

INDIANAPOLIS COLTS POOL REPORT

February 1, 2007

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Sports Illustrated

DAVIE, Fla.—One great quarterback from the last generation watched a great one from this generation invade his old home turf Thursday on the second day of Colts team practice for Super Bowl XLI. Dolphins Hall of Fame quarterback Dan Marino, present with the CBS broadcasting crew that will televise the game, looked on as Peyton Manning had his second straight sharp tune up for the biggest game of his career.

“I like it,” said a smiling Marino, back at his old Dolphins training facility adjacent to the campus of Nova Southeastern University. He was drafted 15 years before Manning, but they have a close friendship. “It’s kind of nice to see him out here.”

Manning had a little of the clutch Marino left in him at the end of the two-hour, nine-minute practice, conducted with crowd noise piped in from speakers on the sidelines. On fourth-and-10 with nine seconds left in the two-minute drill that closes every Thursday practice for the Colts, Manning, working with the first-team offense, drilled a perfect 23-yard touchdown strike to backup wideout Aaron Moorehead in the back of the end zone.

“Peyton practices like that every week, like it’s the Super Bowl,” said coach Tony Dungy at the end of practice. “It rubs off on the entire offense. This is about our 20th week of practice, and I think the defense stopped the offense once or twice all year. When they stop them, we give out game balls.”

With starting left cornerback Nick Harper (ankle sprain) rehabbing inside the Miami practice center for his second straight day, the Colts had what Dungy described as a normal Thursday workday. They spent a lengthy period on kickoff and punt coverage, which Dungy said was no reflection of the club’s regard for feared Chicago return man Devin Hester, but rather what their normal Thursday special-teams period entailed.

For the second straight day, the Colts practiced padless, in shorts, jerseys and helmets, and they worked without Harper, the six-year veteran from Fort Valley (Ga.) State. Harper, who tied for the team lead this season with three interceptions, hurt his ankle in the first quarter of the Colts’ AFC Championship victory over New England. He was the only member of the Colts to miss practice.

“It wasn’t quite as sharp a practice as yesterday,” said Dungy, “but it was good. I was happy with how we worked.”

The Colts continued to list Harper and safety Bob Sanders as questionable on their injury report. But it’s clear from the first two days of practice that Sanders, who ran with no restriction for the second straight practice, is much more likely to play than Harper. Dungy said Harper will attempt to practice Friday and he said he won’t know until Sunday afternoon if Harper will play against Chicago.

“Nick is a veteran guy who knows what he has to do to get ready, and he believes he’ll be ready to play,” Dungy said. “The doctors think he’ll go too. We’ll see how he looks Sunday.”

CBS had its game and pregame show crews—including announcers Jim Nantz, Phil Simms, Steve Tasker, James Brown, Boomer Esiason, Dan Marino, Shannon Sharpe and Charlie Casserly—watching practice.

Midway through the workout, punter Hunter Smith tossed a football to Marino. “Hey Dan,” said Smith. “I’m just a kid. Come on—throw me one.” Marino threw him a short spiral, and Simms and Esiason, also former Super Bowl quarterbacks, followed with completions to Smith. Esiason threw his the hardest and joked: “See? I’ve got the most velocity.”

The Colts will conduct a 90-minute practice Friday at 1 p.m., Dungy said, with a shorter walk-through practice scheduled for noon on Saturday.

Following the custom of many teams over the last two decades, the Colts will leave their Fort Lauderdale hotel for a secret south Florida location Saturday afternoon. That's where they will conduct customary Saturday night meetings and rest before Sunday's game.