

## Pistons look for answers

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They left embarrassed. They never held the lead in either of the games here.

They shot poorly, didn't play much defense and were hurt on the offensive end with Wallace bothered by plantar fasciitis and Billups limited by back spasms that began early in Game 4.

Wallace scored six points on 1-for-5 shooting in 25 minutes Tuesday night. Billups had six points on 2-for-7 shooting in 27 minutes.

"I don't care if Chauncey and Rasheed were healthy, it would not have mattered tonight," Pistons coach Larry Brown said. "They (the Nets) were great. They did all the things they were supposed to do."

Wallace refused to blame his injury. He said he had a relapse, but he expects to be ready for Game 5 on Friday night in The Palace at Auburn Hills.

"I'll be all right," he said three times. Billups said the injury to Wallace is painful. "It is bothering him a lot," Billups said. "A guy like that who depends so much on his athletic ability, and not being able to push off or

jump, that's huge."

The Pistons also haven't helped themselves with two poor all-around games.

After having three players score in double figures in Game 3, the Pistons only had Hamilton do it in Game 4. He matched a career playoff high with 30 points on 11-for-20 shooting.

"To come out and play like that, there is no excuse," said center Ben Wallace, who had six points and 15 rebounds. "There is no excuse for that, especially in the playoffs when we are talking about putting ourselves in position to compete for a championship. That's not championship basketball the way we played the last two games."

Veteran Lindsey Hunter also had no explanation for the last two games.

"It's frustrating for us as players not to come out and put forth the effort we are accustomed to," Hunter said. "It's frustrating when you don't give yourself a chance to remotely even have a chance to win the game."

The Pistons can't afford to play like that Friday.

## TL kicks it up another notch

WINFRED B. CROSS

Test Drive



Acura dumped its reputation for producing reliable but staid cars with the revamp of its midsize TL sedan.

This ain't your uncle's Acura, not even your brother's. This is a beast in sheep's clothing.

The TL can be too much of a beast at times. The six-speed manual transmission model has a lot of torque steer. Both hands are needed to keep this beauty pointed in the right direction. That's not an easy task considering the stick is a bit tricky. It's nearly impossible to launch the car gracefully. Once you get to second, the stick is more agreeable but nothing like the best that Acura can

make.

What is the best is the TL's jewel-like engine. The 3.2-liter V6 has a pulse-pounding 270 horsepower that puts those 18-inch tires to the pavement with a quickness. Sixty miles per hour can be reached in the high 5.0 to low 6.0 second range. This came in handy since everyone wanted to race, especially owners of Infiniti G35s. The engine has a nice growl under hard acceleration, but is quiet as a mouse during regular driving.

The car's handling is very good. Eating up curves is what this car likes to do. There's a slight penalty of body roll and a harsh ride on bumpy roads, but those traits are well worth the results. The TL gets excellent marks for its plush interior. The dash looks as if it were cut from one piece of material. There is a liberal amount of wood and metal, buffed and polished to an immaculate finish. The con-

trols feel, look and work in an expensive fashion. The seats are supportive and power adjustable. Each is also covered in fine, fine leather.

A standard equipment item worth mentioning is the brilliant audio system. It's equipped with XM Satellite radio with a free three-month subscription. Also, it plays the high-resolution DVD-Audio format which reproduces music in 6.1 stereo. The sound is absolutely stunning. Too bad there's not a lot of music to choose.

I've saved the car's looks for last. I'm not a fan of the chiseled-look, but it works well on this car. It's aggressive and bold, sharp and, well, chiseled.

The new TL isn't perfect, but it does a lot right at a good price. My test car was less than \$34,000. That's an absolute steal for something this good. And this car is very good.

## Olympics organizers appear on course

By Lisa Orkin  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ATHENS, Greece — Olympics organizers have managed to overcome worrisome delays and appear on course to meet all key deadlines for the Athens Games, the chief International Olympic Committee overseer said Wednesday.

"In the past, we had doubts ... and I am very happy to report all these doubts have disappeared," Denis Oswald said following a three-day IOC inspection, the final major visit to Athens before the Aug. 13-29 Olympics.

The upbeat tone was in distinct contrast to previous visits, when Oswald and others pressed for faster work and more substantial results. Oswald said he wanted to convey "a message of confidence."

It was a huge relief to Greek Olympic planners who have faced ceaseless criticism and questions about their ability to pull together a successful Olympics. The IOC was so worried about delays and bureaucratic inertia four years ago that it said the games could be in jeopardy.

"No single project is at risk and we know everything will be delivered on time," said Oswald.

The chief organizer, Gianna Angelopoulos-Daskalaki, summed up the mood: "Thank heaven that this progress is finally being made."

Oswald added that round-the-clock efforts to install the roof over the main Olympic stadium stands as a "sign of the capacity of Greece" to meet the tight deadlines.

Engineers Monday began moving one of the 8,000-ton arches along specially built tracks. The glass-and-steel roof is designed to shade the 75,000-seat stadium from the intense summer sun.

The work eased IOC worries about whether the stadium could be ready by the end of June. Organizers also hope the web of metal and glasslike strands will be an enduring image of the Athens Games.

"We have very good news about construction and, of course, the most symbolic is the sliding of the roof," Oswald said.

But there is one aspect neither the IOC nor organizers can fully control: security threats.

Oswald's team met with Greek authorities and representatives of a seven-nation security advisory task force, which includes the United States and Britain. Greek police and military plan to begin a four-day drill Thursday that include terrorist and hostage scenarios.

On Tuesday, Greece's public order minister, Giorgos Voulgarakis, called the triple bombing outside a police station last week "high treason." No one was injured in the blasts, but they touched off worldwide anxiety about safety in Athens. There have been no arrests and no claim of responsibility.

Oswald said the bombings "did not affect" IOC's view of the security planning.

"This summer, no nation will be doing more than Greece to protect those within its borders," Angelopoulos-Daskalaki said.

Although no more full IOC inspection visits are planned, Oswald said he will make follow-up stops in Athens before the games.

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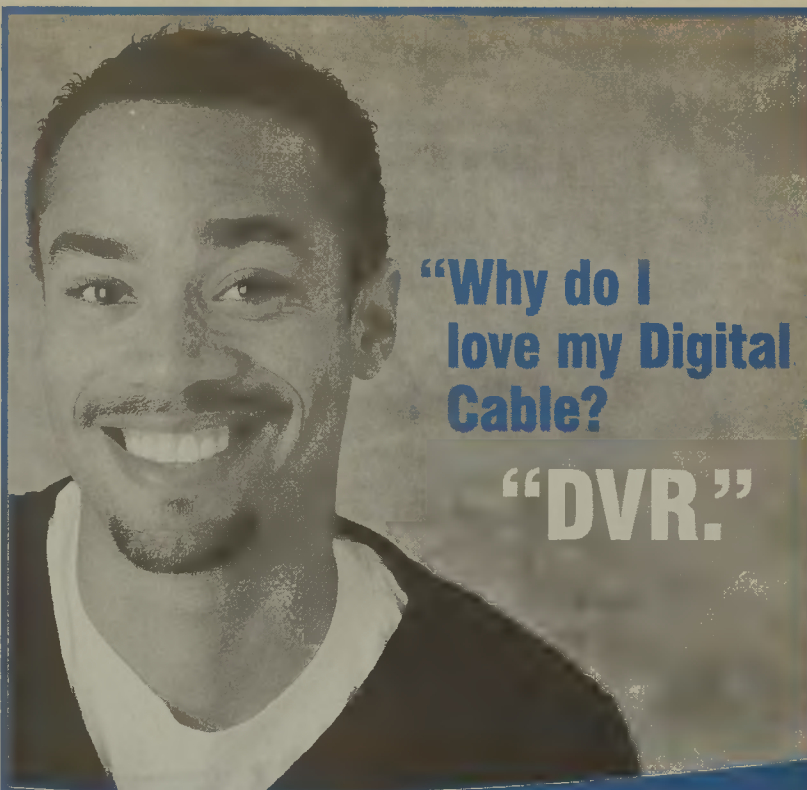
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