

**This guy's not
clay achin'**

Spain's Rafael Nadal sets record with his 54th consecutive victory on clay at the French Open. **Page C4**



SPORTS

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Tuesday,
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2006

NBA PLAYOFFS

Wade sparks Heat

Guard scores 31 points; Miami takes 3-1 series lead

Ira Winderman

South Florida Sun-Sentinel

MIAMI — The Detroit Pistons threw their fifth defender of the series at him.

They loaded up with a zone defense almost the entire third period just to keep the ball out of his hands.

And then, less than a minute into the fourth quarter of a game that had no right to be this close, Dwyane Wade said enough.

So off a pass from Gary Payton, the Heat guard charged to the rim against three defenders, absorbed frightening contact from Pistons power forward Antonio McDyess, flipped the ball over his shoulder — and allowed the reaction to tell the rest of the story.

The crowd's roar let him know he had the two points.

The referee's whistle told him there soon would be another.

Three-point play. And shortly thereafter, a 3-1 lead in these best-of-seven Eastern Conference finals, with an 89-78 victory over the Pistons at AmericanAirlines Arena.

"I kept passing and passing," Wade said of what had been one of his more passive stretches of the series and season. "Then, in the fourth quarter, I said I'm going to take over."

As shaky as the Heat was at times Monday night — blowing a 14-point second-quarter lead and allowing a 29-11 Pistons surge that bridged the second and third quarters — it would take an even more monumental collapse to be deprived of its first-ever trip to the NBA Finals.

Since 1981, the last 16 teams to take a 3-1 lead in the conference finals have advanced to the championship round.

For the Heat to fail to extend that streak it would

See **HEAT**, C5**THE TOURNAMENT TRAIL: REGIONAL**

Making a state-ment



Keystone's Kristie Malinkey delivers a pitch during the Wildcats' 7-0 victory over Lexington in the Division II regional championship Monday afternoon. Malinkey finished with 13 strikeouts and gave up just two hits.

DAVE SCHNEIDER / CHRONICLE

Wildcats breeze to regional title, spot in Final Four

Bob Daniels
The Chronicle-Telegram

BUCYRUS — In a frustrating turn of events, Keystone loaded the bases with one out in the first inning Monday afternoon — and left them that way.

Apparently, it didn't bother the Wildcats. They put up five runs in the third inning en route to a 7-0 victory over Lexington for their fourth straight regional softball championship, 11th overall. The win also lands the Wildcats in the Division II Final Four at Ashland's Brookside Park on Thursday.

Top-ranked Keystone (30-2) meets Ashtabula Edgewood (25-3) at 12:30 p.m. in the first of back-to-back state semifinals featuring teams from Lorain County. Ninth-ranked Elyria (27-5) is scheduled to tangle with Hamilton (24-6) at 3 p.m. on the same diamond.

Both Keystone, which won the Division II title in 1999, and Elyria, which brought home the Division I crown in 2002, are seeking their second state championships. It is the second time two Lorain County teams have reached a softball Final Four in the same season. The same schools were there in 1994.

A standing-room-only crowd sweltered in 90-degree heat as Keystone pitcher Kristie Malinkey hurled a 13-strikeout two-hitter against Lexington's Lady Minutemen. It was her 24th win of the season without a loss and tied her with Amie Leffew (1999) for second on the school's all-time victories list. Brittney Robinson, now starring at Kent State, won 26 games in 2003.

Malinkey has now struck out 78 batters in five tournament games, a 15.6 per-game average. She has 316 strikeouts for the season, moving her past Leffew into second place behind Robinson (377). And she has 882 strikeouts for her career, second to Robinson's 986.

See **WILDCATS**, C5**NEXT UP**

WHAT: Division II state softball tournament
WHO: Keystone (30-2) vs. Ashtabula Edgewood (25-3)
WHEN: Thursday, 12:30 p.m.
WHERE: Brookside Park, Ashland
RADIO: WEOL 930-AM

INSIDE

LORAIN COUNTY LOVE: Keystone's players are happy to be participating in the state tournament with Elyria this year, and about the statement that makes about area softball. **C5**



Chicago's Jim Thome smacks a two-run home run off Cleveland's Cliff Lee in the first inning Monday afternoon in Cleveland. Thome added a solo homer in the sixth inning.

WHITE SOX 11, INDIANS

Chicago likes Thome cookin'

Chris Assenheimer
The Chronicle-Telegram

CLEVELAND — Memorial Day cookouts probably weren't on the minds of Indians players Monday at Jacobs Field, although they were getting seasoned, barbecued and served by the Chicago White Sox.

Using struggling Cleveland starter Cliff Lee as their main course, the Sox opened a somewhat substantial four-game series in emphatic fashion, thumping a listless group of Indians 11-0 behind four home runs — two from former Tribe slugger Jim Thome.

The embarrassing loss came a day after the Indians appeared

to gain momentum by avoiding a three-game sweep at Detroit, which brought them to a game below .500.

"I thought we were going to go out and compete," said Indians first baseman Ben Broussard, who mirrored Cleveland's ineffectiveness at the plate (season-low two hits) by striking out in all four at-bats. "We didn't hit. We didn't pitch. They came out and took it to us from the start."

Lee set the tone for a miserable holiday where Tribe fans were concerned by continuing his alarming recent slide, allowing four runs in the opening inning and seven on eight hits for the game, in just 2 2/3 innings.

Lee, who served up a decisive two-run shot to Thome in the first on an 0-2 pitch, allowed three of Chicago's homers, with Paul Konerko and Juan Uribe also taking the left-hander deep in the Sox's three-run third.

Lee admitted to becoming frustrated by Chicago hitters' ability to foul off a number of his pitches before producing big hits when he brought the ball over the plate.

"Nothing went my way, it seemed like today," Lee said. "It seemed like every time I made a good pitch, they fouled it off. It was just one of those days when everything went against me."

See **TRIBE**, C3**TONIGHT**

WHO: Cleveland vs. Chicago
TIME: 7:05
WHERE: Jacobs Field
PITCHERS: Sabathia (4-1, 1.52 ERA) vs. Buehrle (6-2, 2.62)
TV/RADIO: SportsTime Ohio, ESPN; WEOL 930-AM, WTAM 1100-AM



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