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SPORTS

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SECTION B

ROAD TO THE SUPER BOWL

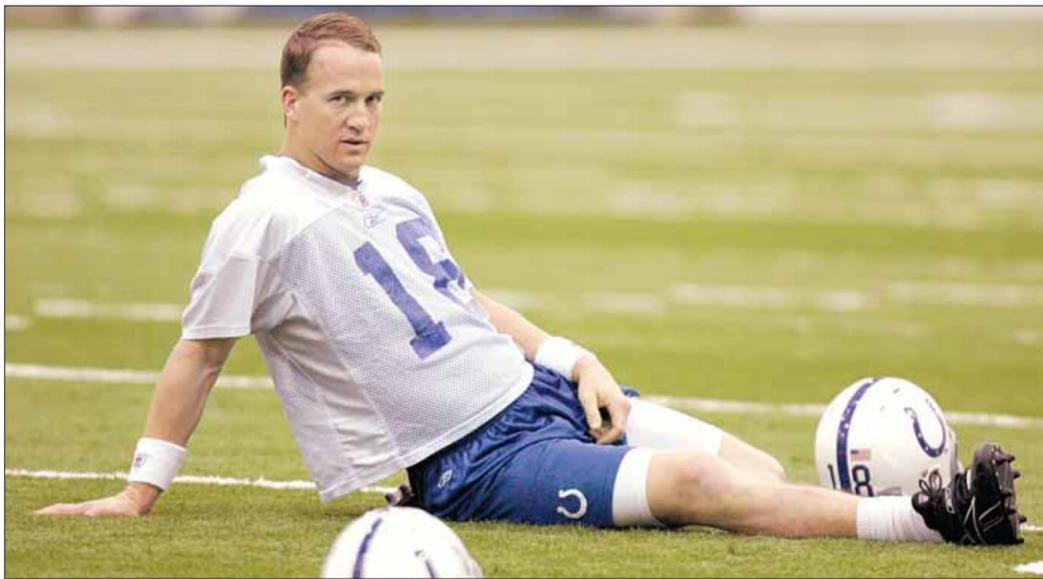


Super Bowl XLI: Indianapolis Colts vs. Chicago Bears

Time: 6 p.m. Feb. 4 TV: WISH-Channel 8 Radio: WFBQ-94.7 FM



Business (almost) as usual



Indianapolis Colts quarterback Peyton Manning stretches before the start of practice at the team's headquarters in Indianapolis on Wednesday.

Manning OK with fans of Bears, even those in Indy

By RICK MORWICK

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INDIANAPOLIS

If you're a Chicago Bears fan living in Indiana, it's all right. Peyton Manning understands.

He even applauds you, so long as your allegiance never waivers.

Cognizant of the divided loyalties in a state that borders Illinois, Manning has no problems with local Bears fans.

He knows that many, if not most, latched onto the Bears long before the Colts moved to Indianapolis 23 years ago.

"Everybody that likes football has a team that they support," Manning said. "Everybody has a team that they like, and so I guess that's what's kind of important to me."

And it's why Manning doesn't take offense to the fact that a sizable portion of the state, notably the area known as "The Region" in the northwest corner of Indiana, isn't necessarily behind the Colts.

Manning grew up with football and understands that the charm

"If you're a Bears fan and live here in Indianapolis, I admire that. That's your team and you stick with them ... as long as you're consistent."

Peyton Manning
Colts quarterback on divided loyalties in Indiana

of sports for most fans is loyalty to a particular team.

In Indiana, a comparatively new NFL state, many fans forged loyalties to other teams long before the Colts arrived.

For the northern half of the state and much of the central part, the Bears were a natural choice because of geographic proximity and their rise to glory in the early and mid-1980s.

Still other fans threw their lot with the dynasties of the 1960s

(SEE FANS, PAGE B3)

Veterans warn of getting caught up in hype

By RICK MORWICK

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INDIANAPOLIS

When coach Tony Dungy asked Anthony McFarland to share words of wisdom with the Indianapolis Colts, the veteran defensive tackle was happy to oblige.

One of only a handful of Colts players who've experienced Super Bowl mania firsthand, McFarland offered the following insight when the team reported to work Wednesday afternoon in Indianapolis.

"My message was: The Super Bowl week is for everybody else. The game is for us, and that's really the only thing that matters," said McFarland, who played for Tampa Bay during its 2003 Super Bowl season.

McFarland was an injured reserve at the time but traveled with the team and participated in all activities leading up to the game.

"Everybody focuses Super Bowl week around every other thing, and they save the best for last, and that's the game," McFarland said. "And I think that's what we have to realize that we are the show."

COLTS NOT NO. 1?

The New England Patriots' season ended with Sunday's 38-34 loss at Indianapolis in the AFC title game. But they are still No. 1 in the Matthews/Scripps Howard NFL computer power ratings.

Factoring in the home-field advantage, the Colts, according to the ratings, would beat the Patriots by four points at Indianapolis, the margin of victory in Sunday's game.

Here are the top five teams in this week's ratings:

Rank	Team	Rating
1.	New England Patriots	58.02
2.	Indianapolis Colts	57.87
3.	Chicago Bears	57.84
4.	San Diego Chargers	57.81
5.	Baltimore Ravens	56.45

"All the other side and pony shows that go on are for everybody else."

Kicker Adam Vinatieri, who also talked to the team, echoed the sentiment.

"It's a three-ring circus with a game at the

(SEE HYPE, PAGE B3)



Colts coach Tony Dungy jogs before the team's practice Wednesday in Indianapolis.

Dungy not ruling out retirement

The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS

Colts Coach Tony Dungy will wait until the end of this season before considering his future with the team.

Dungy signed a contract extension last year that would keep him in Indianapolis through 2009. But many have wondered whether the 51-year-old coach, who had said previously he intended to retire at age 50, might resign if he wins the Super Bowl.

"That's something I've not thought a whole lot about," he said Wednesday. "I'll sit down with (owner) Jim (Irsay) and my wife

at the end of the year. The first thing you have to do is make sure you're still wanted back. I never take that for granted any more."

Dungy made a similar statement after last season when the Colts were eliminated from the playoffs in a 21-18 loss at home to eventual Super Bowl champion Pittsburgh.

He has said since then that he always anticipated returning to the sideline this season.

There's little doubt Irsay would like Dungy back.

Irsay has often praised Dungy for his commitment to football and his life outside of it, and

(SEE DUNGY, PAGE B3)

BASKETBALL

Points come in bunches
Whiteland grad leads Eastern Illinois team

By MATTHEW GLENESK

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When Eastern Illinois University women's basketball coach Brady Sallee made his recruiting pitch to Jessica Huffman, he told her she'd get the chance to play right away.

He wasn't kidding. Huffman, last year's Daily Journal County Player of the Year, has started all but one of the Panthers' 20 games this season.

But the Whiteland Community High School product is doing more than just playing; she's excelling.

Huffman leads Eastern Illinois in scoring, averaging 18 points a game, and ranks second in the nation among Division I freshman scorers, behind Idaho's Katie Madison (19.5 points per game).

"We felt we were getting a heck of a ball player when we signed her," Sallee said. "But in our early-season workouts, seeing what she was doing on the floor and how effortless it was for her on the offensive end, we felt like we had something pretty special."

"She definitely hasn't disappointed us. That's for sure."

It didn't take long for Huffman to get started. In the Panthers' first regular-season game, Huffman played 33 minutes, scored 23 points, pulled down seven rebounds and dished out seven assists.

"After the game I was sitting down with one of my assistant coaches, and I didn't realize that I had played that well," Huffman said. "Your whole life you strive to play Division I basketball, and you get

SANDY KING PHOTO COURTESY EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
Whiteland Community High School graduate Jessica Huffman, left, tries to drive past Illinois-Chicago defenders during a recent Eastern Illinois game in Charleston, Ill.

here, and you actually do good, and you succeed in your first game and win. It felt real good."

The wins have been harder to come by for the Panthers (7-13), but Huffman has scored points in bunches.

Huffman has reached double figures in the past 11 games, the longest current streak on the team, and scored a school-record 38 points against

(SEE BUNCHES, PAGE B5)

THE HUFFMAN FILE

Name: Jessica Huffman
College: Eastern Illinois University
High school: 2006 Whiteland graduate
Position: Point guard
Favorite class: Economics
Best part about playing college

basketball, off the court: "The food. We get real good food."

Best part about playing college basketball, on the court: "The pace of the game. We get to run up and down the court."

Of note: Huffman's scoring average

of 18 points per game leads her team and is second among Division I freshmen in the nation. She has earned the Ohio Valley Conference freshman of the week honors five times and has already broken the school record for freshman scoring.

Trojans run streak to 11 wins

By MIKE BATTREALL

DAILY JOURNAL SPORTS CORRESPONDENT

Center Grove's boys basketball team is 12-1 after an 81-61 win against Decatur Central on Wednesday night.

But the Trojans are barely registering on the state's basketball radar.

The Trojans' players and coaching staff, though, couldn't care less that they're seven spots out of the top 10 in Class 4A and ranked behind several squads that have more losses.

Also, as far as they're concerned, their winning streak of 11 games is nothing but a number.

"We don't get caught up in that stuff," coach Cliff Hawkins said. "Our goal is to improve all the time. We focus and practice and play like a champion."

"That focus on improvement then causes us to stay hungry. You can't have a fat-cat mentality. You want to win the next play."

Trojans 81, Hawks 61

Center Grove put away the Hawks (6-10) with accurate shooting and lightning quickness, as four players reached double figures and another was one point shy of joining that quartet.

Senior forward Tyler Kitchel was the top scorer with 25 points, making 11 of 15 shots, including three 3-pointers.

Center Andrew Bowman added 15 points, and guards Corey Gray and Louis Kamo put in 15 and 11, respectively. Jason Kaylor came off the bench to add nine points, all from 3-point range.

The Trojans shot nearly 62 percent from the field (33 for 54) and ended with 11 3-pointers in 19 attempts. They also had 18 assists (Gray led with five) as well as 13 offensive rebounds, one fewer than Decatur Central had total boards.

(SEE TROJANS, PAGE B2)



Tyler Kitchel, above, and Andrew Bowman combined for 41 points in Center Grove's win.



Reserves lead way in Pacers' victory

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INDIANAPOLIS

Before the fourth quarter of Wednesday's game between Indiana and Miami, the loudest ovation of the night was for Indianapolis Colts players Reggie Wayne and Cato June, who sat courtside.

The Pacers had fallen behind 20 points in the third quarter and lacked emotion and intensity.

Indiana coach Rick Carlisle turned to his bench, and his second unit came through, helping the Pacers to a 96-64 overtime win against the Heat, spoiling

the return of Shaquille O'Neal.

"That was a great win for us being able to come back," Carlisle said. "Our second group did a great job getting us back into it early in the fourth quarter. ... We're looking for anything to catapult us forward to get better."

Wednesday's comeback from 20 points in the final 15:34 of regulation and overtime is the largest deficit the Pacers have overcome for a win this season.

Miami (19-23) had two chances to win the game at the buzzer, once in regulation and another in overtime, but both 3-point attempts missed the mark.

(SEE RESERVES, PAGE B2)

AP PHOTO
The Heat's Dwyane Wade, left, shoots over the Pacers' Troy Murphy in the first half of Wednesday's game in Indianapolis.