

What is URI's biggest weakness as it tries to play into the Tourney?

Tell us what you think at [projosports.com/uri](http://projosports.com/uri)



LA SALLE ROLLS PAST PONAGANSET: View the gallery at [HSGameTime.com/rhodeisland](http://HSGameTime.com/rhodeisland)

**Friars future chat**

Jim Donaldson and Bill Reynolds will take your questions from noon to 1 p.m. today at [projosports.com/chat](http://projosports.com/chat)

**Shooting woes**

Jimmy Baron has had three games this year in which he scored fewer than 10 points, and two of them have come in the last week:

DATE	OPPONENT	POINTS
Nov. 14	at Brown	4
Feb. 13	at Temple	7
Feb. 18	Xavier	2

For up-to-the-second stats and scores: [projosports.com/uri](http://projosports.com/uri)

SECTION C



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# projo SPORTS

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**BIG PAPI IS BACK IN TOWN**



JOURNAL / BOB BREIDENBACH

Red Sox designated-hitter David Ortiz reports to spring training yesterday. See the Red Sox Journal, Page C3.

## Sox not sweating Manny's options

Boston has until November before each season to decide whether to retain the slugger for 2009 and 2010.

BY SEAN McADAM  
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

FORT MYERS, Fla. — Some-time this week — maybe today, maybe tomorrow — Manny Ramirez is expected to arrive for the start of his eighth season with Red Sox.

It could also be his last. When Ramirez checks into camp, will it mark the unofficial beginning of the end?

The landmark eight-year, \$160-million contract signed with the Sox after the 2000 season is complete when this season is over. The Red Sox have options for both 2009 and 2010, each worth \$20 million and the team must make its determination no later than the first week of November prior to each season.

Expect that they will take all the time they need, because this won't be an easy decision.

Ramirez has performed at an extraordinary level for the Sox. Among Red Sox players in history with a minimum of 3,000 plate appearances, Ramirez currently ranks fourth in slugging percentage and OPS (on-base plus slugging percentage), fifth in on-base percentage and seventh in batting average.

In five of his first seven seasons with the Sox, Ramirez has

SEE RED SOX, C3

Find regular reports throughout the season on Mannybeingmanny, at [projosports.com/soxblog](http://projosports.com/soxblog)

# SHOT DOWN

## Baron is scoring fewer points, and that has hurt URI

BILL REYNOLDS



The stats tell the story. In Monday night's loss to Xavier, he had no field goals for the first time in his college career.

But that's not the most important stat.

The most important stat is that he took only seven shots, and one of those was a last-second heave from three-quarter court that shouldn't count against him. The kind of stat

that can get lost in the shuffle.

And not just last night.

In the first 22 games of the season, in which the Rams were 19-3, Baron averaged nearly 11 shots per game. In the last four games, it's down to 7.5 shots a

game.

And it's more than simply the shot attempts. In the last four games, his 3-point attempts are down from nearly eight to just over five. His 3-point percentage is down from 45 to under 30. His points per game have gone from 16 to 8.

And more important: The Rams lost three of those four games.

So you can make the point that how he goes, so go the Rams.

So what's the matter with Jimmy Baron?

Is there anything the matter, or is it just a coincidence?

There's no question that teams have figured out that if you bother him, put pressure on him, don't give him any good looks, the Rams are simply not as good.

**OFF THE MARK**

Jimmy Baron has had difficulty getting off shots in the last four games, and his statistics have suffered accordingly. Perhaps not coincidentally, the Rams have lost three of the four games (per-game averages):

	Att.	FG %	3-pt. att.	3-pt %	Points
First 22 games	10.8	.473	7.8	44.8	16.0
Last 4 games	7.5	.267	5.25	28.5	8.0

That's no surprise. Reduce the effectiveness of the second-leading scorer, and things change.

Why is this happening?

Jimmy Baron is a shooter, and shooters want to find

SEE REYNOLDS, C5



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / JOHN FREIDAH

URI's Jimmy Baron, taking the ball downcourt against Xavier in Monday night's Atlantic 10 game at the Ryan Center, needs to find a way to get more shots.

## If Welsh's days are numbered, then whose number is up?

JIM DONALDSON



team bent on avenging its last loss, which, as amazing as it now seems, happened to come against PC, in Hartford, last month. With the Friars now 4-10 in the confer-

The Providence College Friars have lost four in a row, eight of nine, and will be underdogs in their next two games, both on the road, at West Virginia and Cincinnati. After which, they'll return home to face a scorching-hot Connecticut

ence, ahead of only Rutgers and South Florida in the standings, the chances are good that, for the second time in three years, they'll be on the outside looking in when the Big East Tournament is played next month at Madison Square Garden.

But that doesn't mean there's not much for Friars fans to look forward to.

They can, for example, turn their attention to speculation about who PC athletics director Bob Driscoll will hire as coach for the 2008-09 basketball season if Tim Welsh isn't retained.

Since that's much more fun than wondering if the Friars will win another game

in this death spiral of a season, let's look at some of the names that are being bandied about. ... There are old guys and young guys, PC guys and even TV guys. Showing respect for age, we'll start with the old guys:

■ JIM O'BRIEN

The former BC coach was fired by Ohio State in 2004 for "loaning" \$6,000 to a recruit from Croatia. The Buckeyes received three years' probation from the NCAA and were forced to take down the banner they'd hung in their arena after reaching the Final Four under O'Brien in 1999. O'Brien sued OSU for wrongful

termination and was awarded \$2.4 million by an appeals court last year. An attorney for the school said: "Ohio State maintains it acted appropriately in dismissing Coach O'Brien after he committed serious violations in breach of his contract and failed to report those in a timely manner to the university."

And what would Rev. Brian Shanley, PC's president, say about that? Perhaps "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone."

In addition to his coaching record to

SEE DONALDSON, C5

# what happened last night?



In projoSports and online at [HSGameTime.com/rhodeisland](http://HSGameTime.com/rhodeisland)