



Celebration

Super Bowl champs return to cheers



Fans stream into the RCA Dome for Monday's Super Bowl championship rally, where they held up signs and cheered for Colts players and coaches. A flight delay pushed Monday's celebrations back, but the crowd erupted once the team arrived.

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The banner across the stage of the RCA Dome said it all: Super Bowl Champs.

And the roughly 40,000 fans in the dome didn't let anyone forget it.

Fans waited as long as four hours to see the Indianapolis Colts and to celebrate Sunday's 29-17 victory against the Chicago Bears.

Players and coaches were chauffeured into the dome in the beds of pickups, and the expressions on their faces as they saw the crowd ranged from disbelief to utter awe.

"We had no idea this was waiting for us," said Kelvin Hayden, whose interception return for a touchdown helped seal the Super Bowl victory. "This is more than we could have ever imagined. It just shows us what we already knew: Colts fans are the best in the world."

The team arrived more than two hours behind schedule. First, the team plane from Miami was late. Then the players went first to their training

facility before heading downtown for a parade around the frigid Circle and the rally.

Once in the warmer confines of the dome, they were greeted by a sight normally reserved for home contests, not a Monday afternoon.

Frenzied fans used what remained of their voices to cheer one more time for the team crowned world champions.

Speakers included Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson, Colts owner Jim Irsay, team president and general manager Bill Polian, head coach Tony Dungy and the game's most valuable player, Peyton Manning.

The loudest ovation was reserved for Dungy.

Chants of "Tony, Tony" rang out. Dungy began to make his speech, but the crowd forced him to stop, smile and modestly shake his head, which only caused the throng to cheer even more loudly.

"This is more unbelievable than could be expected," Dungy said. "Thank you so much for this turnout."

When Manning stepped to the podium, chants of "M-V-P" filled the stadium.

Instead of reveling in the moment, Manning showcased a move familiar to

Colts fans. He waved his arms in an attempt to quiet the crowd, much as he does during games so the offense can hear his call at the line of scrimmage. Dungy, Irsay and Polian watched with amusement as the team's franchise player attempted to quiet the raucous gathering.

Defensive players Bob Sanders and Dwight Freeney and wide receivers Reggie Wayne and Marvin Harrison took turns at the microphone.

Harrison appointed Wayne to speak on the receivers' behalf, but teammates dragged the normally quiet Harrison to the microphone to offer thanks to the fans.

Tight end Dallas Clark joked, "I didn't know Indianapolis had this many people."

Players captured the moment with video cameras and danced on the stage in the party-like atmosphere.

Defensive lineman Raheem Brock had just one word for the scene: "Unbelievable."

After players addressed the crowd, Bob Lamey, radio announcer for the Colts, stepped up to the microphone for one last message.

"Only one way to top this," he said. "I'll see you here next year."



Fans line streets for victory parade despite bitter cold

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With hands as red as tomatoes, Jennifer Lowry didn't seem to mind the freezing weather too much Monday evening: One of those hands gave Dallas Clark a high five.

Lowry, of Westfield, along with thousands of other Colts fans, waited in downtown Indianapolis to see the Colts take a victory lap through the city.

Fans started gathering as much as three hours before the parade's scheduled start time of 4 p.m.

As an Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department officer drove around Monument Circle announcing a delay in the parade, some fans scattered to find warmer spots to wait. As soon as word came the parade was coming, people poured out of cafes and lobbies to find a spot along the route.

Most fans got more than they expected. Early announcements about the parade said the players would be on buses.

When the parade rolled through town,



Colts players greet fans along a downtown Indianapolis street during a victory parade Monday after the team's win in last weekend's Super Bowl.

players stood on floats and the Super Bowl trophy was hoisted in the air by coach Tony Dungy and team owner Jim Irsay.

Fans ran up to the floats giving high fives to players.

Players stood on the floats grinning, some even dancing. Bob Sanders stood

on a giant blue horseshoe on the back of one float doing a little dance.

Fans yelled and screamed and some even risked frozen fingers, taking off their gloves to clap for the team.

As the float loaded with the Colts' defensive line rolled by Monument Circle, fans and players chanted "Defense! Defense!"

The parade started more than two hours later than planned, but fans didn't give up.

The jumping around to stay warm turned into jumping up and down in excitement.

Ty Miller of Muncie went downtown Monday to be a part of history, he said. Super Bowl champion cities always have parades. With this being Indianapolis' first, he didn't want to miss it.

While waiting to catch a glimpse of the players, he decided to try to keep his friends entertained by playing a little game.

"Say something warm," he demanded to Heather Pattyn and Amos Haffner. The three started listing warm things to distract themselves from the cold: candles, bonfires, fireplaces.

When the "warm list" didn't help,

Miller relied on keeping his feet moving instead.

As fans waited for the parade to start, rumors circulated first that there wasn't going to be a delay at all, despite what police officers were announcing.

Others heard the parade was canceled. Some said the players were going to the RCA Dome for the rally first, then the parade would start.

Sally Gardner of Indianapolis was ready to call it quits after she heard the parade was questionable.

If the parade isn't going to happen, they should just say it, she said. Waiting inside Au Bon Pain, a café on Monument Circle, her worries lifted as a local news station announced the parade would go on. Gardner's excitement returned and she decided to go ahead and wait it out.

"This doesn't happen very often," she said.

Angele Lovett waited for a glimpse of the team with her life-size Peyton Manning cutout. She took the Manning stand-up to a Super Bowl party the night before and figured he should come along for the parade.

Standing with her personal Manning, Lovett said: "It's cold, but (the team) deserves it."