

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH
SPORTS

High school ref has special bond with his wife

After a kidney transplant last year — his wife was the donor — Kevin Wiggs is back refereeing area high school basketball games. In today's community sports section.



WEST 135, EAST 120

LA's Bryant shakes off boos, wins MVP award

"It's not going to ruin this day," he says as fans in Philadelphia jeer him

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PHILADELPHIA — The booing began when Kobe Bryant of the Los Angeles Lakers was introduced, continued after he made a series of game-turning plays and reached a crescendo when he was handed the All-Star MVP trophy.

Back in his hometown where the fans show him no love, Bryant received none Sunday. Instead, he was practically treated like a traitor by the notoriously harsh Philadelphia fans.

"I was pretty upset," Bryant said. "The boos were hurtful, but it's not going to ruin this day for me."



Bryant scored 31 points — the most in an All-Star Game since Michael Jordan had 40 in 1988 — in the arena where he walked off the court last June with his second championship. He led the Western Conference over the East 135-120 on Sunday.

Inside the game

Kobe Bryant scored 31 points, the most in an All-Star Game since Michael Jordan scored 40 in 1988.

Jordan was off his game, hitting just four of 13 shots for eight points, far below his career All-Star average of 21.3.

Bryant, who grew up in Lower Merion, Pa., and whose father, Joe, played for the 76ers, played with tremendous hustle and flashes of flair in helping the West build a big halftime lead that it never surrendered.

But he was booed nearly every he touched the ball, and when the game ended and he was given the MVP trophy, the fans let him have it long and loud one last time.

"What made me feel good though, at the end, was that the more people booed, some people started clapping and cheering even harder. That made me feel good," Bryant said.

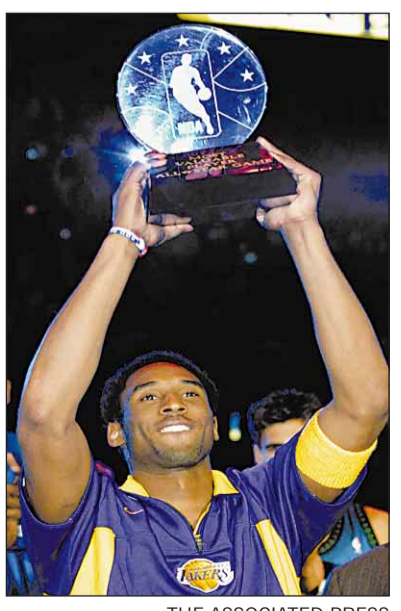
Bryant became the first player to reach 30 points since Jordan did it in 1993, and he relegated Jordan, hometown hero Allen Iverson and every other All-Star into an afterthought by thoroughly dominating the game nearly every moment he was on the floor.

He also had five rebounds and five assists, shooting 12 of 25 from the field.

"What an incredible performance he put on. He was a step ahead of the best in the league, and that's hard to do because there's some great players out there," West coach Don Nelson said.

It's hard to fathom why fans in this city would turn on a player who grew up in the area and whose father was somewhat of a fan favorite when he

See Game, D3



Kobe Bryant of the Lakers had 31 points, five rebounds and five assists for the West.



United States gets first gold



Kelly Clark holds her snowboard aloft in triumph after winning the women's halfpipe to claim the United States' first gold medal.

Vermont woman dazzles crowd in snowboarding

BY VAHE GREGORIAN
Of the Post-Dispatch

PARK CITY, Utah — With the first U.S. gold medal of the 2002 Salt Lake Winter Olympics within her grasp but not her grip, 18-year-old Kelly Clark was utterly at ease as she prepared for her final run in the women's halfpipe snowboard Sunday afternoon.

She cranked her mini-CD player as high as it could go, grinned and waved to the boisterous audience of about 16,000.

"The crowd was going wild, and I could hear them even over my headphones," said Clark, who already was assured of second if she failed to surpass France's Doriane Vidal. "I was real relaxed."

At the bottom of the halfpipe at the Park City Mountain Resort stood Vidal, the reigning world champion. She was in first place and would claim the gold medal if Clark was unable to eclipse her score of 43 out of a possible 50 points.

True to the spirit of the sport, Vidal found herself conflicted. Like Clark, who gravitated toward snowboarding because everybody roots for everybody else, Vidal couldn't hope for a foe to flop.

"It was a strange feeling," Vidal said in perfect English distinguished by her French accent. "Because I like her, I was hoping she would do good. And for the show also. And then I was also hoping she wouldn't beat me. So it was quite strange."

See Clark, D6

■ Olympic coverage, D4-6

How the Americans fared

Downhill — Daron Rahlves was 16th, Jake Fiala 27th and Scott Macartney 29th.

Ski jumping — Brendan Doran, 44th.

Nordic combined — Todd Lodwick was seventh, Matt Dayton 18th, Bill Demong 19th.

Halfpipe snowboarding — Kelly Clark won the gold. Shannon Dunn-Downing was fifth and Tricia Byrnes sixth.

3,000-meter speed skating — Catherine Raney 13th and Annie Driscoll 21st.

Blues' Varlamov sleeps in, joins Ukraine's first team

BY DERRICK GOULD
Of the Post-Dispatch

WEST VALLEY CITY, Utah — Unable to speak the language, Sergei Varlamov could doze off without being rude.

On the charter flight from St. Louis to the Winter Games, Blues winger Varlamov rode with three NHL regulars who were rushing to play for Slovakia. It was past midnight. He was tired. A Ukrainian, he understood little of what they were talking about.

He could join in, but why not steal some Z's when available? "I slept through the whole

thing," said Varlamov, who will play for the first Ukraine Olympic ice hockey team today in its preliminary-round game against Switzerland at 5 p.m. "They got going on speaking Slovakian. I understood some of the words, but not enough. I just slept. Then we got in the car, all found a comfortable spot and slept some more."

Squeezing in sleep, even in the corners of a six-seat plane or a limousine, was essential as Varlamov joins Pavol Demitra as the two Blues cramming an Olympic game between their NHL responsibilities this weekend.

See Varlamov, D6

Blown lead eliminates Slovakia

BY DERRICK GOULD
Of the Post-Dispatch

WEST VALLEY CITY, Utah — Giddy about playing for his country in a must-win Olympic game, Slovakian winger Pavol Demitra couldn't sleep anyway. So why not skate?

After losing to Philadelphia at Savvis Center, taking a charter flight out of St. Louis and then a two-hour limousine ride from an airfield in Wyoming, Demitra was in Salt Lake City at 6 a.m. Sunday. He started talking with his teammates about that night's game and decided, heck, he had enough energy for the morning practice.

His country's team, after all, was nearing crisis.



CHRIS LEE / POST-DISPATCH

Slovakia's Pavol Demitra (right) and Latvia's Aleksandrs Semjonovs (left) trip over Latvia's Karlis Skrastins in the first period of Sunday night's game.

Sleep could wait. "I'm so excited," Demitra said, then explained the simple task Slovakia had in Sunday's hockey game against Latvia.

"We have to win. And score lots of goals."

Demitra, the Blues' top-scoring center, then offered a proven

See Demitra, D6

INSIDE

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- 9 COLLEGE BASKETBALL:** Boston College knocks off No. 12 Miami for the second time this season.
- 10 DOGS:** Canine heroes will take a bow tonight at the Westminster show.

Stewart wins Budweiser Shootout

For the second successive year, Tony Stewart won the Budweiser Shootout at Daytona Speedway, holding off Dale Earnhardt Jr. and Jeff Gordon at the finish line on Sunday.

The event is a warmup for next Sunday's Daytona 500. Stewart, driving a Pontiac, won \$200,955 with just 0.172 second to spare, with two Chevrolets, a Dodge and another Pontiac challenging. **D2**

Tony Stewart celebrates his victory in the Budweiser Shootout.



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Irwin wins on Senior tour

Tom Watson bogeyed while Hale Irwin birdied on the par-5 17th hole at the Senior PGA Tour ACE Group Classic at the Club at TwinEagles in Naples, Fla., handing Irwin the win and \$225,000.

Irwin had a 2-shot lead going into the par-4 18th hole, but put his drive in a fairway bunker and had to lay up. Watson hit a good tee shot, but put his approach 40 feet from the pin, and his birdie putt went past the cup. Irwin sank a bogey putt for the victory. **D2**