

**I**
**ILLINOIS 84, PURDUE 50**

**What happened**

■ Dee Brown and Deron Williams combined for 48 points, and the Illini sent their seniors out in style, winning their 29th straight game, their 25th consecutive Big Ten game and their sixth in a row on Senior Night.

**What it means**

■ Illinois is one game away from regular season perfection and two wins from tying the Flyin' Illini's single-season record for wins. The first will be no pushover, with Ohio State waiting on Sunday. The second is a mortal lock.

**What the Illini said**

■ "It's just a great finish to a home season, a night when you want to have great memories for the season. The juniors stole the show, though." — coach **Bruce Weber**

**What the**
**Boilermakers said**

■ "They shot the ball as good against us as anyone since we played Memphis in the NCAA (tournament) in 1984. It was a tremendous show of shooting ability." — coach **Gene Keady**

**What's next**

■ Illinois visits Ohio State at 11 a.m. on Sunday (CBS). The Illini are off-limits to the media until then, hoping to recapture the magic that beat Wisconsin at the Kohl Center. They'll need it against the pumped-up Buckeyes.

**What's inside**

■ **Asmusen column:** Was it Senior Night for Williams, too? **C-3.**  
 ■ **Nkemdi appreciative for chance** to play in final home game, **C-3.**  
 ■ **Game 29 report card,** **C-3.**  
 ■ **Game 29 box score,** **C-3.**  
 ■ **Zook fills out staff,** **C-5.**

# Bon voyage



John Dixon/The News-Gazette

ABOVE: Illinois junior Deron Williams cuts down a piece of the net at the south end of the Assembly Hall on Thursday night after the Illini's 84-50 win against Purdue. BELOW: Dee Brown poses after hitting one of his school-record eight three-pointers Thursday.

## Brown a clear MVP in anyone's book

So much for the Sports Illustrated jinx. Illini junior Dee Brown, expressing regret about being singled out for SI's cover this week, pushed the so-called hex into the junk pile Thursday night with a first half as breathtaking as any in Illini basketball history.

Draining his seventh three-pointer from far out as the halftime horn sounded, he alone scored 24 points against Purdue's 26, and the 29-0 Illini already had the game salted away, 50-26. The final 84-50 score was an afterthought. "Dee loves the limelight," coach

Bruce Weber said. "He is shooting great. He has his elbow tucked under the ball, he has excellent rhythm and he is supremely confident. He's on a roll, much like last season when he finished so strong."

With the game in hand, Brown played eight minutes after the break, taking one shot and draining it from a location just south of Rantoul. His 27 points were a career high, and his eight treys matched the school record set by Kevin Turner at UCLA in December 1997. And the Illini finished with 15 treys, tying the school record.

Please see TATE, C-7



**TATELINES**  
**LOREN TATE**



## Illini hoping party lasts another month

By **BRETT DAWSON**  
News-Gazette Staff Writer

CHAMPAIGN — It had been an hour since he'd drained his last three-pointer of the night — a record-tying bomb from 25 feet — and the horde of reporters surrounding Dee Brown had trickled to a scant few.

Dressed in an orange Big Ten championship T-shirt, Brown perched on the corner of a table just outside the Assembly Hall press room and considered for a moment how much he'd like to be back in the building one more time this season.

"The Assembly Hall is a great place," Brown said. "It'd be wonderful to come back."

It was Senior Night on Thursday, Illinoi romping Purdue 84-50 in its home finale to close the half of one of the most miraculous Illini

basketball seasons ever.

But a month from today, Illinois hopes to be playing for a national championship. And if it could pull that feat, Brown knows the Illini would return to the Hall for one more celebration.

"It'd be unbelievable," said Brown, whose eight three-pointers tied Kevin Turner's single-game school record. "We have to try not to think about that, because thinking about that just gives you the chills. It's gonna be tough, but I think we can do it."

So does his coach.

Top-ranked Illinois (29-0, 15-0 Big Ten) already has the Big Ten championship sewn up. It will shoot for a perfect regular season Sunday at Ohio State.

Please see ILLINI, C-7

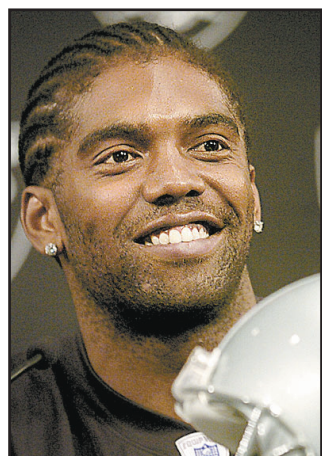
## Speed Read

**Good cheer**

Copy editor Tony Mancuso's three reasons we love sports today: ■ It's Central-Centennial III, and it's right in your backyard. Head out tonight to Centennial High wearing your best powder blue — or if you dare, maroon.

■ The Illini are looking for their first Big Ten title since 1952 — in wrestling, that is. Bob Asmusen previews the tournament in Saturday's section and will file coverage from Iowa City for Sunday and Monday.

■ Wondering how long Al Davis will put up with Randy Moss' antics? Until Moss (right) stops producing, of course.



Noah Berger/AP

**Who am I?**

■ Sixteen years ago today, I hit one of the most dramatic shots in Illini basketball history to beat third-ranked Indiana at Bloomington. Those were three of the 1,172 points I scored in my two varsity seasons at Illinois. My Flyin' Illini teammates and I played in the Final Four, and I was named the Midwest Regional's Most Outstanding Player. I left school after my junior season and was the first player drafted by the Orlando Magic. In 13 NBA seasons, I averaged nearly 15 points. I retired after the 2001-02 season and now reside in Atlanta (answer at right).

**On this date in ...**

1990 — Hank Gathers, one of two Division I players to lead the nation in scoring and rebounding in a season, died after collapsing in Loyola Marymount's West Coast Conference tournament game against Portland. He was 23.

**Today's top five**

Staff writer Jeff Mezydlo's favorite boxing movies of all time:

1. **The Champ.** You cried when Ricky Schroder was yelling for Jon Voight to wake up.  
 2. **Rocky.** Written by the same guy who starred in "Stop! Or My Mom Will Shoot."

3. **Rocky III.** Clubber Lang is the ultimate sports movie bad guy.  
 4. **Rocky II.** One of the best sports movie endings of all time.  
 5. **Raging Bull.** Martin Scorsese scores a knockout with story, direction and look.


**Click it**

■ **Today's question:** What's the best excuse for skipping work to watch Illinois basketball in tournament games?

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**Trivia answer**

Nick Anderson