

The name game:
Who's your pick
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Not so wild out West

The Boston Celtics have not fared well at all during their annual Texas swing:

	W	L
2006-07	1	1
2005-06	0	3
2004-05	0	2
2003-04	0	2

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

SECTION C



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projo SPORTS

Phone: 401-277-7340 Fax: 401-277-7444 E-mail: pjsports@projo.com



AP / KATHY WILLENS

Boston designated hitter David Ortiz strikes out swinging and makes the third out of the first inning yesterday.

Even in Fla., Sox-Yankees can't help but play for real

New York's Derek Jeter gets drilled and Boston's David Ortiz is brushed back during a warmup of baseball's red-hot rivalry.

BY JOE McDONALD
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

TAMPA, Fla. — In the warm southern sun, The Rivalry has resumed.

The Red Sox arrived at Legends Field — the spring home of the Yankees — yesterday morning for a game that didn't have the feel or atmosphere of a spring-training contest. Instead, it felt more like your typical, meaningful game in September with the attention that comes with it.

The ballpark was sold out for what was the only meeting this spring between the two teams. In fact, a record was set, with 11,036 fans in attendance.

It was the first time since 1992 that the Red Sox did not play at home on St. Patrick's Day.

The Red Sox lost to their archrivals, 8-4, but the game still had some moments that mirrored a regular-season game.

The Yankees' Derek Jeter was drilled in the elbow by reliever Julian Tavares with one out in the bottom of the second inning. The Yankees' Bobby Abreu then crushed the next offering from the Sox' reliever and deposited it into the right-field bleacher seats for a 6-0 lead.

In the top of the third inning, Yankees starter Andy Pettitte came in high and tight on David Ortiz with the slugger taking exception and starting back at the mound. The crafty lefty said afterward he was trying to come inside on Ortiz, but it was not retaliatory.

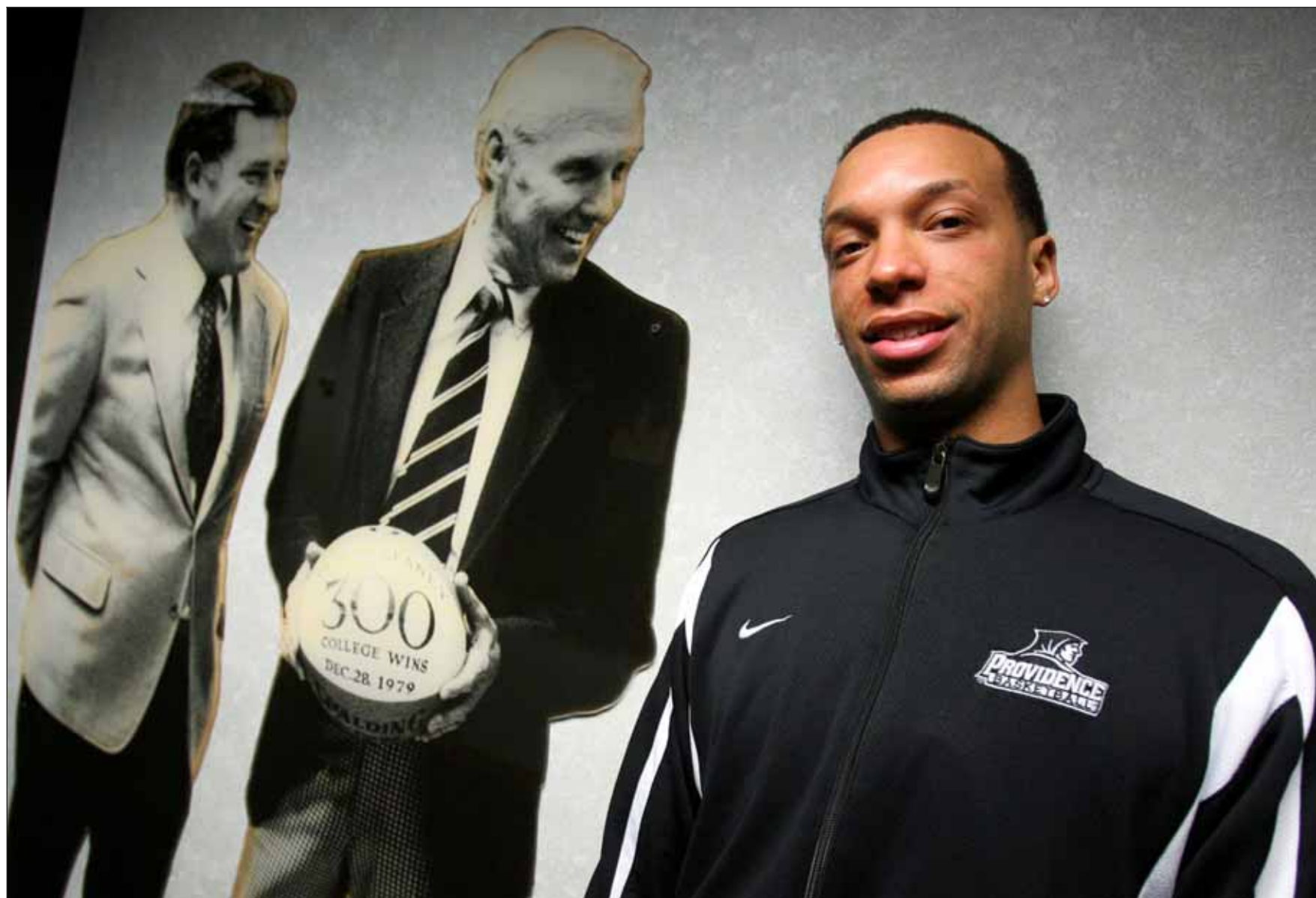
"He's a great hitter," said Pettitte. "There's no doubt I backed him off. He's a great hitter

SEE RED SOX, C5

LOOKING AHEAD

"It was shocking. I wanted to see him back bad and I was trying to stay positive. I had a very good relationship with Coach Welsh."

PC'S JEFF XAVIER



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / FRIEDA SQUIRES

Jeff Xavier talks about coach Tim Welsh's firing. In the background is a photo of two of PC's top coaches — Dave Gavitt, left, and Joe Mullaney.

Welsh firing affects Xavier, other juniors the most

BY KEVIN McNAMARA
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

PROVIDENCE — When Jeff Xavier received a text message from one of his coaches about a team meeting last Saturday morning, a creepy, empty feeling hit his gut.

"I text Kevin (Kurbec) back and just wrote 'good news or bad?' He wrote 'bad.' Then I knew," Xavier said.

A half-hour later, Tim Welsh stood in front of Xavier and many of his teammates and told them he wouldn't be coaching them anymore. While the players felt the pulse of the general unrest surrounding their coach, when

life-changing news like that hits, it supplies a jolt.

"It was shocking," said Xavier. "I wanted to see him back bad and I was trying to stay positive. I had a very good relationship with coach Welsh."

Weynmi Efejuku missed the Saturday morning meeting. He was home in New York City for the weekend with his mother. When he awoke, his phone was buzzing with messages.

"I called Charles (Burch) and he told me," the junior guard said. "I was shocked even though we've heard about it possibly happening. Now all we can do is wait."

Once the news had sunk in, the players realized their lives were about to change. The coaching staff that recruited them to Providence and watches after their every athletic and academic need will be packed up and on the move in a matter of weeks.

A new set of coaches with very different personalities and methods is on the way. To say it's unsettling is an understatement.

"Bob Driscoll met with us (Sunday) and he just said that he had to make a decision and it was the toughest decision of his life," Xavier said of PC's athletic director. "He couldn't say any

TONIGHT'S TOURNEYS

■ URI faces Creighton at 10 p.m. in the NIT. **Page C3**

■ Brown takes on Ohio University at 7 p.m. in the CBI. **Page C2**

names of (new) coaches, but he said to believe in him and trust that he's going to find the right guy. He said that hopefully one year from now we'll be getting called on Selection Sunday."

SEE FRIARS, C3

Arrival of Garnett put Celts ahead of schedule

After all the moves the Celtics made last summer, we all knew

BILL REYNOLDS



they were going to be better this year.

But this much better?

No one expected that.

But here they are at 53-13, the best record in the

NBA.

Here they are already having clinched a playoff berth, even if it's only mid-March; here they are with a leg up on gaining home-court advantage throughout the playoffs. Here they are giving us back our basketball spring, when going deep into the playoffs was part of the schedule, a rite of spring.

And maybe the best thing about it?

The Celtics didn't even know what they had.

At least not last summer.

What they were trying to do then was to jump-start a situation that badly needed a transfusion. They were coming off a disastrous season, one in which they won only 18 games all year and finished with the worst record in the NBA, one of those years that imploded early and then got worse, an NBA version of nuclear winter.

How bad was it?

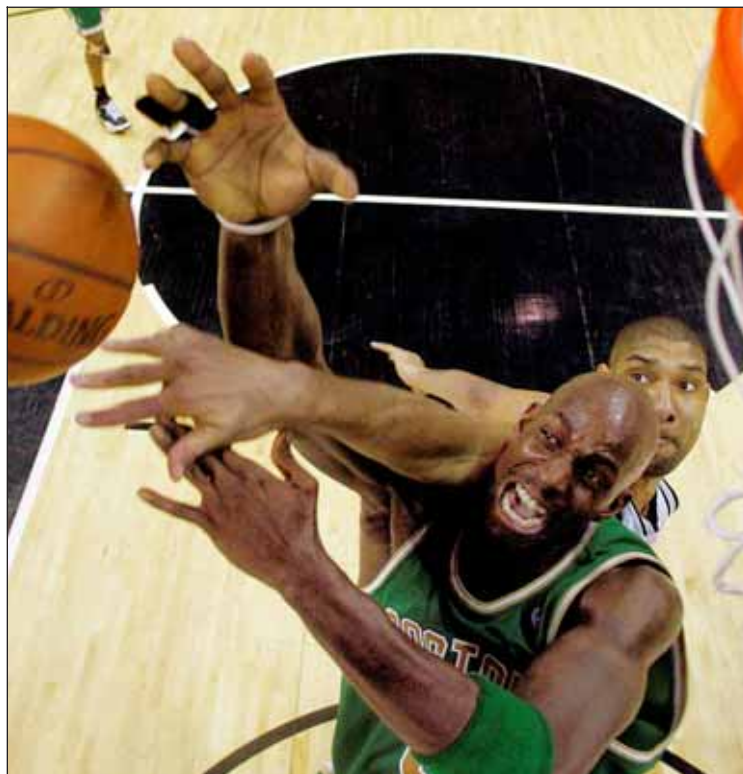
How about the fact that last year at this time the Celtics had 46 losses, were in the middle of a freefall.

That's how bad.

So how did they end up a year later with the best record in the NBA?

Kevin Garnett, that's how.

SEE REYNOLDS, C4



AP / ERIC GAY

Celtics forward Kevin Garnett, front, is defended by Spurs forward Tim Duncan while putting up a shot during the second quarter of last night's NBA game in San Antonio.

CELTICS 93, SPURS 91

Cassell comes off bench, scores 17 in Boston win

Paul Pierce scores 22 points, Kevin Garnett adds 21 and Rajon Rondo has 20 as the Celtics hand the San Antonio Spurs their fourth straight loss.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN ANTONIO — Paul Pierce scored 22 points, Kevin Garnett added 21 and the Boston Celtics rallied to beat the San Antonio Spurs, 93-91, last night.

Rajon Rondo added 20 points for the Celtics, who were still without Ray Allen. He missed his second straight game with a jammed left ankle. Sam Cassell had 17 points. He gave Boston its first lead of the fourth quarter with 46 seconds left when he hit a 3-pointer to make it 89-87.

Manu Ginobili had 32 points to

lead the Spurs, who lost their season-high fourth straight. Tony Parker added 17 points and Tim Duncan scored 10.

San Antonio trailed, 93-89, after Eddie House hit two foul shots for Boston to make it a two-possession game with 9.6 seconds left. Parker then got an easy basket for San Antonio but it appeared too late for the Spurs. But with two seconds left Bruce Bowen stole the ball from Garnett on the inbounds play and passed to Robert Horry, whose 3-point attempt missed. Horry sank to the ground, his head in his hands.

The Spurs have now lost six games at home this season. Their last home loss was Jan. 26 against the New Orleans Hornets.

The Spurs led, 70-68, after

SEE CELTICS, C4