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Oh, what a relief it is!

The Red Sox bullpen, led by one of the game's best closers in Jonathan Papelbon, was tops in the American League in 2007:

	ERA	W	L	SV
Boston	3.10	19	14	45
Toronto	3.46	19	25	44
Texas	3.71	33	22	42
Cleveland	3.75	26	17	49
Minnesota	3.87	20	18	38

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Ailing Baldelli on DL indefinitely

The Rays' center fielder says his body's inability to cope with lactic acid causes fatigue and his muscles to cramp.

BY JOE McDONALD
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

FORT MYERS, Fla. — Rocco Baldelli has decided to put his baseball career on hold in order to concentrate on his health.

In Tampa, two hours north from the Red Sox spring training facility, Baldelli broke his silence and discussed in detail his serious health issue that has kept him sidelined for much of the last two-plus seasons. The Rhode Island native, and center fielder for the Tampa Bay Rays, decided it was

time to reveal that he has metabolic and/or mitochondrial abnormalities, which causes severe fatigue and muscle cramping.

After dismissing rumors about him having multiple sclerosis or a rare blood disorder, and denying that he was a steroids user, in an interview with The Journal last Saturday, Baldelli decided to discuss his health issues publicly in an attempt to stop all the speculation. He met with the Tampa-area media yesterday morning, and spoke with The Journal via a

phone interview yesterday afternoon.

He will be placed on the disabled list indefinitely and he said he'll stay on the DL until something changes, or he learns something new.

Baldelli said that his body is not producing the chemical ATP (adenosine triphosphate), causing his muscles to not work properly or recover as they should for a physically active human. It's common in the competitive sports world that athletes build up so much of this chemical — or lactic acid in laymen's terms — during workouts that they must burn

it off or fatigue will set in. That's what is happening to Baldelli.

When asked if this was a life-threatening issue, Baldelli was cautious with his answer but believes that it is not.

"It's difficult for me to comment on that," he said. "I'm not worried about it being extremely serious and I don't like to use the term [life threatening]. Doctors are fairly certain this is not serious to that point. It's a problem, a serious problem, but not something I'm worried about."

He visited numerous doctors



Tampa Bay's Rocco Baldelli, fielding a ball during spring training, is going on the disabled list because of a serious medical condition.

AP / AL BEHRMAN

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View a gallery of photos from Rocco Baldelli's baseball career, from Hendricken to the Tampa Bay Rays, at projosports.com/redsox

SEE BALDELLI, C2

Rams and Friars ousted



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / JOHN FREIDAH

Providence College's Geoff McDermott drives to the basket against West Virginia's Alex Ruoff in the first half of their Big East Tournament game.

PC's offense fades in final 7 minutes

BY KEVIN McNAMARA
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

NEW YORK — With their season on the line and the opportunity for a sweet win at hand, the Providence College Friars did all the wrong things down the stretch yesterday at Madison Square Garden. This is not a recording.

Perhaps it is fitting that PC's final game of the season, a 58-53 loss to West Virginia in a first-round game of the Big East Tournament, looked strikingly familiar to so many other defeats in a season that came to a close with a final record of 15-16. This Friar team wasn't bad. It was simply a tease.

That quality was on full display yesterday.

Providence played very hard and very tough, diving for loose balls, rebounding well and delivering one of its best defensive efforts of the season. But with the game on the line, PC's offense self-destructed. After pulling ahead, 46-43, with 7:03 to play, the Friars' game went haywire. The rest of the way, they scored just seven points on two field goals and two free throws. They threw the ball away four times and had a fifth crunch-time turnover on an offensive charging foul.

When it was over, the Friars slumped out of the Garden shaking their heads and knew that a chance at a marquee win had slipped through their fingers.

**W. VIRGINIA 58
PC 53**

"It's very disappointing," said Geoff McDermott. "We played well, we played our hearts out. A couple things didn't go our way and we don't come up with the win."

McDermott had 8 points and 8 assists and sparked a defense that limited the Mountaineers (23-9) to 22 fewer points than they scored in a romp over PC just a few weeks back. But manufacturing offense was a struggle all day. Weyinmi Efejuku (12) was PC's only double-figures scorer but his crippling mistakes down the stretch were huge ones. PC shot 42

percent from the floor, made just 4-of-12 threes and turned the ball over 18 times.

PC hasn't won a Big East tournament game in five seasons. Coach Tim Welsh fell to a grizzly 1-9 in the event, a major black mark in a 10-season career that may have come to an end yesterday.

"There was no win-or-go-home talk," Welsh said. "The guys know the Big East tournament is big so they came out with a good focus. I thought they played extremely hard and tough and scrapped and clawed. At the end of the game, we just couldn't buy a bucket."

SEE FRIARS, C3

URI loses it on a pair of free throws in last tick

BY PAUL KENYON
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

ATLANTIC CITY — URI and Charlotte combined to produce 148 points, 14 3-point baskets, 47 fouls, 59 free throws and 32 turnovers last night in an exciting Atlantic 10 opening-round tournament game at Boardwalk Hall.

In the end, though, the difference between the teams came down to two whistles blown by officials in the final eight seconds. Charlotte got the benefit of both, which allowed it to pull out a 75-73 thriller.

**CHARLOTTE 75
URI 73**

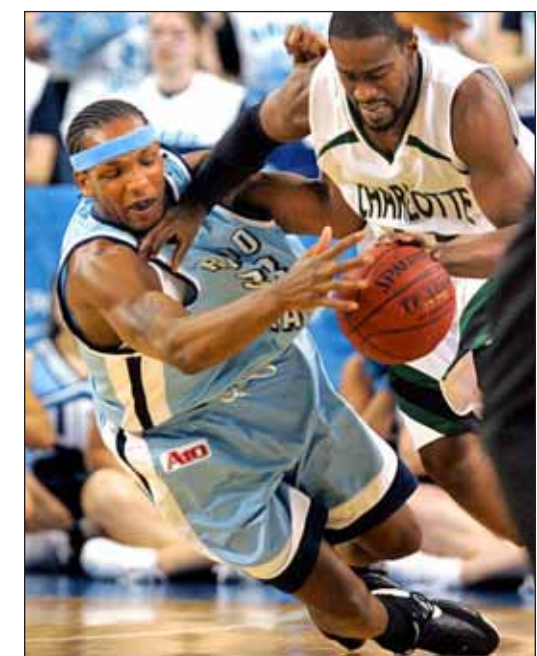
Back-up guard Michael Gerrity was the hero, canning two foul shots with three-tenths of a second left to break a 73-73 tie and give the 49ers their first lead since midway through the first half.

But it was not the foul call against Gerrity, who was driving to the hoop when he was bumped by Keith Cothran, that had the URI side fuming. It was the call with eight seconds left, when URI had the ball and was working to set up what it hoped would be a game-winning shot. Official John Hughes called an illegal screen on Kahiem Seawright as Seawright was trying to make room for Parfait Bitee, who was dribbling the ball.

"We had called a play, Boston," Bitee related. "They were having trouble with ball screens all game. We thought it would work."

What made the foul against Seawright even tougher for URI to take was that Bitee was bumped by Charlotte guard Dijuan Harris just before the shot.

SEE RAMS, C3



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / RUBEN W. PEREZ

URI's Kahiem Seawright dives for the ball as Charlotte's Leemire Goldwire retains control in the first half last night.