

Will the Red Sox win 100 games during the 2008 season?

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NFL Draft central

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L.A. flaws

The Red Sox have not lost a season series to the Angels since 2001:

YEAR	RECORD	YEAR	RECORD
2007	6-4	2004	5-4
2006	3-3	2003	6-3
2005	6-4	2002	4-3

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

SECTION D



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Celtics head coach Doc Rivers sold the Big Three on playing as a unit and led Boston to an NBA-best 66 wins in the regular season.

THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / KRIS CRAIG



Celts credit Rivers for leading turnaround

Kevin Garnett and Paul Pierce say Doc Rivers was able to mesh their egos and maintain a positive attitude on a daily basis.

BY KEVIN McNAMARA
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

BOSTON — Two days ago, Doc Rivers gave a little plug for James Posey and his role as the Celtics' super sub this season.

Rivers spoke about Posey's acceptance of his job in the team's drive to the NBA's best record and the fact that he's clearly sacrificed personal acclaim for the good of the team. He said he's fortunate that the Celtics have become "a role-playing basketball team and everybody buys in and they do it

unselfishly so their numbers are skewed. But we don't really care about it."

Rivers could've also been speaking about himself. Take a step back and look at the job he's done this season. After winning 24 games in 2007, the revamped Celtics rolled to 66 wins this season for the biggest one-season improvement (42 games) in NBA history. Rivers gleefully welcomed Kevin Garnett and Ray Allen onto his roster (not to mention Posey and Eddie House, among others) and smoothed over any ego problems that could've arisen with Boston's resident star player, Paul Pierce.

Yet when names are thrown around for Coach of the Year honors, it seems Rivers is

not the easy quick pick. In fact, he's barely mentioned. In one ESPN.com poll of 20 voters, Rivers was selected once.

TONIGHT
Celtics vs. Hawks
8 o'clock
CSNE, TNT,
WEEI-FM, WSAR

Does a coach who suddenly welcomes two superstars and a few key supporting actors and goes on to the league's best record deserve any acclaim? Or did he just roll the ball out and let Allen, Garnett and Pierce go to work?

Garnett and Pierce addressed the issue recently and basically said that the Celtics wouldn't be sitting where they are entering tonight's Game Two of an opening-round playoff series with Atlanta if it weren't for Rivers' skills. "Doc isn't really

SEE **CELTICS, D3**

Trades part of the big picture

Deals have led to the acquisition of key players, and in most cases the Patriots got even more draft picks for use in future years.

BY SHALISE MANZA YOUNG
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

This weekend's NFL Draft is the 73rd for the league, and the ninth for Bill Belichick and Scott Pioli with the New England Patriots. Since taking over the team in 2000, the Patriots have selected 70 players in the draft, at every position except punter.

And they have made more than half that many trades either during draft weekend or in the days leading up to the event. Those trades have led to the acquisition of key players, in many cases, and in nearly all cases the Patriots got even more draft picks for use in future years.

It is clearly a key part of New England's drafting and team crafting strategy, and like the majority of moves made by the franchise since 2000, they've worked out for the best.

There's no arguing the first trade of the Belichick/Pioli Era, though they weren't the ones that pulled the trigger on it: in exchange for the Jets releasing Belichick from his contract (Belichick was supposed to become head coach in New York), New England gave its divisional rival its first-round pick in 2000.

Three Super Bowl titles and one near-perfect season later, it would be hard to argue with owner Robert Kraft's decision to surrender that number-one pick.

Coming in second behind that

SEE **PATRIOTS, D5**



Wes Welker, celebrating a TD reception against San Diego in the AFC title game, was a great catch for the Patriots.

RED SOX 7, ANGELS 6

ONE-TWO PUNCH

Ellsbury's two home runs and speed afoot fuel Boston

BY PAUL KENYON
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

BOSTON — Forget that debate about whether Jacoby Ellsbury is ready for full-time duty.

If anyone still needed convincing that the young outfielder is for real, they received a huge dose of it last night when Ellsbury led the Sox to a 7-6 victory over the Angels.

The speedy outfielder had the first two home-run game of his career and later helped win it with his feet. He beat out a bunt single in the bottom of the eighth,

then zoomed around the bases on Dustin Pedroia's third double, and fourth hit, of the night to provide the winning run.

Sox manager Terry Francona has seen that type of game before, from the player Ellsbury often has been compared to, Johnny Damon.

"(That was) a little Damonesque," Francona said of Ellsbury's performance. "He can change the game with his legs."

With Coco Crisp having hamstring problems and being unable to play for the

past week, Ellsbury has thrived. He is now 13-for-35, with 11 walks, in the last 12 games. That has raised his average from .176, to .308. Ellsbury has scored at least once in 11 of his last 12 starts.

NEXT GAME
Tonight vs. Angels 7:05

"I feel pretty good," he said. "From game one of the season until now my batting average wasn't showing how I was feeling at the plate. So it's nice to get rolling a little bit. But I felt from game one that I was swinging the bat well."

Ellsbury's power helped the Sox rally

from a 5-1 deficit. Boston had to go without its scheduled starter, Josh Beckett, who was a late scratch because of a stiff neck. David Pauley, who has been on call for three days, was brought in to replace him. Pauley began well, retiring the first six men he faced, but was tagged for three runs in the third and two in the fourth.

The way Boston is hitting, though, no deficit is too big. The Sox rallied for their 11th come-from-behind victory, with Ellsbury and Pedroia leading the way.

SEE **RED SOX, D5**



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / BOB BREIDENBACH

The Red Sox' Jacoby Ellsbury watches the flight of the ball on his home run in the first inning against the Angels last night. He hit another homer in the sixth.

Ellsbury drives Angel pitcher to distraction, leading to win

STEVEN KRASNER
INSIDE THE GAME



BOSTON — After a one-out bunt single, Jacoby Ellsbury was perched on first base in a tie game in the eighth.

Ellsbury's speed, and just the threat of the stolen base helped win the game for the Sox.

Angels manager Mike Scioscia replaced left-hander Darren Oliver with a right-hander, Scot Shields, even though lefties tend to hold runners better than righties. Shields paid careful attention to

Ellsbury, who has stolen eight bases without being caught this year.

With Dustin Pedroia in the box, Shields stepped off the rubber and looked at Ellsbury. Then he threw a pitchout, with catcher Jeff Mathis firing to first in an unsuccessful attempt to pick him off.

Not surprisingly, Shields' first pitch to Pedroia was a fastball (92 mph), giving Mathis a chance to throw out Ellsbury if he went.

Shields tried to speed up his delivery by using the slide-step. Ellsbury stayed at first.

Ellsbury also stayed put on another fastball (92), again with Shields employing the slide-step, which can flatten out a pitch, taking off some of its movement. Pedroia took the pitch for a strike.

Now, with the count 2 and 1, Shields threw over to first. Ellsbury was safe. Then Shields stepped off the rubber and looked

him back. Then he threw over, trying to hold Ellsbury close.

Pedroia, meanwhile, was ready for a fastball when Shields eventually made a pitch to the plate. And he did, another 92 mph heater using the slide-step. Pedroia was geared up for it. He turned on it and drilled the ball inside the third-base bag, the ball zipping into the left-field corner.

SEE **KRASNER, D5**