



# Sports

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Section C FRIDAY, JAN. 2, 2009

## Cubs' curse thaws, doom 'Hawks in 'Winter Classic'

For all the bad blood between the Red Wings and Blackhawks, and all the novel ways they've come up with over the years to spill it, maybe the only surprise is that no one ordered them to "take it outside" before this.

Seven hundred times previously, more than any two teams in pro hockey, these "Original Six" members met and yet rarely raised this kind of ruckus. But a hometown crowd unused to seeing anything stirring in Wrigley Field from Sep-

tember until spring didn't have to wait long to find their familiar ballpark transformed into the "Unfriendly Confines."

Just two minutes in, Chicago defenseman Brent Seabrook lined up Detroit's Dan Cleary, bounced him into the boards and then deposited him headfirst into the Hawks' bench. It was pay-back for the bruised leg Cleary gave rising Chicago star Patrick Kane during the Red Wings' 4-0 thrashing in Detroit two nights earlier. That one broke the Hawks' nine-game winning streak, and

riding the momentum from Seabrook's hit to a 3-1 lead by the end of the first period, it looked like the locals were going to get revenge.

But that idea got buried by three unanswered scores in the second as the reigning Stanley Cup champions piled on the quality in waves, rolling up a 43-37 advantage in shots and a 6-4 win in the NHL's second "Winter Classic."

"It wasn't just another game," Chicago coach Joel Quenneville said. "We had to bring our best

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**Jim Litke**

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# Friendly Confines indeed

## Red Wings prevail over Blackhawks at Wrigley Field

By **Bruce MacLeod**  
 Macomb Daily Sports Writer

**CHICAGO** — It has often been said that some hockey players skate like the wind. On New Year's Day in Chicago, Pavel Datsyuk was the wind.

Wind at his back, Datsyuk swooshed past a pair of Chicago Blackhawks defensemen to score the go-ahead goal in a Detroit Red Wings' 6-4 victory at Wrigley Field. It was the second annual NHL Winter Classic and just the third regular-season outdoor game in league history.

"We saw he had the wind behind him and he really took off," said Detroit's Henrik Zetterberg, smiling at the thought that Datsyuk needed help from the elements. "When he has those chances, he's really good at putting them away."

Datsyuk's goal — his 16th of the season — not only put Detroit ahead, 4-3; it was also the highlight of five consecutive Red Wings goals that negated a 3-1 Chicago first-period lead.

"They're the best team in the world, I think," said Chicago's leading scorer, Patrick Kane. "They proved that today. They can take over when they want."

The game was played outdoors — on a rink that stretched between first and third bases on the historic infield of a ballpark built in 1914 — but Mother Nature wasn't a player in this match. There was no snow to

**T**hey're the best team in the world, I think. They proved it today.

— **Patrick Kane**  
 Chicago's leading scorer

slow the puck's movement. Clouds covered the sun that was causing such difficulties for players during practice one day earlier. Even the temperatures remained pleasant enough — 31.9 degrees at the opening face-off — that players didn't need to change what they wear during every other game.

The Red Wings only needed to defeat the Blackhawks, not the elements.

"I've been worried about the wind," said Chicago native Brett Lebeda, who grew up going to Cubs games at Wrigley Field. "I've been in here when it was howling and it can whip through pretty good. And it wasn't too bad."

The first storm of the day was man-made, created by the Blackhawks and their power play.

Kris Versteeg scored 3:24 into play after the Red Wings were whistled for too many men on the ice. (An odd penalty created when Dan Cleary was knocked clear into the Chicago bench by a Brent Seabrook hit. The Red Wings changed lines soon after, not noticing that Cleary was on the wrong bench. When Cleary hopped onto the ice to get to his

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Detroit goalie Ty Conklin, right, celebrates with teammate Niklas Kronwall after they defeated the Chicago Blackhawks 6-4 in the NHL Winter Classic at Wrigley Field in Chicago.

**Up Next**  
**Wings at Minnesota**  
 Time: 8 p.m.  
 Saturday  
 TV: FSN

## New faces abound as playoffs start

Miami in after going 1-15 a year ago

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Parity. Roger Goodell and the NFL love it.

That will be evident when the playoffs start with the wild-card round this weekend. Five of the eight participants will be teams that missed the postseason a year ago, and one of them, AFC East champion Miami, actually finished 1-15.

### NFL Playoffs

In the NFC, there is only one repeater from 2007 among the six entries: the defending champion New York Giants, who are the top-seeded team in the conference and will have the week off.

Other than New York, which finished 12-4, the rest of last year's NFC playoff teams were a combined 36-44, including Seattle, which finished 4-12 this season, and Green Bay, which was 6-10. That "left out" group also includes preseason favorite Dallas, whose players consistently dubbed themselves "the most talented team in the league," but were sent home

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## Reno nets hat trick

Macomb Daily Sports Staff

Warren-Sterling United's start to the New Year could not have gotten off any better.

Matt Reno netted the hat trick and Mike Merola added two goals to lead Warren-Sterling United boys ice hockey team over Port Huron, 8-0, Thursday during the Titan Invitational at Great Lakes Sports City.

### Boys H.S. Ice Hockey

Alex Steffija, Kenny Miller and Anthony DiMarco also scored, while goalie Chris Schornack made 11 saves to earn the shut-out.

Warren-Sterling United (3-4-0 overall) faces Auburn Hills Avondale today at 8:25 in a semi-final game. Avondale defeated Lapeer West, 3-2 in overtime, to advance.

## Dantonio building for the long haul



**Pat Caputo**

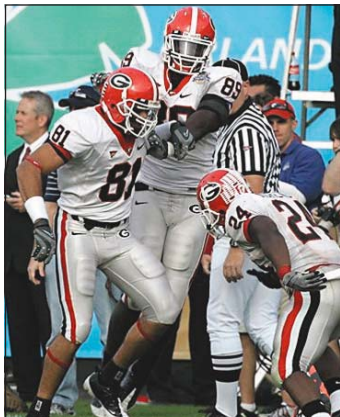
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effective.

The Spartans could have discarded the, "Well, they haven't really beaten anybody they weren't supposed to beat" tag they have been wearing since the conclusion of the regular season.

Regardless, Mark Dantonio's

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Georgia's Aron White (81) celebrates with Bruce Figgins (89) and Knowshon Moreno (24) after catching a touchdown pass.

## Wasted opportunities

Georgia tops Michigan State

By **Dana Gauruder**  
 Journal Register News Service

**ORLANDO, Fla.** — When Michigan State players look back at their New Year's Day bowl experience, they will not dwell on the precision passing of Georgia quarterback Matt Stafford.

They won't think too much about the Bulldogs' '96-yard scoring drive or the 38-yard punt return that set up another



**Georgia 24**  
**Michigan State 12**

Georgia touchdown. They won't sweat over a questionable spot by the officials that killed any hopes of a comeback.

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### SPORTS INSIDER



**Lucky seven**  
 The Washington Capitals scored seven goals to get by the lowly Tampa Bay Lightning, 7-5.

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