

Comment on Justin Masterson's big-league debut

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HENDRICKEN NINE SUBDUES SOUTH KINGSTOWN: View the gallery at HSGameTime.com/rhodeisland

NFL Draft Central

The Draft begins at 3 tomorrow, and we'll have live blog reports and a pick-by-pick Draft tracker, at projosports.com/patriots

Heads of the line

When the Miami Dolphins signed Jake Long this week, he officially became the fifth offensive lineman taken first overall in the NFL Draft:

YEAR	PLAYER	TEAM
1998	Orlando Pace	Rams
1968	Ron Yary	Vikings
1949	Chuck Bednarik	Eagles
1939	Ki Aldrich	Cardinals

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



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THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / KRIS CRAIG

The Celtics' Rajon Rondo has been impressive in the playoffs, averaging 13.5 points and 8.5 assists per game.

Rondo is hitting on every cylinder

The Celtics' point guard has been a playoff series standout, while Atlanta's veteran backcourt leader, Mike Bibby, is struggling.

BY ROBERT LEE
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

WALTHAM, Mass. — When the first round of the Eastern Conference playoffs started, the one position that Atlanta believed it had an advantage over the Celtics was at point guard.

NEXT GAME

Celtics at Atlanta
Tomorrow 8 p.m.

After all, Atlanta starting point guard Mike Bibby entered the series with 51 games of playoff experience and Boston second-year guard Rajon Rondo had none.

Bibby entered the series averaging 17.9 points, 5.6 assists, and 3.6 rebounds per playoff game.

Rondo, who would still be in college if he stayed all four years at the University of Kentucky, spent his rookie NBA season on one of the worst Celtics teams in franchise history. He averaged 6.4 points, 3.8 assists and 3.7 rebounds per game last season.

But Rondo has outplayed Bibby in every aspect of the game so far in this series.

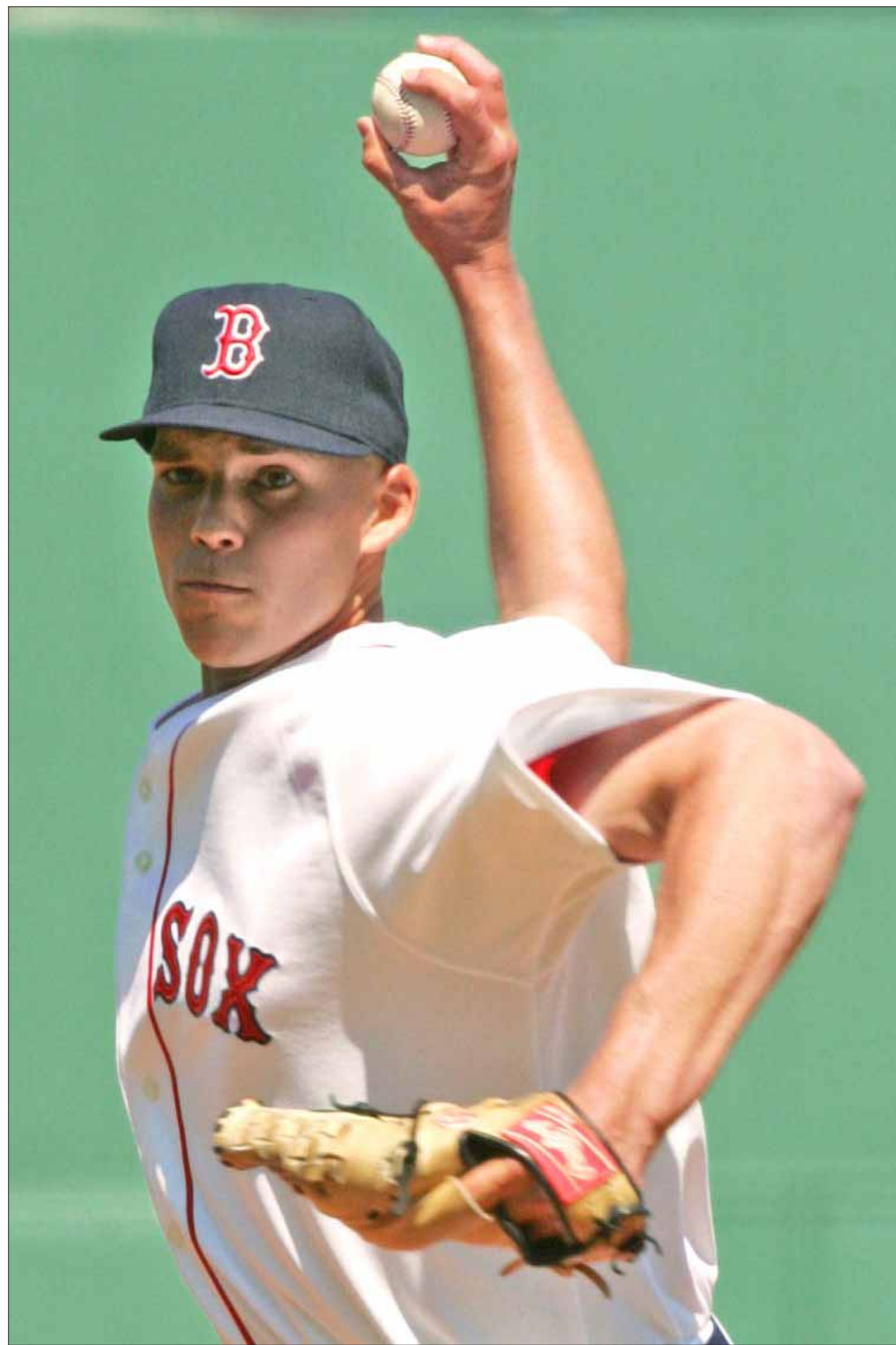
"He's playing terrific," Boston coach Doc Rivers said.

Rondo is averaging 13.5 points, 8.5 assists, 6 rebounds and only 0.5 turnovers per outing in the series. He is also knocking down an impressive 60 percent of his shots (12-for-20) from the field. Bibby is

SEE RONDO, D3

ANGELS 7, RED SOX 5

MASTERFUL START



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / MARY MURPHY

Red Sox starting pitcher Justin Masterson was on target during his major-league debut yesterday at Fenway Park. Masterson allowed two hits and one run in six innings against the Angels.

Masterson shines, but Sox bullpen blows lead

BY PAUL KENYON
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

BOSTON — A few years from now, or maybe even in only a few months, not many people are likely to remember that the Red Sox bullpen blew a lead yesterday and the Sox lost to the Angels, 7-5.

It is very likely, though, that many will remember they were there the day Justin Masterson made his major-league debut.

In the long run, the defeat the Sox suffered is not likely to mean much. Yes, the bullpen struggled again and the Angels rallied to win. But so what?

NEXT GAME

Tonight at Tampa Bay 7:10

That pales in comparison with the work turned in by the latest phenom in the Boston organization. Whether it is later this season (which is likely), or farther down the road, Sox fans found out the organization has another outstanding prospect.

Masterson, a 6-foot-6, 250-pound right-hander, pitched six strong innings. He allowed only two hits and one run (a homer by Mike Napoli) with four walks and four strikeouts. The 23-year-old from Beaver Creek, Ohio, has been compared favorably to Clay Buchholz as being the best of the host of young pitchers in the Boston organization. He showed why.

Called up from Portland to make an emergency start, he was impressive.

"He handled himself just like you would hope," said Sox manager Terry Francona. "That's a lot to ask a kid coming out of Double-A. He competed, he had composure, he knew what he wanted to do and he did it. He did a great job. As an organization, I don't think we could be prouder."

"It was just fun," Masterson said. "I was happy to have the opportunity."

It will be his only appearance for the time being. He is being sent back to Portland to continue to pitch every five days. In his first four starts with the Sea Dogs, he compiled an earned run average of 0.95 with 23 strikeouts and five walks in 19 innings. Kevin Cash, his catcher yesterday, had worked with him several times in spring training.

"He was so composed," Cash commented. "He was drastically improved, even from spring training."

Masterson does not throw overly hard, his best being in the low 90s. But he has a great sinker. He allowed only three fly ball outs.

"On fastballs, he threw predominantly

SEE RED SOX, D7

Here's my 30th anniversary Patriots 'Dream Draft'

With the Patriots having the seventh pick, courtesy of the San Francisco 49ers, New England fans are looking forward to the opening round of the annual NFL Draft tomorrow.

JIM DONALDSON



Today, though, I'm looking backward.

A lot of players have been picked by the Pats since I've been covering them. I've been around since Ricky Sanford, a defensive back from South Carolina, was taken in the

first round in 1979, through the second of last year's two seventh-round choices, offensive lineman Mike Elgin of Iowa.

Tomorrow's Draft Day will be my 30th, so it seems a fitting time to look back over those three decades of drafts and put together what I'd call a Patriots "Dream Draft" — the best player taken in each

round over the last 30 years:

Round 1: Drew Bledsoe, QB, 1993
Along with Bill Parcells, he returned the Patriots to respectability. The first player taken that year — the Pats had gone 2-14 in '92, after having been 1-15 in 1990 — Bledsoe had them in the playoffs in '94, and took his team to a Super Bowl in '96. He also made playoff appearances in 1997 and '98, when Pete Carroll was coach.

I gave Bledsoe the nod over left tackle Bruce Armstrong, a six-time Pro Bowl selection who holds the club record for games played (212), because — reminder here to Parcells, now GM in Miami — it's a quarterback, not an offensive lineman, who turns a team around.

Best all-time No. 1: John Hannah, OG, 1973, by a narrow margin over cornerback Mike Haynes, 1976. Both are in the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Best First Round Ever: 1973.

In addition to Hannah, who was taken fourth overall, the Patriots also selected RB Sam Cunningham (11) and WR Darryl Stingley (19).

Round 2: Andre Tippett, LB, 1982
A fearsome pass rusher, Tippett will be inducted this summer into the Pro Football Hall of Fame, joining Hannah and Haynes. He is the Patriots' all-time sacks leader, with 100 — well ahead of the next man on the list, defensive end Julius Adams, who had 79.5 from 1971 through '87. Almost unblockable because he was too fast for big linemen and too powerful for smaller running backs, Tippett set a season record for sacks in 1984, with 18.5, and had 16.5 in '85.

Round 3: Tedy Bruschi, LB, 1996
One of the more popular players the Patriots have ever had, Bruschi has been to five Super Bowls, more than any player in

SEE DONALDSON, D3



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / BOB BREIDENBACH

Former No. 1 draft pick Drew Bledsoe, celebrating after throwing a TD pass in 2000, helped turn the Patriots around.