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SoxBlog

The latest news from Sean McAdam and Joe McDonald in Fort Myers all this month at projosports.com/soxblog

Better and better

In each decade, the Patriots have increased the number of times they've qualified for the playoffs:

| | YRS. IN PLAYOFFS | TITLES |
|-------|------------------|--------|
| 1960s | 1 | 0 |
| 1970s | 2 | 0 |
| 1980s | 3 | 0 |
| 1990s | 4 | 0 |
| 2000s | 6 | 3 |

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

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PLAYOFF TIME



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / KRIS CRAIG

Scituate guard Katie Birrell is hugged by coach Jean Angell after her free throw with no time left beat Prout, 46-45.

HIGHLIGHTS

While the boys and girls basketball playoffs continued yesterday, the girls' ice hockey state finals began. Both games ended with 4-3 outcomes. Bay View edged Lincoln School/PCD with Elyse Connolly's goal at 10:17 of the third period proving to be the difference in the Division I contest. In Division II, goaltender Chelsea Balasco backboned a La Salle comeback that resulted in a victory when Barbara Fox scored at 3:57 of overtime.

Back on the hardwood, Mount St. Charles guard John Lancellotti tossed in a career-high 30 points as the Mounties dismissed Prout, 74-62, in a Division II quarterfinal. Mount next plays Central Falls, which overpowered Burrillville, 85-64, behind 20 points from sophomore Robert Alers.

In the girls' Division II quarterfinals, Barrington, Woonsocket, Mount St. Charles and Scituate all advanced, the latter doing so when Katie Birrell sank a free throw with no time showing on the clock to nip Prout, 46-45.

BOYS DIVISION III BASKETBALL

QUARTERFINALS
Games Tonight, CCRI-Warwick North Smithfield vs. Juanita Sanchez, 6:30 p.m.
Moses Brown vs. Johnston, 8 p.m.

GIRLS DIVISION III BASKETBALL

SEMIFINALS
Games Tonight, RIC Mount Pleasant vs. Hope, 6:30 p.m.
Central Falls vs. Fatima, 8 p.m.

Papelbon sticking to his guns over contract

The closer knows what he wants to be paid this year, and if the Red Sox don't oblige, he wants the team to renew him at a lower salary, with no more negotiation.

BY SEAN McADAM
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

FORT MYERS, Fla. — Jonathan Papelbon may be young, but he knows how the business of baseball works. He knows that, with a little more than

two years of major-league service time, he has no contractual leverage with the Red Sox. Not yet eligible for arbitration, Papelbon has little recourse at the bargaining table.

But he also has a benchmark for what he should be paid in 2008, and if the Red Sox don't come close to his figure, he would rather they renew him at a lower salary figure, without further negotiation.

"I can't sell myself short," said Papelbon yesterday morning. "I know they're not going to give me what I want, so the



PAPELBN

question becomes, 'How close can we get?' If I can't get close, they can just renew me."

Teams have the right to renew — or unilaterally determine a one-year salary — with players who have less than three years of major-league service. Different organizations have different policies in setting renewal figures. Renewals are not uncommon. The Sox

renewed Kevin Youkilis last spring, and in the last year, the Milwaukee Brewers did the same with young stars Ryan Braun and Prince Fielder.

Such a strategy could cost Papelbon plenty, but he feels this will be matter of principle.

"No doubt about it," he said. "Otherwise, I won't be able to live with myself."

Asked what would be a fair salary for this year, Papelbon had his answer ready.

SEE RED SOX, B5

SHE'S UPLIFTING



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / BILL MURPHY

Gymnast Casey Lesieur of Coventry High, competing in the floor exercise at the state gymnastics championships at R.I. College a week ago yesterday, says, "Every time I go to do something, I don't think about what can go wrong. I just think about what will happen if I do it well."

A positive approach helps Lasieur flourish

BY CAROLYN THORNTON
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

COVENTRY — When she was 2, she was already doing front handsprings without even realizing it.

When she was 5, her parents were panic-stricken when they glanced out the kitchen window to find their daughter walking along the top bar of the swing set.

Fear, it seems, has never been a factor for Casey Lesieur, who spent her childhood climbing trees and performing flips off the couch.

So those who know her best aren't particularly surprised about what the Coventry gymnast has accomplished over the last year despite essentially losing the use of her right arm.

"She doesn't have any fear. She doesn't," says Lesieur's oldest sister, Dawn Mozzi. "There's no talking

about it. She won't stop. She's too hyper. She can't sit still. She's so meticulous."

"Every time I go to do something, I don't think about what can go wrong," says Casey, the youngest of Michael and Diane Lesieur's four daughters. "I just think about what will happen if I do it well. I just think positively."

Lesieur has had to rely on a lot of positive thinking lately to keep her love of gymnastics alive.

It is a love that first blossomed about 10 years ago when her parents introduced her to the sport in the hopes that it would bring the shy 8-year-old out of her shell. Lesieur took to it immediately, progressing to a Level 10 gymnast two years ago.

Competing for Coventry's high school team, she

SEE LESIEUR, B6



Casey Lesieur, right, is hugged by Coventry teammate Kristen Cacal after her floor routine during the state gymnastics championships.

PC 81, CINCINNATI 79
Friars give themselves a reason for hope by outlasting Bearcats

The play of freshman Marshon Brooks helps a rejuvenated PC team stay in the running for a spot in the Big East Tournament.

BY KEVIN McNAMARA
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

CINCINNATI — As he wrapped up a team meeting at a local hotel Saturday night, Tim Welsh received some awful news.

St. John's had just survived for a three-point win over Seton Hall, a victory that moved the Red Storm ahead of the Friars in the Big East standings. PC now needed at least two wins in its final three games to get into the conference tournament.

"Coach just said we have a three-game

season and now we have to win at least two of them," said freshman Marshon Brooks. "We want to get all three and get to New York, for sure."

Now it's one down and two to go. About 15 hours later, Brooks had two stunning plays to help the Friars close out an 81-79 overtime win over Cincinnati. The triumph snapped a five-game PC losing streak and moved the team into a three-way tie with SJU and DePaul for the final spot in the Big East's Madison Square Garden party. If the teams remain tied, the Blue Demons would earn the invite.

PC, 14-14 overall and 5-11 in the conference, must beat either Connecticut or Villa-

SEE FRIARS, B3



AP / TOM UHLMAN

Geoff McDermott, right, and Marshon Brooks celebrate after PC nipped Cincinnati in overtime yesterday, keeping alive its Big East tourney hopes.

Gay inks deal with Saints and gets closer to home

Former Patriot Randall Gay signs a four-year, \$17.8-million pact, allowing him to play 90 miles from his hometown.

BY SHALISE MANZA YOUNG
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

As much as he wanted to stay with the New England Patriots, the team that gave him a chance to play and the region he came to adopt, when Randall Gay got the chance to go back home, he went for it.

Yesterday, the cornerback signed with the New Orleans Saints, who play about 90 miles from Gay's hometown of Brusly,

La. Gay received a four-year deal from the Saints that could be worth as much as \$17.8 million — \$6.9 million of that is guaranteed.

"It's bittersweet," agent Albert Elias said last night. "He's leaving a team that helped him get his shot, that helped him get started. So he's sad one way, but in the other way, he's going to the team he watched growing up as a kid."

When negotiations with the Patriots stalled and Gay and Elias decided to test free agency, Gay stressed to Elias that he wanted to keep New England in

SEE PATRIOTS, B3