

How many games will the new-look Celtics win this season?

Tell us your guess at projosports.com/celtics



SOUTH KINGSTOWN, PILGRIM BOOTERS ADVANCE: View the gallery at HSGameTime.com/rhodeisland

Football poll

Pick this weekend's high school football winners at **HSGameTime.com**. We'll run results in the Friday and Saturday papers.

Paths to perfection

Here's how the Patriots compare to Don Shula's perfect 1972 Dolphins. All stats are through the first nine games of the season.

	Dolphins	Patriots
Points per game	27.8	39.4
Pts. allowed per game	11.4	16.3
Average margin of victory	16.4	23.1
Opponents' win percentage	.333	.479



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IN THE NEWS

■ MOSS HONORED AS TOP AFC PLAYER

Patriots' receiver **Randy Moss** was named AFC offensive player of the week yesterday for his nine-catch, 145 yard, one-touchdown performance against the Colts on Sunday. Moss was a second-half force in helping beat Indianapolis, 24-20, with six receptions for 118 yards coming after intermission, including a 55-yard bomb from **Tom Brady** on New England's first drive of the fourth quarter. Brady threw to Moss on six straight plays during that key series. His second-quarter touchdown reception gave him 12 for the season, tying him with **Stanley Morgan** for the most receiving touchdowns in a season in team history.

■ SOX-A'S IN JAPAN STILL UNDECIDED

The World Series champion Boston Red Sox still aren't sure whether they will start next season with a two-game series in Tokyo against the Oakland Athletics. Baseball officials said they hope for a decision by the owners' meetings next week, if not sooner. With **Daisuke Matsuzaka** and **Hideki Okajima**, the Red Sox would be an attractive draw in Japan. Major League Baseball and the players' union have worked since late July on trying to put together a trip involving the Red Sox and A's. "We don't know if we're going or not," Boston general manager **Theo Epstein** said yesterday.

■ PEDRO ASSISTING DOMINICAN RELIEF

Pedro Martinez is trying to help his neighbors in the Dominican Republic. They've been driven from their humble homes, with families separated and children displaced after small shacks all over the island were washed away in the catastrophic floods from Tropical Storm Noel. People are hungry. They're exhausted. Hundreds are sleeping on the floor at Martinez's old high school, short on clothing and water and everything else they need. "It's devastating. The area was just totally wiped out," Martinez said from his ravaged country.

■ KENTUCKY UPSET BY GARDNER-WEBB

Billy Gillispie's second game at Kentucky turned out to be the first shocker of the college basketball season. Gardner-Webb beat the No. 20 Wildcats, 84-68, last night in the 2K Sports College Hoops Classic in Lexington, Ky. The Wildcats hadn't lost a regular-season game to a mid-major since falling to Western Kentucky on Nov. 15, 2001, in that season's opener. They lost to Alabama-Birmingham in 2004 in the first round of the NCAA tournament. Kentucky's last home loss to an unranked nonconference foe was Dec. 3, 2005, against North Carolina.

■ NBA

Atlanta 105, Phoenix 96
Orlando 105, Toronto 96
L.A. Clippers 104, Indiana 89
Philadelphia 94, Charlotte 63
Boston 119, Denver 93
San Antonio 88, Miami 78
Memphis at Seattle
Cleveland at Utah
New Orleans at Portland

■ NHL

Buffalo 2, Boston 1
Pittsburgh 3, Philadelphia 1
Detroit 3, Nashville 2
Tampa Bay 3, Florida 1
Chicago 5, Columbus 2
Colorado 4, Edmonton 3
Phoenix at Anaheim
Dallas at San Jose

YEAR OF THE RAM?

Daniels-led URI poised for a run at the NAAs



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / CONNIE GROSCH

Senior forward **Will Daniels**, in action against Concordia earlier this week, was the Rams' top scorer last year at 17.4 points per game, and even bigger things are expected from him and URI this season. Find schedules, rosters and updated stats all season long for the men's and women's hoops teams, and tell us who you think will be the best men's team in the Atlantic 10. Go to projosports.com/uri

BY KEVIN McNAMARA
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

SOUTH KINGSTOWN — For six seasons now, several phrases have rolled off coach Jim Baron's lips and into the ears of University of Rhode Island basketball fans.

"It's a process." "Doing things the right way." "Growing pains." "Building a program."

Those expressions have been at the heart of Baron's efforts as his have Rams bobbed and weaved their way through the Atlantic 10 wars with middling success. After two N.I.T. appearances early in his tenure (2003 and '04), the Rams ran in place for a bit as the coach's "process" took hold. Then, out of nowhere, Rhody made a thrilling run last March at an elusive spot in the NCAA Tournament.

Embracing a new, up-tempo offensive style, the Rams upset top-seeded Xavier in the A-10 Tournament before dropping a

hard-fought game to George Washington in the finals. Now, with all of the key players returning from that 19-win team, the equation has changed for the Rams. No longer is it about building a program. URI is a pre-season favorite to challenge for the A-10 title and make the NCAA Tournament for the first time since Lamar Odom hit his long jumper to beat Temple in the A-10 championship game in 1999.

PRESEASON POLL

1. Xavier (42)
2. Rhode Island (5)
3. Saint Joseph's (7)
4. Fordham (2)
5. Saint Louis
6. Dayton (2)
7. George Washington
8. Massachusetts (1)
9. Temple
10. Charlotte
11. Duquesne
12. Richmond
13. La Salle
14. St. Bonaventure

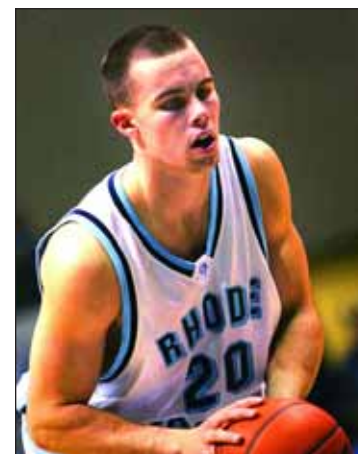
First-place votes in parentheses

SEASON OPENER
URI vs. Florida Atlantic

Tomorrow at the Ryan Center, 7 p.m.

"I don't want people to push aside what these guys have done in helping raise the level of what we're doing and where we're going," Baron says. "Last year, we were picked 11th. Now, we're picked second. That kind of jump is impressive."

SEE URI, D6



Guard **Jimmy Baron**, Rhody's second-leading scorer last season at 14.6 points per game, is comfortable shooting from 25 feet out.



Senior guard **Parfait Bitee** has added range to his shot and often finds the open man in the Rams' running style of play.



URI's **Kahiem Seawright**, the team's top rebounder at 7.5 per game last season, is a long-armed banger who is very aggressive and can draw fouls.



Key reserve **Joe Mbang**, who had 48 3-pointers last season, adds depth to the URI rotation and should be a deadly long-range sniper again.



AP / CHARLES KRUPA

Celtics guard **Rajon Rondo**, right, driving to the basket past Nuggets center **Marcus Camby** during the second quarter last night, and his Boston teammates were too much for Denver to handle in Boston's 119-93 victory. Story, Page D3.

High-flying Celts now on fans' radar

Remember all those people around here the past few years who said they hated the NBA? All those who said they didn't watch it anymore? Well, there are a lot less of them now.

Why? Simple. The Celtics are good.

Which is not to say that some of the NBA's image problems still don't persist as we enter another season. Some of this is generational, of course, the fallout from the fact that hip-hop culture now runs through the NBA like a fast

break. There are still a generation of fans that cling to the Bird era as though it's like the memory of childhood, something that never can be replicated, and see the contemporary NBA as basketball heresy, full of too many tattoos, too many thugs, a different game than the one they used to love.

Some of it, certainly, is the obsession with both the Red Sox and the Patriots, to the point that the seasons seemed to go from the Patriots in the playoffs to spring training. Anything else? Anything else was off the radar. But, truth be told, the main

reason why people around here didn't like the NBA was that the Celtics weren't any good. Or how do you get them excited about Rajon Rondo and Leon Powe when they had seen Larry Bird and Kevin McHale? Or how do you get them excited about rebuilding when they had seen titles being won and banners hoisted into the rafters?

That's essentially been at the core of the Celtics' problems for the past two decades, the fact that we were all spoiled. We had seen the best. We knew the history. This wasn't Orlando or Sacramento, places where the

SEE REYNOLDS, D2