

Indianapolis 500 seeks centennial bump

BY DAVE SKRETTA
AP SPORTS WRITER

There was a palpable sense of excitement everywhere Doug Boles went a year ago, whether it was the gas station or grocery store or his office on 16th and Georgetown just outside Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

Everyone was talking about the 100th running of the Indianapolis 500.

Boles shared in the excitement, too. The president of the speedway seemed to be

everywhere at once, shaking hands with some of the estimated 350,000 fans on race day, taking selfies that showed up on all manner of social media and ensuring the centennial edition would be one to remember.

But just below the surface was also an underlying fear: What would happen next year? Would all the build-up to such a milestone event leave many of those fans done for 101?

“We were worried that one of two things could happen,”

Boles explained. “People who had been coming for a long time would view the 100th as sort of the end point — they had gotten to the 100th and they were going to do something else, listen to it on the radio, watch it on TV, but weren’t going to come.

“And the other one,” Boles said, “is we knew we’d have a lot of bucket-listers and first-timer people who were coming, and we were hoping that

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Past winners Dixon, Franchitti robbed at gunpoint at Taco Bell

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDIANAPOLIS — Police say Indianapolis 500 pole-winner Scott Dixon and fellow former race winner Dario Franchitti were robbed at gunpoint while in a Taco Bell drive-thru lane.

A police report that the

robbery happened shortly before 10 p.m. Sunday at the fast-food restaurant less than a mile from the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, where Dixon had hours earlier won the top starting position for Sunday’s Indy 500.

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Thoughts of family fuel Daye



THE NEWS AND OBSERVER

Northern Vance’s Mya Daye (left) leans at the finish line to edge out Cleveland’s Imani Williams for the 200-meter dash title in the 3-A NCHSAA Track and Field Championships on Saturday at North Carolina A&T University in Greensboro.

Northern Vance sprinter wins two titles at state meet

BY LOGAN ULRICH
SPORTS EDITOR

The same things go through Mya Daye’s mind every time she races. Don’t false start. Don’t let nobody pass you. Run your time, not your opponents. Just get through it. Finish.

The senior sprinter from Northern Vance crouches down in her stance, limbs braced against the blocks, muscles coiled and ready to explode. A gunshot rings out — just like it did outside a party in Greensboro eight months earlier on a cool October night.

A confrontation had turned into an altercation, then into bullets spraying the house at random. Two hit bodies instead of walls. Two students from North Carolina A&T University lost their lives that night. One of them was Mya’s cousin, Ahmad Campbell.

Mya wasn’t there that night. But every time she’s stepped on a track in the months since, she hasn’t been able to forget it.

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Cavs coach defends James after ‘weird’ loss in Game 3

BY TOM WITHERS
ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDEPENDENCE, Ohio — LeBron James was nowhere to be seen, staying behind the scenes, keeping a low profile.

Just as he did in Game 3.

James did not address the media Monday, hours after one of the worst post-season games of his career, an 11-point, six-turnover, head-scratching atrocity in a 111-108 loss to the Boston Celtics that — for the time being — has made the Eastern Conference finals interesting.

As is always the case with Cleveland’s superstar, the poor performance prompted the usual speculation and suspicion: Is he hurt? Was he sending a message to

his teammates? What in the name of Red Auerbach happened?

“It was a weird game,” Cavs coach Tyrone Lue said. “A weird-feeling game.”

And it was an uncharacteristically passive performance by James, who had scored at least 30 in eight straight playoff games and imposed his will on the overmatched Celtics in the series’ first two games.

But James wasn’t himself Sunday night, not by a long stretch. He passed up shots and made mental and physical mistakes normally reserved for others.

For a superstar who regularly seizes the biggest moments and makes them his own, it was strange to see James basically look like

one of Cleveland’s reserves. He took just three shots and didn’t attempt a free throw in the fourth quarter.

Incredibly, he went scoreless over the final 16 minutes.

James accepted responsibility afterward, saying simply “I didn’t have it” during a postgame news conference that was preceded by a run-in with a heckling fan in the hallway.

If James’ play wasn’t stunning enough, Cavs forward J.R. Smith said his celebrated teammate lacked confidence.

What’s that? A three-time champion, four-time MVP, two-time Olympic gold medalist, global icon,

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Ex-MotoGP champ Hayden succumbs to injuries after collision

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CESENA, Italy — Former MotoGP world champion Nicky Hayden died in hospital on Monday, five days after he was hit by a car while training on his bicycle. Hayden was 35.

Maurizio Bufalini Hospital in Cesena, where Hayden had been since the collision last Wednesday, made the announcement. Hayden had severe cerebral damage and multiple traumatic injuries.

“The medical team has verified the death of the patient Nicholas Patrick Hayden, who has been undergoing care since last Wednesday May 17 in the intensive care unit of the Bufalini Hospital in Cesena following a

very serious polytrauma which occurred the same day,” the hospital statement said.

Hayden was training on the Rimini coast following a motorcycle race at nearby Imola. The black Peugeot car that hit Hayden had its front windshield smashed.

Judicial authorities have opened an investigation into the incident and questioned the 30-year-old driver of the Peugeot.

Hayden won the MotoGP title in 2006, finishing narrowly ahead of Italian great Valentino Rossi.

In a MotoGP career spanning 2003-16 with Honda and Ducati,

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Duncan provides tips, laughs for Spurs

Injury-plagued San Antonio trails Western Conference finals series 3-0

BY RAUL DOMINGUEZ
ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN ANTONIO — There was a mad scramble at the Spurs practice during the Western Conference finals, a flurry of activity to position cameras and get recording devices ready to document essentially what was the sighting of a white whale.

Tim Duncan, the NBA's most reclusive star, had apparently accepted a request to speak publicly for the first time since quietly retiring in the offseason.

The excitement built with each step Duncan took. Then, after meticulously unwrapping a right knee brace, the former Spurs All-Star walked past the cameras without stopping.

"Is there a bathroom back there?" Duncan said, delivering the punchline with the same stoic look he wore throughout his 19-year career.

San Antonio staff members, including Monty Williams, Ime Udoka and Becky Hammon, howled in delight — a rare laugh for the Spurs in a conference finals that had Golden State cruising toward an easy win and a trip to the NBA Finals.

Duncan's good humor and calm demeanor — as much a part of Duncan's Hall of Fame career as his leadership — gave the Spurs a minor boost after falling in an 0-3 hole against the Warriors without injured stars Tony Parker and Kawhi Leonard much of the way.

Enter Duncan to provide a few laughs, and more importantly, a few defensive tips.

"It's always good to have Tim in the facility," Spurs guard Danny Green said. "Even his presence gives us a little more mental relaxation, a little more refocus with him just helping other guys see what he sees on the tube. He can pick and point out what the bigs need to do."

Since retiring, Duncan has served as an unofficial assistant coach for the Spurs, imparting the knowledge that helped him become one of the greatest power forwards ever. He worked with numerous players over the weekend, particularly LaMarcus Aldridge and Patty Mills, who have both struggled against Golden State.

Mills was averaging just 5.7 points on 2-for-14 shooting

on 3-pointers through Game 3, but Aldridge has received most of the criticism for the team's lackluster play offensively. After signing a lucrative contract last offseason, Aldridge is being held to 18 points on 22-for-52 shooting against the Warriors.

Without their leading scorer in Leonard, starting point guard in Parker and their energetic reserve post in David Lee, the Spurs need something. Unfortunately, it's not Duncan.

Duncan retired in July after winning five championships, earning three NBA Finals MVP awards and was twice named league MVP. Knee injuries and time forced "The Big Fundamental" to retire.

"Tim can't help us a lick," coach Gregg Popovich deadpanned Saturday. "He can't play dead anymore. He just

comes for the free lunch."

But that hasn't stopped Duncan from trying to help as much as he can. The 6-foot-11 forward has stopped by practice throughout the season to give tips to players and assist with practice. He has stayed in touch with Popovich.

"We're like in love, we text all of the time," Popovich said following a November practice Duncan attended.

The tongue-in-cheek admission was a shock. Popovich texts? Does he use emojis?

"Only the ones where you blow kisses," Popovich quipped.

Duncan may no longer be able to contribute on the court, but he is still giving the Spurs positive energy.

Chances are they might need another pick-me-up following Game 4.

Panthers make several personnel changes

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHARLOTTE — The Panthers have made several changes within their scouting staff, including naming Mark Koncz the new director of player personnel. Koncz had previously worked as the team's director of pro scouting.

Jeff Morrow was promoted to director of college scouting and Matt Allen is the new director of pro personnel.

Don Gregory, who has previously worked as the director of player personnel and director of college scouting, will now serve as a senior executive scout overseeing pro and college.

Jonathan Fields was named a pro scouting assistant and Eli Montague has joined the team as an area scout.

The moves come after assistant general manager Brandon Beane left earlier this month to become the general manager of the Buffalo Bills. The team has not filled Beane's position.

JAMES

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billion-dollar-business-insneakers, wasn't confident?

"He's got to be aggressive, get downhill, play like he's been playing, play confident," Smith said. "That's what I always think, when people of his stature or people like him, you've got to play confident the whole night and play aggressive.

It's the Eastern Conference finals. It's not enough for him. For what he does, what he brings, it's not enough.

"He knows that. We know that. Just expect him to be better in Game 4."

The series resumes Tuesday night at Quicken Loans Arena before returning to Boston on Thursday for a Game 5 that didn't appear necessary until the Celtics stormed back from 21 down and won when Avery Bradley's 3-pointer

danced an Irish jig on the rim before falling with 0.01 seconds left.

It was Boston's first outing since star guard Isaiah Thomas was shut down with a hip injury, and the Celtics showed they're capable counter-punchers.

"You obviously hear people saying that it's all about how you respond, and we don't feel like people believed in us and counted us out," Bradley said. "But that just

put another chip on our shoulder, which I think is good. I hope we can continue to play with that chip on our shoulder and come out the same way next game."

Thomas didn't travel with the club to Cleveland, but he was part of the postgame fun.

"We called him on Facebook, so he got to celebrate with us a little bit," Bradley said. "We wish he was here with us, and we just want him to get better."

DAYE

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Mya has a big family. One brother, one sister, three aunts, four uncles and too many cousins to count. Her family is important to her; it was her cousin Ahmad that introduced her to track in the seventh grade. He would have graduated this May; now Mya is about to graduate with three state championship medals, including two from Saturday's state meet.

"He was basically the reason I won," she said. "I did it all for him."

Ahmad ran track at Southern Vance, and he became her coach and motivator. The two would run and train together. He'd help her block work so she could get a faster start when she ran. Even when he went away to college, he'd find a way to come to nearly every meet. He helped her fall in love with track.

Last year, with Ahmad's help, Mya finished in first place at the state meet in the 100-meter dash with a time of 12.06 seconds. And after she finished in second place in the 200-meter, she determined to come back this year and take first in both.

Mya has always liked math and

numbers. She likes learning new formulas and ways to solve problems. She applies the same focus to track, dissecting her times down to fractions of a second and building them back up to beat her records.

"Everything is pretty much about math, to me," she said.

But when this season began, it was harder. Gone was Ahmad's constant presence as she worked out. Without him, her anxiety rose and her focus waned. Her coach, Randy Bullock, noticed the difference.

"She had that enthusiasm and excitement that first two years," he said. "This year was different."

While Bullock used practice to get other players in shape, Mya had the intrinsic motivation to work outside of track. She'd go full speed in practice, even if her coach told her to take it easy. Earlier this year, though, Bullock saw that fire fade somewhat, and Mya's previous attention to detail slip.

"It was nerve-racking," she said. "When I got on the track, all I could think about was him."

Every meet and every practice became more of a grind than usual. Mya had dreams of running track in college and eventually going to the Olympics, but the memories and the painful reminders that track brought were becoming too much

to bear. It was the middle of the season and she thought about quitting.

But she didn't. Her family kept her going. Her mother and siblings came to her meets and practices. And even though he was gone, Ahmad kept his cousin running toward her passion.

"I knew he wouldn't have wanted me to," Mya said. "He would have wanted me to continue what I love."

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On Saturday, Mya took to the blocks in the state 3A meet held at North Carolina A&T's campus. With pastel nail expansions stretched out on the hot track, she focused on the finish line. When the gun went off, the same thoughts ran through her mind.

Don't let nobody pass you. Just get through it. Finish.

"It was really stressful, but I didn't quit," she said. "I didn't quit. I kept going, and I came out on top."

Twice she ran and twice she finished first. She defended her 100-meter title, shaving off a tenth of a second, and finally took first in the 200-meter to give her three career gold medals.

She screamed when she crossed the finish line, letting out the emotion and a few tears. Ahmad was the only thing on her mind.

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BUMP

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we could get them to come back a second or third time."

It appears many of those first-timers will indeed be back next weekend.

After strong crowds for qualifying weekend, Boles told The Associated Press that ticket sales are strong to watch Scott Dixon lead the field to green on Sunday. The crowd won't reach the complete sellout last year, which allowed the local TV blackout to be lifted for the first time since 1950, but it could surpass 250,000 fans, continuing an upward trend that followed years of stagnation.

"Our number on race day is going to end up being better than any race day we've had in at least the last 15 years, other than last year," Boles said. "If you look at 2011 through 2015, we were on a slow-growing trajectory, which we were happy with,

and then 2016 obviously was a huge boom. We want to maintain as much of that lift as we could and we're really pleased with how much we gained."

The speedway doesn't release official attendance numbers, making it difficult to quantify the amount of lift the centennial race gave to the "Greatest Spectacle in Racing." At least anecdotally, those who have spent much of May around the racetrack have experienced a similar buzz to last year.

"We've seen a great amount of interest in the race," said Graham Rahal, who will start in the middle of the fifth row. "There's been a good buzz about it and that's only going to continue to get better. Even the Grand Prix, it was packed, maybe double what we had from last year."

Yes, the momentum from the 100th race carried over to other IndyCar events. The series' 16 races last year averaged 1.28 million viewers, their highest TV ratings recorded by Nielsen since 2011 — numbers that are noteworthy with Indy 500 broad-

cast rights up for bidding this year.

Helping the cause of the 101st running are the numerous story lines serving as a backdrop:

- Speeds are back after years of temperance. Dixon qualified with a four-lap average of 232.164 mph, the fastest attempt since Arie Luyendyk set the track record of 236.986 in 1996.

- Big names are back, too. Helio Castroneves will again try to join Rick Mears, A.J. Foyt and Al Unser Sr. in the club of four-time winners, while Juan Pablo Montoya tries to become a three-time champ.

- The rookie winner has returned. Alexander Rossi is hoping to defend his title from the outside of Row 1, the young American driver part of powerful a six-car Andretti Autosport stable.

- There's a former Formula One champ making headlines. Fernando Alonso qualified fifth, proving the Spaniard's shot at winning the Borg-Warner Trophy is far more than a publicity stunt.

HAYDEN

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Hayden posted three victories and 28 podium finishes in 218 races.

After switching to

the World Superbike championship last year, Hayden finished fifth overall.

Hayden was 13th in Superbike this season, riding for the Red Bull Honda team.

Fellow motorcycle racers

reacted to Hayden's death on Twitter.

"I'm shattered after the news. We will never forget you!" wrote three-time MotoGP world champion Marc Marquez.

"Always in my heart, champ. RIP Nicky. #69,"

wrote MotoGP standout Dani Pedrosa.

Hayden was born in Owensboro, Kentucky. Several family members had flown in from the United States, including Hayden's mother and brother.