



AP, SUBMITTED AND DAILY JOURNAL PHOTOS

Above: Indianapolis Colts kicker Adam Vinatieri, right, is congratulated by teammate Justin Snow, left, after a 42-yard field goal against the New England Patriots in the first quarter of the AFC Championship Game on Sunday in Indianapolis. The Colts' Hunter Smith looks on. **Top left:** A Colts fan decorated his truck to support the Colts before their AFC Championship victory. **Top cen-**

ter: John Hobbs, 24, Drew Brennan, 25, Neil Osburn, 24, Tim Meyer, 21, Brad Shupe, 23, and Mark Sanford, 24, all of Indianapolis, celebrate before the game. **Top right:** Colts fan Samuel Bryant cheers before the start of the AFC Championship Game. **Bottom:** Brandon Stidham, 5, and Conner Stidham, 3, of New Whiteland show their support for the home team with Colts snowmen.



PLAYOFF NOTEBOOK

Daily Journal staff reports

Cheer up the troops

Becky Applegate wasn't a cheerleader in high school.

But as halftime approached of Sunday's AFC Championship Game, she did her best to raise the spirits of Colts fans inside Rock Bottom Brewery in downtown Indianapolis.

With the Colts down 21-3, Applegate made the rounds to tables offering words of encouragement for downtrodden Colts fans.

"You've got to believe," she said. "Come on, there's still plenty of time left."

Some fans were receptive to her attempts. Others said they've seen this Colts team sputter in the big game before.

A late second-quarter drive led by Peyton Manning invigorated the bar crowd.

"We need a touchdown. No field goal," said Applegate's husband, Kyle.

They watched: Indianapolis had a first-and-goal with less than a minute remaining in the half.

A second-down pass intended for Dallas Clark in the end zone is knocked away.

Replays show Clark had a chance to catch the pass.

"Catch the dang ball," Kyle Applegate said.

Third down offered another shot at the end zone for Manning. Reggie Wayne and a Patriots defender got tangled, leading to shouts for a pass interference call from the unnerved Colts crew in the bar.

Replays showed Wayne tripped on his own.

The Colts settled for an Adam Vinatieri field goal.

Down 21-6 isn't how many Colts fans expected the first half to unfold. Becky Applegate's pre-game prediction of 31-17 Indianapolis is blown out of the water; but she's not ready to count the Colts out yet.

"There's still plenty of time,"

she said. "If anyone can do it, Peyton can."

Kyle Applegate isn't so sure as he shakes his head.

"You can't win if you don't score touchdowns."

Pats fans invade Circle City

Honking car horns and occasional heckling didn't stop Sean Cameron from proudly holding his sign above his head in downtown Indianapolis on Sunday.

"Let's Go Pats," the sign read. "How does it feel to know we're going to win again?" Sean, 10, asked anyone who would listen.

Sean, his father, John Cameron, and family friend Joe MacDonald made the trip from Milton, Mass., to cheer on the New England Patriots on Sunday.

John Cameron and MacDonald have been friends since the first grade. They've been Patriots fans their whole lives.

They've traveled to the Patriots' three most recent Super Bowl appearances and AFC Championship games in Pittsburgh.

Wherever they go, they wear

New England garb. Fans in Pittsburgh were hostile but never let the abuse go beyond verbal. At the 2005 Super Bowl against Philadelphia, the Eagles' fans weren't so kind, throwing food and pouring beer on many Patriots' fans.

While John Cameron and MacDonald have traversed the nation following their favorite team, Sunday's AFC Championship Game was Sean Cameron's first road game.

Luckily for Sean, they found the people of Indianapolis hospitable. But that doesn't mean they didn't receive some good-natured ribbing.

John Cameron, wearing a Patriots' sweat shirt, tried to buy noisemakers at a store Saturday.

The woman behind the register asked him what the noisemakers were for, and he responded, "For the dome tomorrow."

She brushed her hair back behind her ears to show off her Colts earrings and said, "I can't in good conscience sell you the noisemakers. Not to cheer against my Colts."

Cameron said he appreciated her honesty.

It just meant he was going to have to scream extra loudly at the game.

May the Horse be with you

Most Colts fans filing into the RCA Dome honored the team's request: wear blue.

More than an hour before the game, a sea of blue poured into the dome. But one man appeared ready for intergalactic war.

Joseph Sauter of Indianapolis wore a full-body Colts trooper costume, fashioned after the Star Wars' stormtrooper outfit. Sauter said he wears the blue-and-white costume, complete with a helmet and cape, to every home game.

A friend followed Sauter, carrying a poster that said: "May the Horse be with you."

Good-natured ribbing

A Patriots fan spent \$20 to take home a piece of history.

Peter Fernandes of Taunton, Mass., bought two blue towels bearing the phrase "New

England Sucks" for \$10 each.

"This is nostalgia," said Fernandes, who arrived in Indianapolis on Saturday for the AFC Championship Game.

As fans filed into the RCA Dome before the start of Sunday's game, Colts and Patriots fans exchanged friendly banter. Some yelled slogans or jeers, and others held up signs.

Pats fans Jim and Michel Warren of Rhode Island said Indianapolis was a friendly town and everyone has been nice so far. That's not always the case during Patriots home games, Jim Warren said.

Colts fans even bought the couple drinks Saturday night, he said.

New England fan Peter Accola flew in Sunday morning from Boston, "just long enough to get a victory," he said.

Indy's fans have been mostly nice, but he said he has endured some good-natured ribbing, as he expected.

Accola's friend, Chris Willis, said they gave as good as they got. "The champs are here," he yelled to Colts fans.

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