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SPORTS

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SECTION B

Hoosiers score conference win



Purdue Boilermakers (12-4, 1-1 Big Ten) at Indiana Hoosiers (10-4, 1-1)
Time: 7 p.m.
TV: ESPNU
Radio: WLHK-97.1 FM

The Associated Press

BLOOMINGTON

Kelvin Sampson was pleased to get his first Big Ten coaching victory, but he stopped short of calling his team "good" after Indiana's 73-51 victory against Michigan State on Sunday.

Sampson made numerous references to a young Spartans team that recently got sophomore Maur-

ice Joseph and freshman Raymar Morgan back from injuries.

"We caught Michigan State at the right time," said Sampson, who's in his first season with the Hoosiers after coming over from Oklahoma. "Don't give us so much credit for playing great."

D.J. White had 21 points, Lance Stemler finished with 16 points and seven rebounds, and Earl Calloway scored 11 for the Hoosiers (10-4, 1-1 Big Ten), who

evened their record in the conference after a Jan. 2 loss at No. 6 Ohio State.

"We didn't want to put ourselves in a hole, just like Michigan State didn't want to," White said. "This was a game we needed to win."

Travis Walton finished with 12 points and Drew Neitzel scored 10 for Michigan State (13-4, 0-2), which committed 20 turnovers and was outscored 24-4 in points off turnovers.

The Hoosiers, who won their ninth straight Big Ten home opener and improved to 8-0 at Assembly Hall this season, jumped out to a 12-4 lead following consecutive baskets by White early in the first half.

"I think we're a lot better today than we were two weeks ago," Sampson said. "For us, we just have to scrap and claw and fight and find ways to win. We're getting better, I know that."



Indiana guard Armon Bassett, left, drives to the basket against Michigan State forward Raymar Morgan during the second half Sunday.

Ohio State vs. Florida: Too big to call it a bowl

By RALPH D. RUSSO
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz.

A new era of college football begins tonight with No. 1 Ohio State and No. 2 Florida playing a game that's grown too big to be called a bowl.

A week after New Year's Day, after all the bowls have been played, the Buckeyes and Gators meet in the first BCS National Championship Game.

"It's the Super Bowl of college football and I think college football needed that," Gators coach Urban Meyer said Sunday.

What the bigger — if not better — Bowl Championship Series got for its new showcase event is a 1 vs. 2 matchup that had many skeptical at first about its legitimacy.

Heisman Trophy winner Troy Smith and the Buckeyes (12-0) were a no-brainer. The Big Ten champions have been No. 1 since the preseason, and already have



Brutus the Buckeye, Ohio State's mascot, shakes hands with Florida's Albert the Alligator during a fan rally Saturday in Glendale, Ariz., ahead of today's BCS National Championship Game.

a pair of victories against teams ranked No. 2.

"You know the only time we thought for sure that we were going to be in the national championship is when that game (against Michigan) ended Nov. 18 because we knew going in

(SEE BOWL, PAGE B4)



TODAY'S GAME

Florida Gators (12-1) vs. Ohio State Buckeyes (12-0)

Time: 8 p.m. TV: WXIN-Channel

Bobby Hamilton, longtime NASCAR driver, dies at 49

By TERESA M. WALKER
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NASHVILLE, Tenn.

Bobby Hamilton, the longtime NASCAR driver who won the 2001 Talladega 500 and was the 2004 Craftsman Truck Series champion, died Sunday of cancer, said Liz Allison, a family friend who co-hosted a radio show with Hamilton. He was 49.



HAMILTON

Hamilton was at home with his family when he died, said Allison, the widow of former NASCAR star Davey Allison.

"The thing I loved about Bobby Sr. so much is that he treated everybody the same," Allison said. "It didn't matter if you were

one of the drivers he competed against or a fan he'd never laid eyes on before.

"He didn't have a pretentious bone in his body. I think that's why people were drawn to him. He was just very real and had a way of relating to everyone."

Hamilton was diagnosed with head and neck cancer in February. A malignant growth was found when swelling from dental surgery did not go down.

He raced in the season's first three events, with a best finish of 14th at Atlanta Motor Speedway, before turning over the wheel to his son, Bobby Hamilton Jr. The senior Hamilton then started chemotherapy and radiation treatment.

By August, he had returned to work at Bobby Hamilton Racing in Mount Juliet, about 20 miles east of Nashville, and doctors

(SEE HAMILTON, PAGE B4)

NFL: PLAYOFFS

SATURDAY'S GAME

Indianapolis Colts (13-4) at Baltimore Ravens (13-3)
Time: 4:30 p.m. TV: WTHR-Channel 13 Radio: WFBQ-94.7 FM

BIG-PLAY BOB

Sanders' return helps provide spark

By RICK MORWICK

DAILY JOURNAL SPORTS EDITOR
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INDIANAPOLIS

Bob Sanders not only felt fine Saturday, he declares himself good to go for the rest of the playoffs.

The news couldn't be better for an Indianapolis Colts defense that has been without one of its top players virtually all season.

"That's the plan," said Sanders, whose return to the starting lineup during Saturday's 23-8 AFC Wild-Card win against the Kansas City Chiefs marked only his third appearance of the season.

A Pro Bowler last year, the third-year safety has been slow to recover from arthroscopic surgery on his right knee in late September. Soreness and swelling have been constant issues.

But Sanders, one of the Colts' top run defenders, had no problems against the Chiefs.

Statistically, his impact was minimal. But emotionally, his return was invaluable.

The proof was in the results.



Colts safety Bob Sanders, center, celebrates an interception with teammates Cato June, left, and Antoine Bethea during the fourth quarter of a wild-card playoff against Kansas City on Sunday in Indianapolis.

(SEE SPARK, PAGE B3)

INSIDE: Colts hope to clip Ravens on the road; Patriots, Eagles advance. Page B3

Don't count out Colts against No. 2 seed Ravens

INDIANAPOLIS

Sometimes, might doesn't make right. Sometimes, if it's coupled with execution, believing is enough.

That's what the Indianapolis Colts did Saturday in one of the most improbable defensive performances in NFL history.

If they can do it again, what's to stop them from getting to the Super Bowl?

Nothing. Conventional wisdom suggests the era of good feelings will abruptly end at Baltimore, but conventional wisdom was dead wrong against Kansas City.

Boy, was it ever.



Rick Morwick
COLTS BEAT

Who knows whether Indianapolis' defense was really that good or whether the Chiefs' offense was really that bad. This much is certain: The Colts went in believing they could do the job. They got it done. And then some.

They're convinced they can do it again. Who are not to believe them? Look what happened when few, if any of us, believed in them against the NFL's second-leading rusher.

They got the last laugh. "We loved reading (all week) about Larry Johnson," Colts linebacker Cato June beamed in the aftermath. "Larry Johnson just got us to the second round of the playoffs."

Anthony McFarland put it another way. "A coach told me a long time ago it's a

(SEE RAVENS, PAGE B3)

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