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College hoops chat

Paul Kenyon answers your URI hoops questions today at noon. Enter the hoops chat room at projosports.com/chat

Comparing the streaks

The Patriots won 18 consecutive regular-season games in the 2003 and '04 seasons, and matched the feat in 2006 and '07. How they match up:

	'03-04	'06-07
HOME WINS	11	9
ROAD WINS	7	9
AVG. SCORE	24-14	34-16
NO. OF SHUTOUTS	3	0

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

SECTION C



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SHIFTING GEARS

Maroney keying running game as the cold, playoffs approach



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / BOB BREIDENBACH

BY SHALISE MANZA YOUNG
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

FOXBORO — Everyone knows Tom Brady can throw and Randy Moss and Wes Welker can catch.

But for a while, no one believed the Patriots could run.

Over the last few weeks, however, New England — specifically second-year back Laurence Maroney — has shown that it can be just as effective on the ground as it is through the air, something that will serve the Pats well in the playoffs.

That the Patriots can move the chains by running the ball helps in two ways. With the potential of two playoff games in Foxboro and the unknown of a New England winter, it becomes crucial to be able to run effectively if Mother Nature whips up an ugly storm. And it also gives defenses, which already have to deal with the

task of covering Moss, Welker, Jabar Gaffney and Donte Stallworth, one more thing to worry about.

"It's what you try to do as an offense — keep the defense second-guessing," Kevin Faulk said yesterday.

"That's the idea," Giants coach Tom Coughlin said via conference call. "The idea is to go ahead and force people to think about one thing and then be able to rely on another. When they're [the defense] playing pass, you run, and when they're playing run, you pass. That's part of the game."

For much of the season, Brady's arm, the phenomenal athleticism of Moss and the shiftiness of Welker were almost all New England needed to give its foes fits.

Against the Steelers earlier this month, the Patriots ran the ball only nine times, including a four-yard scramble by Brady. It was the second-fewest carries in a game in franchise history, behind the six the team had in its Halloween loss in Pittsburgh to end its 21-game win streak in 2004 and another nine-tote game against Denver in 1996.

For All To See

- **TIME:** 8:15 p.m. Saturday
- **SITE:** Giants Stadium
- **TV:** The NFL Network (Cox Channel 137, Cox HD Channel 726), over-the-air Channel 10, Cox Channel 10, Cox HD Channel 700, over-the-air Channel 12, Cox Channel 12, COX HD Channel 701.
- **ANNOUNCERS:** Bryant Gumbel and Cris Collinsworth
- **TEAM RECORDS:** Patriots 15-0, Giants 10-5
- **THE LINE:** 14½

But in the last two games, the Pats have averaged more than 160 rushing yards, with Maroney enjoying back-to-back 100-yard days for the first time in his young career. The former first-round draft pick, criticized in the media for "dancing" and not running with authority, has been the type of runner New England wants him to be in that time. He's had four- to five-yard gains and gotten big runs in the flow of the game instead of always looking to break a big gain every time he's handed the ball.

Against the Jets, he had a career-high 26 carries for 104 yards, an average of four yards per carry. More importantly,

SEE PATRIOTS, C5

Rams' ascent to Top 25 nice Christmas present

The Rams are in the Associated Press' Top 25 college basketball poll for the first time since a one-week appearance in 1998-99.

It's a great accomplishment. And one we shouldn't take for granted.

For let's understand that there are a slew of schools out there, schools that have many more basketball advantages than URI has, that are nowhere near the top 25 this morning. Complete with a slew of coaches who would all but mortgage their mothers to be 11-1.

So how has it happened? Well, not with trumpets blaring and large symbolic gestures, that's for sure. Rather, with the slow accumulation of players that now has this URI team deep and athletic, arguably as

POLL RESULTS

This is the third time the University of Rhode Island has cracked the Associated Press Top 25 poll in its history:

	WEEKS IN POLL	HIGH	LOW
1997-98*	9	20	25
1998-99**	1	25	--
2007-08	1	25	--

* — was ranked 21st in preseason poll
* — was ranked 23rd in preseason poll
NOTE: The Associated Press poll debuted in the 1948-49 season

deep as it's ever been.

Much has been made of coach Jim Baron's endless mantra that this was a "process," his catch-word for building a program. But that's what this has been. A process. Not always easy. Not always linear, at least as far as the record went. But a process, nonetheless.

That, too, shouldn't be taken



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / CONNIE GROSCH

URI's Will Daniels, looking to the hoop against Concordia last month, is an Atlantic 10 player-of-the-year candidate.

for granted. Winning in college basketball is no guarantee. You can pay coaches all

kinds of money, give them all sorts of support and perks, do

SEE REYNOLDS, C2

Lowrie and Masterson working hard as they climb Red Sox' ladder

BY JOE McDONALD
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

The Red Sox were pleased with the development of numerous prospects during the 2007 season, especially Dustin Pedroia and Jacoby Ellsbury. Both players made significant contributions to Boston's world championship run, but they weren't the only ones who impressed management.

Enter Jed Lowrie, an infielder, and Justin Masterson, a pitcher. Both enjoyed success in 2007, but there's still plenty of developmental work that needs to be done before they can say they have exceeded the organization's expectations.

Lowrie proved that he possesses solid skills. But there was a strength issue. That's something he said he focused on last

season, and he continues to do so in his offseason workouts. He's been in Arizona working out with a personal trainer.

Lowrie is considered a solid hitter with good knowledge of the strike zone. When he steps into the batter's box, he approaches each at-bat with a plan. He is a well-prepared player, and there should be improvement in spring training because of his increased strength.

"I'm continuing to work out and let my body mature," said Lowrie, a 6-foot, 185-pounder. "I feel like I'm still growing and I feel like I have a lot of potential, but it's something I need to work at and I'm working at it pretty hard. It's just a matter of gaining some strength and maintaining

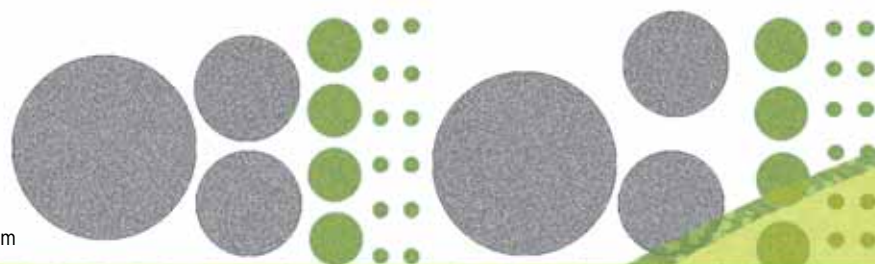
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