

## Irving bids farewell to Cleveland

Guard doesn't mention James in thank-you note

BY TOM WITHERS  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

CLEVELAND — Kyrie Irving did not mention LeBron James, now his former teammate, while thanking Cleveland fans after his trade to Boston was finalized.

Irving, who is now officially a member of the Cel-

tics after the teams completed a blockbuster deal that had stalled, posted a lengthy thank-you note and video on his Instagram account Thursday. While somewhat vague about his intentions, the All-Star guard explained some of the reasons that led to him requesting the Cavaliers

trade him following six seasons — and three straight trips to the NBA Finals.

In a meeting last month with Cleveland owner Dan Gilbert, Irving said he wanted out.

“You understand the magnitude of decisions that you make in your life can affect a lot of people all at once,”

Irving said in the more than 4-minute video. “And when you get to that point and you understand that the best intentions for you and ultimately to be in your truth, and find out what you really want to do in your life and how you want to accomplish it — that moment comes and you take full advantage of it.”

“And there are no other ulterior reasons other than

being happy and to be somewhere you feel like it's an environment that's conducive for you maximizing your potential.”

Irving apparently felt it was time to get out from under the colossal shadow cast by James. The pair won an NBA title together — the first for any Cleveland team

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## Sophomore shines in Northern Vance loss

BY LOGAN ULRICH  
SPORTS EDITOR

Samien Burell's father always told him to rely on his instincts. Keep your head in the game, don't think, just go.

So when the sophomore quarterback for Northern Vance dropped back on third down, with the Vikings trailing Beddingfield by 16 in the fourth quarter and needing a play, he didn't need to pause when a defender closed in a heartbeat after the snap.

He took a hop forward to put a teammate between him and the charging Bruin. Then with no one open, Burell tucked the ball and took off down the middle of the field. Two linebackers met him after 10 yards.

“I knew from film that they had good hitters,” he said. “I had to drop my shoulders, because I knew the hitters were coming, and I just kept my feet moving.”

The bone-crunching impact reverberated off the trees surrounding the field. Burell, all 5-foot-10 and 140 pounds of him, defied physics and stayed on his feet, then turned on the jets to race the final 30 yards for a touchdown.

It was exactly the type of spark Northern Vance, scoreless after two games, was looking for when it turned to the youngster at quarterback this week. Burell finished the game with 62 yards rushing, 160 passing and a touchdown each through the air and on the ground.

And though the Vikings dropped their third straight game of the season, falling to Beddingfield 28-12, head coach Antwain Cook thinks they've found something to build on.

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Northern Vance quarterback Samien Burell (13) releases a pass to wide receiver Mikel Brown (2) for a first down in Thursday's game.

Special to The Daily Dispatch / KEN MARTIN



More fun coming to the NFL this season?

BY BARRY WILNER  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Troy Vincent has heard, far too often, the No Fun League reference to his sport.

While he finds it a totally inaccurate description, Vincent is confident the NFL will be even more entertaining in 2017.

Why?

“Two topics that I have spent most of the offseason on: pace of play and celebration,” says the league's executive vice president of football operations and a former star defensive back with the Dolphins and Eagles.

“The commissioner and myself spoke to literally over 200 players about celebration — the majority active, our legends, Hall of Famers, fans, officials — which was critical in our decision. It's one thing to make an adjustment, then can you teach it, can a player apply it, then can an official officiate it? That's what you have to look at when you change rules or policies.

“Some of the players' reactions were, tell me what is wrong with me using a ball as a prop? They simplified things and made us think. Over time, we've seen that something is happening and we've responded and reacted, and put restrictions on what our fans have grown to love and appreciate: this spontaneity, creativity, and innovation of celebration, and when a great play is made.

“It was a great process. Because it was a good process, we were able to make

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## Crimson Tide-Seminoles highlights ACC's opening slate

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Things to watch in the Atlantic Coast Conference in Week 1:

**GAME OF THE WEEK**

No. 3 Florida State against No. 1 Alabama. The opening weekend in Atlanta offers probably the biggest regular-season matchup for the entire college football season. The Crimson Tide beat Clemson for the national title two years ago then lost to the Tigers in last season's title game. Now Jimbo Fisher's Seminoles get their shot against Nick Saban's pow-

erhouse program, this time as the preseason favorite to win the ACC after Clemson's recent run. This is the first time two top-3 teams in the Top 25 will meet to open the season, and the game features the winningest programs in the country since 2010 (Alabama 86, FSU 78).

**BEST MATCHUP**

Virginia Tech's defense vs. West Virginia's offense. They're dusting off the Black Diamond Trophy after 12 years and bringing it to Landover, Maryland, for the renewal of a once-dormant border rivalry between two

former Big East programs and current Top 25 teams. For veteran Tech defensive coordinator Bud Foster, this will be his 20th meeting against the Mountaineers but the first since 2005. This time, his trademark tough D will try to frustrate highly regarded Florida transfer Will Grier in his debut at quarterback for West Virginia.

**INSIDE THE NUMBERS**

ACC schools hope this season starts as well as 2016 did. The ACC went 10-2 during the opening weekend last year, highlighted by Florida

State's victory over Mississippi in Orlando, Florida, and Clemson's win over Auburn. That tied the best collective start in league history, also achieved in 2010 and 2015.

**LONG SHOT**

Youngstown State presents a tough challenge for Pittsburgh, even on the road. The Penguins are coming off a 12-win season that included an appearance in the Championship Sub-division title game, and they enter the season ranked in the top 10 nationally

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# Falcons' rivals to challenge for division

## Panthers hoping to bounce back from injury-plagued season a year ago

BY BRETT MARTEL  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Before the Atlanta Falcons can think about Super Bowl redemption, they'll have to contend with an NFC South Division that could be dangerous to overlook.

A Carolina team that was in the Super Bowl just two seasons ago aims to bounce back from an injury-filled 2016. A young, talented Tampa Bay Buccaneers team looks primed to end a long playoff draught.

And in New Orleans, there is urgency to climb out of a three-year rut of sub-.500 play in what is currently 38-year-old, record-setting quarterback Drew Brees' last season under contract.

Falcons coach Dan Quinn has gone out of his way to hush any Super Bowl talk — not because he doesn't want to revisit the pain of his team's collapse against New England, but because he wants his players focused on what he views as the considerable challenge of staying on top of their division.

"That's where the mindset has to be to get where you want to go," Quinn said. "We know if you would

look past these other three (NFC South teams), that would be a mistake, knowing the toughness these three groups play with on well-coached teams."

For Quinn, a former defensive coordinator for Seattle's 2013 title team, a key characteristic of the division is exceptional play by quarterbacks with varying strengths. He has his own prolific QB in Matt Ryan, a conventional pocket passer with a 6-foot-4 frame and accurate arm.

The Saints, of course, have benefited from Brees' extraordinary timing and accuracy for more than a decade, including five 5,000-yard seasons passing (and another with 4,952).

Carolina has a true dual-threat QB in Cam Newton. The Bucs have the up-and-coming Jameis Winston, who prefers to stay behind the line of scrimmage, but has the mobility to escape collapsing pockets and give himself more time to throw.

For Atlanta, re-conquering the division will mean contending with "the uniqueness of what Carolina does, the uniqueness of what New Orleans does, the uniqueness of what Tampa does and the way they feature the players in their systems," Quinn said.

Brees has been around the NFC South long enough to see how hard it has been to stay on top.

Since the division was created by NFL realignment in 2002, Carolina is the only repeat winner with a three-year run from 2013-15.

"We know that every team in our division is going to be somebody to

contend with," Brees said.

Here are some other story lines in the NFC South:

### STEVE'S SYSTEM

The Falcons had to find a new offensive coordinator when Kyle Shanahan left to take over as San Francisco's head coach. Atlanta decided to fill the void with Steve Sarkisian, who was briefly Alabama's offensive coordinator when the Crimson Tide lost the national title game to Clemson.

Sarkisian was a stopgap measure when the Crimson Tide sent Lane Kiffin packing. Now Sarkisian is back in the NFL for the first time since serving as Oakland's QB coach in 2004.

### KEEPING CAM CLEAN

Last season, Newton followed up a 2015 MVP campaign with the worst statistical season (19 TDs, 14 INTs) of his career. He struggled behind an offensive line beset with injuries and played the final month of the season with a partially torn rotator cuff that required offseason surgery.

"I can't let 2016 happen again," Newton said.

To help, Carolina signed free agent left tackle Matt Kalil and drafted right tackle Taylor Moton in the second round. They also added two versatile weapons on offense with their first two draft picks — running back Christian McCaffrey and wide receiver Curtis Samuel.

### RISING EXPECTATIONS

The Bucs haven't made the play-

offs since 2007 and haven't won a postseason game since the team's Super Bowl run 15 years ago. But with Jameis Winston entering his third season, pressure is mounting to change that.

The team added playmakers on offense: receiver DeSean Jackson in free agency and tight end O.J. Howard in the draft. Coach Dirk Koetter is counting on the defense being better, too, following the addition of end Chris Baker and safeties J.J. Wilcox and Justin Evans.

Winston led the Bucs to their first winning record in six years last season and has topped 4,000 yards passing in each of his first two seasons. Doug Martin, the NFL's second-leading rusher in 2015, also is set to return in Week 4 from a drug suspension.

### HELPING BREES

The Saints brought in 10-year veteran Adrian Peterson hoping he still has some exceptional football left after missing most of last season with a knee injury. They also hope he can catch the ball and will thrive in coach Sean Payton's inventive formations.

New Orleans also used two of its top three draft picks in an effort to improve a secondary that ranked last against the pass last season. Cornerback Marshon Lattimore was the club's top pick and safety Marcus Williams was taken in the second round.

### PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

Falcons, Panthers, Buccaneers, Saints.

## Area soccer, volleyball and tennis teams in action

### SPECIAL TO THE DISPATCH VARSITY BOYS SOCCER

The Henderson Collegiate Pride defeated KIPP: Pride High by a score of 8-2 Thursday evening at Kennametal Field. Henderson Collegiate was led in scoring by Micah Lewis (junior) with 4 goals, and Alex Lopez (sophomore) with 3 goals. Ernest Trejo (freshman) contributed as well with a goal of his own. With a balanced attack the Pride were able to overcome an initial deficit by going on a 6 goal run to end the half. It was their first win of the year, and they now own a record of 1-4 on the season. Their next game is Friday at Kennametal Field in Henderson.

### MIDDLE SCHOOL

Henderson Collegiate's middle school soccer team defeated Envision Science Academy by a score of 5 to 2 Thursday evening at Kennametal Field. The team was led in scoring by seventh grader Justin Martinez, who scored 3 goals in the game. Seventh graders Oscar Delcid and Silvestre Romero also contributed one goal apiece for the Pride, who now have a record of 1-0 on the season. Henderson Collegiate will play their next game at Sallie B. Howard next Wednesday in Wilson, NC.

### CROSSROADS CHRISTIAN BOYS SOCCER

The Colts won Tuesday's game against Cresset Christian Acad-

emy by a score of 5-1.

### GIRLS TENNIS KERR VANCE ACADEMY AT BURLINGTON

KVA - 9

Burlington - 0

#### Singles

No. 1 - Holly Steg def.

Ellie Riddle 6-2; 7-6 (7-5)

No. 2 - Kayla Abbott def.

Jess Fluette 6-0; 6-1

No. 3 - Savannah Barnes

def. Anna Meeks 6-1; 6-0

No. 4 - Eddie Echols def.

Brea Mciva 6-0; 6-0

No. 5 - Caroline Williams

def. Leona Lin 6-0; 6-0

No. 6 - Genie Parish def.

Madison Reese 6-0; 6-0

#### Doubles

No. 1 - Steg/Barnes defs

Riddle/Fluette 8-2

No. 2 - Abbott/Echols

def. Meeks/Lin 8-0

No. 3 - Williams/

Lorena Negrón def. Reese/

Catherine Yan 8-0

## SOPHOMORE

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"That just shows him," Cook said about Burell's touchdown run. "He is going to fight to the very end, and that's what we needed."

Burell has the speed and arm to be dangerous at quarterback, but what set him apart Thursday night was his grit. On nearly every drop back, he faced immediate pressure, and time after time Beddingfield defenders took him to the turf — hard.

But the young quarterback never wavered. He didn't think about the hits that were coming or the bruises that would need to be iced after the game. He kept his eyes downfield in search of a play for his team.

"He's not afraid to stick his head in there, drive his feet," Cook said. "He's going to do everything he can to give us the best play he can."

After the Viking's defense had used a pair of interceptions — one each by senior Mikel Brown and sophomore Taquan Lyons — to hold Beddingfield to only a touchdown in the first half, the Bruins had scored on a long touchdown run to take a 14-0 lead midway through the third quarter.

Facing a third-and-12, Burell dropped back, ducked a tackler, then ran forward before stopping and sprinting to his right, barely staying behind the line of scrimmage. He whipped his right arm back and let the ball fly deep down the field, where sophomore Phadol Jordan waited all alone for the easy 64-yard touchdown pass.

It was Northern Vance's first touchdown of the season, 11 and a half quarters into the season.

Then after another long touchdown run to start the fourth quarter by Beddingfield's Jalil Hutcherson, his third of the night, Burell burst through the line for his second score of the night in

response. With 11 minutes to go, the score was 22-12, and Northern Vance had hope for its first win of the season.

Yet it wasn't meant to be. The defense had put the Vikings in a position to win the past two weeks with stops and turnovers, but the team had fallen short after the offense couldn't take advantage. On Thursday night, the turnovers dried up after the first half, and Northern Vance couldn't make the one final stop it needed.

With Beddingfield facing a third-and-23 after penalties — the Bruins had a staggering 22 on the night — quarterback Sean Jones hit Hutcherson on a simple screen pass. Eighty-eight yards later, he was in the end zone for his fourth score of the night and the backbreaker for Northern Vance.

"At the end of the day, we were in the game, they had penalties galore," Cook said. "But it goes back to what we talked about last week, what we talked about the week before. We are not good tacklers. And as much as we work on it with the bags, as much as we work on it with live, we still as a concept are not wrapping up. That's the key to what we do on defense, you have to wrap up and you have to drive your feet."

Cook admitted the defense may have suffered the past couple weeks from a lack of attention while the coaches figured out the offense. But with Burell looking like the answer to Northern Vance's offensive woes, Cook can turn his attention fully to the defense.

Meanwhile, others have taken notice of Burell. As the sophomore jogged off the field, Jones, the Beddingfield senior quarterback who racked up nearly 300 yards of total offense himself, stopped to congratulate him.

Like Burell's father before him, Jones told him to keep doing his thing.

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## FUN

FROM PAGE B1

an informed decision. All stakeholders had a say."

There will be limits, naturally, to what players can do. Don't look for any soccer-style, full-team scrums on the sideline or end line.

Nothing demeaning or provocative when using the ball as a prop. No dunking over the crossbar, which apparently has been deemed dangerous (Tony Gonzalez would argue otherwise).

And all of these prop celebrations are allowed only after a touchdown or a change of possession. That's

with the intent to stick to speeding up play, eliminating as much dead time as possible.

Fans at the games will notice that even more than those watching on TV or other devices — particularly fans in frozen stadiums in December.

"That was so important, that we had to make sure we had clarity around dead time," Vincent said.

"The last thing you want is a player, coach or fan thinking we are trying to disrupt the game. Ball run out of bounds, time after a touchdown, changing of possession, all of this is dead time. When you start analyzing all of the mechanics of that, we realize we need to be much more efficient."

## SLATE

FROM PAGE B1

for both FCS polls. YSU lost to Pitt 45-37 in 2015 in its first game under former Nebraska coach Bo Pelini, but earned an upset win in 2012.

### IMPACT PLAYER

North Carolina State could use another big performance from do-everything threat

Jaylen Samuels in Saturday's opener against South Carolina in Charlotte. The senior — a pre-season AP all-America second-team pick — creates matchup problems by lining up at tight end, running back and receiver. He has scored 29 rushing or receiving touchdowns the past two seasons, and gets the chance to play in his hometown against the Gamecocks.

## IRVING

FROM PAGE B1

since 1964 — in 2016, but Irving did not single out James in his video or the accompanying note.

Irving's comments were his first since the trade, which was initially announced on Aug. 22. He was sent to the Celtics for All-Star guard Isaiah Thomas, forward Jae Crowder, center Ante Zizic and the 2018 first-round pick Boston acquired from Brooklyn.

After the Cavaliers had concerns about Thomas' hip injury, they asked for more and

obtained a 2020 second-round pick from the Celtics, completing the deal.

In his video, Irving thanked Gilbert and Cleveland's ownership group for taking "a chance on a 19-year-old kid that was coming off a stubbed right toe, of being in a very, very immature place at the time."

The Cavaliers selected Irving with the No. 1 overall pick in 2011 after he played in just 11 games at Duke because of injury.

He was a four-time All-Star with Cleveland and made the biggest basket in franchise history, a 3-pointer in the closing moments of Game 7 in the 2016

Finals that propelled the Cavs to the title.

While Irving and James had their differences, the two seemingly managed to work through them. After the Cavs were beaten by Golden State in this year's Finals, Irving spoke at length about what it meant to play with James and how much he had learned.

But as he closed his video, Irving didn't acknowledge their relationship.

"And to my teammates: crazy stories, crazy experiences and just unbelievable human beings, man," Irving said. "You all know how this brotherhood goes, man. All love."