

What grade do you give the Patriots for their 2008 draft selections?

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SOX SWEEP AWAY IN TAMPA BAY: View the gallery at [Projosports.com/redsox](http://Projosports.com/redsox)

**Projo PatsTalk**

Shalise Manza Young discusses the Draft in an audio report posted this afternoon at [projosports.com/patriots](http://projosports.com/patriots)

**Up to speed**

Red Sox outfielder Jacoby Ellsbury is on pace to become the team's record holder in stolen bases in a season:

YEAR	PLAYER	STEALS
1973	Tommy Harper	54
1912	Tris Speaker	52
1913	Tris Speaker	46
1994	Otis Nixon	42

For up-to-the-second stats and scores: [projosports.com/redsox](http://projosports.com/redsox)

SECTION B



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# projo SPORTS

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**2008 NFL DRAFT**

## Patriots' defense is suddenly a lot younger

New England uses five of its seven selections to shore up positions that were exposed as weaknesses.

BY SHALISE MANZA YOUNG  
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

FOXBORO — With all of the success he has had as head coach of the New England Patriots, it seems that when Bill Belichick wants something for his team, he goes and gets it.

He admitted yesterday, however, that that is not always the case.

After selecting three linebackers and two cornerbacks among New England's seven picks in this year's NFL Draft — the other two choices were a quarterback and receiver/special-teamer — Belichick was asked whether he had intended to be defense-heavy in his selections.



BELICHICK

"No, we went into it open-minded. We really did. We certainly wanted to get younger and faster on defense," Belichick said.

And then he added, "But I have been saying that for the last six years. This has really been since the 2001 season. We just had some opportunities here; the way things fell, there were players in that (defensive) category."

New England's fan base and observers have been saying that the team needs an infusion of youth on defense. Year after year, however, the linebacking corps remained one of the oldest in the league, though also quite effective. Last year's group of Tedy Bruschi, Junior Seau, Mike Vrabel, Roosevelt Colvin and Adalius Thomas had an average age of over 32. They were a solid group, to be sure, experienced and smart playmakers. But after watching his team suffer crushing defeats to close out each of the last two seasons, both times with the opponent driving than 80 yards for the game-winning touchdown, Belichick decided to act.

First-round pick Jerod Mayo expressed his eagerness to learn from Vrabel and Thomas, Bruschi and Seau, and he'll probably be groomed to play inside linebacker. Mayo's 6-foot-1, 242-pound size and savvy make him a good fit inside. He also made

SEE PATRIOTS, B3

**PATRIOTS PICKS**

Rd.	No.	Name	Pos.	Coll.	Hgt.	Wgt.
1	10	Jerod Mayo	LB	Tenn.	6-1	242
2	62	Terrence Wheatley	DB	Colo.	5-9	178
3	78	Shawn Crable	LB	Mich.	6-5	243
3	94	Kevin O'Connell	QB	S.D. St.	6-5	225
4	129	Jonathan Wilhite	DB	Auburn	5-11	185
5	153	Matt Slater	WR	UCLA	6-0	198
6	197	Bo Ruud	LB	Neb.	6-4	234

**RAYS 3, RED SOX 0**

## Suddenly punchless Sox drop fifth straight

Boston wastes another solid pitching effort, this one by Josh Beckett, and is swept in its weekend series with Tampa Bay.

BY JOE McDONALD  
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — The bats must be sick and tired, too.

The formerly potent Red Sox offense has gone astray, and Boston has now lost five straight games, including a 3-0 setback to the Tampa Bay Rays yesterday at Tropicana Field. During this horrid stretch, which included 20 straight games between off-days, the Red Sox have been depleted by the flu and injuries.

Boston has been hoping for some relief from its current struggles and it found it in the way of starting pitching in the last two games. The problem, however, was those starters

didn't get any help offensively.

Red Sox pitcher Josh Beckett was back in the mix yesterday after missing his last start with a stiff neck. The right-hander was solid, going seven innings and allowing only two runs (one earned) on four hits with a career-high 13 strikeouts — only to suffer the loss. The offense had only two hits.

His effort came on the heels of Clay Buchholz's three-hit performance during Saturday's 2-1 loss, in which the Red Sox generated only five hits. Boston simply hasn't been able to come up with the timely hits.

"Our offense carries a lot of the load around here," Beckett said. "It's time for us [pitchers] to start stepping in that direction or maybe it's our turn to start carrying our load."

Speaking of solid pitching performances, the Rays' James Shields pitched a complete-game shutout, the first of his career, and allowed only two hits — Dustin Pedroia and Julio Lugo each had a single — with one walk and seven strikeouts. The right-hander was in control from start to finish. While the Red Sox were blaming the loss on their lack of offense, they weren't about to take anything away from Shields.

**NEXT GAME**  
Tomorrow vs. Toronto  
7:05 p.m.

time he ever out-pitches anybody, either. He deserves a lot of the credit for what he did."

Despite the weekend sweep here and the current losing skid, Red Sox captain Jason Varitek was able to find something positive from the weekend losses — the starting pitching.

"It was very well needed for our bullpen to get those outings," he said. "Things need to

SEE RED SOX, B5

# SEEING FLAWS



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / GLENN OSMUNDSON

Kevin Garnett, arguing a second-half call with a referee in Game Three against the Hawks in Atlanta on Saturday night, and the Celtics must regroup.

## Stunned Celts take long, hard look at themselves

BY KEVIN McNAMARA  
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

ATLANTA — A few hours before Game Three of his team's playoff series against the Atlanta Hawks, Kevin Garnett labeled the game the biggest of the season for the Boston Celtics.

That may have been the case Saturday, but the tag is even more appropriate heading into tonight's Game Four. If Atlanta shocked and surprised anyone with its 102-93 win over the Celts, the reaction will be much different if the Hawks can tie the se-

ries at two games apiece by winning again tonight at Philips Arena.

This is truly a swing game. Lose, and all bets are off for the Celtics. Maybe they are not a dominant team, one that some observers thought would lower the boom on defense and ride the scoring skills of the New Big Three through the Eastern Conference with relative ease.

A Celtics win would make Game Three seem like a blip on the radar. It would also give the Celts a 3-1 series lead heading back to the TD Bank-

**TONIGHT**  
at Atlanta  
8 p.m.

north Garden for Game Five on Wednesday.

Despite two dominating wins in Boston, right now the Celtics haven't done a whole lot in the series, according to coach Doc Rivers.

"I didn't think they were going to go away. They shouldn't go away," he said. "You're in the playoffs and at home. No one has done anything yet

in this series. There's been three games played and the home team has won (all of them)."

Rivers and the rest of the coaching staff chose to rest the players' legs yesterday, but put their eyes through a workout during one of the longest film sessions of the season.

"Obviously, it was a long one," said Rivers. "We just felt we couldn't get anything by going out on the floor. We needed to watch film and just look."

SEE CELTICS, B5



Red Sox starting pitcher Josh Beckett reacts after giving up a seventh-inning home run to Tampa Bay's Evan Longoria yesterday.

AP / MIKE CARLSON