

React to Jim Larranaga's decision to turn down PC

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SOUTH KINGSTOWN ROMPS PAST NARRAGANSETT: View the gallery at HSGameTime.com/rhodeisland

Opening night

Joe McDonald will blog Bartolo Colon's start tonight in Pawtucket, inning by inning, at projosports.com/soxblog

Been there, done that

Three of the four coaches remaining in this year's NCAA Women's Final Four have multiple championships on their resumé:

	SCHOOL	TITLES
Pat Summit	Tennessee	7
Geno Auriemma	UConn	5
Tara VanDeveer	Stanford	2
Van Chancellor	LSU	0

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



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RED SOX 5, ATHLETICS 0



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / BOB BREIDENBACH

Red Sox left-hander Jon Lester, delivering a pitch during the first inning of yesterday's series finale in Oakland, worked at a fast pace, mixed his cut fastball and a sinking fastball with effectiveness and stayed ahead of the A's hitters.

He's grade A('s)

Lester's stellar start helps Boston to a sweep

BY SEAN McADAM
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

OAKLAND — They've played in the Far East and on the West Coast; during day and night; on turf and real grass, and through it all, one essential baseball truth has remained.

"What sets the tone," said catcher Jason Varitek, "is starting pitching."

Perhaps now, with the team dealing with endless flights and time zone changes and the bats slowed by fatigue, that has never been more true.

Fortunately for the Red Sox, they got two

quality starts in two days here to sweep their mini-series with the Oakland A's. Hours after Daisuke Matsuzaka had limited the A's to a run on two hits Tuesday night, Jon Lester bettered him yesterday afternoon, tossing 6½ shutout innings while yielding just three hits in a 5-0 Red Sox win.

The total from the two starters: 13½ innings, five hits allowed and one run scored.

"At this point of the season," said David Ortiz, who collected his first two hits, including a two-run homer to snap a scoreless tie in the seventh, "the pitchers take advantage. I've been saying that for years."

"It's the time of year when maybe we're not operating (offensively) on all cylinders," said manager Terry Francona, acknowledging that the team may be leaning on its pitching staff more in the first few weeks.

Lester, who was ineffective last week in Tokyo against the same Oakland lineup, was far better yesterday. He issued three walks in the first four innings, but all three times used double plays to erase the free passes.

He was touched for a one-out double in the first, a leadoff single in the third and a

SEE RED SOX, C5

Larranaga won't be PC's next coach

The former Friar turns down the men's basketball coaching job to stay at George Mason, where he's the winningest coach in the school's history.

BY KEVIN McNAMARA
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

PROVIDENCE — Jim Larranaga is staying at George Mason. Now Providence College's search for a new basketball coach moves to San Antonio and the Final Four.

After nearly a week courtship, Larranaga turned down an offer to become PC's new basketball coach. The ex-Friar guard (Class of '71) informed PC athletic officials of his decision a bit after noon yesterday.

"It's been an emotional couple of days," Larranaga said when reached at his home in suburban Virginia. "The biggest thing is I love George Mason, as I have since the day I arrived. I was very flattered that my alma mater was interested in me but what we've accomplished at George Mason is very important to me."

Larranaga kept PC officials in the dark for much of the last three days. He met with school president the Rev. Brian Shanley on Sunday in Washington, D.C., and spent Monday and Tuesday weighing what clearly was a difficult decision to leave Mason. Larranaga is that school's all-time winningest coach (207-131) and just completed his 11th season as the Patriots' coach with a spot in the NCAA Tournament, the fourth of his career.

projo.com

Extra: For a list of potential candidates for the PC coaching job, go to: projosports.com/pc

Larranaga's coaching profile was elevated to a national stature in 2006 when Mason shocked three former national champions — Michigan State, North Carolina and Connecticut — on the most improbable run to the Final

SEE PC, C2



AP / DARRON CUMMINGS

George Mason head coach Jim Larranaga has turned down an offer to coach Providence College.

Rejection shows Friars' job is a difficult task

It was going to be a wonderful story, of course.

The Friars were going to hire former star

Bill Reynolds to be their new basketball coach, and we already knew the story line. He was going to be the first former Friar to come back as

the coach. He was going to be a name they could sell at the news conference, the guy who was the darling of the NCAA Tournament two years ago.

He was going to be a visible link to the storied past, one of

the PC family coming back to try to take the Providence College basketball story to another act. He was going to be the new face of the Friars.

It was all set. Roll out the old game tapes, dust off those black-and-white photographs from the old days back in Alumni Hall, and have one of those news conferences where the Friars anoint one of their own, the former star with a clipboard.

Until Larranaga pulled out yesterday, and the wonderful story went up in smoke.

Until reality came rushing in here in the form of a blind-side

SEE REYNOLDS, C2

BILL REYNOLDS



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / KRIS CRAIG

Celtics forward Kevin Garnett drives around Jeff Foster of the Pacers during the first half of last night's game in Boston.

CELTICS 92, PACERS 77

This Boston romp one for the books

The Celts match the NBA record for the largest one-year improvement and also notch their first 60-win regular season since 1985-86.

BY ROBERT LEE
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

BOSTON — The Celtics are on the verge of making NBA history after the 92-77 beating they gave the Indiana Pacers last night.

Boston's dominating victory matched an NBA record for the largest one-year improvement.

The Celtics (60-15) have 36 more victories than they had last season, which ties San Antonio's one-year turnaround record set during the 1997-98 season.

The win marked the first time the Cel-

tics have won 60 regular-season games in a season since the 1985-86 campaign, when they amassed a record of 67-15. Boston won the NBA title that season.

As impressive as the Celtics have been this season, the team's only goal is to win the NBA title, coach Doc Rivers said.

"You don't get anything for it. It really means nothing," Rivers said of Boston's milestones.

"It's nice, but again it's not what we are playing for. It doesn't mean a lot to us. Probably later when I'm older it may [mean something], but right now it doesn't. We just have a single goal, and anything else is what you get on your way there."

"It's all good, but we have a bigger picture in mind," Boston captain Paul Pierce said about the team's improvement. "It's great to get as many wins as we are get-

ting, but the goal for us is to wrap up home court throughout the playoffs, because that record goes out the window once the playoffs start."

"We are preparing for something way bigger than the present," Boston forward Kevin Garnett said.

It didn't matter that Boston reduced the minutes of Pierce, Garnett and Ray Allen last night. And it didn't matter that Indiana All-Star forward Jermaine O'Neal played in just his second game since returning from a left knee injury he suffered more than two months ago, giving the Pacers a boost.

Boston was simply too good in capturing its fifth consecutive victory while cooling off the Pacers (31-44), who lost for just the third time in their last nine

SEE CELTICS, C2