conference Women's Basketball First Team. The Aces defeated Wichita 77-73 in overtime in the conference tournament before falling 81-65 to Indiana State. Liffick had 25 points (6-11, 2-4, 11-14) with five rebounds and three steals in 37 minutes against the Shockers, and 13 points (3-13, 1-6, 6-8), two rebounds and a blocked shot in 37 minutes against the Sycamores.

• The Wabash Valley softball team, rated fifth in the country in the preseason junior college poll, won 11 games and lost three on its Florida trip. **Ashley Tharp**

was 12 for 34 (.352) on the trip with nine RBIs, seven runs scored, three doubles, one home run and one triple.

• The Ball State softball team (4-8) defeated San Diego 3-2. **Nicki Hellem** (1-2) pitched two innings, giving up three hits and two earned runs while striking out two and walking three. She was the losing pitcher in an 11-0 loss to DePaul, yielding eight hits and eight earned runs in two innings. She was 0 for 5 at the plate in starts at first base against Oregon State and Florida State.

• Freshman **Brittney Clow** was 0 for 1 as a pinch-hitter in Franklin College's 5-4 softball loss to DePauw. The Grizzlies are 0-2.

• The IUPUI softball team (1-11) lost 2-0 to Northern Iowa and 18-7 to Southeast Missouri. **Sarah Needy** was 0 for 5 with an RBI and a run scored in the two games.

Greenwood

• **Michelle Hammons** has started all 16 games for the 11-5 St. Joseph College softball team. She is batting .250 (11 for 44) with two RBIs.

• Freshman **Luke Andrews** is a member of the Huntington College track and field team. In the 1,000-meter race at the Ohio Northern Friday Night Series, he finished fourth of 12 runners in 2:46.79. At the DePauw Indoor Classic, he was 16th of 26 in the 3,000-meter run in 9:28.30.

Walt Vanderbush is a former principal at Franklin Community High School. Ideas for the weekly College Update should be sent to sports editor Rick Morwick at rmorwick@thejournalnet.com.

Pacers

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1)

Monday with a win against Orlando. But they went nowhere with Wednesday's loss, and another tonight against resurgent Sacramento (33-31) would be a definite backward step.

Avoiding another slow start against an opponent that has gone 16-7 since trading Stojakovic for Artest is critical.

"It's hard to play from behind," point guard Jamaal Tinsley said. "We have another tough game (tonight). We must play hard, play smart and play for 48 minutes."

If not, the Pacers face the specter of finishing the home-stand, which ends Sunday against Boston, at .500 or worse.

"Sacramento's playing great right now," Carlisle said. "Boston has a sub-.500 record, but in the last two weeks they're playing their best basketball of the season."

"So this is a very important time for us if we're going to be a team to make the playoffs."

For Stojakovic, tonight marks

the first time he's played against his former team since the Jan. 25 trade.

Indiana's leading scorer (17.9 ppg) and second-leading rebounder (5.2 rpg), Stojakovic played 8½ seasons for the Kings, who selected him in the first round of the 1998 draft.

"It's just another game, but it's going to be weird, though," Stojakovic said. "I'm just going to approach it like any other game."

Before the trade, Sacramento was 17-24 and fading fast from the Western Conference playoff race. It is now two games above .500 and seventh in the conference standings.

By comparison, the Pacers have gone 11-10 since the trade and have stayed in the playoff race despite multiple injuries.

The challenge now is to not lose ground and make the most of opportunities at home.

"We can't afford to show up and not play a great game for 48 minutes," Carlisle said. "Our undoing is the fact we're not playing 48 minutes at home."

"Playing from behind in this league on a consistent basis is a losing proposition."

Artest

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1)

game. The Kings have won 14 of their past 18 overall, with their opponents' scoring average and shooting percentages all dropping sharply.

Artest's development into a star was slowed by his 73-game suspension last season and his trade request last fall, but he's back on track.

He was remarkable in three recent home wins, guarding Pau Gasol, Dirk Nowitzki and Kobe Bryant with equal adeptness while hitting big baskets on the other end, something to evoke the best of times for the Pacers.

"Ron's playing great, which I knew he would," Indiana coach Rick Carlisle said. "We knew the kind of player he was and how he could help a franchise's fortunes."

After playing a supporting role in Indiana to Jermaine O'Neal and Reggie Miller, Artest has evolved into the clear floor leader for the Kings, who welcomed his hard-charging leadership.

Mike Bibby, Brad Miller, Bonzi Wells and Shareef Abdur-Rahim all are veteran players who seem more comfortable in supporting roles, and Artest has been burning for a chance to be the man.

"It's the first time in a long time that I've been complimented on my leadership skills," Artest said. "Partly it was my fault that I hadn't been complimented in the past. Maybe some

people just weren't recognizing."

Artest still speaks fondly of his days in Indiana, recalling how the fans supported him even through suspensions, ejections and his odd request for time off to work on his music label.

"I made myself into a franchise player there, but I kind of sneaked up on them," Artest said.

Most of his former teammates were stung by his demand to leave Indiana, resulting in his deactivation in December. His return in purple provoked guarded feelings among the Pacers who still consider him a friend but who will never look at Artest the same way.

"Everybody seems to think that I pushed him out the door," O'Neal said. "I didn't push him out the door. We mutually agreed that that was the best situation for both parties."

"When we talked, it came down to him understanding what he needs to do to achieve his goal to be the type of player he can be and get the recognition he deserves."

Artest knows he ruined a good thing in Indiana, voicing his regrets before and after the trade to teammates, including O'Neal and Miller, who was traded from Chicago to Indiana in the same deal in 2002.

Nobody is certain how he'll be received: Artest expects boos, Carlisle anticipates cheers, and Miller forecasts a mix.

"I'm looking forward to seeing him," Carlisle said. "He's one of my favorite players I've ever worked with. I'm not looking forward to seeing him in an opponent's uniform."

O'Neal working hard to return from groin injury

BY STEVE HERMAN

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDIANAPOLIS

Jermaine O'Neal's recovery appears ahead of schedule, although his injured groin is still painful, and there's no immediate timetable for his return to the Indiana Pacers.

O'Neal tore his left groin during a game at Cleveland on Jan. 24. He began full workouts this week and was the final player to leave the practice court Thursday after going one-on-one against assistant coach and former Pacers player Chuck Person.

He finished with sprint drills and appeared tired but otherwise in good shape.

"The severity of it was pretty bad, but I'm right on pace for where I need to be," O'Neal said. "Obviously, I haven't played in six weeks. ... It's been pretty tough trying to get back in shape. But as for the injury, I'm moving pretty well."

The Pacers have gone 11-10 since O'Neal's injury and 11-9 since they traded Ron Artest to Sacramento for Peja Stojakovic.

"I'm glad to see him on the court," Stojakovic said of O'Neal's return to practice. "Obviously, he's going to make a huge difference to our team. I just can't wait."

Coach Rick Carlisle said the heavy workouts for O'Neal were a good sign.

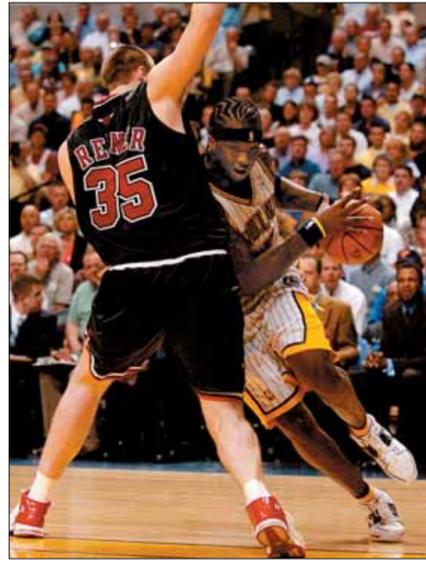
"He looked good," Carlisle said. "He's not conditioned to the point where he can go out there and play a full game yet, but he's working hard to get to the point where he can come back, and hopefully it's sooner rather than later."

He would not be more specific about O'Neal's return, although he said it would not be tonight against Artest and the Kings.

"I'm not going to throw a date out there, because I don't think that's fair," Carlisle said. "I just think it's important that he's out here. He's working as hard as he can to get back, and when the time is right, he'll know."

This week's practice marked the first time O'Neal had gone through two-a-day drills.

"That's really the best way for my injury to really be tested, to go out and just really bang hard and



FILE PHOTO

The Pacers' Jermaine O'Neal, right, has been participating in recent two-a-day workouts in an effort to return from a groin injury. He has been sidelined for six weeks.

run," he said. "There's still a little bit (of pain), but the injury itself is in good shape. So I'm not worried about tearing it or something, because it's already been completely torn away."

He also would not speculate when he might return, although he said he would like to come back before the playoffs.

"The playoffs are maybe six, seven weeks away. I'm a lot further ahead than I thought I was going to be at this point," O'Neal said. "I wanted to get back a little closer to 100 percent (before returning) ... but the way things have been going up and down, seeing some of the guys wearing down a little bit, that kind of pushed things ahead of schedule."



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