

Post your comments about today's Red Sox-A's game

Look for survey questions at projosports.com/redsox



MOUNT, NARRAGANSETT POST PLAYOFF WINS: View the gallery at HSGameTime.com/rhodeisland

Baseball in Japan

See what it's like in Bob Breidenbach's multimedia presentation at projosports.com/redsox

How Sweet 16 it is

The Big East and Pac-10 each boast three teams remaining in the NCAA's Sweet 16:

TEAMS	CONFERENCES
3	Big East, Pac-10
2	Big 10, Big 12
1	ACC, A-10, Conf. USA, SEC, So. Conf., Sun Belt

For up-to-the-second stats and scores: projosports.com/college



TUESDAY, MARCH 25, 2008

projo SPORTS

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OPENING DAY

FIRST WORD

"I'm excited. I can't wait for the games to count. ... There's nothing like starting the season and going out, trying to win game No. 1."

— Dustin Pedroia

PROBABLE LINEUPS

RED SOX	A's
Dustin Pedroia 2B	Travis Buck RF
Kevin Youkilis 1B	Dan Barton 1B
David Ortiz DH	Mike Sweeney DH
Manny Ramirez LF	Jack Cust LF
Mike Lowell 3B	Bobby Crosby SS
J.D. Drew RF	Mark Ellis 2B
Jacoby Ellsbury CF	Jack Hanrahan 3B
Jason Varitek C	Chris Denorfria CF
Julio Lugo SS	Mac Suzuki C
Daisuke Matsuzaka P	Joe Blanton P

ON RADIO/TV

The game will be broadcast on WEEI-FM (103.7) and televised on both NESN and ESPN2.

ON PROJO.COM

Can't get to a radio or television? Come to

projosports.com/redsox. Even if you can get to a radio or TV, you'll want to be here throughout the game and beyond for ...

■ Pregame news from **Sean McAdam** and photos from **Bob Breidenbach** at

projosports.com/soxblog

■ A pitch-by-pitch account of the game, with a dynamic box score updated after each batter.

■ In-game notes from McAdam, and photos from Breidenbach, posted to the blog.

■ A game story available immediately after the final pitch.

■ Postgame notes and comments, reported by McAdam to both the blog and projosports.com's Red Sox site.

■ A complete postgame report, posted within hours of game's end

Go to: projosports.com/redsox and projosports.com/soxblog

LAST WORD

"It should be special. It's a great place to start the season."

— Jacoby Ellsbury

WAKE UP AND SMELL THE HOT DOGS

■ Today in Tokyo: Red Sox vs. A's, 6:05 a.m. ■ Tomorrow in Tokyo: Red Sox vs. A's, 6:05 a.m.



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / BOB BREIDENBACH

Red Sox left fielder Manny Ramirez swings a weighted bat during the team's final practice yesterday in preparation for today's season-opener against the Athletics at the Toyko Dome.



JON LESTER

Illness behind him, Lester's time has come

BY SEAN McADAM
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

TOKYO — Every member of the Red Sox came a long way to begin the 2008 season here, but in a very real sense, no one has journeyed as far as Jon Lester.

A year ago, Lester was chafing in his bid to convince the Red Sox that, rid of the non-Hodgkin's lymphoma that had threatened his life months earlier, he was ready to pitch again.

Wisely, the Red Sox made sure he progressed slowly, fearing that having him do too much too soon, with an already weakened immune system, would have disastrous consequences.

As Lester prepares to make his first start of 2008, no such fears exist. To the contrary, the Red Sox are trying to tamp their own expectations for Lester, whom, they believe, is ready to emerge as a formidable starting pitcher.

It's a belief that was first realized last October, when Lester started and won Game Four of the World Series, shutting out the Colorado Rockies for 5½ innings in the title-clinching game.

"My feeling today," pitching coach John Farrell said, "is no different than at the end of last year — this is a guy who's ready to become a solid, middle-of-the-rotation starter. The progression he's made in the last year is pretty remarkable."

Farrell and the rest of the Red Sox' staff have been taken by what Farrell terms the left-hander's "relentless work ethic and his competitive

SEE RED SOX, D5

Mazzulla is living his dream in NCAAAs

BILL REYNOLDS



I first met Joe Mazzulla four years ago at Rainone Gym in Johnston, so very far from the NCAA Tournament where he now lives.

He was just a sophomore at Hendricken then, but already the word was out on him. He was going to be the state's next great schoolboy basketball player, but even then he had bigger dreams

than that.

It was why he was at Hendricken in the first place, even though his uncle was the boys coach in Johnston and his father was the girls coach, even though his grandfather had been the town's longtime athletic director, and the Mazzulla name ran through the town like Route 295. Even though for him not to go to Johnston High School was seen by many at the time as a form of civic heresy.

But he wanted to be a big-time college player one day.

That was the dream, and he chased it, chased it through summer camps and AAU tournaments, chased it in endless hours in small gyms like the one in Johnston, places where you spend the hours playing imaginary games in your head, complete with imaginary cheers.

"This is my life," he said that morning. "This is what I do."

So he would get up at 5:30 each morning in order to go to the Wal-Mart on Plainfield Pike,

SEE REYNOLDS, D3

76ERS 95, CELTICS 90

Celtics let the 76ers overtake them

Red-hot Philadelphia prevails by rallying from 11 points behind in the fourth quarter.

BY PAUL KENYON
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

BOSTON — Some anniversaries are more special than others. The one the Celtics will celebrate this week is just another illustration of how dramatically the team's situation has changed

in the last year.

It was one year ago this week that the Celts were officially eliminated from the NBA playoff race. Last night, as the Celtics returned from a five-game road trip, much of the pregame discussion was about the playoffs.

This time, it was for all the right reasons.

The Celts were beaten by Philadelphia, a possible playoff opponent, 95-90. Philadelphia, one of the hottest teams in the league

— it has won 10 of its last 12 — earned the win by coming from 11 behind in the fourth quarter. The 76ers scored 16 straight as they turned an 80-69 deficit with 8:20 remaining into an 88-80 lead with 2:18 left.

"I didn't think we played with a lot of energy tonight," said Boston coach Doc Rivers.

"We let it slip away. No excuse," said Paul Pierce, who

SEE CELTICS, D2

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