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**Leafs raking it in**

According to Forbes Magazine, the Toronto Maple Leafs are worth \$448 million, making the franchise the most valuable in the NHL. The top five most valuable NHL teams:

RANK	TEAM	VALUE
1	Maple Leafs	\$448m
2	Rangers	\$411m
3	Canadiens	\$334m
4	Red Wings	\$303m
5	Flyers	\$275m

SECTION B



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**projo**SPORTS

Phone: 401-277-7340 Fax: 401-277-7444 E-mail: [pjsports@projo.com](mailto:pjsports@projo.com)



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / BOB BREIDENBACH

Clay Buchholz, ready to throw to first after fielding a ground ball against the Orioles in September, could be the Sox' fifth starter.

**Red Sox have the luxury of tinkering with their roster**

Without the need to make a big splash in free agency, Boston could be in the trade market for the right deal.

BY DANIEL BARBARISI  
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

When the Red Sox drew up their offseason blueprint, they realized they had one significant advantage over much of the competition: Boston doesn't have a drastic need to do anything.

Most of the Red Sox' roster losses come from the bench or middle relief. Without the need to make a big splash in free agency, the team could be active in the trade market if the right deal is there.

"We don't feel like there's anything we absolutely have to do," said general manager Theo Epstein in an interview after the season, "but there are going to be a lot of opportunities out there. Teams like a lot of our players. We like a lot of other teams' players. Maybe there will be a fit out there."

Much attention has been focused on the destination of free-agent catcher Jason Varitek, with the Blue Jays, Dodgers and Indians possible suitors. Varitek could, of course, re-sign with Boston, or the Red Sox could seek a catcher in trade, such as Texas' Gerald Laird or Jarrod Saltalamacchia. The free-agent market for catchers is weak, with only one, Boston's David Ross, under 33 years old.

Beyond Varitek, however, the Red Sox' starting lineup and rotation should remain mostly intact. Varitek, Curt Schilling, Bartolo Colon, Mark Kotzsay, Ross, Alex Cora, Sean Casey and Paul Byrd all have filed for free agency in the last week, but beyond Varitek, all played part-time roles last season.

**Red Sox free agents**

With the Red Sox having picked up their \$4-million option on Tim Wakefield, only reliever Mike Timlin has yet to file for free agency. Epstein

SEE RED SOX, B5

**BREAKING OUT**

Junior Keith Cothran demonstrates in the Rams' exhibition against Concordia that he has become a better and more complete player.

BY PAUL KENYON  
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

SOUTH KINGSTOWN — Keith Cothran is becoming a more complete player, which is good news for the University of Rhode Island's basketball team.

Almost from the day he joined the Rams two seasons ago, the 6-foot-4

guard from Connecticut has been one of the stars of the team highlight reel. Long, lean and athletic, Cothran has excelled in making the spectacular play.

He has been the team leader in steals and one of the team leaders in dunks, too. It has been his athleticism that has made him a solid contributor for the Rams.

As he begins his junior year, that is changing.

Cothran demonstrated in the Rams' opening exhibition, against Concordia University on Monday night, that he is now able to do much

more. He is developing more skills.

His shooting range, which was limited when he arrived, began to improve last season. It is now extending to the 3-point line. His ball-handling and decision-making, which were shaky at times, also are improving.

He is, in short, becoming a more complete player. He is developing into one of the Rams' key cogs.

Cothran, whose career-high in regular-season play is 17 points, had 20 in the 123-84 rout of Concordia. But the points barely begin to tell how he is becoming a more valuable

**projo.com**

**Live chat with Jim Baron:** The URI Rams' coach will answer your questions from noon to 1 p.m. next Wednesday as his team gets set to start the regular season against Brown. Look for more information this afternoon on [projosports.com/uri](http://projosports.com/uri)

player.

Two plays from Monday night stick out. The first was his first shot

SEE URI, B5



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / RUBEN W. PEREZ

URI's Keith Cothran, leading a fast break after making a steal against Charlotte during last season's Atlantic 10 Tournament, has improved his shooting range, which now extends to the 3-point line. His ball-handling and decision-making also are improving.

**Optimist, Pessimist chew on Patriots' 5-3 start**

We are halfway through this 2008 Patriots football season — one which has turned out to be

JIM DONALDSON



very different from what we expected, and worlds away from last year's near-perfect season. And so, at the midway mark, it seems an appropriate

time to make some halfway points, to take a few moments to examine whether the Pats' glass is half-full, or half-empty. Consequently, we bring you, for consultative purposes, The Optimist and The Pessimist —

meeting, as they always do, at the coffee shop halfway between their respective domiciles. The Optimist hopeful that this time, even though it's never happened before, The Pessimist will buy the beverages, while The Pessimist is convinced there's no way in the world that The Optimist ever will pick up the tab.

"How 'bout them Pats!" The Optimist exults. "They're 5-3 and tied for first in the AFC East. As optimistic as I am, I can't say I expected them to do that well after Tom Brady got hurt in the first half of the first game."

SEE DONALDSON, B3

"I have kind of kept an eye on Buffalo. They have played a lot of teams that we have played so we have seen them to some degree. But now is really when we start zeroing in on them."

BILL BELICHICK



THE JOURNAL / GLENN OSMUNDSON

**Buffalo first of three hurdles for Patriots**

New England is in a fight for the division title with the Bills, Jets and Dolphins —its next three opponents.

BY ROBERT LEE  
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

FOXBORO — Having won six of seven AFC East titles since 2001, the Patriots have certainly been the juggernaut of the division.

Their 36-10 record in division play over that span is the best in the NFL.

They were the favorites before this season began to again roll through the division, but that all changed in the first quarter of the

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**On projosports.com/patriots:** See how Matt Cassel's stats compare with Tom Brady's in his first eight games as Patriots starting quarterback. And get breaking news from around the league on Mike McDermott's Football Today column, posted by noon each weekday.

Patriots' season-opener when Kansas City safety Bernard Pollard injured the left knee of reigning NFL MVP Tom Brady, ending his season.

After that, not many NFL pundits thought that the Patriots

SEE PATRIOTS, B3