



Individual triumphs overshadow Hillcats loss



**BLUE ROCKS 6,
HILLCATS 2**

TONIGHT • 7:05 P.M.
WILMINGTON: **BLAKE JOHNSON**
(8-6, 3.30) AT
HILLCATS: **KYLE BLOOM**
(9-11, 5.23)

By Chris Lang
clang@newsadvance.com
(434) 385-5529

Sunday night proved to be a snapshot of what minor league baseball is really about. Often, individual storylines are more important than the result of one particular game.

Wilmington beat the Hillcats for the ninth straight time, this one a 6-2 snoozer lacking any sort of appreciable drama. But the buzz at City Stadium had to

do with one Hillcat setting a record and another saying goodbye to his teammates.

Pedro Powell stole his 64th base, breaking the single-season team mark he set last year. There was an air of inevitability about the record. If Powell gets on base, he's going more often than not. He reached on a bunt single in the third, and after two pickoff attempts, he raced to second and beat a bad throw to the bag.

Please see **HILLCATS**, Page C6



AP photo

Pedro Powell broke his own stolen base record from 2006 with his 64th snag on Sunday.

Fading Away

Despite a 5th-place finish at Bristol, Dale Jr. is losing time to make the Chase

The Associated Press

BRISTOL, Tenn. — After his best finish in almost a month, Dale Earnhardt Jr. had one thing on his mind. "I'm ready to go home, get on the lake!" he said, pumping his fist.

But as Earnhardt enjoyed a rare Sunday off from Nextel Cup racing, he was faced with the harsh realization that his last chance to win a championship for Dale Earnhardt Inc. is slipping away.

Carl Edwards clinched a berth for the Chase for the championship by winning Saturday night's race at Bristol Motor Speedway, leaving Earnhardt farther from contention with his fifth-place finish. With only two races to go before the championship field is set, Earnhardt is 158

points away from the 12th and final qualifying spot.

He knows that not making the Chase is considered professional failure — Earnhardt lived it during a miserable 2005 season — and dreads what the final 10 weeks of the season will be like if he again isn't eligible to run for the title.

"When we don't make it, everybody makes a big deal out of it," he said. "They talk about it pre-race. They talk about it post-race. It's a bummer when you see that and have to watch that and read it and what not. You kind of want to go under the radar when you can't get it done."

Please see **EARNHARDT**, Page C6



Outside the top 12
Points out of Chase for the Championship

- ▶ -7 after Pocono on Aug. 5
- ▶ -100 after Watkins Glen on Aug. 12
- ▶ -163 after Michigan on Aug. 21
- ▶ -158 after Bristol on Aug. 25



Steve Stricker hits a tee shot on the 13th hole on his way to his first tour win since 2001.



AP photo

Stricker breaks losing streak

The Associated Press

HARRISON, N.Y. — What looked like more heartache for Steve Stricker turned into the sweetest victory of his career.

After going 6½ years and 146 tournaments without winning, Stricker birdied four of his last five holes Sunday at The Barclays for a stunning turnaround that gave him a 2-ander 69 and a two-shot victory over K.J. Choi.

"It was hard, but it was fun," Stricker said, his voice choking as tears streamed down the side of his face. "I never knew if I

was going to win again."

It sure wasn't easy. Not with 10 players — five of them major champions — separated by three shots. And not with Choi holding two birdie putts that were a combined 95 feet, making it look as if he were destined to win.

Stricker, who already let four chances of winning slip away this year, refused to buckle.

And when his final birdie from 8 feet dropped into the cup, he raised his arms and hugged his caddie, Tom Matthews, who

Please see **BARCLAYS**, Page C6



- ▶ Steve Stricker -16
- ▶ K.J. Choi -14
- ▶ Rory Sabbatini -13
- ▶ Geoff Ogilvy -12
- ▶ Ernie Els -12
- ▶ Mark Calcavecchia -12
- ▶ Phil Mickelson -11
- ▶ Rich Beem -11

INGE'S DAY
SUNDAY VS. YANKEES
▶ 0-3, strikeout
IN 5-4 WIN

NEXT GAME:
▶ TODAY vs.
NY YANKEES

SEASON STATS
AVG. HR RBI
238 12 56

*Detroit Tigers third baseman
Brandon Inge is a
Brookville High School graduate.*

Major League Baseball

Ryan Howard leads the Phillies past the Padres with a 3-run shot
Page C3



WHAT'S IN THIS SECTION



U.S. Open Tennis
Andy Roddick will be looking to win another U.S. Open
Page C2

Today's TOP TV games

- MLB:** Yankees @ Tigers
7 p.m., ESPN2
- NFL:** Falcons @ Bengals
8 p.m., ESPN