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INDY RACING LEAGUE PHOTO/BILL WATSON

Sam Hornish Jr. (left) beats Marco Andretti to the finish line at the Indy 500 by .0635 seconds.

New day in racing circles

Indy 500 shows that best on-track product is in open wheel series

Sunday was auto racing Nirvana, with Formula 1's Grand Prix of Monaco, Indianapolis 500 and Coca-Cola 600 on the same day. The best — by far — was Indy.

The 500 — which had lost a lot of luster in

recent years because of a split between American open wheel racing organizations — got most of it back in one day. Dan Wheldon dominated early, and led the most laps. The Andretti clan, one of U.S. racing's royal families but a hard luck story at Indy, had a shot at winning late with third-generation driver Marco whipping by dad Michael for the lead with four laps to go to set up a whale of a finish.

Sam Hornish Jr., the best of the American-born drivers, thundered by 19-year-old Marco with a daring pass at the stripe to win by 0.0635 seconds. I don't think my eyes will blink that fast. That kind of duel isn't for the faint of heart, but dang that was great theater, something NASCAR rarely replicates on the track.

Uh, oh. I did it, putting stock cars second in wanna-be NASCAR Valley. Don't get me wrong. The stock car gang has U.S. racing by the crankcase, a citadel built primarily by a mighty marketing machine and open wheel dulled edge after a nasty 10-year feud. But that's the past. Indy took the wraps off a new era of open wheel racing, much like the 1979 Daytona 500 did for NASCAR, minus the Allison brothers and Cale Yarborough wreckin' and fightin' on the last lap. If you like to see drivers duking it out at 220 miles an hour and inches away from disaster, Indy Car racing is

Please see NEW DAY/2C

Saunders says griping isn't new problem for Pistons

By Tim Reynolds
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MIAMI — Flip Saunders led the Detroit Pistons to 64 regular-season wins, the most in franchise history, and the best record in the NBA this season.

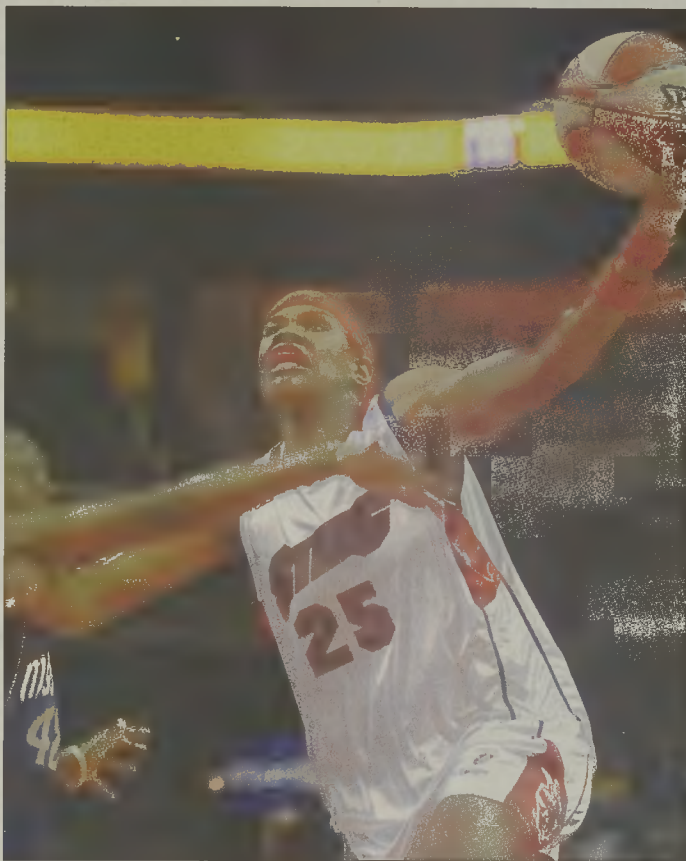
And he almost certainly has come to the realization that those accomplishments won't matter much if the Pistons don't end this season with their second championship in three years.

Saunders was in the crosshairs of some player gripes before Game 4 of the Eastern Conference finals in Miami, with Rasheed Wallace — who snapped at him at least once in Game 3 — upset that he resorted to the Hack-a-Shaq strategy in that game and Ben Wallace saying the team has forgotten its defense-first roots.

For his part, Saunders says he's fine with the criticism from players.

"They gripe all year. Everybody just doesn't know about it," Saunders said.

Please see PISTONS/3C



PHOTO/CURTIS WILSON

Charlotte Sting rookies Monique Currie (above) and LaToya Bond (below) ended their first week as WNBA players as Charlotte's first- and fourth-leading scorers.

Kids are all right

Sting rookies Currie and Boyd settle in as team leaders

By Herbert L. White
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Mugsy Bogues had been checking out Monique Currie long before she wound up with the Charlotte Sting.

Bogues, the Sting's head coach, through four years at Duke and marveled at her offensive skills. Coming off a 6-28 season last

year, Bogues figured Charlotte needed someone like Currie.

"When you are watching talent, you know the level and the type of athlete that you need," he said. "I watched Monique early on in her career, not really giving it much thought that I would be coaching her one day."

He is, and Currie is producing.

She leads the 1-2 Sting in scoring at 13 points a game and connects on 41.7 percent of her shots.

"I think coach having confidence in his players helps us a lot," Currie said. "He doesn't allow you to get discouraged and he continues to encourage you. You know he has your back and he's supporting you, so you want to go out there and do the things you know you can do."

Currie isn't the only rookie standout, however.

LaToya Bond is fourth in scoring at 10.7 and converts 47.6 percent of her shots. They were instrumental in Charlotte's first win of the season, a 73-63 victory over Washington May 25. Currie scored 11 of her 13 points in the fourth quarter, while Bond came off the bench for 12 on 4-of-4 shooting.

As a tandem, the accounted for 17 points, two rebounds and an assist in the fourth.

"They played huge," Bogues said. "We were struggling at the

See STING/2C



"I think coach having confidence in his players helps us a lot."

Charlotte Sting guard Monique Currie on coach Mugsy Bogues' influence

It's the bronze age for Charlotte boxer

Wade Bolton finishes third in international tourney

By Herbert L. White
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Wade Bolton II went around the world to earn his latest boxing prize.

Bolton, 15, won a bronze medal at the 2006 Aliyev Cup boxing tournament last week in Baku, Azerbaijan, which from 1920 until 1991 was part of the Soviet Union. It is now an independent republic wedged between Russia and Iran on the Caspian Sea.

Bolton, a ninth-grader at Harding University High, had never been on an airplane, or out of the country.

"It was fun being up there, looking down at the clouds."

See HARDING/2C



MECKLENBURG PARK AND RECREATION

Wade Bolton, a freshman at Harding High, punches a speed bag under the watchful eyes of Charlotte Boxing Academy coach Alvin Simpson.

CIAA wary of NCAA's motives

Realignment forces league into a new region

RALEIGH — Blame it on basketball.

That's the consensus among CIAA athletic directors, coaches and staff on why the entire NCAA Division II is being overhauled.

For those living in a cave for the past two weeks, the NCAA regionalization task force will revamp all regions in D-II by 2008 to create eight new super regions: West, Central, South, Midwest, South, Southeast, Atlantic and New England.

The CIAA, which currently resides in the South Atlantic along with the Peach Belt and South Atlantic conferences, is scheduled to be moved to the new Atlantic Region which houses the Pennsylvania State Athletic and West Virginia Athletic conferences.

The Carolinas-Virginia Athletic Conference, which has been trying to get into the South for years, finally whined and schemed long enough to take the CIAA's spot in the South Atlantic, which will be renamed the South in 2008. (Got all that?)

But, as has been stated here numerous times before, this isn't about regional fairness; it's about one word: basketball.

The CIAA is a D-II powerhouse — ESPN doesn't knock on just anybody's door — and has owned the South Atlantic over the years. Teams in the Peach Belt and South Atlantic know the road to the Elite Eight — Division II's version of the Final Four — goes through the black neighborhood.

In order to justify its decision, the task force voted to redo the entire division and include ALL sports, so no one could claim favoritism.

Sharon K. Cessna, NCAA

See CIAA/4C

For Bonds, 755 mark far from a sure thing

By Janie McCauley
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN FRANCISCO — Barry Bonds once seemed on an inevitable march toward becoming baseball's home run king.

The San Francisco slugger homered at a dizzying rate, sending pitches both good and bad over outfield fences. Now he's lucky to hit one out once a week.

What only a Bonds few years ago appeared a relatively simple task has become daunting: 40 home runs to tie Hank Aaron's record of 755.

"If my health feels good and I feel like I can play, then I'm going to play," Bonds said Monday before the Giants played at Florida, then minutes later became a little less definitive. "If I'm healthy enough, it's

See BONDS/4C