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 Call editor Greg Bowers: 573-882-5729
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Sports

SECTION B Monday, February 7, 2005

INSIDE TODAY:

DIVER DELIVERS

Rachel Witt overcame hardships to start her college career with the MU women's diving team. Page 4B

Tigers continue tailspin

By SEAN MCDONNELL
 sports@columbiainmissourian.com

There's something about the Missouri men's basketball team that seems to bring out the best in its opponents.

That was definitely the case Saturday, as Texas A&M played an impeccable second half to defeat the Tigers 91-63.

"That's probably the best we've played in the Big 12 (Conference) since I've been here," Aggie junior Antoine Wright said. "It was just one of those nights where everybody was making shots. Nobody thought we would be able to do this. Some of us, even on the team, had doubts about how the season was going to go."

Missouri, which had led by a point at halftime, was helpless to stop Texas A&M's electric offense in the second half. The Aggies shot 9-of-12 on 3-pointers on their way to scoring 57 points in the half.

"It was just fun to watch," Texas A&M coach Billy Gillispie said. "You don't get a chance to be a part of a half like that too often. It was awfully fun to be on our sideline tonight during the second half."

Wright led all scorers with 20 points, including a fluke 3-pointer that he banked home as the shot clock expired midway through the second half.

"I'm going to be honest with you," Missouri guard Jason Conley said. "This game is a little different than usual because these guys didn't miss any threes. When Antoine Wright hits a shot right in my face, off the glass from the corner, which is very hard, with the shot clock expiring, you know, what can you do? All we can do is keep playing, but that's not an excuse."

After losing its fourth consecutive game, Missouri is running out of excuses. The 91 points the Tigers allowed were the most Missouri has let an opponent score all season. It was more than Texas A&M had scored against opponents like Baylor, Chicago State, Prairie View A&M, and Trinity College.

Missouri coach Quin Snyder, who the MU athletic department announced Friday will definitely be retained next season despite the Tigers' struggles, said his team has a long way to go to become competitive.

On Saturday, he faulted the Tiger defense. Missouri attempted a zone defense in the second half to contain Texas A&M center Joseph Jones, who finished with 17 points. Jones was mostly quiet in the second half, but the Aggie perimeter shooters made Missouri pay for the switch.

"Tonight was about us not guarding in the second half," Snyder said. "And it was about Texas A&M playing lights out basketball."

With the win against Missouri, Texas A&M (15-5, 4-5 Big 12) ensured having its best season since going 19-11 in 1993. While the Aggies are eyeing a potential NCAA tournament appearance, the Tigers' (10-12, 2-7) are just trying to figure out what, if anything, they can do to win a basketball game.

"When it comes down to it, if we're not putting the ball in the hole and they are putting the ball in the hole, we're not getting any stops," Conley said. "That's the game right there."

Hitting the road pays off

By DOUG TUCKER
 Associated Press

KANSAS CITY — That old joke, "the team hit the road but the road hit back," got twisted around like a hairpin curve.

The poor road only lay there and took it on the chin.

Missouri was the only visiting team that lost in Big 12 Conference play on Saturday. What everyone assumes is the natural order in college basketball, the sport where home field advantage usually means the most, didn't hold true. Iowa State, Kansas, Colorado, Oklahoma State and Texas Tech would have none of it.

When Iowa State wins on the road, against a ranked opponent, it's got to be a weird weekend.

Please see **BIG 12**, page 4B

PATRIOTS 24, EAGLES 21

TRI-UMPH



Patriots wide receiver David Branch helped New England muscle its way to 331 yards of total offense.

AMY SANCETTA
 Associated Press

MVP: New England wide receiver Deion Branch had 11 receptions for 133 yards.

Air Wars: Teams combine for only 157 rushing yards, lowest in Super Bowl history. Pat's QB Tom Brady passes for 236 yards. Philly's McNabb throws for 357 yards.

Owens in: Philly's Terrell Owens defies doctor's advice, joins lineup just 6 1/2 weeks after ankle surgery, catches nine passes for 122 yards.



DAVID J. PHILLIP/Associated Press

Corey Dillon's 2-yard touchdown run at the beginning of the fourth quarter capped off a 66-yard drive and swung the momentum in the Patriots' favor.

Pats win third in four years

By BARRY WILNER
 Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — Dynasty? Definitely. The New England Patriots don't have to proclaim greatness. The NFL record book does it for them.

The Patriots won their third Super Bowl in four years Sunday, 24-21 over the Philadelphia Eagles, and now they are challenging history.

It was their ninth straight postseason victory, equaling Vince Lombardi's Green Bay Packers. It was coach Bill Belichick's 10th playoff victory in 11 games, one better than the great Lombardi. And it matched Dallas' run of three championships in four years in the early 1990s.

"We've never really self-proclaimed ourselves anything," said Tom Brady, who is 9-0 in the playoffs. "If you guys say we're great, we'll accept the compliment."

This one wasn't overpowering, and at times it was downright ugly. But not even Belichick seemed to care about that.

"To me this trophy belongs to these play-

ers," Belichick said. "They met all comers this year, a very challenging year. We're thrilled to win. These players played great all year, their best in the big games and they deserve it, they really deserve it."

With MVP Deion Branch tying a Super Bowl record for receptions with 11, Brady efficiently running the offense and Rodney Harrison sparking a smothering defense, the Patriots (17-2) didn't need a last-second field goal from Adam Vinatieri this time.

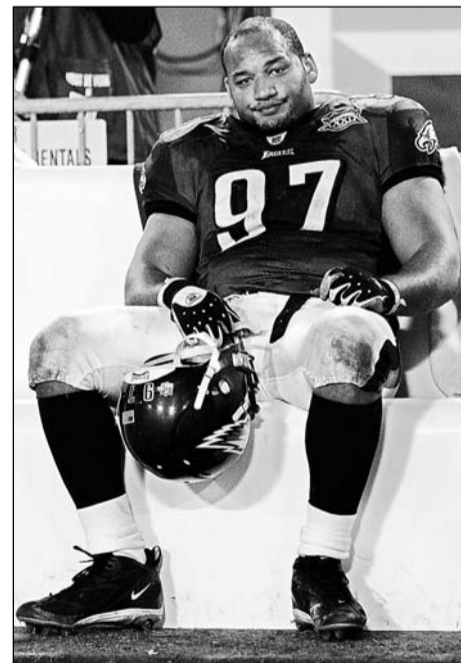
But his kick, a 22-yarder with 8:40 left, provided the points that made the difference.

This time, the Patriots sealed it with a stop.

Philadelphia (15-4) got the ball back at its 4 with 46 seconds remaining. It was hardly enough time and far too much territory to cover against such a formidable foe.

Harrison got his second interception with 9 seconds remaining to end it.

Playing before a sea of mostly green jerseys in the crowd of 78,125, the Patriots ended Philadelphia's chance of heading



DAVID J. PHILLIP/Associated Press

Darwin Walker recovered a Tom Brady fumble in the red zone, but he couldn't be happy with the Eagles' four turnovers.

north with its first pro sports title since 1983. Indeed, it's been 45 years since the Eagles won the NFL crown. And even though they made it to the Super Bowl for the first time since 1981, after three straight conference championship flops, their sparkling season still ended in disappointment.

Please see **SUPER BOWL**, page 3B

Owens no decoy for Eagles

The wide receiver started, despite his doctor's warnings.

By ROB MAADDI
 Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — Terrell Owens was a go. The rest of the Philadelphia Eagles didn't quite match his stellar performance.

The Eagles' All-Pro receiver caught nine passes for 122 yards, but Philadelphia lost 24-21 to the New England Patriots in the Super Bowl on Sunday night.

Owens defied his doctor's advice and was in the starting lineup just 6 1/2 weeks after ankle surgery.

"A lot of people in the world didn't believe I could play, but my faith alone, the power of prayer and the power of faith carried me all the way," Owens said.

Right from the start, Owens was no decoy.

He caught a 7-yard pass on Philadelphia's second play, his first action since he severely sprained his ankle and broke his leg in a game against Dallas on Dec. 19.

Owens had a 30-yard catch-and-run later in the first quarter, setting up a first down at the Patriots 8, which the Eagles failed to turn into points. After that catch, the flamboyant Owens flapped his arms along the sideline.

He also had a 36-yard reception in the fourth quarter, but didn't catch any of Donovan McNabb's three touchdown passes.

Please see **EAGLES**, page 3B

Pats win titles by putting team first.

By DAVE GOLDBERG
 Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — New England's third Super Bowl victory in four years came down to the most basic of football rules: The Patriots ran the ball and made sure the Eagles couldn't.

So New England won 24-21, established itself as the team of the century (early though it is)

and put Bill Belichick ahead of even the great Vince Lombardi with a 10-1 postseason record.

Lombardi would have loved it. Like his Packers of the 1960s, this is such a complete team that nobody really knew who the MVP of the game was. It turned out to be Deion Branch, who had 11 receptions for 133 yards. But it could have been Tedy Bruschi, Rodney Harrison or Richard Seymour, who all made big defensive plays; or quarterback Tom Brady, who

took home the award when the Patriots won in 2002 and 2004.

"Different plays, different guys," guard Joe Andruzzi said, expressing what has happened for the Patriots in the past two years and especially the past two, when they are 34-4, an almost unthinkable record in the parity of free agency and the salary cap.

Lombardi certainly would have loved the 66-yard drive late in the third quarter and early in the fourth that broke a tie. Of those yards, 34 came on the

ground, including the final 2, by Corey Dillon.

The Patriots also got 20 yards rushing on that drive from Dillon's backup, Kevin Faulk, who ran for 8 and 12 yards from a spread formation. Faulk also took a screen pass from the 16 to the 2 to set up Dillon's TD.

"Every time I come in, they yell 'screen! screen!' Faulk said. "So we ran the draw and it worked and then we ran the screen."

Please see **PATRIOTS**, page 3B