

BASEBALL

MINNEAPOLIS

Twins plan tribute to Puckett in Metrodome

The Minnesota Twins needed a big building for a tribute to Kirby Puckett. It was only natural they'd choose the Metrodome, where Puckett won the hearts of so many fans.



PUCKETT

The Twins announced plans to honor Puckett in a free public ceremony Sunday evening at the stadium, with testimonials from family, friends and current and former Twins, along with video highlights of his life and career. The family plans a private ceremony earlier that day.

Puckett, the Hall of Famer who led the Twins to two World Series titles, died Monday in Arizona, a day after suffering a stroke. He was 45.

The Twins played their first game following Puckett's death at their home spring training complex in Fort Myers, Fla., on Tuesday. Puckett's No. 34 was stenciled outside the first- and third-base lines, flags flew at half-staff and fans and players observed a moment of silence before a game against Cincinnati.

Puckett's 12-year baseball career, all with the Twins, was cut short in 1996 by glaucoma.

By MICHAEL MAROT
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDIANAPOLIS

The NCAA Tournament's field of 65 seems to finally be coming together. Sort of.

Four days before the brackets are set, selection committee chairman Craig Littlepage said about two dozen teams are well positioned to receive one of the 34 at-large bids.

That is a major change from two weeks ago, when Littlepage acknowledged there were fewer locks than in past years.

If true, that could help alleviate some of the complaints bound to come Sunday night when the field is announced.

"The last two and a half weeks have helped in many situations," said Littlepage, the athletic director at Virginia. "Right now, I would say I could come up with 23 or 24 teams that have done enough, and that's probably around the average the committee comes up with when we take our first vote (today). I feel pretty comfortable with the teams I would put down on paper."

But Littlepage has only one vote on the 10-member commit-



AP PHOTO

Hofstra coach Tom Pecora talks with guard Loren Stokes during the second half of Colonial Athletic Association Tournament championship game against North Carolina-Wilmington in Richmond, Va., on Monday. Hofstra is one of many mid-majors hoping for an at-large berth in the NCAA Tournament.

tee, meaning other opinions could still make this weekend more hurried than usual.

Among the new issues:

- The unusually high number of mid-major teams that have better RPI ratings than those in the traditional power conferences, even

better than perennial contenders such as Kansas and Kentucky.

- The unbalanced schedules in some conferences, particularly the 16-team Big East, where teams face nine opponents once, three teams twice and avoid three altogether.

Badgers want to win again at Hoosiers' expense

Staff and wire reports

INDIANAPOLIS

Beating Indiana a month ago got Wisconsin's season back on track.

The Badgers would like to see a repeat with Friday's matchup against the Hoosiers in the Big Ten Men's Basketball Tournament.

Wisconsin (19-10, 9-7 Big Ten) lost three of four to finish the Big Ten regular season on a down note. But the Badgers have a chance to shore up their résumé for the NCAA Tournament beginning with Friday's game against the Hoosiers (17-10, 9-7).

Wisconsin coach Bo Ryan said things aren't as bad as some may think. He pointed out that Wisconsin finished with back-to-back games at Michigan State and Iowa within a three-day span, no easy task for anyone in the Big Ten.

He also noted that the Badgers won four in a row to open the Big Ten season.

Had they finished with those four games, people would be talking about the Badgers' momentum heading into the post-season, he said.

"You've got to take the 16 games. Don't underreact. Don't overreact," Ryan said at his weekly news conference.

The Badgers had lost five of six before they hosted Indiana a month ago and turned in a dominating performance, winning 72-54. Still, Ryan said Wisconsin is likely to see a different team Friday in Indianapolis.

Their most recent meeting came as rumors swirled around the program about the status of coach Mike Davis, who announced not long afterward that he would step down at the end of the season. Since that announcement, the Hoosiers have won five of six, including four in a row.

Ryan said people have forgotten that the Hoosiers were expected in the pre-season to contend for the Big Ten title

and cracked the top 10 before a slide in which they lost seven of eight.

"They're talented. They've got players. It's a good team," Ryan said. "They can play. They're making shots. They're got one of the best big men in the country. What don't they have?"

The big man Ryan was referring to is Indiana's Marco Killingsworth, who is averaging team bests of 17.4 points and 7.8 rebounds a game.

Robert Vaden (13.6 points a game) and Marshall Strickland (12.4) also average in double figures for the Hoosiers.

Purdue doesn't have to wait until Friday to play in the conference tourney. The 11th-seeded Boilermakers (9-18, 3-13) will face fading Michigan State (20-10, 8-8) in a 5:05 p.m. game today.

Matt Kiefer, one of only two players to appear in at least 25 games for Purdue this season, leads the Boilermakers in scoring (11.8 points) and rebounding (7.5 per game).

IF YOU GO

What: Big Ten Men's Basketball Tournament

When: Today through Sunday

Where: Conseco Fieldhouse in Indianapolis

Schedule

Today

Noon — Northwestern vs. Penn State, ESPN2

2:30 p.m. — Michigan vs. Minnesota, ESPN2

5:05 p.m. — Michigan State vs. Purdue, ESPN2

Friday

Noon — Ohio State vs. Penn State/Northwestern winner, ESPN

2:30 p.m. — Wisconsin vs. Indiana, ESPN

6:40 p.m. — Iowa vs. Michigan/Minnesota winner, WTTV-Channel 4

9:10 p.m. — Illinois vs. Michigan State/Purdue winner, WTTV-Channel 4

Saturday

1:40, 4:05 p.m. — Semifinals, WISH-Channel 8

Sunday

3:30 p.m. — Championship, WISH-Channel 8

FOOTBALL

WASHINGTON

Navy QB reportedly taped admitting sexual assault

A midshipman who says she was raped by the Naval Academy's starting quarterback testified Wednesday that with her help academy investigators secretly taped an apparent admission of the assault.

The woman, who has not been publicly identified, said that she called Lamar Owens on the phone and an investigator listened as he told her he felt distraught about what he had done and considered killing himself.

"I didn't do it for that long; you weren't even awake," said the midshipman quoting Owens.

Owens, a 22-year-old senior from Savannah, Ga., was charged last month under the military code of justice, with raping the female midshipman in her dormitory room Jan. 29.

The reported victim testified at the beginning of Owens' Article 32 hearing at the Washington Navy Yard. Described by the academy as roughly equivalent to a civilian grand jury proceeding, the hearing will determine if there is sufficient evidence to go ahead with a court-martial. Navy officials said.

BASKETBALL

KANSAS CITY, Mo.

Kansas coach honored by Big 12 Conference

Bill Self was voted The Associated Press' Big 12 coach of the year on Wednesday, with the Jayhawks entering the conference tournament as co-champions for the second straight season.

Self was a runaway winner in balloting by a panel of media representatives who cover the league, getting 20 of 24 votes.

No. 17 Kansas (22-7) is all but assured an NCAA Tournament bid that only two months ago seemed out of reach. Kansas dropped two of its first three Big 12 games, with defeats to rivals Kansas State and Missouri.

• Banquet

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1)

first season as head coach, is speaking free of charge but requested donations for Jill's House.

Hoepfner, 58, played for four seasons under late Grizzlies coach Stewart "Red" Faught. He later served as an assistant under Faught before embarking on a highly successful, 19-year career at Miami (Ohio) University.

He spent his final six seasons at Miami as head coach. He guided the RedHawks to multiple bowl appearances, including the 2003 GMAC Bowl championship, and was the college coach of Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger.

He joined the Hoosiers shortly after coaching Miami in the 2004 Independence Bowl.

During Hoepfner's first year, IU enjoyed a resurgence in fan enthusiasm. Home attendance improved 39 percent, season ticket sales spiked 46 percent, and student season ticket sales skyrocketed 110 percent, according to the school's athletic department.

Indiana, which got off to a 4-1 start, finished 4-7 but showed dramatic improvement from previous seasons. The Hoosiers fea-

A WORTHY CAUSE

What is Jill's House?

Named for slain Indiana University student Jill Behrman, who was abducted while riding her bicycle on May 31, 2000, Jill's House is intended to provide a temporary, home-like residence for cancer patients undergoing outpatient therapy at the Midwest Proton Radiotherapy Institute in Bloomington.

Jill's House will be equipped with many of the comforts of home, including bedrooms, kitchens and laundry facilities at little or no cost to patients and their families.

The 19,754-square-foot facility is expected to cost \$5,035,800.

What is proton therapy?

Proton therapy is a type of radiation treatment similar to standard radiation

SOURCE: Jill's House Inc.

tured one of the nation's most explosive offenses and showed distinct signs of turning a competitive corner.

Renowned for his unbridled energy and can-do spirit, Hoepfner had a tumor surgically removed from his right temple on Dec. 27. He resumed his coaching responsibilities a short time later and is expected to make a full recovery.

Besides Hoepfner's appearance, the 2006 banquet will feature the introduction of a new addition to the Athlete of the Year awards.

treatments, such as gamma knife radiation, X-ray therapy, brachytherapy, radioactive seed and similar therapies.

But unlike similar therapies, proton therapy doesn't involve light waves. Protons are subatomic particles that behave like light waves when they travel at speeds close to the speed of light.

Because proton therapy can deliver high doses of radiation to a tumor without damaging healthy tissue, it is applied most often for tumors that are near critical tissues, such as optic nerves, functional centers of the brain, spinal cord and heart.

Proton therapy is not an experimental treatment, but centers are very expensive to build. The IU facility is one of only two operating clinics in the nation. Three more are under development.

Corporate sponsor Domino's Pizza, which defrays much of the banquet's operating costs, will award the top male and female winner with a \$750 "Domino's Dollars for Scholars" education gift.

The cash prize can be applied to college costs or used however winners choose.

Each school nominates a male and female athlete of the year and selects its own male and female sportsmanship winners.

Athlete of the year candidates and sportsmanship winners will be announced in May.

WEDNESDAY'S COLLEGE BASKETBALL

ROUNDUP

The Associated Press

MEN

No. 23 Georgetown 67 Notre Dame 63

NEW YORK — Brandon Bowman scored a season-high 25 points, and No. 23 Georgetown overcame a terrible start to beat Notre Dame in the first round of the Big East Tournament.

The fifth-seeded Hoyas (20-8), who missed their first 12 shots from the field, advanced to the quarterfinals and will face fourth-seeded Marquette (20-9) today.

Bowman, whose previous best this season was 23 points in the Hoyas' victory against then-No. 1 Duke on Jan. 21, scored six of Georgetown's final nine points. The 6-foot-8 senior forward's biggest play came when he drove and scored on a left-handed flip off the glass (he's right-handed) with 22 seconds left to give Georgetown a 66-63 lead.

Colin Falls hit six 3-pointers and had 21 points for the 12th-seeded Irish (15-13), who managed to qualify for the conference tournament despite getting off to a 1-8 start in league play.

Syracuse 74 Cincinnati 73

NEW YORK — Gerry McNamara drove the length of the court and hit a 3-pointer with a half-second left, leading Syracuse to a riveting win against

Cincinnati in the first round of the Big East Tournament.

With the Orange trailing 73-71 and just more than 6 seconds to go, McNamara dribbled through the Cincinnati defense and pulled up in between the NBA and college 3-point lines. He hoisted a one-handed shot while both feet were behind the college line.

Official Curtis Shaw immediately ruled the shot a 3, and the play was reviewed and upheld. McNamara, with a knack for hitting big shots during his four years at Syracuse, was then serenaded by chants of "Gerry! Gerry!" by the Madison Square Garden crowd.

Jihad Muhammad took a desperation shot from near half court that hit the front of the rim at the buzzer, sealing the win for Syracuse.

McNamara finished with 17 points on 6-of-17 shooting, including 5 of 8 from 3-point range.

WOMEN

No. 8 Oklahoma 78 Iowa State 74

DALLAS — Erin Higgins bailed out Oklahoma.

Higgins made a 3-pointer with 49 seconds remaining to help lift the No. 8 Sooners past pesky Iowa State and advance to the Big 12 Tournament semifinals.

Oklahoma's Courtney Paris dominated inside with a tournament-record and season-high 36 points, 16 rebounds and six blocked shots.

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