

# Sports

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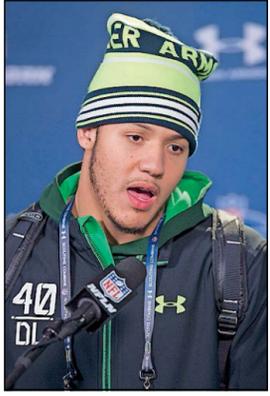
NBA playoffs, 2 MLB, 3 NHL playoffs, 4

## TWO-MINUTE Drill

"To me, doing the Double has never been anything that I seriously thought about. Do I wish I had the opportunity to race in the Indianapolis 500? Absolutely. It just wasn't meant to be."

**JEFF GORDON**  
NASCAR Sprint Cup driver and Indiana native on why he never raced in the Indianapolis 500

## Inside



### Draft stock up in smoke?

NFL hopefuls Shane Ray (above) and Randy Gregory must wait and see how their recent transgressions will affect their status in today's NFL draft.

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## Names in the games

### T'wolves' Wiggins to be named NBA's top rookie

A person with knowledge of the situation tells The Associated Press that Minnesota Timberwolves forward Andrew Wiggins will be named NBA rookie of the year today.

The person spoke Wednesday on condition of anonymity because an official announcement has not been made.

After coming to the Timberwolves in the trade that sent Kevin Love to Cleveland, Wiggins averaged 16.9 points and 4.6 rebounds while playing all 82 games in his first season.

### Jeff Gordon to drive pace car in Indy 500

Jeff Gordon will drive the pace car for the Indianapolis 500 next month.

The four-time NASCAR champion is retiring at the end of this season. He has a background in open-wheel racing, but Gordon has never run the Indianapolis 500. He'll

take the field to the green flag in the May 24 race, watch some laps with his wife and children, then fly to North Carolina to compete in NASCAR's Coca-Cola 600 that evening.

Chevrolet made the announcement Wednesday at Indianapolis Motor Speedway, where Gordon turned some laps in the Corvette Z06 pace car. He is a long-time Chevrolet ambassador.

### Patrick losing GoDaddy as primary car sponsor

Danica Patrick is losing GoDaddy as her primary car sponsor.

The internet domain giant has decided to pull its sponsorship of Patrick's No. 10 Chevrolet, which is fielded by Stewart-Haas Racing.

The 33-year-old Patrick is in the final year of her contract at SHR and landing a primary sponsor could be key to her NASCAR future.

GoDaddy wants to sign her to a personal services contract but will no longer sponsor her car.

— FROM STAFF, WIRE REPORTS

## Today's birthday

**Isiah Thomas, 1961**  
Basketball Hall of Famer

## GREENBRIER CLASSIC

# Tiger stalking Old White TPC again

14-time major champ announces plans to compete in second Greenbrier Classic

By Mitch Vingle  
Sports editor

Some folks jokingly call golf "a good walk gone bad."

Well, on Wednesday, Greenbrier resort owner Jim Justice had a good hunting trip "gone bad." Yet for a very good reason.

While in the wild, he received a text, you see, saying golfer Tiger Woods will participate in this year's Greenbrier Classic.

"I was in the middle of the woods

turkey hunting when I got the text," Justice said. "I was right in the middle of calling the turkey when I looked down and saw it. I started hollering — and that was the end of my hunt. But this is really good. It's really, really good."

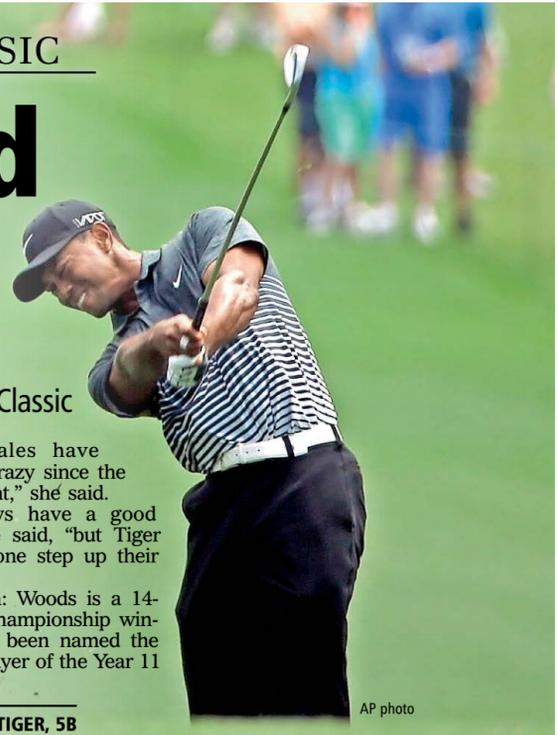
That's because Woods might be struggling with his game (he's currently ranked No. 116), but remains golf's biggest draw. The Greenbrier's Habibi Said Mamone said Woods is already drawing for the June 29-July 5 event in White Sulphur Springs.

"Ticket sales have been going crazy since the announcement," she said.

"We always have a good field," Justice said, "but Tiger makes everyone step up their game."

The reason: Woods is a 14-time major championship winner who has been named the PGA Tour Player of the Year 11 times.

SEE TIGER, 5B



AP photo

## PREP TRACK — 80TH GAZETTE/FOC RELAYS



F. BRIAN FERGUSON | Gazette

Hurricane's Abby Watson will be one of the athletes to watch during this week's Gazette/Friends of Coal Relays.

# RIISING TO THE CHALLENGE

Hurricane's Watson has overcome obstacles on, off the playing field

By Courtney Sealey  
For the Gazette

Abby Watson has been playing basketball and soccer since she was a toddler, so it is not surprising she is an all-stater in both those sports. What is surprising is her career with the Hurricane girls track team.

It all started when a coach in need for a stronger field squad scouted Watson.

"The track coach saw me walking in the hallway and just kinda asked me to come out and throw," Watson said.

"I had no idea of what I was doing, but I guess it ended up working out for me."

Four years later, Watson is a senior and the defending state champion in Class AAA shot put and in the shuttle hurdle relay after helping the Redskins win the school's second girls track title last spring.

She is one of the featured athletes competing this weekend in the 80th Gazette/Friends of Coal Relays, a two-day meet — considered a precursor to the state meet — that begins Friday at Laid-

ley Field in Charleston.

Watson picked up the shot put title on her final toss of 42 feet, 9 inches last year, beating favorite Mackenzie Leigh of Buckhannon-Upshur, who had gone 41-3/4.

With three teammates, Audrey Barber, Chloe Papa and Lauren London, Watson also won the shuttles in 1:04.90, topping runner-up Wheeling Park by more than a half-second (1:05.43).

Watson said it was a shock to win both titles.

"Mackenzie had really been good from the start of

her career. So it was just huge that I was able to beat her and be a state champion," Watson said. "Hurdles is awesome because I am doing it with some of my best friends."

Leigh didn't go home empty handed. She won the discus title after throwing 135-8, 11 feet more than Watson's 124-5, making it the second year in a row Watson fell to Leigh for the discus title. This year, Watson is looking to repeat in

SEE WATSON, 5B



DAVE HICKMAN

# Preston poised to make impact

MORGANTOWN — There are a handful of positions on West Virginia's football team that seem solid heading into the summer, most of them on the defensive side.

The offense breaks in a relatively new quarterback, a host of new receivers, a couple of linemen and searches for depth at running back. On special teams there's the issue of a new holder and finding new kick and punt returners.

There are some issues on defense, too — along the line and in the secondary — but one of those doesn't seem to be linebacker, where three fifth-year seniors are at the top of the depth chart and a fourth will be hard-pressed to squeeze in playing time.

So that's settled, right? Well, maybe.

"I like our senior linebackers, but they better watch No. 53 behind them," coach Dana Holgorsen said following last Saturday's spring game. "Because Xavier Preston might be our best defensive football player at this point."

For the record, Xavier Preston is not one of those seniors. Or even a junior. He's a 6-foot-2, 236-pound sophomore who played primarily on special teams a year ago.

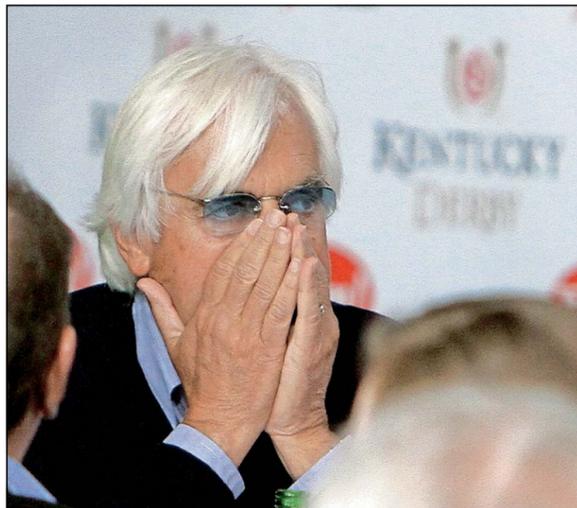
"He's so athletic," defensive coordinator Tony Gibson said of Preston. "He's strong and explosive and he has everything that you look for in a linebacker."

"By the time he's done he might be as good as we've ever had here. In the 10 years I've coached at West Virginia, he's got all of the tools and the ability to be as good as anybody."

High praise for a guy who took a snap or two in a goal-line package against Alabama in his first college game, then pretty much disappeared the rest of the season. But as far as Gibson is concerned, that was more a matter of just not being ready instead of any lack of ability.

"Oh, you could tell he was going to be an impact guy from day one," Gibson said. "We played him a little bit in the Alabama game in special packages, then we sat him a few games and then tried to get him back into the swing

SEE HICKMAN, 5B



AP photo

Hall of Fame trainer Bob Baffert reacts as American Pharoah draws post position 18 in Wednesday's Kentucky Derby draw.

## 141ST KENTUCKY DERBY

# Baffert has top two early favorites

By Beth Harris  
The Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — American Pharoah was made the early 5-2 favorite Wednesday for the 141st Kentucky Derby, with Dortmund the second choice in the full field of 20 horses, giving trainer Bob Baffert the top two choices on the morning line.

American Pharoah drew the No. 18 post. Only one horse has won from there, Gato Del Sol in 1982. American Pharoah comes into the Derby having won the Arkansas Derby by eight lengths.

"I'm extremely happy. I love 18. Not like, love," owner Ahmed Zayat said. "He's outside in the clear. He can do whatever he wants. He can sit and watch. The jock has so many options. That's the best post."

Baffert's other horse, undefeated Dortmund, drew

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