

Talk about last night's Patriots-Ravens game

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McAdam in Nashville

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Half bad

The Patriots and Ravens were tied at halftime last night, only the second time all season the Pats didn't lead after two quarters:

PATS AT THE HALF

Behind	1
Tied	1
Ahead by 1-10 points	3
Ahead by 11-20 points	2
Ahead by 20-plus points	5

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SECTION C



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THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / BOB BREIDENBACH

Boston general manager Theo Epstein and owner John Henry, background, need the foresight to prepare a contract for Johan Santana.

Santana's price could be too hot to handle

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — As the trade negotiations involving Johan Santana carry on like some three-sided game of Ping-Pong — with first the Red Sox and then the Yankees volleying with the Minnesota Twins for the services of the superb left-hander — a larger point seems to have been lost.

SEAN MCADAM

Even if the Red Sox win the bidding war with the Yanks and surrender four players in exchange, there remains the considerable task of signing Santana to a contract extension. Not just any extension, either — for Santana to waive his full no-trade clause, it's likely that he will have to be enticed with the biggest contract ever given to a pitcher.

As unpredictable as the saga has been to date, with the Yankees and Red Sox including players they had previously deemed untouchable and the Yanks issuing a deadline/ultimatum to the Twins, it could get stranger still.

Although most baseball executives at the winter meetings here predict that Santana will ultimately land with the Yankees — if for no other reason than their desperation to land a legitimate front-line starter — others suggested the pitcher's landing spot was still, in the words of one, "a coin flip."

And as time-consuming and melodramatic as the Red Sox' pursuit of Santana has been, there are no guarantees that they will meet Santana's asking price. The Sox could win the battle with the Yankees, only to determine that the pitcher's own asking price is too steep. Since the Sox were bought by the

SEE **RED SOX, C3**

Friars, Rams are revved up for showdown

BY KEVIN McNAMARA
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

SOUTH KINGSTOWN — After too many years in dormancy, the health of the Providence College-University of Rhode Island basketball rivalry is strong and vibrant again.

When the Friars invade the Ryan Center tonight (7 o'clock), they'll find a Rams team that's more than ready for them. URI's 8-1 start is the school's best in 16 years. Jim Baron's team is explosive, deep and carries enough star power to merit Atlantic 10 title consideration this winter.

Rhody welcomes a PC team that appears to be riding one of the upticks that's marked Tim Welsh's roller-coaster career as PC's coach. The Friars (5-1) already boast several wins over teams from marquee conferences, and have four juniors

SEE **PC-URI, C3**

PATRIOTS 27, RAVENS 24

PERFECT ENDING

Late TD pass to Gaffney keeps N.E. unbeaten



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / BOB BREIDENBACH

The Patriots' Benjamin Watson gives Jabar Gaffney (10) a hug after the Patriots wide receiver caught the winning touchdown pass in the fourth quarter last night against the Ravens.

BY SHALISE MANZA YOUNG
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

BALTIMORE — Baltimore head coach Brian Billick said last week that last night's prime-time game against the New England Patriots was his team's Super Bowl. And the Ravens came darn close to pulling off the upset on the grand stage.

But when push came to shove, the Ravens flagged.

As in penalty flags. Baltimore committed two costly penalties, which led to New England's game-winning touchdown — an eight-yard pass from Tom Brady to Jabar Gaffney, who came down with both feet barely in bounds with 44 seconds to play — as the Patriots kept their perfect season alive with a come-from-behind 27-24 victory.

"I told him, that was the best catch of his career. It was a (heck) of a time to do it."

TOM BRADY

Referring to Jabar Gaffney's catch

"[Brady] made a great throw," said Gaffney. "I was able to get both feet down."

The play was reviewed by officials in the press box, and the call was upheld.

"I wasn't nervous at all," said Gaffney of the review. "I knew I had it."

"I told him, that was the best catch of his career," said Brady. "It was a (heck) of a time to do it."

But as back and forth and zany as the final minutes of the game were, the Ravens nearly pulled off the improbable win as Kyle Boller's Hail Mary pass with seconds left on the clock was caught by Mark Clayton, who was gang-tackled at the 3-yard line with time expired.

After the 30- and 40-point victories recorded by New England this season, head coach Bill Belichick insisted that his team still had work to do, though to most observers it seemed like Belichick was being unreasonable.

But last night weaknesses were exposed, particularly in the run game, on both sides of the ball.

"I was proud of the way they played when it was all on the line and we had to make some plays," said Belichick. "We made most of them."

Even so, people now believe Belichick when he says his team isn't perfect

SEE **PATRIOTS, C5**

Roller-coaster ride in Baltimore ends with happy ending

BALTIMORE — They'll go 16-0 now. No question.

JIM DONALDSON

If the Patriots didn't lose last night, they never will.

They are winning narrowly, rather than impressively, but the important thing is that they're still winning.

Where once their wins were dazzling, they're now harrowing. Instead

of winning by lopsided margins, they are winning by the skin of their teeth. Patriots fans, used to watching games with their feet up by halftime, now sit on the edge of their seats for 60 minutes, biting their nails.

Even for those devoted fans who couldn't believe the Patriots ever would lose, it's hard to believe how the Pats came from behind to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat against a Ravens team that had lost five in a

row, hadn't scored more than 14 points in four of those five games, and were whopping, 20½ -point underdogs.

As if it weren't enough that the game ended when a desperation, last-ditch, final-play pass from Ravens QB Kyle Boller was caught at the N.E. 2-yard line by Mark Clayton, the fact is that the game should have been over twice before that.

If you thought Redskins coach Joe

Gibbs had lost his marbles Sunday when he called back-to-back time-outs trying to freeze the Buffalo kicker before a last-second field-goal attempt — drawing a 15-yard penalty that turned a 51-yard attempt into a game-winning 36-yarder, then there's no doubt that Ravens coach Brian Billick lost the game when he called a time-out from the sidelines that nullified a

SEE **DONALDSON, C5**



PATRIOTS 27 RAVENS 24

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UPSETTING START

The heretofore moribund Ravens rose to the occasion on national television, putting the Pats' perfect record in jeopardy.

FIGHT TO THE END

The Pats' defense stiffened in the fourth quarter, getting a key interception at the goal line and

forcing two three-and-outs that gave Tom Brady and company a chance to pull it out in the closing minutes.

MAGICAL FINISH

And pull it out they did, converting two fourth-down chances and scoring the game-winning touchdown on a Brady-to-Jabar Gaffney pass with 44 seconds to play.

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