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Game Five gallery

See Mary Murphy's photos from last night, plus galleries of the first four Celts-Hawks games, at [projosports.com/celtics](http://projosports.com/celtics)

Gang Green

This year's edition of the Boston Celtics put themselves in the record book by becoming the team with the largest one-year improvement in NBA history:

TEAM	FROM	TO
2006-07 Celts	24-58	66-16
1996-97 Spurs	20-62	56-26
1988-89 Spurs	21-61	56-26
2003-04 Suns	29-53	62-20

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



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CELTICS 110, HAWKS 85

# GREENER PASTURES



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / MARY MURPHY

## Celtics soar at home and ground Hawks

BY KEVIN McNAMARA  
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

BOSTON — The Boston Celtics know the time is at hand to shoot down the Atlanta Hawks. We'll see if they're ready to do the job.

For the third straight time on their home floor at the TD Banknorth Garden, the Celtics controlled the youthful Hawks for the majority of the game and won handily, this time by a 110-85 count. Boston is

now in control of this first-round play-off series, three games to two, and will try to close the Hawks out tomorrow night in Atlanta.

Transferring these superior home efforts to the Peach State hasn't been easy for the NBA's top regular-season team. The dominating defense that kept the Hawks in check (40 percent shooting) last night was shaky in Atlanta's Game Three and Four wins. The balanced offense and aggressive bench play that overwhelmed the Hawks last night only showed up in fits and stops on the road.

But with a ticket to the Eastern Conference semifinals within their grasp, the Celtics say they're looking forward to Game Six.

"The level of intensity we play with at home, for some reason, we have to carry it with us on the road," said emotional leader Kevin Garnett. "We really have to lock in and carry this over to the road. It's very important to carry this over to the next game."

The Celtics played better than the Hawks in every phase last night. They shot better, were more aggressive off the backboards (39-28) and locked the Hawks' key scoring stars up most of the evening. Joe Johnson, a killer in Atlanta's Game Four comeback win, led

SEE **CELTICS, C3**

Paul Pierce and the Celtics regained the upper hand against Al Horford and the Hawks last night after returning to the friendly confines of TD Banknorth Garden in Boston.

## Familiar Garden surroundings put bounce back in Celtics' step

BOSTON — This is why the home court counts.

This is why all those games in January are important, even though the rest of the world is watching the Patriots.

This is why all the games from the West Coast in February are important, all those games that no one ever watches because they're on television too late.

This is why all these games in this NBA season that seems to go on forever are important, all those games that seem to run together, for the simple reason that there are simply too many of them, game after game, 82 of them. This is why the regular season matters.

For that's what gives the Celtics the home-court advantage in this series with the young, upstart Hawks, the reason the Celtics will have the home-

court advantage in every playoff series they play. The reason why, once again, the Celtics are back in control of this series.

The only thing that counts in the NBA is the playoffs?

No doubt. But this is how you win series. Last night was Exhibit A. Game Five, the traditional deciding game of an NBA series. Here in The Garden.

Not in Atlanta where the crowd is alive and festive and the Hawks feed off their energy and make shots that they don't make on the road. But here in The Garden, where the Hawks were blown out in the first two games, looking more like robins in search of a nest than a team that was going to upset the Celtics. Here in The Garden, where the Celtics returned last night in search of the magic that saw them win 66 games in the regular season, the magic that's

made them the favorite to get to the NBA Finals.

Thank the basketball gods. Truth be told, the Celtics didn't look like a team that had won 66 games in the two games in Atlanta, didn't look like a team that's supposed to bring back the glory days. For the first time they looked vulnerable, both their lack of athleticism and their inability to

SEE **REYNOLDS, C3**

RED SOX 2, BLUE JAYS 1

## Another heart-stopping walk-off victory

Jason Varitek's RBI single in the ninth inning snaps a 1-1 tie, giving Boston its second straight nail-biting triumph over Toronto.

BY SEAN McADAM  
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

BOSTON — For the slumping Toronto Blue Jays, this was — as noted baseball philosopher Yogi Berra once famously said — déjà vu all over again.

"It was just like last night," said beleaguered Jays manager John Gibbons.

Not exactly. But for the Red

Sox, it was close enough.

On Tuesday night, it took one ninth-inning single to center with the potential winning run in scoring position to notch a walk-off win. Last night, it took two.

After pinch-runner Jed Lowrie was blocked at the plate, failing to score on a single to center by Brandon Moss, Jason Varitek gave the Sox another chance. His single to center delivered Manny Ramirez, who celebrated the Sox' 2-1 win over the Blue Jays with an emphatic slam of his helmet.

"It's not one person every night," said winning pitcher Jo-

nathan Papelbon, who pitched a scoreless top of the ninth. "It was Tek tonight and [Kevin] Youkilis [Tuesday] night. That's the beauty of this ballclub. That's what makes us tick."

Like Tuesday night, the teams were scoreless deep into the game before David Ortiz gave the Sox a 1-0 edge with a homer into the right-field seats.

But the Jays answered off the Sox' bullpen in the top of the eighth, working a single off Manny Delcarmen and a double and sacrifice fly against Hideki Oka-

jima to pull even.

The Sox then had Coco Crisp (double) in scoring position with one out in the eighth, but couldn't snap the tie until the bottom of the ninth.

As was the case in Tuesday's ninth, Ortiz was the first to reach base, opening with a sharp single that eluded the shift put on against him. When Ramirez joined him on base with a walk, the Sox had two on and none out.

Manager Terry Francona

**NEXT GAME**  
Tonight vs. Toronto 7:05

SEE **RED SOX, C5**



AP / WINSLOW TOWNSON

Boston's Jason Varitek, right, is hugged by coach Luis Alicea after his game-winning RBI single in the ninth inning last night.