Hornish wins second straight IRL race

KANSAS CITY (AP) — Sam some points on the championship," Hornish Jr. threw himself a birthday party in Victory Lane.

The icing on his cake: Hornish now leads the Indy Racing League season points race after his second straight win.

"It's a great day to celebrate my birthday," said Hornish, who turned 27 on Sunday — and got a cream pie in the face from Marlboro Team Penske teammate Helio Castroneves before the race. "We're just so happy right now."

Hornish blew past Dan Wheldon after a restart with 17 laps to go at Kansas Speedway, then won a back-and-forth battle down the stretch for his third victory of the season. He also extended his series record with his 17th career

"The last couple of laps were a little bit fun — but a little bit nervous, too," said Hornish, this year's Indianapolis 500 winner.

Castroneves fell out of the points lead despite recovering from an early crash to finish sixth. Hornish now leads him by 20 points in the standings.

said Castroneves, who came in leading Hornish by five points. "But under the circumstances, I'm quite happy with our performance today."

Wheldon, the defending IRL champion, passed Hornish on the 197th lap of the 200-lap, 300-mile race. He was still narrowly ahead with two to go, but Hornish retook the lead in the white flag lap and held it until the end of the Kansas Lottery Indy 300.

"We gave it everything we got," said Wheldon, who also was second here last year and has not won since the season opener at Homestead. 'We just came up short."

Wheldon also dismissed suggestions that he realized he couldn't catch Hornish and backed off rather than risk a crash.

"Absolutely not. At this point in the championship, there's no point in ahead of Wheldon on the seventh lap me coming in second to a Penske and led until Dixon got out of the pits car," said Wheldon, who drives for Target Chip Ganassi Racing. "I've ahead by lap 46 and held the top spot got to win or do nothing. I tried everything that I possibly could."

Vitor Meira was third for the sec-"It's a little disappointing to lose top-three finish here. But it was little that happened," said Hornish, who running as high as fourth place.

consolation for the 29-year-old Bra- led all but 51 laps on Sunday. zilian, who extended one IRL record for futility and matched another.

Meira has not won in 53 career starts, extending his own record, and his winless streak matches the longest in league history. Robbie Buhl and Billy Boat also went 53 races without a win, but each of those streaks came after a victory.

He was followed in the top 10 by Scott Dixon, 2005 race winner Tony Kanaan, Helio Castroneves, Tomas Scheckter, Kosuke Matsuura, and rookies Marco Andretti and Jeff Simmons. The race looked to be little more

than a duel between Wheldon and Hornish, who started in the top two positions and held them for much of the day, until two late crashes tightened the field. Hornish, starting second, moved

first in the 41st lap. Hornish was back for much of the remainder of the

"I was just really surprised to get ond straight year, his third straight out of here with a win after the way

"When you lead that many laps early, something tends to go wrong and you don't end up winning."

Wheldon, who led for 45 laps, moved into the lead when Hornish pitted under green in the 149th lap. He was still leading when Scott Sharp spun into the wall on lap 168.

Then, after Wheldon pulled away from the resulting restart with 25 laps to go, Buddy Rice hit the wall in turn four and brought out the final caution of the race.

'With the place as hot and slick as it is, as soon as I made a move, it made the car step out and it just got away," said Rice, who edged Meira two years ago by 0.0051 seconds the second-closest finish in series history. "We qualified ninth and were running between sixth and ninth all day, so this was just a disappointing finish to the day."

Castroneves spun into the back wall in the 37th lap and knocked his rear wing loose. His crew was able to reattach and tighten it during subsequent pit stops, though, and Castroneves worked his way back through the pack — eventually

SportsBriefs

NEWPORT, R.I. (AP) — Annika Sorenstam missed a 30-foot birdie putt, sending her into an 18-hole playoff Monday against Pat Hurst at the U.S. Women's Open.

Moments after Sorenstam's miss, Hurst made a superb par save from short of the 18th green, holing a 5foot putt that ended a marathon Sunday at Newport Country Club.

Both finished at even-par 284. Michelle Wie, the 16-year-old

from Hawaii, was tied for the lead with six holes to play until failing to save par from a bunker on the 13th hole, then settling for pars the rest of the way. She closed with a 72 and tied for third with Se Ri Pak and Stacy Prammanasudh.

TENNIS

WIMBLEDON, England (AP) - A trio of high profile Americans were ousted at Wimbeldon on Sun-

Playing in his 14th Wimbledon before retirement later this year, 36year-old Andre Agassi lost to 20year-old Rafael Nadal 7-6 (5), 6-2,

Three-time champion Venus Williams fell to Jelena Jankovic of Serbia 7-6 (8), 4-6, 6-4. With sister Serena out injured, there will be no

Williams in the Wimbledon final for the first time since 1999. The sisters have won five of the last six titles.

PRO BASKETBALL

DENVER (AP) — Carmelo Anthony agreed to a maximum contract extension with the Nuggets on Saturday.

The five-year deal is worth approximately \$80 million.

The Nuggets re-signed power forward Nene on Sunday.

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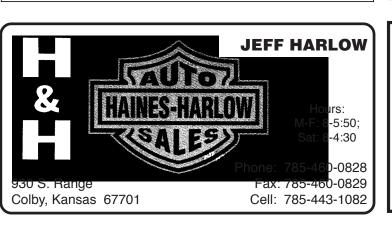
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