

Should Craig Hansen be the main set-up man for Papelbon?

Tell us what you think at projosports.com/redsox



A SALUTE TO THE SPRING CHAMPIONS: View the gallery at HSGameTime.com/rhodeisland

Game Three final

Late news and photos from Los Angeles, plus Bill Reynolds' audio analysis, at projosports.com/celtics

Junior's achievement

With his homer Monday night, Ken Griffey Jr., based solely on games played, became the 4th fastest player in MLB history to reach 600 home runs:

PLAYER	GAMES
Babe Ruth	2,044
Sammy Sosa	2,302
Barry Bonds	2,394
Ken Griffey	2,439
Willie Mays	2,557
Hank Aaron	2,592

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NBA FINALS 2008

Lakers 87-81

WHAT HE WANTED

He complained long and hard about the officiating after Game Two, but Lakers coach Phil Jackson insisted he wasn't attempting to intimidate the referees into calling Game Three in favor of L.A. "We want just even balance," he said with a straight face. "You don't want it to go one way or the other... [Just] even calls."

WHAT HE GOT

Just what he probably thought he'd get. The Lakers shot 22 free throws to the Celtics' 7 in the first half, with Kobe Bryant getting 12 of the 22 attempts.

WHAT HE DIDN'T EXPECT

The Lakers missed 10 of the 22 free throws, meaning it was still a relatively close game -- L.A. 43, Boston 37 -- at the half.

WHAT HE DREADED

The third-quarter domination the Celtics enjoyed in the first two games continued in Game Three. They outscored L.A. 25-17 -- and now have an 87-58 edge in the third quarter of all three games -- and took a two-point lead into the final period.

WHAT HE NEEDED

A lights-out finish from Bryant... and that's what Kobe delivered. A 7-0 L.A. run over a 53-second span midway through the period put the Lakers ahead to stay, and Bryant (36 points) hit clutch shot after clutch shot down the stretch as they held on to cut Boston's series lead to 2-1.

WHAT HE FACES

Another must-win game tomorrow.

RESULTS

GAME	SCORE
ONE	Celtics 98, Lakers 88
TWO	Celtics 108, Lakers 102
THREE	Lakers 87, Celtics 81

SCHEDULE

GAME	DATE	SITE
FOUR	Tomorrow	at Los Angeles
FIVE	Sunday	at Los Angeles
xSIX	June 17	at Boston
xSEVEN	June 19	at Boston

x -- if necessary
 All games begin at 9 p.m. Eastern.

NOW ON PROJO.COM

- A complete postgame report, including:
 - Game recap from Kevin McNamara, with locker-room reaction.
 - Postgame column from Bill Reynolds.
 - Additional stories from McNamara.
 - A slideshow from the game.

COMING ON PROJO.COM

- An audio report from Reynolds.
- Today's news as it happens from McNamara in Los Angeles.

ALWAYS ON PROJO.COM

- Audio blogs from Journal writers.
- Video from Journal photographer Kris Craig.
- "The Bandwagon," featuring quizzes, Q-and-A's, and everything you need to know about the Celtics.

Go to: projosports.com/celtics

NOT THEIR NIGHT



AP / MARK J. TERRILL

Lakers guard Kobe Bryant tries to dish off as the Celtics' Kendrick Perkins fouls him during the first half of last night's Game Three of the NBA Finals at Los Angeles.

Key Celtics contained; Lakers take Game Three

BY KEVIN McNAMARA
 JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

LOS ANGELES — For much of last night's Game Three of the NBA Finals, the Boston Celtics seemed to play as if they were wondering just how badly they could perform and still win a huge basketball game.

The answer was tough to swallow.

The Celts let a golden chance at a series-changing win slip away at Staples Center as they could not overcome poor performances from Paul Pierce and Kevin Garnett and watched the Los Angeles Lakers escape with a 87-81 win.

Game Four is tomorrow night with Boston's series lead down to two games to one.

The Celtics struggled on offense all night (35 percent) but how they hung in with Pierce (2-for-14, 6 points) and Garnett (6-for-21, 13 points) shooting so poorly was a minor miracle. Ray Allen led the way with 25 points.

The Lakers trailed in the third quarter and didn't take the lead until the seven-minute mark but the home team closed fast. Kobe Bryant stepped up with 36 points and hit several game-clinchers. His sidekick in that department was Slovenian guard Sasha Vujacic, who nailed 7-of-10 daggers into the hearts of the Celtics.

"Sasha really is our offense off the bench," said Lakers coach Phil Jackson. "We couldn't have won the game without his help."

Los Angeles should have won easily but kept hurting itself from the foul line. The Lakers missed 13 free throws, making 21-of-34 tries. Bryant went 12 of 20 from the stripe.

SEE **CELTICS, D7**

The Kobe of legend finally rises to occasion for Lakers

He is supposed to be the best player in the world.

BILL REYNOLDS
 JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

That is the baggage Kobe Bryant brings with him to these NBA Finals, right there with his first MVP trophy and his reputation as his generation's Jordan.

It's also the baggage he brought with him last night to Game Three in

the Staples Center in Los Angeles, a game the Lakers simply had to win if this was to be a true series and not just a prelude to an inevitable Celtics coronation, their 17th world title.

This is Kobe's world now, the one he tries to wear as easily as he wears his gold Lakers uniform, all free-flowing, all cool. He so wants to be Jordan, he so wants his basketball immortality, he so wants to be the one

in the spotlight, universally recognized as the best guy in the biggest gym in the world. He so much wants to be seen as a transcendent figure.

It is why once upon a time he fought with Shaq, and last summer he fought with Lakers management. It's also why after Game One, in which he was less than brilliant, he refused to give the Celtics any credit for his struggles.

"I get those looks again, I'm foaming at the mouth," he said. "I want those looks again. I would never be bashful, you know that."

It was vintage Kobe, the subtext being that no one can stop him, only he can stop himself, as if it's his ball, his game, his world, everyone else is only living in it.

SEE **REYNOLDS, D7**

The Red Sox' Hideki Okajima stands on the mound as he waits for manager Terry Francona to take the ball from him after giving up two runs in the seventh. All three Orioles runs in the inning were charged to Okajima.



THE JOURNAL / GRETCHEN ERTL

ORIOLES 10, RED SOX 6

Boston's relievers were strictly for the Birds

Hideki Okajima and Craig Hansen allow Baltimore to rally past the Sox in the late innings.

BY JOE McDONALD
 JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

BOSTON — Red Sox outfielder J.D. Drew referred to last night's 10-6 loss to the Baltimore Orioles at Fenway Park as a "tip-your-cap" game.

Manager Terry Francona said things didn't unfold the way the club hoped they would, especially giving up the lead late in the game.

Red Sox starter Josh Beckett called it a battle, and reliever Hideki Okajima didn't stick around long enough afterward to comment. Okajima suffered the loss, surrendering the Sox' 6-4 lead in the seventh inning, when he allowed the Orioles to

score three runs on only two hits.

"He was up with a lot of pitches and behind in the count," said Francona.

While Okajima's struggles continue to haunt the Red Sox, some good came out of last night's defeat.

Red Sox second baseman Dustin Pedroia snapped his five-game hitless skid with a 2-for-3 performance, including a double, and two runs scored. It's no secret that when Pedroia does well offensively and defensively, Boston usually has a good shot at winning.

"He swung the bat well," Francona said. "It was good to see. He's looked at a lot of video and feels good about his adjustments. He took some pretty healthy swings tonight."

Pedroia is the type of player who doesn't allow something like an 0-for-18

drought to affect his game. He'll get the job done defensively until he's able to string together consistent at-bats. Even though the numbers of late don't show that, he certainly believes it.

"I've been having nice at-bats for a while, just haven't had much luck," he said. "I'll get going. I'll hit. I'm not worried about it."

Pedroia made a few nice defensive plays last night, but also had a miscue late in the game. The Orioles entered the top of the ninth inning with a one-run lead, and reliever Craig Hansen was on the mound. The hard-throwing right-hander allowed a leadoff single before getting the Orioles' Melvin Mora to hit a soft grounder to shortstop.

The Sox' Alex Cora charged the ball,

SEE **RED SOX, D5**