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# SPORTS

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## SECTION B

### ROAD TO DETROIT: DIVISIONAL PLAYOFFS

# HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?

## Colts' stunning collapse against Steelers ends season that once had designs on perfection



Colts kicker Mike Vanderjagt slams his helmet onto the ground after missing a game-tying field goal attempt during Sunday's divisional playoff game against the Steelers in Indianapolis. AP PHOTO



Jason Martin

### Indianapolis gave up long before Vanderjagt shanked field-goal attempt

**INDIANAPOLIS**

The Colts' superb season officially ended Sunday, Jan. 15. In reality, however, Indianapolis shut down on itself after winning in Jacksonville on Dec. 11. When the Colts wrapped up home-field advantage and their coaching staff decided to shirk playing for a perfect record, that choice sent a message that they would hit their virtual pause button and wait to pick up their sharp play again in the playoffs.

In the NFL, it doesn't work that way. Philadelphia may have gotten by last year using that tactic in a watered-down NFC, but the Eagles are the exception. The Colts found out the hard way in their 21-18 loss to Pittsburgh that you can't turn on momentum like a light switch. Think back to when Indianapolis was 13-0 and chasing the '72 Dolphins.

(SEE ATTEMPT, PAGE B4)



Jim Litke

### 'Everything was set the way we wanted it'

**INDIANAPOLIS**

Tony Dungy's expression never changed. He took his hands off his hips every so often and folded his arms across his chest. He wore out a path on the sideline between the 40-yard lines, bit his lip now and then and patiently lectured an official on several occasions. But from start to finish, for all those minutes the cause looked lost — and even those few at the end when it was nearly, incredibly, improbably rescued — Dungy never let his emotions leave that narrow corner of his soul to which he'd banished them.

He was no different, not in public, anyway, when this odyssey of a season was finally done. "We'll survive. Personally, there were a couple of big disappointments," the Colts coach said after yet another championship pursuit came up short, this time in a 21-18 loss to the Steelers. Then Dungy paused. "Obviously, though," he added a moment later, "this one doesn't rank anywhere near the last one."

(SEE WANTED, PAGE B4)

### SUNDAY'S CONFERENCE CHAMPIONSHIP GAMES



**AFC**  
Pittsburgh Steelers at Denver Broncos  
Time: 3 p.m. TV: WISH-Channel 8



**NFC**  
Carolina Panthers at Seattle Seahawks  
Time: 6:30 p.m. TV: WXIN-Channel 59



### INSIDE

Additional coverage of the Colts' divisional playoff loss Sunday to Pittsburgh; also a look at next week's conference championships.

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### JOHNSON COUNTY TOURNAMENT

# Sweet revenge: Trojans win title

## Center Grove rallies for championship-game win against Grizzly Cubs

By GREG DODDRIDGE  
DAILY JOURNAL SPORTS CORRESPONDENT

The Center Grove High School boys basketball team doesn't have to wait any longer to get a team picture on its locker room walls. And Trojans senior Todd Price is happy to see the championship drought end. "I can't remember the last time it's been done, county, sectional, whatever," he said. Center Grove hasn't won a championship since a sectional title in 1994.

But after winning the 2006 Johnson County Boys Basketball Tournament on Saturday by defeating Franklin 67-64, they are able to start a new tradition with second-year coach Cliff Hawkins. They can take a team picture and put it on one of the bare walls in their locker room, starting what Hawkins calls a wall of champions. "That's a high-order priority on Monday," Hawkins said. But first, his two captains, junior Tyler Kitchel and senior James Nussbaum, had to cut down the nets on

their home court. "We want to save the real net-cutting ceremony for March," Hawkins said. The Trojans have shown vast improvement from last year when they had seven wins all season. In just 10 games this year, Center Grove (7-3) has its seventh win. The county tournament, in its second year back after a 40-year hiatus, produced another thrilling championship game this year. Last year, Franklin

(SEE TROJANS, PAGE B2)



Center Grove's Mitch Deffner, right, goes for a steal against Franklin's Cody Long during Saturday's championship game of the Johnson County Boys Basketball Tournament. The Trojans rallied late in the fourth quarter and won the title game by a three-point margin, 67-64.

STAFF PHOTO BY SCOTT ROBERSON/ sroberson@thejournalnet.com