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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. Sunday TV: WISH-Channel 8 Radio: WFBO-94.7 FM



AP PHOTO

Indianapolis Colts center Jeff Saturday, right, and defensive end Raheem Brock arrive at the team hotel in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., on Monday.

Colts seek normalcy in Miami chaos

By MICHAEL MAROT
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla.

Tony Dungy was ready to get to work in south Florida, even if Indianapolis had one less day to do it.

Arriving a day after the Chicago Bears and later than most recent Super Bowl teams, Dungy explained Indianapolis' delayed arrival as wanting to make this as normal a week as possible.

Good luck doing that during Super Bowl week.

"There have been times when there's only been one week between the Super Bowl, and we've also had three really emotional games, so I wanted to give the guys an extra day off," Dungy said. "We want to keep it as normal as possi-

ble, and this seemed like the best way to do that."

The craziness began Monday night as the Colts made Dungy and six players available an hour after landing in Fort Lauderdale. Today, more players, including two-time MVP Peyton Manning and quiet receiver Marvin Harrison, will address questions from podiums.

Manning was not among the players who spoke Monday, even though the past week has been filled with questions about his injured right thumb. Manning hurt it when his throwing hand hit the helmet of Colts left tackle Tarik Glenn late in the AFC Championship Game.

Teammates and coaches said last week the thumb was fine, and Dungy reiterated that Manning would make his 157th career start, including playoffs, Sunday.

Manning has never missed a start in his nine-year career and ranks second all-time among quarterbacks in consecutive starts behind only three-time MVP Brett Favre of Green Bay.

Instead, the biggest injury question concerns starting cornerback Nick Harper, who sprained his left ankle last week. He got off the bus with his foot in a walking boot.

"Everybody practiced today, except Nick," Dungy said.

He did not update Harper's status.

Before departing Indianapolis, the Colts had their final practice of the season at their indoor facility, again closing it to the media.

Dungy has generally held open practices but closed all except the stretching portion to the media during the playoffs.

INSIDE



Lovie Smith is the first Chicago Bears coach to lead the team to the Super Bowl since "Da Coach," Mike Ditka, in 1985. But Smith's approach is decidedly different from Ditka's.

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Sharing the load

Rhodes doesn't mind splitting time with rookie



AP PHOTO

Dominic Rhodes has played a key role in the Colts' Super Bowl run despite sharing time with rookie Joseph Addai. Rhodes has carried for 193 yards on 41 carries in the postseason.

By RICK MORWICK
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MIAMI

If Dominic Rhodes resents his role, he hides it well.

He not only considers Joseph Addai a friend, but he has no problems splitting carries with, or being a backup to, the Indianapolis Colts' rookie running back.

"That's fine. Let's play some football," said Rhodes, who started every game in the regular season but has come off the bench in the playoffs. "Really, the whole year we have been switching on and off anyway, so both of us have been the starter, regardless.

"It hasn't been a big deal to me. I'm just going out there trying to help my team win, and that's the bottom line."

In that regard, Rhodes has kept his end of the two-back bargain.

With Addai providing speed and agility and Rhodes lending power and burst, the Colts have outrushed all three opponents in the playoffs. Addai has started all three games, but Rhodes has almost the same number of yards.

And his per-rush postseason average (4.7) is nearly a full yard better than Addai's (3.8).

But the backs aren't in a statistical contest, nor do they compete for recognition.

Both are working toward the same objective: winning the Super Bowl.

"It's not about one individual person," Rhodes said. "It's about all of us. That's why we're right now still playing, because we don't have a lot of guys that are selfish."

"We take pride in helping this team win, and that's what it's about."

Still, Rhodes wasn't sure what type of message was being sent when the Colts took Addai in the first round of the April 2006 NFL Draft.

Conventional wisdom suggested Rhodes, a seven-year veteran and former 1,000-yard rusher, would become the feature back following Edgerrin James' free-agent departure in the offseason.

But Addai's arrival signaled the Colts had other plans.

"It hasn't been a big deal to me. I'm just going out there trying to help my team win, and that's the bottom line."

Dominic Rhodes
Colts running back
on sharing time with
rookie Joseph Addai

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CG graduate enjoying ride

Halterman helps Colts prepare, will take in game from sideline

By RICK MORWICK
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Two months ago, Aaron Halterman was an out-of-work pro football player.

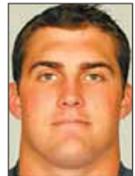
Now, the former Center Grove standout not only is employed, but his employer is in Miami for the Super Bowl.

Signed to the Indianapolis Colts' practice squad Dec. 21, Halterman helps prepare the team for the biggest game in the franchise's history since it relocated to the Circle City from Baltimore in 1984.

"What can you say about this? It's surreal, very unreal," Halterman said of playing for the team he cheered for while growing up.

"I can't come up with enough words to describe it," Halterman said. "I was out of work a lot of this year, and then you come back and get an opportunity like

(SEE RIDE, PAGE B3)



HALTERMAN

THE HALTERMAN FILE

Name: Aaron Halterman
Age: 24
Position: Tight end
College: 2004 graduate of Indiana University
High school: 2000 graduate of Center Grove
Family: Father, Rick Halterman; mother, Jan Abraham; brother, Andy Halterman, 23
Favorite NFL team while growing up: Indianapolis Colts
Fondest memory of the Super Bowl: "The Cowboys teams during the 1990s. My mom and I would always cheer for them, and my dad and Andy would be stuck with the other team. That was always fun."

Wayne still mourns loss of older brother

By MICHAEL MAROT
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDIANAPOLIS

Reggie Wayne considers himself lucky.

He's going to the Super Bowl this week with the Indianapolis Colts and the Pro Bowl next week with four of his teammates, finally achieving some of the goals he and his older brother, Rashad, dreamed of when he first made it to the NFL.

Yes, Wayne knows his late brother, killed in a September traffic accident, embraced the accomplishments. He just wishes Rashad

could share them in person.

"There's not much time that goes by that I don't think about him," Wayne said. "A lot of my success today has come through him. I think about him all the time."

On the field, this has been Wayne's best season in terms of visibility.

After signing a \$39 million contract in February, Wayne produced his first Pro Bowl season by finishing second on the Colts to Marvin Harrison in receptions (86) and yardage (1,310), both career highs.

He also caught nine touchdowns, the second-highest total of his career, and earned the biggest reward of his football career by winning the AFC championship.

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WAYNE

Grossman: Super Bowl berth proof of his worth

By RICK MORWICK
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MIAMI

Rex Grossman spent much of Monday fielding the inevitable questions about his regular-season struggles that at times nearly doomed the Chicago Bears.

Never losing his composure, the former Bloomington South High School star acknowledged some bad games but gave high marks to his overall season.

He is, after all, playing in the Super Bowl.

"I've had about five or six (career games) that I'm really not proud of at all," said the fourth-year quarterback, who is winding down his first full season as a starter. "I need to work on those six games, but I'm happy where I'm at."

"I'm at the Super Bowl, ... and I feel like I've had a good season."

But he's had bad games along the way, a fact that didn't go unnoticed during a personally rocky season.

When Grossman was good, he was very good, earning quarterback ratings of better than 100

seven times during the regular season. The high-water mark was a 148.0, four-touchdown performance in a win against Detroit.

But when Grossman was bad, he was very bad, earning quarterback ratings of below 40 five times during the regular season.

The first low-water mark was a 10.2, four-interception disaster in an unlikely win against Arizona.

But the worst was still to come.

Grossman had three interceptions and no touchdowns for a 1.3 rating in a late-season win against Minnesota.

In a season-ending loss to Green Bay, he was intercepted three times in the first half and

benched for the second half in favor of Brian Griese.

Grossman's quarterback rating against the Packers was zero.

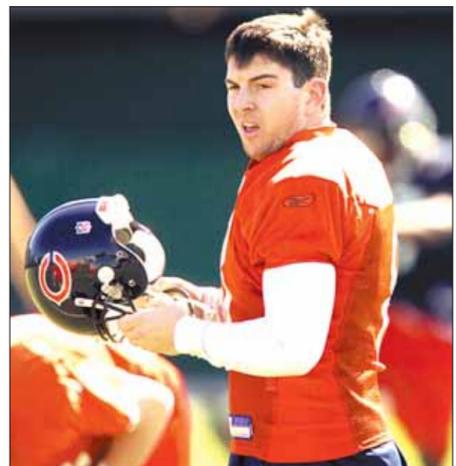
Amid harsh criticism from fans and the media, speculation swirled that Bears coach Lovie Smith would go with Griese in the playoffs.

He did not.

Smith never lost faith in Grossman's ability to run the offense, and the Bears (13-3) have a Super Bowl berth as a reward.

"We lost three games during the regular season, and I thought for a young guy that Rex performed

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AP PHOTO

Bears quarterback Rex Grossman prepares to put on his helmet at the start of practice Monday in Coral Gables, Fla. Grossman spent much of his first Super Bowl news conference Monday defending his sporadic play this season.