

MURKY
Cloudy, but drier
by afternoon.
Highs in the 60s.
Forecast, E16

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FOR KOBE, A SEASON TO REMEMBER

One year ago, the mercurial leader of the Los Angeles Lakers was asking to be traded. Now, he finds himself four victories away from basketball's ultimate prize.

BY KEVIN MCNAMARA
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

BOSTON — Only one year ago, Kobe Bryant's basketball life was in shambles. Long known as one of the National Basketball Association's singular talents, Bryant can also act like a one-man soap opera. One day last May, the Los Angeles Lakers' star guard went on a New York sports radio show and said "I would like to be traded. As tough as it is to say that, as tough as it is to come to that conclusion, there's no alternative." Later the very same day, Bryant told an ESPN radio interviewer, "I don't want to go anyplace else. I

don't want to. I want to be a Laker. I want to be here for the rest of my career."

NBA FINALS

Bryant's conflict was simple. He wanted to win. He had tasted championship glory three times earlier (2000, 2001, 2002) in his career but those titles came with star center Shaquille O'Neal as his significant running mate. Once Shaq was traded in 2004, Bryant couldn't lead the Lakers out of the first round of the playoffs. So basketball's premier scoring guard

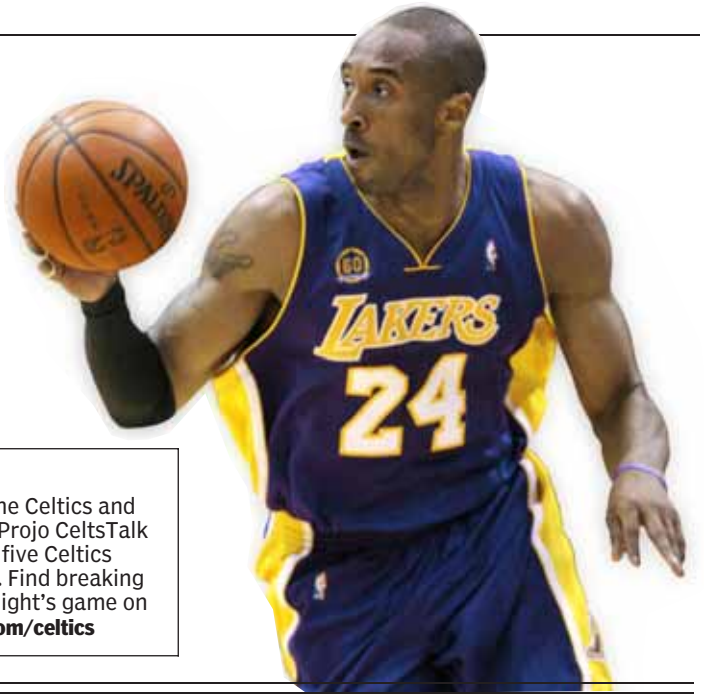
SEE **KOBE, A4**

Kobe Bryant, one of the game's brightest stars, will lead his Los Angeles Lakers against the Boston Celtics tonight in the NBA Finals.

AP FILE

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Extra: Hear Bill Reynolds break down the Celtics and the Lakers, position by position, in his Projo CeltsTalk audio report. See photo galleries of all five Celtics starters, plus the Lakers' Lamar Odom. Find breaking news throughout the day and after tonight's game on the projo Sports Blog. On projosports.com/celtics



CAMPAIGN 2008

Clinton to back Obama



MCT / CHUCK KENNEDY

Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton speaks at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee policy conference in Washington, D.C., yesterday.

JOURNAL WIRE REPORTS

WASHINGTON — Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton is moving toward ending her presidential campaign Saturday, when she'll express support for Sen. Barack Obama and call for Democratic Party unity at an event she's holding in Washington.

Clinton's campaign would not confirm widespread media reports yesterday, based on unidentified sources, that she would end or suspend her campaign. Instead, her campaign office issued a statement saying only that "Senator Clinton will be hosting an

The New York senator will hold a rally Saturday in Washington, D.C., to call for party unity as she moves to suspend her campaign for the Democratic nomination.

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Your turn: What should Hillary Rodham Clinton's next step be? To respond, go to projo.com

event in Washington, D.C. ... to thank her supporters and express her support for Senator Obama and party unity."

Initially, the Clinton event was set for tomorrow, but it was changed to Saturday a couple of hours later to allow more time for her supporters to gather.

After Obama secured the Democratic nomination Tuesday night following a bruising, five-month primary season, Clinton said at a rally in New York that she had

SEE **DEMOCRATS, A11**

Graduation rate much lower than believed

A national report using a more exacting reporting method finds just 70 percent of Rhode Island students entering the Class of 2007 as freshmen graduated within four years.

BY JENNIFER D. JORDAN
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Only 7 of every 10 Rhode Island students who started high school in 2003 graduated on schedule, in 2007.

A few months ago, the graduation rate for the Class of 2007 was reported as 89.2 percent — almost 9 out of every 10 students.

But yesterday, the state Department of Education revealed a new, more accurate system, and the state's reported graduation rate plummeted by 19 percentage points.

It turns out just 70.1 percent of the Class of 2007 graduated within four years. Of the students who didn't make it, about 3,000 dropped out and others either received a GED or stayed back.

The Class of 2007 did not

SEE **SCHOOLS, A6**

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Extra: For a school-by-school breakdown of the newly calculated graduation rate, go to projo.com

Graduation rate swing

The state released new, more accurate graduation rates for 2007 that show a substantial decrease in the number of seniors who completed high school in four years. These are the 10 high schools with at least 200 potential seniors that had the biggest percentage point discrepancy compared with the previous calculation.

School	% point drop
Shea, Pawtucket	30.0
Tolman, Pawtucket	29.7
Central Falls	26.9
Woonsocket	26.8
Pilgrim, Warwick	26.5
East Providence	26.5
Mount Pleasant, Prov.	20.6
Davies Tech. (Regional)	19.9
Rogers, Newport	19.8
Toll Gate, Warwick	19.7
State of Rhode Island	19.1

Source: R.I. Dept. of Education

Employee of DOT contractor charged in use of passwords

Anthony Mesiti, who works for Shire Corp., is suspected of misusing computer passwords to give his company an advantage in contracts.

BY BRUCE LANDIS
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

PROVIDENCE — Shire Corp., a state contractor whose employee is accused of ransacking the state Department of Transportation's computer system, had the passwords of the top DOT officials in charge of project design and construction, according to a state police affidavit filed in court yesterday.

The state police also described finding passwords to the DOT computer system on a desk at Shire's offices in Cranston during

a search May 22 and gave examples showing how simple the DOT's password system was.

Yesterday, the police charged Anthony Mesiti, 41, the construction manager for Shire, with breaking two of the state's computer crime laws, felonies that carry prison terms of up to five years. He was released on recognizance. Neither he nor Shire would comment on the case. The DOT didn't respond to questions yesterday.

SEE **DOT, A8**

Judge says no bail in firefighter's homicide

BY DAVID SCHARFENBERG
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

WARWICK — District Court Judge Elaine Bucci denied bail yesterday for Nicholas Gianquitti, the Cranston man accused of shooting his neighbor James A. Pagano last month in a dispute that began with a child's stray tennis ball.

The decision, which drew audible gasps of relief from the victim's family, capped an often emotional three-day bail hearing that included testimony yesterday that Gianquitti had shot Pagano in the back.

Gianquitti, who had no visible reaction to the ruling, will remain at the Adult Correctional Institutions while the state seeks a grand jury indictment.

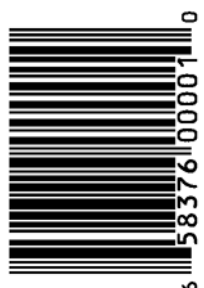
Bucci said she was particularly struck by a 911 tape played in court Tuesday that began with Gianquitti's wife, Jennifer, screaming frantically and ended with Nicholas calmly making the case for why he'd shot Pagano just minutes before.

SEE **BAIL, A7**



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / KATHY BORCHERS

Nicholas Gianquitti, second from left, and his lawyers, Mark Dana, left, and William Devine, look at evidence submitted by prosecutor William Ferland at a bail hearing at the Kent County Court House, in Warwick yesterday.



INSIDE TODAY

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The Providence Journal SUMMERTIME FUND



A total of \$28,874 was donated last week. See the latest donations B3.

HOSPITALS ANNOUNCE THEIR OWN SMOKEOUT

A number of Rhode Island hospitals will mark this fall's Great American Smokeout observance by imposing a permanent ban on all smoking on their campuses. B1

GOOD NEWS IN THE BAD NEWS

The bite of state and local taxes in Rhode Island is now 11th highest in the nation, a two-place improvement over the Ocean State's former standing. F1

PASSAGES CURTAIN CALL FOR AMBIVALENT ACTOR



Mel Ferrer, who enjoyed film directing and disliked acting yet had roles in movies over five decades, has died. He was 90. Among his film credits was the thriller *Wait Until Dark* with his wife Audrey Hepburn, shown on the set of the 1967 production. A2