

SPORTS

The Detroit News Thursday, October 29, 2009 | Section C

Chat with The News at detnews.com



U-M:
Angelique S. Chengelis,
2 p.m. today



MSU:
Eric Lacy,
1 p.m. today



PREPS:
Tom Markowski,
10:30 p.m. Friday

Goliaths drool as Central rules

Hey, it was fun for a while. Michigan State was winning in all sorts of funky ways, and then Michigan State was winning in all sorts of tedious ways, and then Big Ten title hopes started swirling in heads, even without the use of known hallucinogens.



BOB WOJNOWSKI
Pigskin picks

And then? Then, for reasons that remain unclear, Michigan decided to treat opposing receivers as if they were carrying the pig flu, not the pigskin. Then, Michigan State arrogantly refused to participate in the closing seconds of another game, securing the title as the nation's finest 59-minute team (trophy to be presented with two seconds left in the next home game).

And now here we sit with Michigan (5-3) and Michigan State (4-4) reduced to spoilers, out of the Big Ten race.

I can't even get all shrieky about the Wolverines' trip this weekend to face the Illini, although Rich Rodriguez needs to alter his strategy with NCAA investigators. Sorry, but playing like a team that uses very little practice time is not the way to go.

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Wojo's picks

■ **Indiana at Iowa:** Thanks to their vaunted field-goal kicking, the Hawkeyes have outscored opponents by an astounding average of .0004 points. I know I sometimes don't show it, but I am impressed. **Iowa 6-5**

■ **Georgia vs. Florida:** The Gators keep squeaking by, boosted by the amiable assistance of SEC officials. I'm not saying the conference has made piles of questionable calls in Florida's favor. I'm just saying when refs signal a first down, they do it with a Gator Champ. **Florida 28-17**

Stunner of the Week

■ **USC at Oregon:** The Trojans got their annual Pac-10 pratfall out of the way and again are positioned to be the Greatest One-Loss Team in College Football History. But hold on, the Ducks are back up on their little webbed feet. **Oregon 30-20**



Otto Greule Jr./Getty Images

This week's all-time historic upset giant-killers: LaMichael James and the Oregon Ducks.

PISTONS 96, GRIZZLIES 74

Guards fire Pistons

Hamilton, Gordon work well together in opening win

BY TED KULFAN
The Detroit News

Memphis — Rip Hamilton and Ben Gordon gave doubters their first answer as to whether they could coexist.

The answer was a resounding yes.

Hamilton scored 25 and Gordon 22 as Detroit defeated Memphis, 96-74, in the season opener for both teams.

The victory made coach John Kuester a winner in his NBA head coaching debut.

"Butterflies? No question," Kuester said before the game. "You're anxious to get going. I'm fortunate to have a great group of guys who've worked hard and given me everything they have every practice."

Kuester added it'll be important for the Pistons to improve as the season progresses.

In that case, Wednesday's opener was a good base to build from.

After a roller coaster exhibition season, the Pistons looked robust offensively and downright stingy defensively, where the success for this season largely rests.

"Offensively we can hold it down man to man with anybody," Hamilton said toward the end of the exhibition season. "In order for us to be great, we have to do what we do defensively, and that's stop people."

Hamilton left the game in the fourth quarter because of an apparent left ankle injury, but it's not thought to be serious.

The Pistons held Memphis to 36-percent shooting (26-of-72). Marc Gasol led the Grizzlies with 21 points, while Rudy Gay scored 16 and Zach Randolph (Michigan State) scored 14.

It was the Grizzlies, you may remember, who scored 115

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More online: Read the Pistons Blog and join the discussion in Pistons Talk at detnews.com/pistons



Lance Murphey/Associated Press

Ben Wallace poses a problem for ex-Spartan Zach Randolph. Wallace had three points and nine rebounds.

Lee's pitching carries Phillies

Starter strikes out 10 in complete game, Utley hits two homers

Detroit News wire services
New York — Cliff Lee and Chase Utley got the Philadelphia Phillies off to a fast World Series start.

Lee pitched a six-hitter to out-duel CC Sabathia, Utley homered twice and the Phillies beat the Yankees, 6-1, in a misty Game

1 on Wednesday night.

In the first Series game at the new billion-dollar Yankee Stadium, Lee struck out 10 and walked none, improving to 3-0 with an 0.54 ERA this postseason.

Utley hit solo homers off Sabathia in the third and sixth innings. Sabathia allowed four hits in seven innings, and Philadelphia tacked on four runs against

the Yankees' bullpen.

Pedro Martinez starts for the Phillies against A.J. Burnett in Game 2 on Thursday night.

Utley drove a 95 mph fastball about two rows into the seats in right field with two outs in the third. The home run, on the ninth pitch of the at-bat, was the first Sabathia allowed at home to a left-handed hitter this year.

Sabathia retired eight in a row before Utley sent another 95

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Eric Gay/Associated Press

Phillies second baseman Chase Utley rounds the bases after hitting a solo homer in the sixth.

Lions likely to be blacked out

Don't expect to see the Lions on local television Sunday.

The team said Wednesday it had approximately 10,000 tickets available for its game against the winless Rams.

The Lions have until 1 p.m. today to sell the remaining tickets or prove to the NFL they are close enough to selling out to receive a 24-hour extension.

It would be the second blackout of the season.

Tim Twentyman



Robin Buckson/The Detroit News

Local Lions fans likely will not see Sunday's game against the Rams on TV.

Central Michigan hoops honored

Central Michigan is on a roll.

The football team is 7-1, and now the basketball team has been selected as the favorite to win the Mid-American Conference West Division in a vote by the media.

Central received 10 first-place votes in the poll.

The Chippewas were 12-19 last season (7-9 MAC) and shared the West title with Western Michigan and Ball State.

The Chippewas were followed in the poll by Northern Illinois, Eastern Michigan, Ball State, Western Michigan and Toledo.

Akron was picked to win the MAC East and the MAC Tournament.

Chiefs RB Johnson suspended for slurs

Chiefs running back **Larry Johnson**, who made two gay slurs within a 24-hour period, was given what amounts to a one-game suspension Wednesday, but Johnson's agent said he would appeal.

Johnson agent **Peter Schaffer** said the game check and other lost revenue would amount to about a penalty of about \$600,000 for Johnson, a former two-time Pro Bowl player.

In a three-sentence release, the Chiefs said Johnson would be suspended until Nov. 9 for conduct detrimental to the team.

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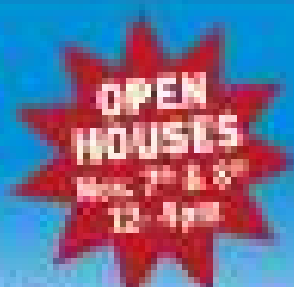
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