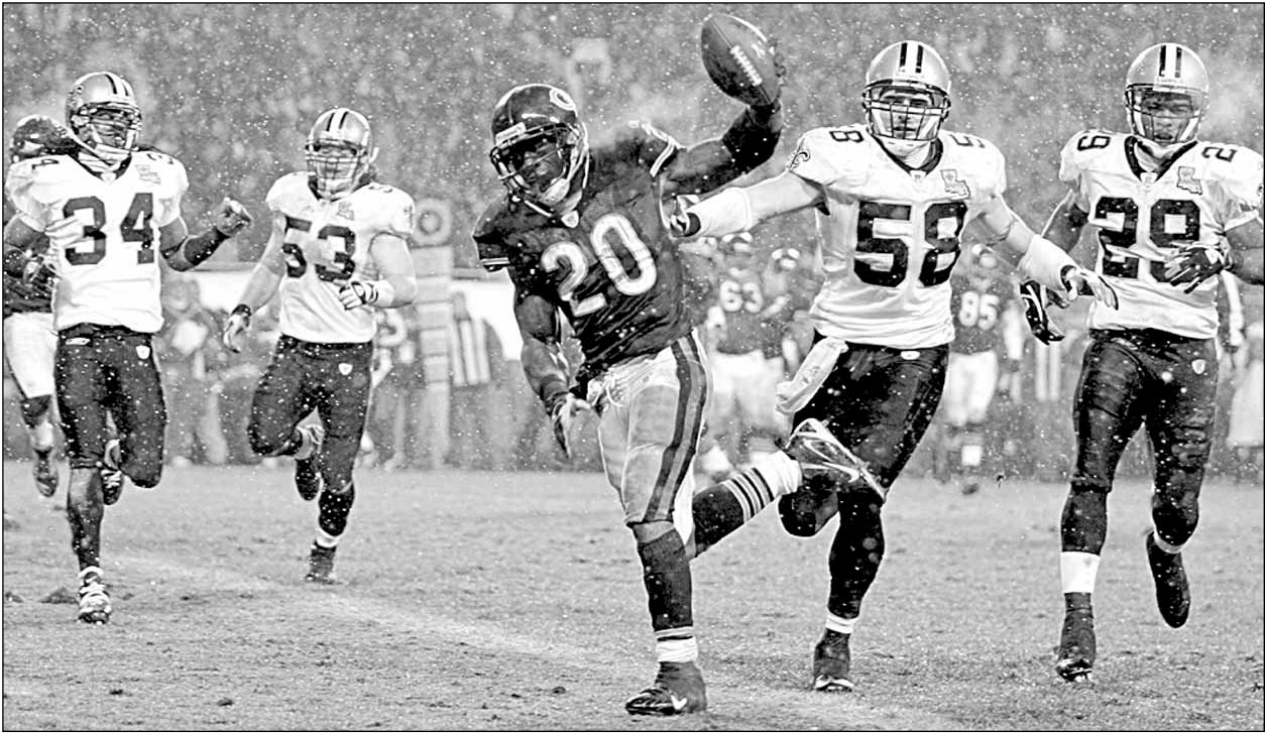


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Chicago marches on



Chicago Bears running back Thomas Jones, center, runs into the end zone for a 15-yard touchdown during the fourth quarter of the NFC Championship game against the New Orleans Saints on Sunday. The Bears won 39-14.

Bears barrel over Saints on way to Super Bowl

By BARRY WILNER THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Chicago. Rex Grossman and Da Bears are indeed good enough for this Super Bowl, and they've already made it a historic one.

Few teams with such an impressive record have been as questioned, even maligned, as the Bears. Yet after romping past the New Orleans Saints 39-14 on Sunday, they are headed to their first NFL title game since the 1985 team overwhelmed the league and shuffled in under Mike Ditka and Jim McMahon.

This time, Lovie Smith will lead them there, the first black head coach to make it to the title game in its 41 years.

Smith's team did it in true Bears fashion: big plays on defense and a steady running game in the sleet and snow, ending the Saints' uplifting saga.

The Bears (15-3) will play the Indianapolis Colts, in Miami in two weeks. The Colts victory put two black head coaches in the big game for the first time. Indianapolis coach Tony Dungy was Smith's mentor.

"We knew what the experts said," All-Pro linebacker Brian Urlacher said. "It didn't matter. This is a great team win for our franchise."

All the worries about how genuine the Bears' outstanding season was disappeared thanks to running back Thomas Jones. All-Pro kicker Robbie Gould and a defense that, while not dominant, made enough decisive plays.

For a moment, though, in the third quarter they seemed to be in trouble. Reggie Bush's electrifying 88-yard touchdown catch and dash to the end zone pulled the Saints within two points, 16-14.

But from then on, Urlacher and the Bears' defense took over. Chicago, which has won nine NFL

titles but has been an also-ran for much of the past two decades, later went 85 yards in five plays in the worst of the weather.

Often-criticized Grossman had four completions, including a 33-yarder to a diving Bernard Berrian that clinched it, sending the bundled-up fans in Soldier Field into foot-stomping hysteria and chants of "Super Bowl, Super Bowl."

"We had a great game today," said Grossman, who was 11 for 26 for 144 yards but made no mistakes. "This is great and all, but we have one game to go."

Jones had all 69 yards on an eight-play ground drive in the second quarter, scored twice and rushed for 123 yards. Gould nailed three field goals.

The Bears, who led the league with 44 takeaways, forced four turnovers, and when NFC passing leader Drew Brees fumbled less than a minute after Berrian's TD, whatever karma the Saints (11-7) carried this season disappeared.

Cedric Benson scored on a 12-yard run, and from there it was a matter of searching for the sun.

Smith and Bears owner Virginia McCaskey, daughter of Bears founder George Halas, accepted the Halas Trophy moments after Grossman tossed the ball deep into the stands after the final kneel-down.

"This is why we play the game, to get to the Super Bowl and win," Urlacher said. "This overshadows everything."

It was a bitter, sloppy conclusion to the Saints' remarkable turnaround from a nomadic 3-13 season in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina's destruction to this winning season.

As their city rebuilds, the team has provided an uplifting respite in the saga.

This was the first trip this far into the playoffs for the 40-year-old franchise, previously best known as the Aints, whose fans wore paper bags on

their heads because the team was so bad.

Down 16-0 and throttled for 28 minutes, the Saints awakened late in the first half on a 29-yard third-down completion to Marques Colston, who previously had several drops and several more slips. Brees threw a pair of sideline darts and Colston beat Charles Tillman for a 13-yard TD that temporarily changed the flow with 46 seconds remaining in the half.

It took New Orleans only 2:40 into the third quarter to make it 16-14 on Bush's spectacular 88-yard touchdown that ended with a couple of bush moves. The rookie beat Chris Harris off the line, ignored the sleet and extended for Brees' looping pass. Then he sped down the left sideline and, at midfield, used one of those Heisman jukes past Danieal Manning.

As Bush neared the end zone, he turned and pointed tauntingly at the hopelessly trailing Urlacher before somersaulting into the end zone.

That hot-dogging wasn't close to Brees' heave in the end zone. Under pressure but still in the pocket, he threw the ball away, causing a safety.

That erased any momentum for the Saints, and Chicago scored on Berrian's brilliant catch at the 2; he was not tackled down and stood up to cross the goal line.

A Chicago blitz stymied New Orleans' opening drive. After Devery Henderson outfought Tillman for a 40-yard pass to the Bears' 32, an all-out rush on third down led to a sack by Israel Idonije and a Saints punt into the end zone.

It set a first-half trend.

Another sack, by rookie Mark Anderson, Chicago's top pass rusher this season, was even more embarrassing to the Saints.

Brees lost the ball and a Keystone Kops chase for it wound up in a 25-yard loss when rookie guard Jahri Evans recovered.

Boys basketball

Saturday's results At Center Grove Brownsburg 47 BROWNSBURG — Grant Goedde 15, Gordon Hayward 10, Julian Mavunga 9, Michael Stainaker 8, Ben Miller 5, Austin Fish 0, Blake Hall 0. Totals: 19-25-47. CENTER GROVE — Andrew Bowman 12, Louis Kamo 11, Corey Gray 10, Tyler Kichel 8, Jason Kaylor 7, Danny Gill 2, Jared Hawkins 0, Justin Quinette 0, Kyle Beltz 0. Totals: 19-11-14 50. Brownsburg 9 12 14 14 — 47 Center Grove 8 14 12 16 — 50 Three-point shooting: Brownsburg (Stainaker 2, Hayward 2, Goedde 2, Miller), Center Grove (Kaylor). Records: Center Grove 11-1, Brownsburg 9-6.

At Edinburg Edinburg 64, Crothersville 58 CROTHERSVILLE — Chris Campbell 5 9-12 21, Josh Couch 1-3 15, Bobby Isenhower 4 0-0 8, Taylor Davis 4 0-0 6, Stephen Wilp 3 0-0 6. Totals: 22-10-15 58. EDINBURGH — Brandon Cravens 7 8-8 23, Seth Henderson 5 3-3 13, Jake Burton 2 0-0 4, Kevin McGaha 2 0-0 4, Matt Smith 2 1-2 5, Blake Roberts 0 1-2 1, Josh Burton 4 1-3 14. Totals: 22-14-84. Crothersville 14 10 18 16 — 58 Edinburg 15 12 14 23 — 64 Three-point shooting: Crothersville (Campbell 2, Couch 2), Edinburg (Cravens, Burton 4, Smith). Fouls: Crothersville 15 (Wilp fouled out), Edinburg 11 (Henderson fouled out). Records: Edinburg 3-9, Crothersville 5-8.

At New Palestine New Palestine 53, Whiteland 50 WHITELAND — Marcus Hanger 24, Reid Meador 10, Michael Kirkham 7, Billy Patrick 7, Smerdel 2, Mitch Meador 0, Couch 0, Darrin Mann 0. Totals: 20-5-11 50. NEW PALESTINE — Zach Litteral 25, Nate Fraley 13, Brian Meiser 6, Jason Carnes 3, Aaron Cavin 2, Spenser Maxwell 2, Will Chamstrom 2, Nick McColley 0, Kyle Bone 0. Totals: 17-11-17 53. Whiteland 15 3 19 14 — 53 New Palestine 16 6 19 12 — 50 Three-point shooting: Whiteland (Hanger 4, Patrick), New Palestine (Litteral 7, Meiser). Records: Whiteland 5-7, New Palestine 9-3.

Girls basketball

Saturday's results At Center Grove Ben Davis 54, Center Grove 40 BEN DAVIS — Alexa Bentley 6 7-8 19, DeAira Goss 4 5-13, Vivian Holcomb 3 3-3 9, Charlotte Robinson 4 0-0 8, Patricia Boyd 2 0-0 4, Demetra Nunley 0 1-2 1. Totals: 19-40-16-54. CENTER GROVE — Hillary Bowling 4 5-14, Brittney Shaner 4 1-7 8, Gina Phillips 1 2-2 4, Heidi Reisinger 2 0-0 4, Nicole Reid 2 0-1 4, Kierstan Glesmann 1 0-0 2, Alex Dewitz 2 0-0 2, Lydia Feldman 1 0-0 2, Jordan Price 0 0-0 0, Alex Hawkins 0 0-0 0. Totals: 15 9-12-40. Ben Davis 12 12 14 16 — 54 Center Grove 13 8 7 12 — 40 Three-point shooting: Center Grove (Bowling). Records: Center Grove 12-4, Ben Davis 14-3.

At Whiteland Whiteland 46, Franklin 46 WHITELAND — Amy Orendar 4 6 13-16 21, Rusti White 1 3-0 2-2, Sarah Condra 5 8 3-4 13, Brittany Wells 0 0-4 6-4, Jennifer Harman 1 1-2 2-4, Courtney Wilkerson 0 0 0-0 0, Brittany McFarland 0 0-0 0, Kelsey Reynolds 0 0-0 0, Cassie Ferguson 0 0-0 0, Bridget Buchanan 0 0-0 0, Brittney Wilson 8 13-22 19. Totals: 19-31-24-63. FRANKLIN — Kristin Chantry 1 2-2 4, Lindsay Vandivier 4 1-7 1-10, Morgan Burke 0 0-0 0, Cathy Shuck 0 3-5 3-5, Abby Shuck 0 0-0 0, Becca Williams 0 0-0 0, Nancy Miller 4 7-7 8 15, Sarah Walden 1 1-0 2-0, Carley Buchanan 3 7-1 2 8, Chelsea Bujarsky 8 2-4 5 4, Tiffany Ray 0 0-0 0, Shelby Wood 0 0-0 0, Sarah Wilson 0 0-0 0. Totals: 9-29-18-26 46. Whiteland 15 26 11 11 — 63 Franklin 7 12 16 11 — 46 Three-point shooting: Whiteland 1-3 (Condra 0-1, Wilson 2-1), Franklin 2-10 (Vandivier 1-8, Caitly Shuck 0-1, Buchanan 1-1). Rebounding: Whiteland 33 (Wilson 10), Franklin 19 (Miller 7). Fouls: Whiteland 22 (White fouled out), Franklin 23 (Bujarsky fouled out). Records: Whiteland 12-5, Franklin 6-11. Reserve score: Franklin 4-1, Whiteland 39.

At Southwestern (Shelby) Indian Creek 46, Southwestern 46 INDIAN CREEK — Sam Mathena 19, Kyle Hamilton 16, Courtney Von Stealy 5, Ashley Mathena 14, Megan Lines 11, Jessie Chinn 4, Randi Kennett 5, Alli Mitchell 4. Totals: 35-16-19 84. SOUTHWESTERN — Courtney Messer 16, Michelle Steinberg 12, Shelby McCarthy 6, Emily Burgett 4, Natalie Keegan 2, Lisa Griffey 2, Mandy Garon 1, Jessie Elsdor 1, Thomas 2. Totals: 20-4-16 46. Three-point shooting: Southwestern (Messer 2), Indian Creek (Hamilton 2). Fouls: Southwestern 19, Edinburg 15. Records: Indian Creek 10-7, Southwestern 7-9.

At Greenwood Christian Academy Greenwood Christian Academy 60, Indy Metro 40 INDY METRO — Smith 6, Lung 2, Brown 2, Cole 2, Mos 0, Gatie 0, Pucket 0. Totals: 5-15 12. GREENWOOD CHRISTIAN ACADEMY — Alyssa Havens 24, Brittany Gilson 14, Christi Williams 7, Stacie Wilson 11, Crystal Bentley 2, Kayla Bentley 2. Totals: 25 8-24-60. Three-point shooting: Indy Metro (Long), Greenwood Christian Academy (Havens 2). Record: Greenwood Christian Academy 6-6.

Wrestling

Saturday's results Metropolitan Interscholastic Conference Tournament At Warren Central Mount Vernon 35, Franklin 28 Franklin individual results 103: Dalton Chinn 0-1, Kyle Hart 2-1, 112: Sam Vaughn 2-1, 119: Clint Pike, eighth, 125: Matt Adams, third, 130: Blake Harvey, second, 135: Jerod Crump, sixth, 140: Ryan Christian, third, 145: Tony Zubia, second, 152: Jason Cambridge, third, 160: Shelby Mappes, second, 171: Tyler Kirk, eighth, 189: Drew Dorsey, fourth, 215: Sean Beard, seventh. Hvt: Quentin Leonard, seventh.

At Mooreville Greenwood 105, Mooreville 73 200 medley relay: 2:10.59 Greenwood (Terri Cooper, Brianna Webber, Deborah Wilson, Megan Webber). 2. Greenwood (Lauren Means, Ashley Woodcock, Beth Riddle, Logan Ross). 200 freestyle relay: 1:14.92 Peretz CG. 400 freestyle relay: 1:55.65 Center Grove (Parsethik, Kai Volz, Kim Kreuzman, Nicole Kreuzman). 2. Center Grove (O'Brian, Ryan, Reed, Maggie Pence). 100 backstroke: 1:06.00 Gasiorowski, 2. O'Brien CG. 3. Volz CG. 100 breaststroke: 1:14.92 Peretz CG. 400 freestyle relay: 3:50.20 Center Grove (Reed, Katie Loscar, David, White). 2. Center Grove (Perez, Kim Kreuzman, M. Watkins, Volz).

MAIN EVENTS

TV TODAY

NBA

Chicago Bulls at Indiana Pacers, 7 p.m., Fox Sports Men's college basketball Connecticut at Louisville, 7 p.m., ESPN Oklahoma at Oklahoma State, 9 p.m., ESPN Gonzaga at Portland, midnight, ESPN

Tennis

Australian Open, men's and women's quarterfinals, 9 p.m., ESPN2

SPECTATOR SPORTS

TODAY

Girls basketball Edinburg at Waldron, 7:30 p.m. International at Greenwood Christian Academy, 8 p.m. Gymnastics Plainfield at Center Grove, 6:30 p.m.

Call us with results

Results can be called in to the Daily Journal sports department from 6 to 10 weeknights and Sunday evenings at 736-2715. Results also can be faxed to 736-2766.

Franklin College

Saturday's results Men's basketball At Franklin Bluffton 76, Bluffton 93 BLUFFTON — Coll Cunningham 6-12 4-6 19, Aaron Taylor 6-9 0-0 12, Eric Schwieterman 3-6 4-5 10, Zack Kraus 4-7 0-0 6, Mike Anthony 3-4 2-2 8, P.J. Juenger 3-5 0-2 6, Tom Hill 2-2 0-0 4, David Patch 1-1 2-2 4, Nick Wilson 1-0 0-2, Josiah Stober 1-2 0-0 2, Nate Overmyer 0-4 1-2 1. Totals: 30-57 13-19 76. FRANKLIN — Jacob Redman 6-9 3-4 17, Luke Tudor 5-6 3-3 15, Jon Neill 3-5 7-7 15, Dustin Marshall 4-7 3-4 14, Marly Young 4-6 4-6 12, John Yochum 5-8 2-4 12, Jeff Gasser 0-2 4-4 4, Seth Lee 1-2 0-1 2, Derek Cleghorn 1-1 0-0 2, Joe Ramey 0-1 0-0 0, Paul Galbraith 0-1 0-0 0. Totals: 29-48 26-33 93. Halftime score: Franklin 43, Bluffton 32. Three-point shooting: Bluffton 3-9 (Coll Cunningham 3-4, Overmyer 0-3, Wilson 0-2), Franklin 9-16 (Gasser 0-1, Redman 2-4, Marshall 3-5, Tudor 2-3, Neill 2-2, Ramey 0-1). Rebounds: Bluffton 24 (Juenger 5), Franklin 29 (Yochum 8, Young 7). Assists: Bluffton 8 (Anthony 4), Franklin 15 (Redman 6). Fouls: Bluffton 24, Franklin 23. Technical foul: Bluffton 1. Records: Franklin 9-8, 5-4; Bluffton 13-5, 5-4 HCAC.

Women's basketball

At Bluffton Bluffton 78, Franklin 70 FRANKLIN — Jennifer Redicker 1-7 0-1 2, Kelly Snider 2-5 0-4, Katie Douglas 6-8 0-0 13, Brittany Beeher 2-9 1-2 5, Courtney Swain 8-16 0-0 18, Rachelle Durchoz 3-4 2-2 9, Jennifer Walters 0-4 0-0 0, Leslie Kingsed 4-11 3-6 11, Heather Harper 1-3 6-10 8. Totals: 27-67-121 70. BLUFFTON — Lindsey Ebbeskotte 5-12 0-0 10, Angie Lee 4-10 7-8 17, Lindsay Bush 9-13 6-7 25, Tanya Rickenberg 4-8 1-3 9, Amanda Bell 4-7 5-14, Sarah Bruner 0-0 0 0, Vicki Auer 1-2 0-0 3, Katie Lord 0-0 0-0 0. Totals: 27-52 19-24 78. Halftime score: Bluffton 39, Franklin 33. Three-point shooting: Franklin 4-16 (Redicker 0-1, Douglas 1-1, Beeher 0-1, Swain 2-8, Durchoz 1-1, Walters 0-2, Kingsed 0-2), Bluffton 5-13 (Ebbeskotte 0-2, Lee 2-4, Bush 1-1, Rickenberg 0-2, Bell 1-3, Auer 1-1). Rebounds: Franklin 34 (Redicker 13), Bluffton 40 (Bush 14). Assists: Franklin 14 (Beeher 5), Bluffton 17 (Rickenberg 5). Fouls: Franklin 20 (Snider fouled out), Bluffton 18 (Ebbeskotte fouled out). Records: Franklin 11-6, 5-5 HCAC; Bluffton 5-13, 3-6.

NFL playoff

Table with columns for Wild-card round, Divisional Playoffs, Conference Championships, Super Bowl, and NFL playoff results for various teams like Philadelphia, Washington, Miami, etc.

Girls swimming

Saturday's results At Lawrence Central Center Grove 122, Lawrence Central 64 200 medley relay: 1:52.09 Center Grove (Melody White, Lindsey Gasiorowski, Michelle McKeahan, Holly Reed). 2. Center Grove (Regina Perez, Brooke Parsethik, Sarah O'Brien, Michelle Watkins). 200 freestyle: 2:01.41 Morgan Davis CG. 3. Reed CG. 200 IM: 2:31.49 Kristen Conrad L.C. 2. Kim Kreuzman CG. 50 freestyle: 23.87 McKeahan CG. Diving: Lauren Gannett LC 184.40, 2. Anna Wimmener CG. 3. Marina Farmer CG. 100 butterfly: 1:06.68 Chandler Brown L.C. 2. Nicole Kreuzman C.G. 3. Watkins CG. 100 freestyle: 5:59.61 Emmett G. 2. White CG. 3. Perez CG. 500 freestyle: 6:14.49 Kendra Watkins L.C. 3. Reed CG. 4. Megan Ryan CG. 200 freestyle relay: 1:55.65 Center Grove (Parsethik, Kai Volz, Kim Kreuzman, Nicole Kreuzman). 2. Center Grove (O'Brian, Ryan, Reed, Maggie Pence). 100 backstroke: 1:06.00 Gasiorowski, 2. O'Brien CG. 3. Volz CG. 100 breaststroke: 1:14.92 Peretz CG. 400 freestyle relay: 3:50.20 Center Grove (Reed, Katie Loscar, David, White). 2. Center Grove (Perez, Kim Kreuzman, M. Watkins, Volz).

NBA

Table with columns for Eastern Conference, Atlantic Division, Western Conference, Southwest Division, and NBA results for various teams like New Jersey, Toronto, New York, Boston, etc.

Table with columns for Southeast Division, Central Division, Western Conference, Southwest Division, and NHL results for various teams like Philadelphia, Washington, Miami, etc.

NHL

Table with columns for Eastern Conference, Atlantic Division, and NHL results for various teams like New Jersey, N.Y. Rangers, Pittsburgh, etc.

Table with columns for Southeast Division, Central Division, Western Conference, and NHL results for various teams like Atlanta, Carolina, Tampa Bay, etc.

Transactions

Table with columns for Baseball, National League, Philadelphia Phillies, and transactions for various teams like Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, etc.

Table with columns for Saturday's games, Sunday's games, and transactions for various teams like Florida, Atlanta, New Jersey, etc.

SCHOOL NOMINATED SPORTSMANSHIP AWARD FRANKLIN Whitney DeWees Eric Lazell

Center for Orthopaedic Surgery and Sports Medicine. Appointments scheduled within 24-48 hours. Includes photos of staff and contact information: 317-888-PAIN, www.gotpain.org

SCHOOL NOMINATED ATHLETE AWARD FRANKLIN Sarah Dannemiller Brian Yount