By BARRY WILNER
Associated Press writer

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — A not-so-rare rookie and a trustworthy veteran lifted the Baltimore Ravens to the brink of the Super Bowl.

With the help of a brutal defense that knocks opponents silly, of course.

After all, these are the Ravens, who lose nothing more than to win grudge matches. And, this one was worthy of the WWE.

Baltimore survived 13-10 on Saturday against the Tennessee Titans thanks to Matt Stover’s 43-yard field goal with 53 seconds remaining.

The unflappable Flacco was certain the 40-year-old kicker would get his team into next weekend’s AFC title game at either Pittsburgh or San Diego.

“I just watched on the big screen,” said the first rookie quarterback to win two playoff games. “I didn’t watch it live, for whatever reason.”

Maybe Flacco’s reason was simply that he never flinches. Nor does his team, which took the wild-card route to the NFL championship in 2000 and just

RAVENS, Page B7

Ravens safety Ed Reed (20) holds the game ball as he celebrates with cornerback Corey Ivy (35) and cornerback Frank Walker (41).

Hyperbole often leads to cynicism

The irony was palpable, even while a nation of viewers succumbed to a wave of nausea.

“In such a cynical, sarcastic society, it is tempting, sometimes looking for the negative on anybody or anything, if you’re fortunate enough to spend five or 20 minutes around Tim Tebow, your life is better for it,” FOX announcer Thom Brennaman gushed about the Florida quarterback during Thursday’s BCS Championship broadcast.

That was silly in itself, but this was more.

When an Oklahoma defender was quoted as saying Tebow would be the fourth-best quarterback in the Big 12, Brennaman assessed it as “probably the most ridiculous statement ever said.” There’s no ruling yet on where, “Mission accomplished” might rank.

And when Tebow got called for an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty, the announcer added, “That might be the first thing he’s ever done wrong.” Um, we’ll need to consult Tebow’s parents on that one.

Yet while Brennaman has been roundly — and rightly — criticized for his deification of Tebow throughout the broadcast, we seem to be missing the point.

Because “cynical” is defined as “contemptuously distrustful of human nature and motives.” And it’s people such as Brennaman who have generated this cynicism.

Tim Tebow is a great college football player, one of the greatest ever. He seems to be an outstanding young man, traveling the world and performing missionary work.

His pledge after this season’s loss to Mississippi is the stuff of legend: “You have never seen anyone in the entire country play as hard as I will play the rest of this season and you’ll never see someone push the rest of the team as hard as I will push everybody the rest of this season and you’ll never see a team play harder than we will

JAYNE, Page B3

Greg Jayne
Commentary

Kindsfather remembered for contributions at Clark

Former 20-game winner in PCL died last month at 84

By PAUL DANZER
Columbian staff writer

Vern Kindsfather was a 20-game winner for the Seattle Rainiers in the Pacific Coast League, and pitched the first perfect game in Northwest League history.

But his greatest contribution to the sport he loved might have come in his hometown. For 25 years, Kindsfather coached the Clark College baseball team and taught physical education.

Kindsfather died Dec. 21. He was 84.

“Vern, when working with students, was a disciplined coach, but he had a soft heart,” said Gaydene Thompson, a former Clark College athletic director and physical education teacher who joined the Clark faculty along with Kindsfather in 1962.

“He was very personable. Students went to him for counsel. He loved the sport of baseball, and it showed.”

A native of Vancouver, Kindsfather played baseball and basketball at Clark before an 11-year career as a pitcher.

He was one of the first athletes Skeet O’Connell recruited for his basketball and baseball teams at Clark College.

KINDSFATHER, Page R3
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manager Bobby
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Wakamatsu
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Baseball notes

"We've had some guys watch
him the last couple of years, and
they like him," Cox said.

Cox said he's watched
Wakamatsu on film and he
looked very good. He was able
to throw the ball right where
he wanted to with three or four
throws.

Wakamatsu's agent, former
Dodgers manager Don
Evans, declined comment Sat-
urday. Braves GM Frank Wren did
not respond to an e-mail from
The Associated Press, and as-
istant general manager Bruce
Manno said he had no comment
on Wakamatsu.

Wakamatsu, the 2004 Central
League MVP, has a 128-82
career record with a 3.22 ERA in
11 seasons in Japan. He was 9-5
with a 2.30 ERA for the Chunichi
Dragons in 2008, despite missing
several weeks with a back strain.

The 5-foot-10 righty would be
an important addition to a Braves
rotation that will be without John
Smoltz, who has missed the pre-
season with right knee surgery.

Atlanta also lost free agent
Mike Hampton to the Houston
Astros and is preparing to be
without ace Tim Hudson for the
season as Hudson recovers from
elbow ligament-replacement
surgery.

The team is monitoring the
progress of Tom Glavine as he
recovers from elbow surgery.

Free agent Derek Lowe, a 14-
year veteran for the Dodgers
last season, had been linked with
Braves officials in Atlanta on
Saturday.

In their only major pitching
move since the end of the sea-
son, the Braves acquired right-
der Hanley Ramirez from the
White Sox for a package of mi-
nor-leaguers.

Boston bolstered bullpen with Saito

Takashi Saito agreed to a one-
year deal with Boston on Satur-
day, giving the Red Sox another
ace in their bullpen.

Saito, who had 18 saves and a
2.29 ERA last season despite
being limited by an elbow injury,
became a free agent when the
Los Angeles Dodgers declined
to offer him a contract.

The right-hander would have
been eligible for salary arbitration
and a raise from $2.4 million if he
was tendered a contract.

The active Red Sox announced
a deal with Rocco Baldelli on
Thursday, finalizing a $15
million, one-year deal with right-
hander Brad Penny on Friday
and are expected to complete a
$5.5 million, one-year contract
with John Smoltz in the next few
days.

The 38-year-old Saito is 12-7
with 81 saves and a 1.99 ERA in
three major league seasons, all
with Los Angeles.

"He's done an amazing job
since coming over from Japan;
" he said.

Saito made the All-Star team
in 2007 when he went 23-1 with
19 saves and a 1.44 ERA in 68 games.
He should feel right at home
in spring training with three
other Japanese country-
men in Boston's camp.

Kindsfather set for 'greatest' honor

Rickye Hendon

Rickey Henderson proclaimed himself the "greatest of all time" when he broke Lou Brock's career record for stolen bases in 1995. As
he awaits a call from the Hall of Fame on Monday, others are lining up to echo Henderson's sentiment.

Kindsfather:
From Page B1

"I'd heard a lot about his ath-
etic ability," O'Connell said
this week. "He was a good basket-
ball player, but baseball wasn't
his first love.

Kindsfather spent five of his 11
pro seasons with the Rainiers in
the PCL. He was one of 11 pitch-
ers in that team's 27-year history
to win 20 games in a season,
posting a 21-11 record in 1952.
He followed that up a year later
with a 16-18 mark, including
eight shutouts. During his time
with the Rainiers, he ranked
among the PCL leaders in
innings pitched.

On June 15, 1957, Kindsfather
pitched the first perfect game in
the Northwest League, blanking
Eugene 3-0 in a seven-inning
game in the first game of a dou-
bleheader.

His out pitch was a sinking fastball.

"Don't ask me how I threw it," he
said. "I'd like to say it was my
curve ball, my slider or my fast-
ball, but it was just a natural pitch."

Jayne:
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