

Bench leads Pacers to win

Subs combine for 63 to push Indiana past Memphis

By Rick Morwick

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INDIANAPOLIS

Danny Granger didn't start. Neither did Marquis Daniels.

But they powered the Indiana Pacers to a strong finish Wednesday night against the visiting Memphis Grizzlies.

Compensating for a difficult night for the starters, the pair combined for 39 points to lift the Pacers to a 114-104 win in the final game before the weekend All-Star break.

Their output was part of a 63-point bench burst that rescued the Pacers (28-24) from a poor start.

Indiana trailed at the end of the first and second quarters but gained enough traction in the final two periods to take a two-game winning streak into the break.

"The bench, you've got to give those guys a lot of credit," said Pacers coach Rick Carlisle, whose team played in front of a sparse Conseco Fieldhouse crowd of 13,037. "They gave us a lot of energy."

"If we can establish a strong bench, it can be part of who we are as a team."

For the moment, Granger and Daniels are the centerpieces.

Granger, an occasional starter, has the highest team scoring average (13.2) among reserves. Daniels, who returned to the lineup Sunday after missing seven

(SEE PACERS, PAGE B3)



AP PHOTO

The Pacers' Jermaine O'Neal, left, puts up a shot over Grizzlies forward Alexander Johnson during the first quarter of their game Wednesday in Indianapolis.

NASCAR: Waltrip team used illegal substance

By Jenna Fryer

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla.

The Daytona 500 is a wreck before it even gets started.

A cheating scandal that had already brought down four teams now has ensnared another — that of two-time winner Michael Waltrip — tarnishing NASCAR's signature race and Toyota's highly anticipated debut.

"We've got people's attention now," NASCAR competition director Robin Pemberton said Wednesday.

Waltrip lost his crew chief and team director right before Sunday's Super Bowl of racing. The two were suspended indefinitely after an illegal substance was found during inspection for the season opener.

Waltrip, docked 100 points, will be allowed to participate in Thursday's races that determine the field for the 500.

David Hyder, his crew chief, was thrown out of the garage and fined \$100,000. Team director Bobby Kennedy also was kicked out.

Waltrip said he was "so sad and embarrassed" but tried to shift blame to an unidentified individual within his team.

"This is not the action of an organization, a manufacturer or a sponsor," Waltrip said in a statement. "This was an independent act done without consent or authorization from me or any of my executive management team."

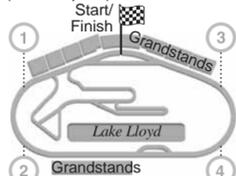
Waltrip spent all day Wednesday meeting with NASCAR officials.

(SEE TEAM, PAGE B4)

Daytona 500

Daytona Beach, Fla.
Daytona International Speedway
▶ Tri-oval, 2.5 miles
▶ 31 degrees banking in turns
Distance: 500 miles; 200 laps

Schedule:
Thursday, qualifying (Speed Channel, 2 p.m.); Sunday, race (FOX, 2 p.m.)



Last year:

After holding off Ryan Newman and Casey Mears in an overtime caused by a late caution, Jimmie Johnson came out of nowhere, and won his first Daytona 500.

Next race: Auto Club 500, California Speedway, Feb. 25, Fontana, Calif.

SOURCE: NASCAR AP

PREP SWIMMING

Shaving off time

County swimmers get ready for postseason with new gear, a bit of rest and a razor



Franklin swimmers, from left, freshman Michael Oaks, senior Paul Goad and junior Ross Rucker talk in the pool during practice at the school Monday. Many Johnson County swimmers are in the process of tapering in preparation for this week's sectional. Tapering can include getting new swim suits, swimming less in practice and shaving body hair.

STORIES AND PHOTOS BY MATTHEW GLENESK

Boys hope to save fastest times for sectional

New suits, fewer yards and no hair. Area high school boys swimming teams are gearing up for tonight's IHSAA swimming sectional at Indian Creek. But the real preparations began at least three weeks ago to make sure the biggest meet of the season is their fastest.

That preparation process is called tapering, a reduction in the training volume leading up to the goal meet of the season, in this case, the sectional.

The lightened training load allows muscles to recover after a rigorous season and keeps athletes fresh heading into the competition.

"For me it's always the best part of the year," Franklin junior Brian Yount said. "You train so hard through the entire season, you're tired and physically exhausted."

"It's good to back off a little, get the body some rest and be able to recover from four or five months of hard training."

An easier practice regimen isn't the only key to going faster in the pool.

(SEE TIMES, PAGE B6)



Franklin boys swimming coach Brett Findley gives instruction to one of the Grizzly Cubs swimmers during practice at the school Monday. The boys swimming sectional starts today.

IF YOU GO

What: IHSAA boys swimming sectional

Where: Indian Creek High School

Who: Center Grove, Franklin, Greenwood, Indian Creek, Whiteland, Perry Meridian, Shelbyville, Southport and Triton Central

When: Preliminaries begin at 5:30 p.m. today. The finals, including diving, will be Saturday.

Qualification for state meet: The first-place winners in each event qualify for the state meet. Any contestant who equals or betters the state time standard in their respective event also qualifies for the state meet.

Of note: Center Grove has won 21 consecutive sectional crowns.

First-year Franklin coach hopes to close gap

For Franklin Community High School swimmers, former coach Kurt Hass was like a father figure.

Their new coach, Brett Findley, is more like an older brother.

Hass coached the Grizzly Cubs for 33 years and began his tenure before Findley was born.

But in his first season as Franklin's coach, Findley has made some noticeable changes to how the Grizzly Cubs train and prepare for meets, including tonight's sectional preliminaries at Indian Creek.

Findley, 25, graduated from Franklin in 2000 and swam four years under the guidance of Hass.

He was a four-year letter winner at Wabash. After college, Findley worked as an assistant coach at Center Grove and coached at the Avon Swimming Club.

He models much of his training techniques from working with Indian Creek coach Brad Smith and Center Grove coach Jim Todd.

Franklin's swimmers say practices are more intense and

(SEE COACH, PAGE B4)

Season could be NASCAR's turning point

The 2007 NASCAR Nextel Cup season isn't a make-or-break situation. But it will be one that could determine whether Cup racing resumes its unprecedented growth of the past two decades or takes a couple of more steps back toward cult status.

Attendance at several tracks and TV ratings were down slightly in 2006. While NASCAR officials don't seem to be panicking, they've made enough changes to indicate they are at least concerned.

Among the changes:
• The introduction of the Car of Tomorrow. On the up side, these cars, in theory, will help level the playing field. And they are being touted as much safer for drivers.

On the down side, these cars don't even remotely resemble anything you'll see in a dealer's showroom. NASCAR long ago gave up on brand loyalty to automakers as a drawing card,



Jeff Decker

FULL THROTTLE

instead focusing on fans' loyalty to sponsors' products and drivers.

• Changes to NASCAR's much-ballyhooed and much-criticized Chase for the Championship format.

On the up side, the new format puts more emphasis on winning.

On the down side, the new format still doesn't put enough emphasis on winning. And NASCAR has fallen into the habit of tweaking the Chase so often that one has to wonder if a play-off-type format will ever work to

everyone's satisfaction.

• ESPN, which helped introduce the sport to a mass audience back in the 1980s and early '90s, is back in the fold.

On the up side, ESPN seems to be willing to commit much of its massive resources and air time to NASCAR racing.

On the down side, some of NASCAR's problems could be attributed to overexposure; there's seemingly nothing left to learn about the sport and its teams and drivers. And no network can overhype a sport like ESPN and its myriad related networks.

There are other changes aimed at making NASCAR more of a global sport. Toyota has entered the fray, and its massive resources have Ford, Chevy and Dodge teams nervous.

And the presence of driver Juan Pablo Montoya will be a

(SEE SEASON, PAGE B2)