

What is the biggest area of concern for the Patriots' offense?

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Late Sox report

Read Sean McAdam's final game story and postgame notes from Safeco Field in Seattle, at projosports.com/redsox

Road worriers

Road woes have prevented this year's Red Sox team from challenging for their best record after 100 games in the last 13 seasons:

YEAR	RECORD	YEAR	RECORD
2007	61-39	2002	59-41
2006	61-39	1998	58-42
1995	61-39	2008	57-43
2003	60-40	2001	57-43

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



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He's aiming high

Murphy is in position for all sorts of honors

BY KEVIN McNAMARA
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

SOUTH KINGSTOWN — One moment, Erik Murphy says it's not a big deal. The next, he smiles, and you can see the excitement in his eyes.

Murphy, the South Kingstown resident who has committed to play for Billy Donovan at the University of Florida in the fall of 2009, is a strong candidate to become the first Rhode Islander chosen to play in the prestigious McDonald's All-American basketball game next spring. The honor goes to the top 24 prospects in the country.

Insiders say the selection process to be one of the lucky ones to follow in the sneakers of greats such as Magic Johnson, Michael Jordan and LeBron James can be highly political and at times even cutthroat.

Murphy, who will be a senior at St. Mark's School in Southboro, Mass., this fall, says, "It would be an honor for me. I think it's possible, hopefully."

While he'd be thrilled with the prospect of such an accolade, Murphy downplays the significance of a spot on the team.

"Those things really don't matter," he says.

Maybe not, but the 6-foot-9, 215-pounder is certainly in position for all sorts of honors. He's currently ranked the 21st-best prospect in the country by ESPN.com. Two other noted services, PrepStars and ScoutHoops.com, rank him 26th. Another, Rivals.com, has him 69th, which only emphasizes the fickleness of rating 17- and 18-year-old prep stars.

"There's no question he's put himself in solid position to be considered," said Jeff Goodman, a national recruiting writer for Fox Sports ScoutHoops.com. "He's one of the best players to come out of New England in a long time."

Murphy's quest for national accolades may ride on his play this week. He's in Las Vegas to take part in one of the glamour national AAU team events, the Adidas Super 64. Murphy's

SEE MURPHY, C6



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / BOB BREIDENBACH

Hideki Okajima a late-inning mainstay as a rookie, has not been nearly as effective this season for the Red Sox.

Sox may not reach for help in 'pen

Boston is sending signals that it is unlikely to make a significant addition to its relief corps by the trading deadline.

BY SEAN McADAM
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

SEATTLE — Baseball's non-waiver trading deadline is a little more than a week away, and while the Red Sox' needs may be obvious, the solutions are not.

Even as the team battles a short-term offensive slump, the expectation is that the lineup will produce, particularly with David Ortiz tentatively slated to rejoin the lineup Friday when the Sox begin a homestand.

The bullpen, however, is seen as a more obvious weakness. Collectively, Red Sox relievers have lost more games than they did last season — and more than a third of the schedule remains.

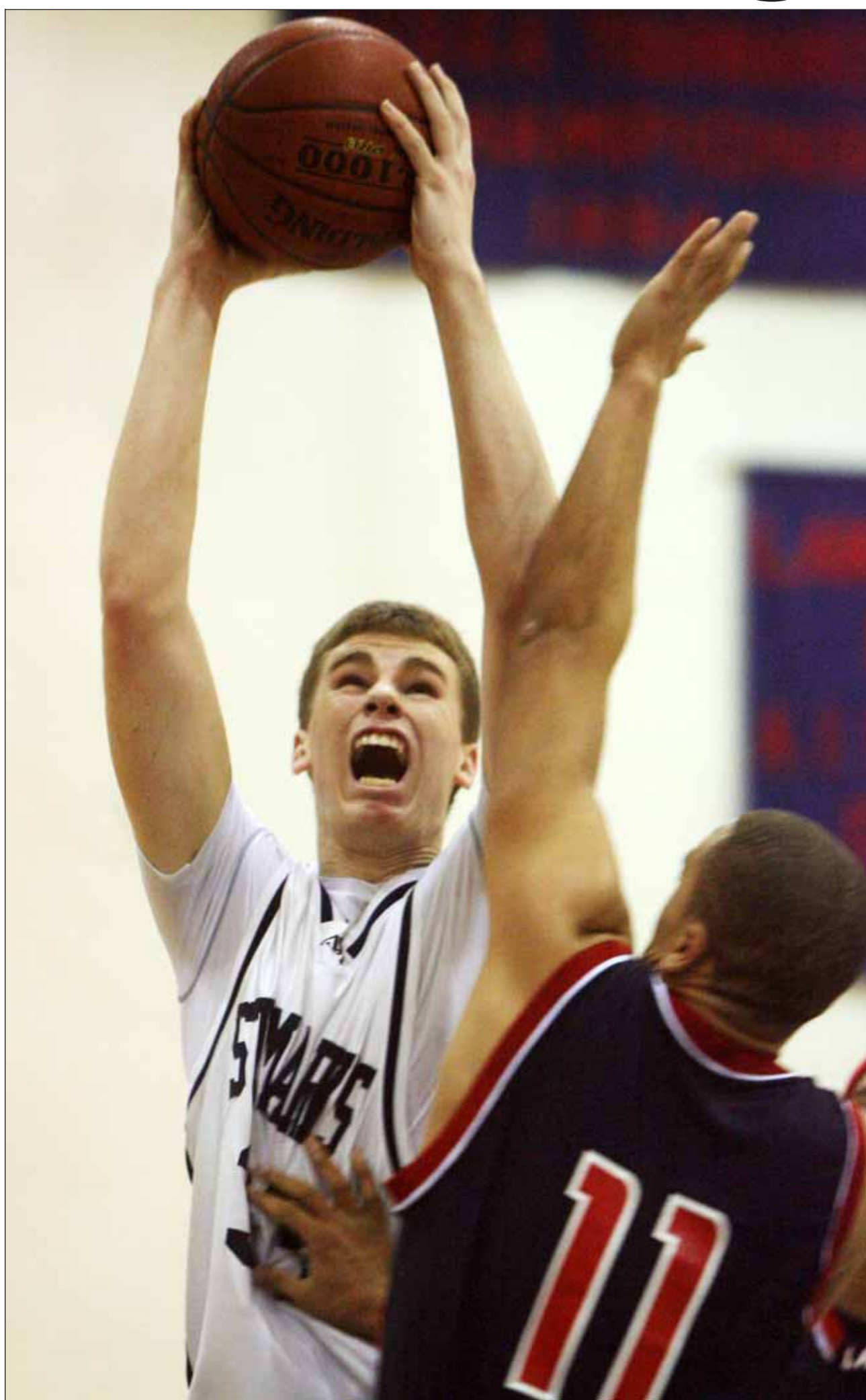
Hideki Okajima, a late-inning mainstay as a rookie, has not been nearly as effective this season.

"A big thing last year," said manager Terry Francona, "was Okie cleaned up a lot of innings and then came back and pitched another one. That was such a big part of our bullpen. A lefty with strikeout potential for both lefties and righties? That's a big deal."

But not this season. Okajima's struggles with inherited runners have been well documented, and his earned-run average is nearly double what it was at this stage a year ago.

However, the trade market doesn't offer

SEE RED SOX, C5



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / KRIS CRAIG

St. Mark's basketball star Erik Murphy of South Kingstown, in action in a game at Lawrence Academy last December, is currently ranked as the 21st-best prospect in the country by ESPN.com.

Wide receivers, offensive linemen take their turn under microscope

Here's a look at the players at each position and questions for each, as well as potential camp battles that will play out.

BY SHALISE MANZA YOUNG
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

With the New England Patriots beginning training camp on Thursday and thus kicking off the start of the 2008 season, we'll take a look at the players at each position and questions for each, as well as potential camp battles that will play out in the coming weeks.

WIDE RECEIVER

In the mix: Randy Moss (11th season), Jabar Gaffney (7th), Sam Aiken (6th), Kelley Washington (6th), Wes Welker (5th), Chad Jackson (3rd), C.J. Jones (2nd), Robert Ortiz (1st), Chris Dunlap (1st) and Matthew Slater (rookie).

Questions and concerns: Who will emerge as the third option behind Moss and Welker? Can Chad Jackson fulfill the promise that led to New England trading up to get him in the 2006 draft?

The seasons Moss and Welker had last year — with a combined 210 catches, 2,668 yards and 31 touchdowns — won't soon be forgotten in New England. Both came to the Patriots with questions marks and immediately went to work, learning the offense and getting to know quarterback Tom Brady.

With Donte Stallworth gone to Cleveland, the battle to see who becomes Brady's third option might be the best of training camp. The early money is on

Gaffney, who has been steady and gotten big yards when needed. He also seems to have a good rapport with Brady on the field.

After spending all of last year on special teams, Washington must be chomping at the bit to try to prove that he can contribute to the offense, and Jackson is in a make-or-break situation. After returning from an ACL injury midway through the season, the former second-round pick was relegated to special teams and the game-day inactives and didn't catch a pass.

Slater is an intriguing player. Most pundits were surprised to see him taken in the fifth round, but he is a highly regarded special-teams player.

SEE PATRIOTS, C6



The Patriots' Randy Moss, in the open field after catching a pass during the team's rout of the Bills in Foxboro last September, silenced the doubters by having an outstanding season.

THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / BOB BREIDENBACH