

• Respect

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won eight of its past 10 games. Purdue (16-9, 5-6) has won three of its past four games, including victories against Illinois and Michigan State.

Painter said a win against the Hoosiers would play a critical role in helping Purdue accomplish its goals this season.

"I think it's a very important game for us because we're playing a quality opponent in conference to help us kind of bolster our résumé to try to get into the NCAA Tournament," he said.

Senior stars Carl Landry and David Teague have carried the Boilermakers and allowed their younger teammates to get comfortable. Landry averages 19 points per game, and Teague is averaging 16.1 points per game in conference play.

"As the season has gone on, they've gotten better and better," Sampson said. "Teague has really stepped his game up in the last month. Landry has played all year like a first-team all-conference guy."

Teague is averaging 20.2 points in Purdue's Big Ten wins.

"I think we've done a better job of getting him the basketball," Painter said. "He's done a better job of being efficient."

Teague has made more shots than he did against nonconference foes, Painter said.

"He's just evolved into a good player," Painter said.

The Boilermakers have given up an average of 57 points in its past five games.

Michigan State shot 36 percent and had its lowest scoring output in more than 50 years in Purdue's 62-38 win Wednesday. The Boilermakers held the Spartans to 12 points in the second half.

• Guilty

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testified that he also grabbed his gun and put it in his pocket when he heard "dump" being shouted. He did not fire any shots and was not charged.

Jackson said the man, identified by prosecutors as Willford's cousin, Quentin "Fingers" Willford, had one hand in a back pocket and another in his shirt. The fight started after Jackson and those with him realized Quentin Willford had no weapon.

"It was like an all-out brawl," Jackson said. "I started seeing more and more faces I didn't know."

He said he fired a couple of shots in the air to break up the fight, and then the car hit him.

Tinsley testified that he jumped into his car and briefly chased the Oldsmobile before returning to the parking lot.

Jackson left the courtroom late Monday morning to catch a flight to Denver, where the Warriors played the Nuggets on Monday night. He said he wasn't frustrated by the criminal case but was ready to move on.

"I leave everything in God's hands and continue to work on playing basketball," he said.

Deon Willford will be sentenced Feb. 28. He faces two to eight years in prison for the felony and up to a year for the misdemeanor.

Jackson was booked into jail Oct. 12 and has been free since on \$10,000 bond. The criminal recklessness charge carries a prison term of six months to three years.

Besides Tinsley and Jackson, Pacers guard/forward Marquis Daniels and former Pacer Jimmie Hunter were with Jackson at the club during the fight but have not been charged.

• Less

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hole collapse at the U.S. Open, whether the five mediocre performances that closed out that season and the three disappointments that began this one meant his confidence was permanently shot.



MICKELSON

The second that little pitch shot quit dancing and Mickelson ambled up behind it, they had their answer: Not only had he shed the psychic baggage, but he was anywhere from 15 to 25 pounds lighter.

"I was hoping to play like this the first couple of weeks," Mickelson said after tapping in for a 66

and tying the record of 20-under Mark O'Meara set 10 years ago.

"I'm glad that I finally did." Near the end of that interview, CBS reporter Peter Kostis offered Mickelson a chance to fire back at his critics.

"I don't really think much about that," he replied.

Nor should he. All this talk about Mickelson being through was overdone.

As Associated Press golf writer Doug Ferguson noted recently, Mickelson is not Len Mattiace, Jean Van de Velde or Mike Reid — guys who know they've blown their only shot at a major and will never recover.

For all the winning he's done, Mickelson's career has been marked at least as much by disappointment. He was 0 for 42 in the big ones before he finally broke through at the 2004 Masters. And the two majors he won since, plus the one he threw away at Winged Foot in June, all came during the

Tiger era, which means they're worth almost twice as much.

It didn't hurt Mickelson's chances that Woods had skipped Pebble Beach, though it likely wouldn't have mattered this weekend. When Mickelson is on his game, he's a match for anyone, Tiger included. What he accomplished Sunday was just a reminder of that.

All the great ones have thrown majors away, though none quite as spectacularly as Mickelson.

Woods is still probably kicking himself over the chunked chip and three-putt that produced back-to-back bogeys at Pinehurst and cost him the U.S. Open in 2005.

In a wide-ranging interview in this month's Golf Digest, Jack Nicklaus made it clear that he's still stewing about a few loose shots that lost him a British Open at Royal Lytham 34 years ago.

There are similar stories about Tom Watson, Arnold Palmer, Gary Player and Lee Trevino.

"The demands on talent increase under pressure," Nicklaus said in the same interview, "and some players don't possess the talent to get them through the hard part."

That was never Mickelson's problem. He had all the shots almost from the start of his career, just not the temperament to always string them together in the right sequence. Not that he hasn't tried to improve.

His most recent changes, though, might turn out to be the most productive. Mickelson says he's been working out in earnest, swapping flab for muscle through cardio training and martial arts.

As sacrifices go, it suggests that Mickelson not only plans to be around coming down the stretch but that he understands there's plenty of heavy lifting left to do.

Jim Litke is a national sports columnist for The Associated Press. Send comments to jlitke@ap.org.

• Racers

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If NASCAR is serious about ending cheating, suspending the driver, the team's most high-profile member, just might do it.

Outrageous? Maybe. But suspending a driver for a crew's cheating would force the sport's biggest stars to keep a closer eye on those who put their racecars together.

It's one thing to suspend a crew chief. It's quite another to send home a star who keeps fans in the stands and glued to the TV.

NASCAR argues suspending drivers would punish fans. But if fans got mad about a driver's suspension, it would create more pressure on teams not to cheat. Because today's NASCAR has

progressed so far from the days when a driver built his own car and changed his own engine, officials say the crew chief, not the driver, should pay the price when things aren't right.

"We have someone who we know is in control of the mechanical part of the racecar, and that's the crew chief," competition director Robin Pemberton said. "For now, we are content going down the avenue of holding that person responsible."

In more cases than not, it's plausible the driver doesn't have a clue what his crew is doing. Maybe that's the problem.

Another problem: Where's the line between flagrant cheating, working the margins of the rule book and a simple mistake?

NASCAR isn't even sure the three teams questioned Sunday were cheating.

Waltrip, a two-time Daytona 500

winner, had a suspicious substance in the intake manifold of his new Toyota Camry that NASCAR officials didn't recognize. So they seized the part and shipped it back to North Carolina, where a team of inspectors spent Monday examining it.

Waltrip's car also was impounded, and NASCAR hasn't decided when, or even if, it will give the Camry back. Once officials figure out what the substance was, NASCAR will have a hard time figuring out why the substance was there and whether it was put there on purpose.

Same goes for Kahne and Kenseth, who had holes in their cars' wheel wells. Was it cheating or a careless mistake?

Ray Evernham, who owns Kahne's car, said Monday the holes were a minor infraction that doesn't qualify as cheating. "NASCAR saw the holes in

inspection and told my guys to tape them up. They were taped, but the tape came off," Evernham said. "I don't know why they made such a big deal about it. It was not an aerodynamic device or something that was built to fool them."

Still, Evernham expects crew chief Kenny Francis to get hit with a suspension.

Pemberton said NASCAR still was discussing Monday how to properly punish cheaters this season but indicated the penalties would be tough. After Knaus and Slugger Labbe, then Dale Jarrett's crew chief, were suspended early last season, Pemberton said teams were on their best behavior.

Now it's time to get the garage back in order again. Sending drivers home certainly would do it.

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• Choice

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interested," McGarvey said. "Saying something like that to a college is actually kind of hard because you feel bad, but it's something you have to do."

Recruiting for kickers sometimes differs from that experienced by other players.

Some smaller Division I schools prefer to have kickers and punters attempt to walk on the team, therefore saving the university scholarship money.

Earlier in the recruiting process, Ohio University expressed an interest in McGarvey, who visited the campus and watched a home football game.

Coaches at the school were noncommittal as to whether they were going to offer a scholarship to a kicker.

McGarvey said he wasn't kept fully informed during the process.

"They actually didn't tell me anything," he said. "They just completely stopped talking to me. I was fine with it because I

was already happy with my decision to go to Ball State."

McGarvey later received an e-mail from Ohio's recruiting coordinator informing him that the school was not going to offer a scholarship to any kicker but asked if he'd be interested in walking on.

He wasn't. During official visits, current college players show recruits around the campus and give them a feel for what the next four years of their life might be like.

At Ball State, McGarvey was shown around campus by junior linebacker Alex Moore of Cincinnati.

"He was a real nice guy and was actually roommates with the kicker that just graduated, so they thought what better person to show me around than one who already knows how to handle kickers," McGarvey said.

McGarvey and his parents met with academic advisers before the recruits were ushered into the football locker room.

There, waiting in locker No. 99, McGarvey's jersey number at Center Grove, a jersey and helmet were already laid out.

"That was pretty cool to see that," he said.

Division III recruits

A number of other Johnson County football players will compete in college without signing letters of intent.

Players who are going to NCAA Division III schools, where athletes do not receive scholarships, do not sign letters of intent.

Many smaller schools keep tabs on a number of athletes but wait until after Signing Day to see who remains unattached.

Indian Creek coach Mike Gillin expects four or five of his players to continue playing football at the Division III level.

With no binding letters of intent, Gillin said there is no rush for players to try and find a school. He only warns that they make sure they find the right fit.

"It can go into the summer," Gillin said. "I tell them to go visit three or four places. Especially if it's a small school, find a school that fits your needs academically as well as football-wise."

"Make sure it's the place you're going to be happy. That's the most important part."

• Slide

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1)

of tumbling from basketball blue-blood to bubble team, or worse, NIT participant.

"You have to concentrate on the job at hand, because if you don't take care of the job at hand, or don't attempt to do as well as you possibly can, then the big picture will always be not as good," Krzyzewski said Monday. "When you're coming off of losses, at times that becomes more difficult."

The losses are piling up at an historic rate for the Blue Devils (18-7, 5-6 Atlantic Coast Conference), who expected a mild downturn this year after the graduation of J.J. Redick and Shelden Williams, the top two scorers on a team that spent much of last season ranked No. 1.

But even though Duke has lost one upperclassman on scholarship and its eight-man rotation features four freshmen and three sophomores, not many experts expected this.

The Blue Devils on Sunday absorbed their most lopsided ACC defeat since 2003 when Maryland won 72-60, extending their longest slide since they lost four straight in January 1996.

The first two losses of that year's streak knocked Duke from the AP top 25. The Blue Devils resurfaced at No. 10 in the preseason poll of 1996-97 and remained ranked for 200 straight weeks, the second-longest streak of all time.

They're eight points behind No. 25 Alabama in the latest rankings.

A loss at Boston College on Wednesday would give the Blue Devils their first five-game losing streak since dropping six in a row during a miserable 1994-95 season.

"I don't know if there's any good time to catch Duke," Eagles coach Al Skinner said. "No one would have ever predicted that that was going to happen."

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