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SPORTS

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SECTION B



STAFF PHOTO BY SCOTT ROBERSON/roberson@thejournalnet.com

The Colts' Reggie Wayne, shown trying to make a catch during a Jan. 15 AFC playoff game against the Steelers, agreed to a six-year contract with Indianapolis on Wednesday.

Colts keep Wayne

Receiver agrees to six-year contract

By MICHAEL MAROT
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDIANAPOLIS
Reggie Wayne wanted to stay with a winner.

So Wednesday, Wayne skipped the chance to become an unrestricted free agent and agreed to a new six-year deal worth \$39 million with the Indianapolis Colts.

The move makes Wayne one of the NFL's highest-paid receivers and allows the Colts to use their franchise designation on another player if they choose.

The deal includes a \$13.5 million signing bonus.

"He's thrilled. He could not think more highly of the owner, Jimmy (Irsay), Bill (Polian) and coach Dungy is someone he respects more than anybody he's ever been with," said David Dunn, Wayne's agent. "And he has the maturity to understand the importance of winning."

Polian, the Colts' president, would not confirm the deal Wednesday.

But the Colts had no intention of letting Wayne get away.

(SEE WAYNE, PAGE B3)



Jeff Decker

FULL THROTTLE

NHRA's push for diversity deserves notice

"Well, I could be wrong, but I believe, uh, diversity is an old, old wooden ship used during the Civil War era."

Will Ferrell as clueless chauvinist Ron Burgundy in "Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy"

In case you missed it — and you probably did — a woman recently struck a blow for diversity in a major racing series.

Unfortunately for the National Hot Rod Association, a victory by Top Fuel driver Melanie Troxel



TROXEL

Troxel in the season-opening Carquest Auto Parts NHRA Winternationals didn't grab the attention of the media the way Danica Patrick does seemingly every time she breathes.

That Troxel's victory went nearly unnoticed by the mainstream media has to bother NHRA officials, who have made a point to tell the world of not only their recent efforts in the area of diversity but also a rich history of women and minorities succeeding in their series.

Part of the problem is just that: A woman doing well in the NHRA isn't anything new.

Troxel was the eighth woman

(SEE DIVERSITY, PAGE B5)

Hoosiers stop long skid

Strickland leads way as Indiana wins for first time in six games

By STEVE HERMAN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BLOOMINGTON

The basket looked bigger with every shot Marshall Strickland took.

The Indiana senior scored 22 points, including seven 3-pointers and a clinching free throw with 20 seconds to go, as the Hoosiers beat visiting Penn State 69-65 on Wednesday night.

The victory snapped a five-

game losing streak for Indiana.

"I was shooting with confidence. I felt good," said Strickland, who hit 7 of 11 from long range. "All the shots, even the ones I missed, I felt like they were going down. When I get like that, I just feel like it's flowing for me."

It was Indiana's second game, and first at home, since coach Mike Davis said last week that he would step down at the end of the season.

The Hoosiers (14-10, 6-7 Big

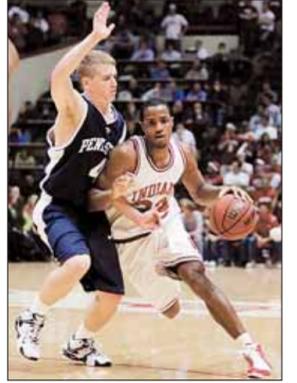
Ten), who had lost seven of their past eight games, overcame a 10-point deficit in the first half, built their lead to seven points early in the final period and held off a late rally by the Nittany Lions (13-12, 5-9).

"I figured I was going to keep going at them, keep being aggressive," Strickland said. "They beat us up underneath the basket ... and we were just trying to fight them. I think we won the battle tonight."

Indiana dominated the boards 38-26 but relied mainly on its 3-point shooting because of the Penn State zone defense, which made it difficult to get the ball inside. The Hoosiers made 15 of 33 from outside but only 6 of 18 from inside the arc.

A basket by Penn State's Janelle Cornley tied the game at 63-all before Strickland hit his career-high seventh 3-pointer

(SEE HOOSIERS, PAGE B2)



AP PHOTO
Indiana's Marshall Strickland, right, drives around Penn State's Mike Walker during the second half of Wednesday's Big Ten game in Bloomington. Indiana won 69-65.

PREP SPORTS



STAFF PHOTO BY SCOTT ROBERSON/roberson@thejournalnet.com

Franklin Community High School senior Josh Blackwell will participate in the state finals in Indianapolis on Saturday. Blackwell won Tuesday's diving regional at Bloomington North.

Diving into new waters

Franklin's Blackwell hopes to earn medal at state finals

By JOHN GROTH
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Josh Blackwell didn't expect to have such a successful high school diving career. It's easy to understand why.

The Franklin Community High School senior didn't take up the sport until his freshman season. Fortunately for the Grizzly Cubs, he was a quick learner.

Blackwell qualified for the IHSAA state finals that same year and has advanced to the state meet every year since, improving his placing each time.

He was 12th last season and is bidding to become Franklin's highest placing boys diver in team history.

Little wonder Blackwell sometimes marvels at his own success in a sport in which most top performers begin at a young age.

"I started so late," said Blackwell, who took tumbling and gymnastics classes during middle school and was influenced by his stepsister, Courtney Watson, a junior diver on the Cubs' girls team.

"I started my freshman year. A lot of people start younger," Blackwell said. "Usually, those are the ones that stick out as they go through their high school career."

(SEE DIVING, PAGE B3)

IF YOU GO

What: IHSAA Boys Swimming and Diving State Championships

Where: IU Natatorium at IUPUI, 901 W. New York St., Indianapolis

When: Preliminaries at 6 p.m. Friday; diving preliminaries and semifinals at 9 a.m. Saturday; consolations and finals in all events at 1 p.m. Saturday

Admission: \$8 per session; \$12 for both days

Local participants

Franklin: Josh Blackwell (diving); 200-yard medley relay (Steven Chambers, Paul Wilson, Brian Yount, Michael McElyea); 200-yard freestyle relay (McElyea, Jason Cheek, Wilson, Ben Shafer) and 400-yard freestyle relay (McElyea, Cheek, Wilson, Shafer)

Center Grove: Paul Brogan (100-yard breaststroke, 200-yard individual medley); Noah Pashley (500-yard freestyle); Paul Beauchamp (100-yard breaststroke); Nick Swift (diving); 200-yard medley (Pete Hewitt, Brogan, Beauchamp, Oleksiak) and 400-yard freestyle (Hewitt, Brogan, Oleksiak, Cody Adkins)

Greenwood: Sam Mynsberge (100 breaststroke, 200 individual medley) and 200-yard medley relay (Mynsberge, Kiel Hauser, Stephen Madsen, Eliot Jennings)

Whiteland: Justin Shaw (100 freestyle) and Billy Pennington (diving)

CG proves doubters wrong

Gymnasts thriving despite graduation of top performer

By JOHN GROTH
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Seniors Elaine Maurer, Angela Blankenship and Sara Schmidt have done something no Center Grove High School gymnasts have done.

They haven't lost a regular-season meet in their entire career.

But as impressive as that is, the upperclassmen still have another first on their minds: Winning what would be Center Grove's first team state championship.

"Every day, we go into the gym knowing that is what we want to do," Maurer said. "That's our goal."

Center Grove, tied for No. 3 in the state

coaches' poll with Lawrence Central, ended its regular season Tuesday night with a 110.95-105.5 victory at No. 9 Bloomington South.

With the win, the Trojans finished the regular season 11-0 and have won 50 straight regular-season meets dating back to 2002.

In the same time frame, the Trojans have won three straight sectional and regional championships and advanced to the state meet, where they've improved their finish each year.

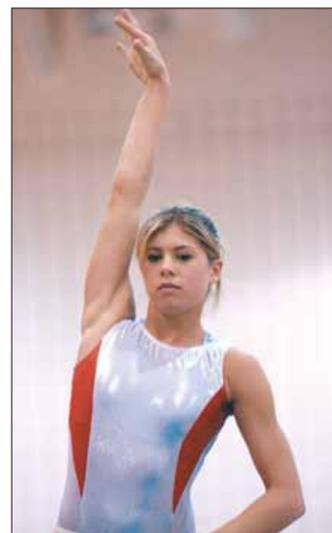
Center Grove was third last season. It was fourth in 2004 and fifth in 2003.

Despite the graduation of 2005 floor exercise state champion Natalie Hesler, the Trojans are not only still winning, they're still contenders for the team state title.

And they've achieved their success without a standout individual.

Hesler was a four-time all-state performer and the team's first state champion. She was

(SEE DOUBTERS, PAGE B3)



STAFF PHOTO BY MATT OOLEY/mooley@thejournalnet.com

IF YOU GO

What: IHSAA gymnastics sectional

When: March 4

Where: Columbus East High School

Admission: \$4

Participating schools: Bloomington North, Bloomington South, Center Grove, Columbus East, Columbus North, Jeffersonville, Martinsville, Seymour and Terre Haute North

Center Grove High School senior Elaine Maurer works on her balance-beam routine during the Trojans' practice at the school Wednesday.

Unselfishness helping Pacers

By RICK MORWICK
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Danny Granger isn't playing like a rookie, and Anthony Johnson isn't playing like a journeyman.

Thanks to the pair, the Indiana Pacers are playing at their highest level of the season.

The timing couldn't be better.

With 32 regular-season games left, the Pacers (27-23) have the fifth-best record in the Eastern Conference. They have won six of their past seven heading into tonight's game at Detroit and have a realistic chance of climbing up the seeding ladder instead of sliding down it.

They've accomplished it all by playing an unselfish brand of basketball that has paid dividends across the spectrum.

They're defending better. They're rebounding better. They're protecting the ball better. And they're getting better play from players whose roles weren't clearly defined before a wave of injuries pressed them into action.

Enter Granger and Johnson, who are making the most of what had been limited opportunities.

Widely regarded as the steal of the 2005 draft, Granger is starting to play like it. He had career highs of 22 points and 11

(SEE PACERS, PAGE B2)



AP PHOTO

Pacers rookie Danny Granger dunks during Tuesday's game against the Hornets in Indianapolis.

Walsh: Indiana not likely to make deal at deadline

By CLIFF BRUNT
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDIANAPOLIS

The Indiana Pacers say they don't need to make noise before today's trade deadline. They made enough by adding Peja Stojakovic last month.

The Pacers have won six of eight since sending Ron Artest to the Sacramento Kings for Stojakovic. The success has Pacers CEO Donnie Walsh saying he'll likely keep what he has and assess the roster at season's end.

"I think I know the team well enough that I

(SEE DEAL, PAGE B2)