

Which will be the more exciting series: Sox-Rays or Sox-Yanks?

Tell us what you think at projosports.com/redsox



ANOTHER ONE-RUN LOSS IN HOUSTON: View the gallery at projoSports.com/redsox

Projo Sports Blog

Breaking news reports, special features and quirky items with a New England focus, at projosports.com

Stars bid venue adieu

This year's MLB All-Star Game will be played at Yankee Stadium for the fourth and final time on July 15. Here are the results of the previous All-Star Games played in the Bronx:

YEAR	WINNER	SCORE
1977	National League	7-6
1960	National League	6-0
1939	American League	3-1

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



SECTION B
MONDAY, JUNE 30, 2008

projo SPORTS

Phone: 401-277-7340 Fax: 401-277-7444 E-mail: pjsports@projo.com

RESUME FIRING

Upstart Rays are no longer easy prey

BY STEVEN KRASNER
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

Tampa Bay. Ah, a breather. Guaranteed wins. They wouldn't come out and say it publicly, but when the Boston Red Sox looked ahead to a series against Tampa Bay, be it on the road or at home, they were viewed as games they should win. If not a sweep of the series, certainly a series win.

That, though, was when they were called the Devil Rays and were wearing those ugly green uniforms. That was when they had flotsam and jetsam sprinkled through their everyday lineup. That was when their starting pitchers were "Not Ready for Prime Time Players" and their relievers always seemed to have a can of gasoline with them on the mound, adding fuel to the fire of every Red Sox rally.

Tonight, though, when the Red Sox visit Tropicana Field for the start of a three-game series, a lot has changed in the matchup.

First of all, Tampa Bay no longer is the Devil Rays. They are simply the Rays.

They also are not the door-mats they used to be.

In fact, when the Red Sox square off against the Rays this week, first place in the American League East will be at stake.

Who would have thought that would be the case when the schedule first came out given Boston's status as the defending World Series champion and the Rays' status as one of the worst teams/organizations in the majors?

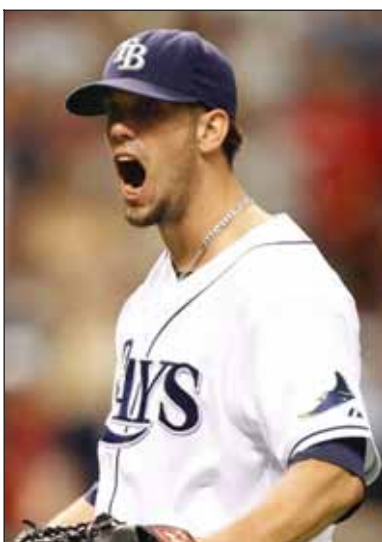
SEE RAYS, B5

PITCHING MATCHUPS

- TONIGHT: Justin Masterson (4-1, 3.43) vs. James Shields (5-5, 3.76)
- TOMORROW: Tim Wakefield (5-5, 3.88) vs. Matt Garza (6-4, 3.76)
- WEDNESDAY: Daisuke Matsuzaka (9-1, 3.21) vs. Scott Kazmir (7-3, 2.28)

All games start at 7:10 p.m.; All games televised on NESN and broadcast on WEEI-FM (103.7)

ACT I



Rays starting pitcher James Shields exults after the final out of his two-hit shutout over the Red Sox in April.

AP / MIKE CARLSON

ACT II



Boston left fielder Manny Ramirez, right, rejoices with shortstop Julio Lugo after Ramirez threw out Tampa Bay's Carlos Pena at home plate in May.

AP / WINSLOW TOWNSON

ACT III



Tensions flared earlier this month between the Red Sox and Rays when Boston's Coco Crisp, tussling here with Tampa Bay catcher Dioner Navarro, charged the mound after Rays pitcher James Shields hit Crisp with a pitch.

THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / BOB BREIDENBACH

ASTROS 3, RED SOX 2

Okajima throws another one away

A Mark Loretta pinch-hit single knocks in the Astros' winning run after Boston hitters strand 13 runners.

BY SEAN McADAM
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

HOUSTON — Talent evaluators in baseball all agree — trying to forecast how middle and set-up relievers will fare from one season to the next is next to impossible.

Case in point: Hideki Okajima. A year ago, Okajima was a shutdown set-up man for the Red Sox, expertly stranding 24 of 28 inherited runners while recording key outs in the eighth and ninth inning.

This season, however, Okajima has stumbled when it comes to stranding runners. For the last six weeks, the Sox had studiously avoided bringing Okajima into games with runners on base.

Not since May 14 — when he served up a game-winning grand slam to Jay Payton — had Okajima been brought into a game with runners on base. But yesterday, tied 2-2 with the Houston Astros in the eighth inning, the Sox

SEE RED SOX, B5

Manny, secretary in ticket tussle

The Red Sox slugger shoves team traveling secretary Jack McCormick over a request by Ramirez for tickets.

BY SEAN McADAM
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

HOUSTON — Maybe it's something in the water in Houston.

Days after Houston Astros pitcher Shawn Chacon tackled Houston general manager Ed Wade in the home clubhouse at Minute Maid Park, the visitors clubhouse was the scene of another player/club employee altercation Saturday afternoon.

Manny Ramirez shoved team traveling secretary Jack McCormick to the ground in an argument over Ramirez's ticket allotment. Several onlookers moved quickly to separate the two.

Ramirez had asked McCormick for 16 tickets for Saturday night's Red Sox-Astros game, an unusually high number for a day-of-game request. In

SEE MANNY, B5

Beisel's Olympic dreams become reality

It's the fairy tale that became reality. How else do you explain a 15-year-old Rhode Island teenager, a girl born and raised in North Kingstown, swimming her way to the Olympics.

JOHN GILLOOLY



Rhode Island produces Olympic hockey players, maybe even an Olympic sailor or two, but not Olympic swimmers.

They come from places like Santa Barbara and Long Beach, Calif., or maybe even big college towns such as Ann Arbor, Mich., not Saunderson, R.I.

But last night in Omaha, Neb. there was Elizabeth Beisel, the North Kingstown High junior who first fell in love

with the water at the beach down the street from her Saunderson home, earning a trip to Beijing as she finished second in the finals of the women's 400-meter individual medley on the opening day of the U.S. Olympic swimming trials.

Three months ago she was setting records at the Rhode Island high school swimming championships. Yesterday she became an Olympian.

Fairy tales do come true. The official tally sheet said that Beisel swam the 400 meter IM, which consists of 100 meters each of the butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle, in 4:32.87. She finished second to 19-year-old Katie Hoff, the three-time world champion in the event who set a world record last night with a winning time of 4:31.12.

Under U.S. Swimming Association regulations, the top two finishers at the trials, and only the top two, in every event other than the freestyle events, earn Olympic berths for that event.

So the kid from Rhode Island, who grew up in a town that doesn't even have an indoor swimming pool, will be in Beijing in August.

Yesterday's performance was just the latest in what has now become a string of amazing, some might consider shocking, performances by Beisel.

She started swimming in a youth program at URI about the time she entered kindergarten. She was a natural, an aquatic prodigy of sorts, who also seemed to enjoy the work required to become a good swimmer.

SEE GILLOOLY, B3



North Kingstown's Elizabeth Beisel races toward a second-place finish in the women's 400-meter individual medley during the opening day of the U.S. Olympic swimming trials yesterday.

AP / MARK J. TERRILL