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# SPORTS

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SECTION B

NASCAR: DAYTONA 500 AFTERMATH

## Keeping the faith

### Car owner talked Harvick into thinking he could win

By MIKE HARRIS  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla.

During the weeks leading up to the Daytona 500, Richard Childress kept telling his race team he had a feeling they were going to win NASCAR's biggest event.

"We had a luncheon for our 400 employees about four weeks ago, and I told them I just had a gut feeling we were going to win it," Childress said Monday.

On Friday, when Kevin Harvick was downcast after a difficult practice session, telling Childress he thought he had a 10th- or 15th-place car, Childress replied: "You can win it."

It was an infectious thought that Harvick took to heart.

After struggling through much of Sunday's race, Harvick found himself in seventh when a crash brought out a red flag on Lap 196 of what was scheduled to be a 200-lap event. As Harvick sat in his No. 29 Chevy-

let, he told his team over the radio, "I'm gonna win this thing."

The race went to a two-lap overtime sprint, and Harvick was still sixth, locked in a huge, scary pack of cars, after the first heart-thumping lap around the 2.5-mile oval.

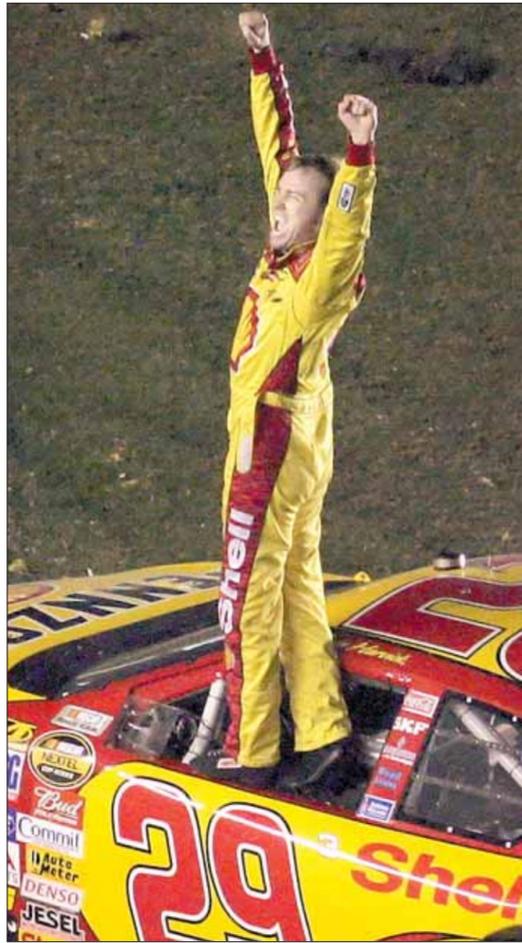
But, with drafting help from Matt Kenseth and RCR teammate Jeff Burton, Harvick somehow wound up winning, beating Mark Martin by the length of a hood as cars crashed and banged behind them.

It was more than a win for Harvick and Childress, though. It was more validation of their decision midway through last season to remain together.

The 31-year-old Harvick, who stepped into the Nextel Cup ride a year early because of the death of seven-time champion and fan favorite Dale Earnhardt in the 2001 Daytona 500, came to a crossroads in 2006.

He was working on the final year of his original contract with Childress and trying to decide, in the

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Above: Kevin Harvick celebrates his win in the Daytona 500 on Sunday. Below: The car of Clint Bowyer slides on its roof as the cars of Robby Gordon, No. 7, and Boris Said approach on the final lap Sunday.

### THE HARVICK FILE

**Name:** Kevin Harvick  
**Age:** 31  
**Occupation:** NASCAR Nextel Cup driver  
**Hometown:** Bakersfield, Calif.  
**Car:** No. 29 Shell/Pennzoil Chevrolet Monte Carlo  
**Team:** Richard Childress Racing  
**Crew chief:** Todd Berrier  
**Accomplishments:** Won the 2001

NASCAR Busch Series title. That same season, he replaced Dale Earnhardt after Earnhardt's death in the Daytona 500. Harvick earned his first Cup win in his third start and went on to win Rookie of the Year honors. He won the Busch Series title again in 2006 and finished fourth in the Nextel Cup standings. He earned his first Daytona 500 victory Sunday.

## Late-race call is just latest proof NASCAR needs a rule book

By JENNA FRYER  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla.

It was a split-second decision that NASCAR could get neither right nor wrong.

As the cars tumbled across the track in the Daytona 500's closing moments, series officials had to make a tough choice.

They could throw a caution flag immediately, giving Mark Martin a sentimental victory while denying Kevin Harvick a chance to race to the finish. Or they could let them race on, even as a seven-car

### COLUMN

demolition derby exploded behind them, in a frenzied final stretch that will be remembered as one of the best in NASCAR history.

NASCAR went for the drama.

When the cars crossed the finish line, the cheating scandal that ensnared five teams and tainted preparations for the Great American Race was forgotten, at least for a while.

By allowing Harvick and Martin to race to the checkered

flag, giving Harvick his first Daytona 500 victory and dropping Martin to 0 for 23, NASCAR created a whole new controversy.

"We get criticized for everything we do, and this is no exception," competition director Robin Pemberton said Monday. "If we throw the flag too early, people are mad that we kept Harvick from winning. If we throw it too late, people are mad that Mark Martin didn't win."

"It's hard. It's always hard. All we can do is make the best decisions that we can in that moment." But in that moment NASCAR

slightly changed its own rules.

In the old days, drivers raced to the flag when the caution came out. That practice was stopped in 2003, when NASCAR determined it was too dangerous to allow speeding cars to zip past an accident scene.

Now, the field is frozen, and all cars must slow down when a caution comes out. Multi-car mayhem generally warrants a caution. But as Kyle Busch, Matt Kenseth and Jeff Gordon bumped and banged across track just

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## Big Ten teams rise to top of poll, prepare to face off

The Associated Press

NEW YORK

Get ready for another 1 vs. 2 showdown in the Big Ten, this time on the hardwood.

Wisconsin was the new No. 1 in The Associated Press top 25 poll Monday, and Big Ten rival Ohio State was not far behind at No. 2.

The Badgers (26-2, 12-1), on top of the poll for the first time in school history, play the Buckeyes (24-3, 12-1) in Columbus, Ohio, on Sunday, about three months after Ohio State and Michigan played a much-hyped 1 vs. 2 football game at Ohio Stadium.

Florida's 83-70 loss at Vanderbilt on Saturday snapped the Gators' 17-game winning streak and dropped them from the top spot in the media poll for the second time this season.

Wisconsin, which was No. 3 last week, leaptfrogged second-ranked Ohio State to become the fourth



AP PHOTO

Penn State's Ben Luber, right, tries to steal the ball from Wisconsin's Brian Butch during the first half of Saturday's Big Ten game in Madison, Wis.

No. 1 team this season, and 52nd different school to hold the top spot in the history of the AP poll.

For the Badgers and coach Bo Ryan, there's not much time to celebrate their new lofty status, not with a Big Ten game at Michigan State tonight.

So Ryan conducted his own 60-second celebration at home, with a

big foam "We're No. 1" finger he took from his kids, a party favor and a handful of paper torn into confetti.

"I ran around with the foam finger, blowing the horn and throwing the confetti for about a minute," Ryan said with a laugh. "Then I went back into my office and watched the DVD of a very good Iowa team losing by 30 to Michigan State."

The Badgers received 35 first-place votes and 1,747 points. Ohio State got 31 first-place votes and 1,728 points. No. 3 Florida received four first-place votes and No. 4 UCLA got two.

"I'm really happy for the players and the university," Ryan said. "It says something about the work that's been put in, not just this year but over the years. That's the reward. It does make a great statement for the program."

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### AP MEN'S TOP 25

The top 25 teams in The Associated Press' men's college basketball poll:

	Record	Pts.	Pvs.
1. Wisconsin (35)	26-2	1,747	3
2. Ohio St. (31)	24-3	1,728	2
3. Florida (4)	24-3	1,647	1
4. UCLA (2)	23-3	1,611	5
5. North Carolina	23-4	1,474	4
6. Kansas	23-4	1,403	9
7. Memphis	23-3	1,378	8
8. Texas A&M	22-4	1,283	6
9. Washington St.	22-4	1,172	10
10. Pittsburgh	23-4	1,161	7
11. Nevada	24-2	1,146	11
12. Georgetown	20-5	1,009	14
13. S. Illinois	23-5	962	16
14. Air Force	23-4	831	17
15. Butler	24-4	695	13
16. Marquette	21-7	510	12
17. Vanderbilt	18-8	413	—
18. Duke	20-7	410	—
19. Texas	19-7	332	—
20. Louisville	19-8	286	—
21. BYU	20-6	264	—
22. West Virginia	20-6	240	23
23. Oregon	20-7	218	15
24. Virginia	18-7	185	—
25. Alabama	19-7	177	25

Note: Notre Dame (39 points) and Indiana (21) were among the teams receiving votes.

## Fans at Braves' game can reenact big shots

Daily Journal staff report

Fans who attend the Indian Creek boys basketball team's game at Brown County High School on Wednesday will have the chance to relive some of the great moments in state high school basketball history.

The IHSAA and Indiana Union Construction Industry will bring their "Big Shot" promotion to Indian Creek's game against host Brown County on Wednesday.

The JV game will tip off at 6 p.m., with the varsity contest to follow.

Three contestants selected from a random drawing at the game will have the opportunity to sink four shots, with prizes for each made shot.

The shots are:

- "The Perfect Ending," a free throw to commemorate Damon Bailey's 11 points in the final two minutes to lead Bedford-North Lawrence to the state title in 1990. Participants making the

shot will receive a \$20 gift certificate from Hat World/Lids.

- "The Shot" commemorates Bobby Plump's dramatic late-game shot to lift underdog Milan to the 1954 state championship. Participants making the shot from the top of the key will receive a Wilson basketball.

- "The Thriller" recalls Scott Skiles' 22-foot buzzer-beater to give Plymouth the 1982 state title. "Big Shot" participants who make the shot will receive two tickets to the IHSAA boys basketball state finals.

- "The Half-Court Hero" emulates Luke Zeller's half-court "Hail Mary" that led Washington to the Class 3A crown in 2005. Any participant who hits the shot will receive a \$500 getaway weekend in Indianapolis, including a one-night stay at the Indianapolis Marriott Downtown, a \$100 gift certificate to McCormick & Schmick's Seafood Restaurant, four tickets to the IMAX Theatre and a \$100 shopping gift card.

## Combine a time to evaluate

### Colts prefer getting to know prospective picks

By MATTHEW GLENESK  
DAILY JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER  
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INDIANAPOLIS

Tony Dungy admits he's two weeks behind schedule when it comes to evaluating prospects for April's NFL Draft.

But the Indianapolis Colts coach has a good excuse.

Fresh off their Super Bowl win, Colts personnel and scouts have had little time to savor the championship victory with the NFL's Scouting Combine set to begin Thursday.

The combine, conducted each year at RCA Dome in Indianapolis, is a weeklong scouting showcase for college prospects. Players undergo physical and mental tests in front of NFL coaches, general managers and scouts.

A year ago, more than 300 prospects from 107 universities took part. The list of invitees is compiled by a selection committee of members of national scouting services.

During the equivalent of an audition, players are kept busy completing a number of tests and workouts for teams, including the 40-yard dash, bench press, vertical jump, position-specific drills, interviews, physical measurements, injury evaluation, drug screening and a standardized intelligence-problem solving test, among others.

Colts president and general manager Bill Polian said the combine is an important tool when evaluating potential draft picks, but he said he can remember only one occasion (Don Bebee in 1989) in which a player came to the combine and totally changed his perception of the player.

### WORKING OUT

**What:** NFL Scouting Combine  
**When:** Thursday through Feb. 28  
**Where:** RCA Dome in Indianapolis  
**Who:** More than 300 NFL hopefuls  
**Format:** On-field drills, medical tests, exams and interviews with NFL personnel and the media  
**Admission:** Not open to the public  
**TV coverage:** NFL Network  
**A look ahead:** Teams are preparing for the NFL Draft on April 28 and 29

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## Dungy still coach as Indy starts gearing up for draft

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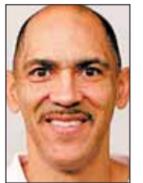
INDIANAPOLIS

While there was no official announcement proclaiming Indianapolis Colts head coach Tony Dungy would be returning for the 2007-08 season, Monday's news conference previewing this week's NFL Scouting Combine served the purpose.

As Dungy and team president and general manager Bill Polian gear up for the search for players who will help them repeat as champions, Dungy said the decision to return didn't take long and wasn't difficult.

"Certainly there was a lot of emotion. You never really know until it's all over. I try to sit back at the end of the year and look at everything and look at where we're going for the future," he said. "And obviously you want to come back; you want to defend the title. We have such a great group of guys. That's eventually what draws you back every year."

Polian said Dungy told him he'd be returning a few



DUNGY

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