

Will the Rhody Rams qualify for the NCAA Tournament?

Tell us what you think at projosports.com/uri



CUMBERLAND WINS DUAL-MEET TITLE: View the gallery at HSGameTime.com/rhodeisland

Papelbon speaks

The closer talks about dancing, his relationship with Eli Manning and Dice-K's hair at projosports.com/redsox

Very hard to hit

In 2007, Jonathan Papelbon had the lowest batting average allowed of any qualifying major-league relief pitcher.

	Team	BA allowed
Jonathan Papelbon	BOS	.146
Takashi Saito	LAD	.151
J.J. Putz	SEA	.153
Carlos Marmol	CHC	.169
Jason Isringhausen	STL	.179

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Barons' biggest tests these days are off the court

Twelve days ago, URI coach Jim Baron's wife, Cindy, mother of Jimmy and Billy Baron, underwent major heart surgery to repair a congenital defect.

BY PAUL KENYON
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

EAST GREENWICH — The worst appears to be over for the Baron family.

The worry, the concern and the uncertainty are still there. But all indications are that the procedure went well. Recovery time will be needed, but there is every reason to believe the matter will have a happy ending.

No, this is not about basketball. This

is not about the URI team Jim Baron coaches and Jimmy Baron plays for. This is about a far more important issue. This is about life and death, about a wife and mother going through heart surgery.

It is about how there are more important things than basketball games.

Twelve days ago, Cindy Baron, Jim's wife and Jimmy (and Billy) Baron's mother, underwent major heart surgery to repair a congenital defect. She had been living with atrial septal defect. It is a condition that, in effect, means she had holes in her heart.

"There were two of them," Jim Bar-

on said. "She would have flareups. It would cause the rhythm of her heart to go out." Surgery was required to close the holes and insure the proper flow of blood through her heart.

"To see her with all these tubes in her. It was hard."

JIM BARON

URI basketball coach

So, while the URI team was putting together a big season, as the team was on the way to winning 20 games faster than any other squad in school history, the Barons had other concerns. The surgery was 12 days ago Monday at Rhode Island Hospital. Cindy Baron was in intensive care for several days and was in the hospital for a week. She has now returned to the family's East Greenwich home.

According to all reports, everything went well. She is doing fine. The process, though, took its toll not only on her, but on her husband and children, as well.

"To see her with all these tubes in her. It was hard," Jim Baron said.

Her husband and son spent as much time as possible with her. They were there virtually every day. The sons, of course, had classes to attend. Jimmy Baron is a junior at URI, a dean's list student. Billy Baron is a junior at Hendricken, one of the top high school players in the state. Both also had basketball to deal with. URI athletic director Thor Bjorn discussed the issue with Jim Baron and asked if the family

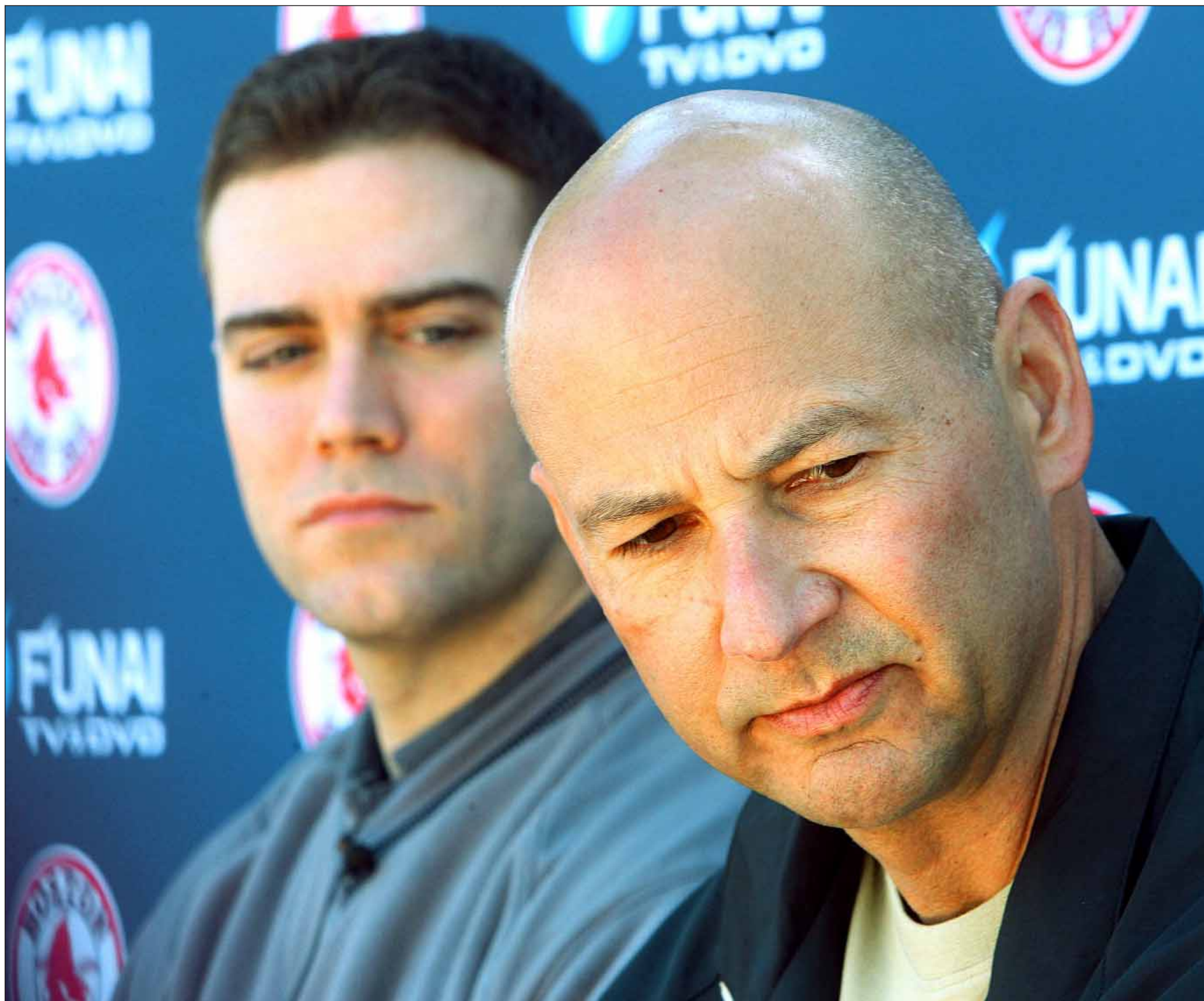
SEE **BARON, C2**



URI NEWS BUREAU / NORA LEWIS

While the Rams are putting together a big season, Cindy and Jim Baron and their children have more important concerns.

STATE of the NATION



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / BOB BREIDENBACH

Executive vice president/general manager Theo Epstein, left, and Red Sox manager Terry Francona talk to the media at the minor-league facility yesterday.

Schilling only variable as camp opens

BY SEAN McADAM
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

FORT MYERS, Fla. — About to begin their fifth season, in tandem, as the manager and general manager of Red Sox, Terry Francona and Theo Epstein emerged from the clubhouse at the team's minor-league facility yesterday morning after pitchers and catchers reported on the first day of spring training.

A typo in court papers regarding Barry Bonds filed late yesterday by federal prosecutors touch off a brief tempest over the mistaken belief that he failed a drug test in November 2001, one month after breaking the home-run record.

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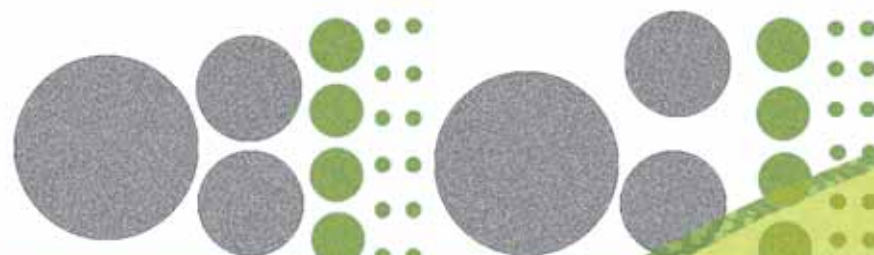
Already, the Sox have lost veteran starter Curt Schilling for at least half of the season, and other American League rivals — the Detroit Tigers, most notably — committed themselves in the offseason to closing the gap that exists between the defending champs and the rest of the league. "We're in a tough division and a tough league," Epstein said. "We're going to have to work hard and play well to compete at the highest level."

Perched on the top of a bench, alongside his manager, Epstein invited reporters' questions and addressed a wide range of issues.

After a nasty dispute with Schilling that surfaced last week regarding the best course of treatment for the shoulder and biceps injuries that jeopardize his 2008 season, and by extension, his career, Epstein said the organization and the 41-year-old pitcher are "on the same page." Schilling's longtime orthopedist, Craig

SEE **RED SOX, C3**

bring it on!



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