

THE MAN

Coach Vrabel has brought a personal touch to Pats greatness



A special publication of The Eagle-Tribune, The Salem News, The Daily News of Newburyport and the Gloucester Daily Times

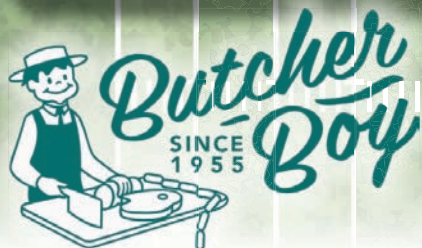


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Total redemption for Bob Kraft

Bill Burt



Bob Kraft messed up and, eventually, fessed up.

He gave Bill Belichick too much power — his words! — and fired the struggling, coaching legend. And then handed over keys to his multi-billion dollar franchise to, basically a friend, Jerod Mayo, with no leadership experience outside of sales job.

Two decisions, two disastrous seasons, comparable to a few other pathetic seasons in franchise history, and eight wins combined.

One of pro sports greatest modern day dynasties, remarkably constructed in free agency era, virtually disappeared before our very eyes.

Obviously, Tom Brady's exodus was at the forefront, but this was bigger than a fortysomething legendary quarterback. Kraft waited less 30 minutes after the 2024 regular season ended, with the franchising blowing an opportunity of coping the first overall pick, to fire Mayo, the first black head coach in the team's history.

Admitting a mistake is one thing. Admitting it less than a year later is another.



Patriots head coach Mike Vrabel with Patriots owner Bob Kraft last January after he was hired to replace Jerod Mayo.

Eight days later, the Patriots owner then hired free agent Mike Vrabel to, essentially, run the football operations.

Gutsy? Absolutely. Lucky? Damn straight.

But luck usually finds those in position to accept such a gift and Kraft, after realizing Mayo was not going to turn the struggles of the last two years around, went with the Patriots Hall of Fame former linebacker.

Vrabel not only had six years head coaching experience, but his Tennessee teams won two AFC South

Division titles and made the playoffs three times, all with a third-tier quarterback.

Vrabel was inducted into the Patriots Hall of Fame the year before and didn't mince words speaking to the Gillette Stadium crowd, "I don't want you to take this organization for granted. I've been to a lot of places. This is a special place with great leadership, great fans, great direction, great coaching. Enjoy it. It's not like this everywhere."

While Kraft chose Mayo to replace Belichick after the four-win 2023 season, the Patriots owner connected with Vrabel the two days he was in town. Similarly, in 1996, when Bill Belichick was here for one season as an assistant, he connected with Kraft. It took four years, but Belichick returned and about 18 months later, so did Vrabel.

Belichick and Tom Brady got the bulk of the credit for two decades of work, but Vrabel's influence as a player and teammate was special, particularly in the biggest games was special. Personally, his two sacks, forced fumble and

TD reception in the Patriots second Super Bowl win over the Carolina Panthers deserved MVP recognition.

His personality, which reeked of New England sarcasm, always was a perfect fit here.

It's not easy admitting a mistake and the compounding that with one of the best moves the organization ever made outside of drafting Brady 199th overall, hiring Belichick and drafting Drake Maye.

But changing course and bringing Vrabel on board might some day be on a par with all of those decisions.

The Patriots owner, over 31 years, has made some questionable decisions. But almost every time he has bounced back.

I'm not saying Kraft predicted this in 2025, within a year, but ...

"I personally am very excited," said Kraft. "The last two years have been very tough. After my family, this team is the most important thing. The one thing that brings everybody together is the NFL, and we gotta win. I believe we're set up this year to turn around what's gone on the last couple of years."

The Patriots appear back. And the owner made that happen.

You can email Bill Burt at bburt@northofboston.com.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

4 How Vrabel, the man, won over franchise and region

8 Five key factors to watch

11 Coach Bill O'Brien's connection with coaches Vrabel, McDaniels, Marrone

12 Patriots just don't get here without Bill Belichick's draft survivors

14 A game-by-game look back at memorable 2025 season

20 Like Patriots, shrewd moves in free agency and NFL draft help build 'Hawks' Super Bowl roster

22 How Patriots roster was built

26 Patriots Super Bowl History

ON THE COVER

Head coach Mike Vrabel looks on during the Patriots game against the Pittsburgh Steelers in September.

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How **Vrabel**—the man—won over franchise and region

By Bill Burt

▸ bburt@northofboston.com

Two decisions, drafting Tom Brady and hiring Bill Belichick, changed the course of a fledgling — sometimes good, oftentimes bad — New England Patriots franchise.

Bob Kraft had things moving in the right direction in his first half-dozen years, but his goal of “becoming the San Francisco 49ers” — consistently competing for championships multiple years — was still far-fetched.

Nobody knew anything about Brady, drafted 199th. And a distinct minority sided with Belichick hiring because of his personality.

But they both changed the course of history.

Mike Vrabel hiring was different. It was celebrated. A favored player as a three-time Super Bowl champ, clutch player and Patriots Hall of Famer, he brought some juice back, as head coaching talent to the franchise after a few horrific seasons.

Expectations were high that Vrabel would fix it, sooner rather than later with a kid quarterback that showed franchise quarterback tendencies.

But nobody expected this. Nobody.

On the day Vrabel was hired — 12 months and 25 days ago — he brought certitude back, using a key word, “accountability,” several times.

A great football word, accountability: it’s tough, decisive, reeking of discipline. From a few decades of experience, we like that in our football team around



JAIME CAMPOS PHOTO

Mike Vrabel congratulates running back Rhamondre Stevenson (38) after Stevenson’s touchdown against Miami in January.

here.

But Patriots fans and Patriots players have gotten so much more from Vrabel.

Though he did sort of promise what has actually happened:

“I want to galvanize our football team,” said Vrabel. “I want to galvanize this building. I want to galvanize our fans.”

While Belichick galvanized a lot of people, especially when the Patriots winning Super Bowls, this feels different.

The players have a bigger role, which was apparently part of Vrabel’s master plan.

We knew he had

experience as a championship player and as a successful coach. What we didn’t know was his devotion to relationships.

“There’s so much to like and respect about Mike,” said Patriots veteran tight end, Hunter Henry. “He played the game at the highest level and was a great player. He had a lot of success as a (head) coach, too.”

“I’ve played for a lot of coaches,” noted Henry. “He’s different, in a positive way, but more importantly the message is consistent. He never wavers. Personally, I love playing for him. I’d do anything for him.”

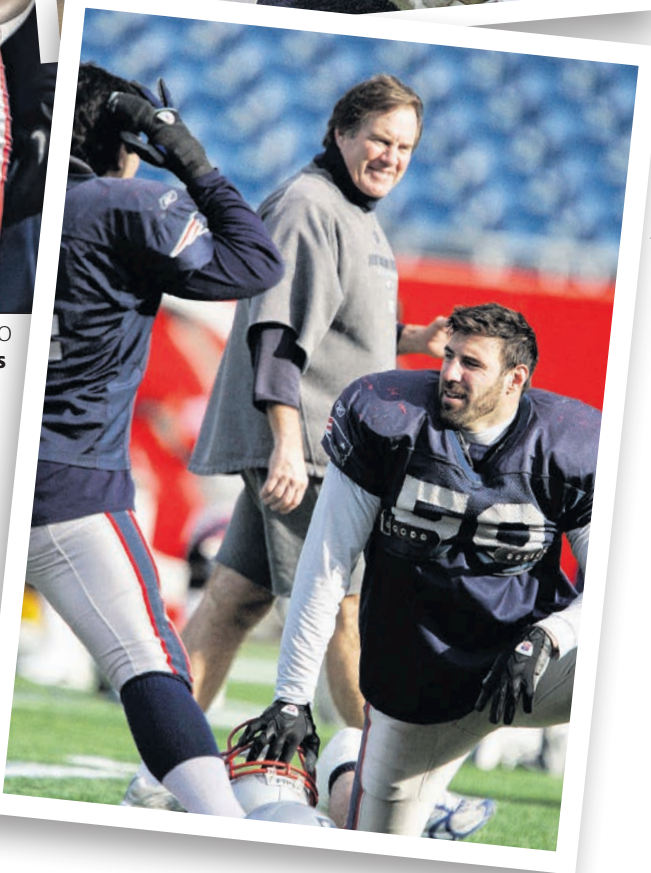
Early in the summer, Vrabel got the entire team and coaches together with a program he called the “Four H’s,” having everyone talk about their personal lives in terms of hometown, heartbreak, hero and hope.

It turned into a tear-fest for many players and coaches, learning deep, personal stories about so many of their peers.

“It was amazing hearing all of the stories,” said Pats star cornerback Christian



STAFF FILE PHOTO



AP FILE PHOTO

TOP: Mike Vrabel sacks Chargers’ quarterback Philip Rivers in 2007. BOTTOM: Mike Vrabel, right, talks with Teddy Bruschi, left, as head coach Bill Belichick, center, walks past during team practice in 2008.

See **VRABEL**, Page 6

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Patriots head coach Mike Vrabel smiles after Stefon Diggs' touchdown against the Atlanta Falcons in November.

JAIME CAMPOS PHOTO

» Vrabel

Continued from Page 4

Gonzalez. "You tell your story and the tough experiences we've had. You realize we're all in this together."

Starting safety Jaylinn Hawkins said those hearing stories were a turning point for him.

"I can't tell you how much it brings you together, hearing guys get emotional," said Hawkins. "I appreciated it so much. I know guys say it all the time, but it really feels like a family on this team."

Vrabel was asked about his philosophy on seemingly being a "players coach," and where it came from.

"I think you try to have a core belief in what you do. And I think you try to be consistent with that. But I think you also have to be authentic," said Vrabel. "(Your players) have to see you be upset, be disappointed, be sad, share personal experiences."

"I talk about how much time we spend together. It just goes all the way back to when – they don't care how much you know until they know how much you care," said Vrabel last week.

"Whatever we can do to try to help them off the field, grow as men – there's a lot of great guys in there that are husbands and fathers, and then

they're also great players. So, we just try to build the player the best that we can."

There have been so many success stories about this team, from free agency, the draft, the holdovers, the new offensive line, the stout defense we've seen the last three weeks and, of course, the development of a true franchise quarterback.

But winning 16 of its last 17 games, and to be the last team standing in the AFC is nothing short of remarkable. It's more than talent.

Near the end of last Sunday's AFC title win in Denver, defensive tackle Cory Durden was caught mic'd up conversing with Vrabel in the final minute.

The undrafted interior defensive lineman joined the Patriots this summer after spending time with three teams: Detroit, L.A. Rams and N.Y. Giants. He started on the practice squad before becoming a key cog this season.

"You changed my life, coach," he told Vrabel. "You changed my (bleeping) life. You changed my life, dawg. I swear to God, you changed my life."

Quite frankly, Coach Vrabel has enhanced a lot of lives, including several million fans.

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Patriots head coach Mike Vrabel convenes with receivers Kayshon Boutte (9) and Stefon Diggs (8) during their game against the Giants in December.

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Five key factors to watch

By Hector Longo

There is a lot to digest when comparing the New England Patriots to the Seattle Seahawks. Here is a look at five key factors to watch when teams meet on Sunday:

1. Darnold under duress

Will the real Sam Darnold please stand up?

For New England football followers, it is truly hard to take the Seahawks' quarterback seriously.

Darnold was forever burned in our memories back in 2019 when the former No. 3 pick overall by the New York Jets in 2018 uttered those fateful words in a Monday Night beat-down by the Patriots that he was "seeing ghosts" from the pocket.

That game in Week 7 of his second pro season, for all intents and purposes, ended his tenure with the Jets and nearly ended his career before he even started.

Now in his fifth pro season, it remains a chore to respect Darnold, despite the fact that he is now 30-7 as a starter over the last two years.

Darnold has the opportunity to silence any doubters — from Taunton to Tacoma — by winning the game's ultimate prize on Super Sunday.

But can he handle the heat?

One year ago, in his first career playoff start, Darnold took nine sacks in a humbling home playoff loss for the 14-3 Vikings against the Rams.

One week ago, he ended the Rams' season with a four TD pass effort in the NFC title game. Total vindication is within Darnold's reach.

New Englanders are



Houston Texans defensive end Will Anderson Jr. (51) sacks and forces New England Patriots quarterback Drake Maye to fumble. The Texans recovered the ball.

ROBERT F. BUKATY/AP photo

banking that they have a pulse on who the real Sam Darnold is, was and always will be — that is the one "seeing ghosts."

2. Is Maye 'slump' real?

There is no sugar-coating it.

Drake Maye's statistical dropoff in the playoffs borders on alarming.

Be it the 56% completion rate, the 6.9 yards per attempt, or as simple as points produced per game in the playoffs (15.7), Maye's struggles leap of the stat sheet.

Is it the better defenses faced? His beleaguered offensive line simply giving way (15 playoff sacks)? The rugged weather? The higher stakes? A tender right (throwing) shoulder?

Probably some combination of them all.

But both analytically and visually, Maye showed too much during a regular season in which he made a rock-solid case for NFL MVP to think that he suddenly can't throw the football with the best of them.

Super Sunday offers the second-year man out of North Carolina a fair chance

to lay claim to his spot among the NFL's elite. He can overcome the multiple missed throws in Denver during the AFC title game.

On the game's grandest stage, Maye can do what LA's Matt Stafford and San Francisco's Brock Purdy in previous weeks couldn't do — that is, beat the Seahawks.

3. How do Pats cover JSN?

With complementary pieces like an aged Cooper Kupp, special teams ace Jake Bobo and former New Orleans Saint Rashid Shaheed, every team approaches Seattle with a familiar plan: Don't let Jaxon Smith-Njigba beat us.

All have tried. Nearly all have failed, with JSN putting up an NFL-best 1,749 receiving yards and 10 touchdowns in the regular season followed by 13 catches, 172 yards and two TDs in the two playoff wins.

How will the Patriots go about it?

Christian Gonzalez, New England's top cover guy, has shown cracks in his armor. A one-on-one, all-over-the-field matchup might be Super suicide for the New England defense.

Expect the Pats to muddle things up for JSN with a strategy like Bill Belichick used against the Rams all the way back in Super Bowl XXXVI.

Vrabel was on the field that day, watching Ty Law step into Torrey Holt's grill and attempt to manhandle the future Hall of Famer.

Holt was held to 49 yards in 12 targets that day. Can Gonzalez pull it off? Will he be asked to go it alone? That's unlikely.

The Patriots will feature two deep safeties most of the day with one tasked with staying on top of JSN, just in case the tight Gonzalez coverage is beaten.

4. Does Pats or Seahawks rush defense break?

The physicality of each team's offensive line has been a strength in the run game.

Since the bye week in early December, Rhamondre Stevenson has averaged 5.9 yards a carry on the ground.

Buffalo's James Cook led the NFL at 5.2 yards per try this past season.

Stevenson's late numbers



GODOFREDO A. VÁSQUEZ/AP photo

Seattle Seahawks quarterback Sam Darnold (14) runs for yardage against the San Francisco 49ers.

have come against monster fronts, including Houston and Denver.

Meanwhile, the Seahawks counter with one of the best-kept secrets in football, Kenneth Walker III.

A two-time 1,000-yard rusher in four seasons, Walker ripped the heart out of San Francisco with 119 yards and three TDs in the Seahawks' playoff opener.

Each back will test the opposition's will. Both fronts have been stout, especially in the playoffs.

New England rendered RJ Harvey an after-thought in Denver. Both the Texans and Chargers were forced into one-dimensional offenses.

Seattle smothered San Francisco's Christian McCaffrey (11 carries, 35 yards) and never allowed the Rams' Kyren Williams (10-39) to get on track.

The team that runs the football successfully on Super Sunday holds a humongous advantage.

5. Are Seahawks more battled tested?

With Patrick Mahomes

finally showing himself as a mere mortal in Kansas City, Buffalo's Josh Allen coming up short again, and Joe Burrow continuing to run for his life in Cincinnati, the AFC became the lesser of two conferences in 2025.

The NFC held the power, at least according to the experts, a factor that should bode well for the Seahawks, who earned the top seed in the conference at 14-3, despite playing in a division with three 12-plus win teams.

Those teams — Seattle (5-0), San Francisco (3-2) and the LA Rams (5-0) — went 13-2 against the AFC.

The Seahawks had to go through those two West rivals in the playoffs in the playoffs to get here, while New England feasted on a depleted Chargers' team, the Texans without their two best offensive players and the Broncos with Jarrett Stidham behind center.

But while the edge in competition faced absolutely has to favor Seattle, keep this one statistic in mind:

New England went 5-0 against the NFC this year. So, don't expect the Patriots to be the least bit intimidated.

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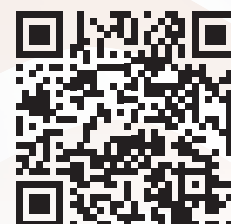
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‘My **three** Patriots pals’

Coach Bill O’Brien’s connection with coaches Vrabel, McDaniels, Marrone

By Bill Burt

» bburt@northofboston.com

Boston College football coach Bill O’Brien has special place in his heart for this Super Bowl in Santa Clara, Calif.

And while he spent six of 33 seasons in the sport working for the New England Patriots, his favorite team growing up in Andover, this is bigger than the Patriots.

Three of best friends in the sport will be working on the Patriots sidelines:

Head coach Mike Vrabel, Offensive coordinator Josh McDaniels and offensive line coach Doug Marrone.

And all have played huge roles, starting at the top with Coach Vrabel, who joined O’Brien’s Houston Texans staff when he took the job in 2014 as linebackers coach and defensive coordinator, lasting four seasons there.

O’Brien and McDaniels were introduced in 2007 after O’Brien joined the Patriots staff as a low level offensive assistant under McDaniels before becoming his wide receivers coach in 2008.

As for Marrone, they go way back, to the mid-1990s at Georgia Tech, where they were together for five years as assistants for George O’Leary.

O’Brien said because of the trio he followed the Patriots a lot more than he probably would have.

“I knew Mike (Vrabel) would be a great hire,” said O’Brien, while on a recruiting trip to Rhode Island last week. “He has a unique ability not many coaches have. He connects with everybody in the building. Obviously, he connects with players, guys from different backgrounds. But it’s everyone; the cafeteria ladies; the people cleaning up; the security guards; the equipment guys; everybody.”

O’Brien was talking with a female bus driver who took their B.C. team to the airport this year, after having driving the Patriots to the airport in Providence.

“She said Mike introduced himself to her and they chatted a bit. She said he was so



AP PHOTOS

Boston College football coach Bill O’Brien has three of his best friends on the New England Patriots coaching staff.

O’Brien: Vrabel’s humor is also elite

Boston College football coach Bill O’Brien said one of Mike Vrabel’s best attributes, outside of coaching, is “busting people’s chops.” O’Brien was head coach with the Houston Texans, having spent four years with Vrabel as a linebackers coach and defensive coordinator.

“Mike is very funny, every day,” said O’Brien. “He knows how to push everybody’s buttons.”

O’Brien recalled when his two older brothers John and Tom went to the Texans game in Green Bay in 2016. O’Brien invited them to a staff meeting the night before the game.

“Mike walks in and I introduce him to them,” recalled O’Brien. “Mike said, ‘Your two brothers?’ He looked at their full heads of hair and looked at me. ‘What the hell happened to you? They look like the Kennedys. I don’t even know what you look like.’

“But Mike could take it, too,” said O’Brien. “And we gave it back, trust me.”



Mike Vrabel, on right, was elevated to the Houston Texans defensive coordinator in 2017 by head coach Bill O’Brien.

GEORGE BRIDGES/
File photo

Belichick's Boys

Patriots just don't get here without Bill's 10 draft survivors

By Hector Longo

» sports@northofboston.com

FOXBOROUGH – On his way out the door from One Patriot Place, Bill Belichick endured lethal shots – from near and far – about the state of the New England Patriots.

The Patriots were talent-starved, and the region let Bill know he was to blame.

Somewhere out there, either on campus at Chapel Hill or maybe secluded in Nantucket, Belichick should demand an apology.

The Patriots are one win from the Super Bowl and “Bill’s Boys” — guys he drafted and helped develop in his final years with the Patriots — are playing major roles.

You can make the case that Belichick, in some twisted, convoluted, and yes, contrived the way got the Patriots here.

They certainly don’t beat the Texans on Sunday without his guys.

Ten current Belichick draft picks don’t just remain on the roster. They’re feasting, and leading the franchise back to prominence.

Don’t believe it? Take a peek.

1. Christian Gonzalez, Round 1, 2023

The only Pro Bowler on the defense and the maybe the best all-around player on the football team.

Gonzalez, whom Belichick backed up to No. 17 in the draft to get him, delivered the sleeper biggest play of the game in the Divisional round playoff win over Houston, stripping running back Woody Marks of the football when the Texans were headed in for the potential

game-tying score in the third quarter.

He’s the guy the defense is built around.

2. Mike Onwenu, Round 6, 2020

There is one, proven rock on the New England line, it’s Onwenu at right guard.

The Patriots are a right-handed running team, and “Big Mike” — a steal of a pick with 90 career starts — is the major reason why.

He has played 99 percent of the offensive snaps this season and has committed one false start and one holding penalty.

3. Rhamondre Stevenson, Round 4, 2021

He’s been the closer, one of the game’s best running backs over the past seven weeks. Since Dec. 1, Stevenson has averaged 6.7 yards per carry (67 rushes, 442 yards).

More importantly, as he proved on the six-minute, game-icing drive in the fourth quarter, he dominated the game’s best defense.

4. Marcus Jones, Round 3, 2022

No Patriot has delivered more big plays on defense or special teams this season.

The hidden gem in an otherwise gross 2022 draft that included busts like Cole Strange, Tyquan Thornton and Jack Jones.

Owens a first-team All-Pro and a second-team All-Pro nod as a returner. Has two punt return TDs this year to go with two interception return touchdowns, including last week’s back-breaker against the Texans.

See **BELICHICK**, Page 13



JAIME CAMPOS

After more than 20 years of contending for championships, Bill Belichick’s final year with the Patriots saw the team fall to 4-13. His winning legacy continues, however, with 10 of his draft picks playing key roles on this year’s team.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Christian Gonzalez smiles standing next to the NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell after he was drafted by the Patriots in the first round of the 2023 draft.



DAVID LE/Eagle Tribune file photo

New England running back Rhamondre Stevenson (38) celebrates with teammate Marcus Jones (25) have both come up with big plays during the regular season and playoffs.

Six More Belichick Survivors

Hunter Henry: One of the better unsung Belichick free-agent pickups ever. Has been a solid contributor and the third-down security blanket Bill envisioned for Mac Jones. Instead, he’s done it for Drake Maye.
Jahlani Tavai: Another

Belichick scrap-head guy, coming over in 2021. Has carved out a nice career here, still contributing as a situational linebacker.
Brenden Schooler: Signed as an undrafted free agent out of college, he’s grown into a first-team All-Pro special

teamer.
Christian Elliss: Even Belichick couldn’t have imagined him playing regular snaps at linebacker on defense when he brought him here from Philly to play special teams in 2023.
Vederian Lowe: Brought him

in to fill the void at tackle in 2023. As the song goes, “started from the bottom, now we’re here.” and that’s a good thing for Lowe, I guess.
Alex Austin: One of Bill’s last pickups, deep in the 2023 season. He’s a reserve defensive back.

» Belichick

Continued from Page 12

5. Kayshon Boutte, Round 6, 2023



Kayshon Boutte, Patriots wide receiver

Thought to be headed out of town at various times during the offseason during training camp, Boutte headlines a monster Round 6, which has three different players on this list.

Second on the team to Hunter Henry with six TD grabs this year, he made the catch of the year, crushing Houston's spirit with a one-handed gem to beat one of the game's top corners, Derek Stingley Jr.

6. DeMario Douglas, Round 6, 2023

The second of the three Round 6 steals from 2023, he set the tone with the first TD of the game for the Patriots, scorching the Texans



TIM JEAN/Staff photo

Patriots wide receiver DeMario Douglas, seen here in early season action against the Raiders, has been on the receiving end of some memorable long touchdowns this season.

defense on a fourth-and-one hookup from Drake Maye.

Yes, he disappears for stretches. Yes, his lack of size can be a detriment, especially with the Patriots

stressing the run game.

But Douglas' explosiveness, a trait that's been evident since he was drafted out of Liberty, has provided a handful of

much-needed sparks in this amazing run.

7. Christian Barmore, Round 2, 2021

Fans may be going a bit overboard in the past couple weeks with Barmore riding the coat-tails of his fellow defensive tackle Milton Williams. But the fact prevails, he's been a stout defender at the heart of what is suddenly a game-changing defense.

He started slow, returning from blood clot issues a year ago, but Barmore has played better of late.

His resurgence could not have been better-timed.

8. Anfernee Jennings, Round 3, 2020

Stop the giggling.

Jennings is another of the Belichick holdovers that wasn't supposed to be here.

A funny thing happened on final cutdown day back in September. Jennings stuck with the club, and he's been a regular contributor since.

He's played on a third of the defensive snaps, playing 14 games

and starting three. He's also played on nearly half of the plays in the kicking game (45 percent).

9. Bryce Baringer, Round 6, 2023

The third of the Round 6 gems, New England's punter has endured a roller-coaster ride this season.

Averaging 47.4 yards per kick with a net of 40.6, he's been rock-solid.

As the holder on place-kicks, he's also helped nurture the rookie, Andy Borregales. Don't overlook that either.

10. Marte Mapu, Round 3, 2023

The kid from Sacramento State is hanging tough.

Yes, this was a blatant over-draft by Belichick, one he'd likely admit to regretting.

Too slow for safety, too small for linebacker, Mapu has played only 12 percent of the defensive snaps this year. He has, however, been a key special-teamer, allowing Mike Vrabel to keep him around for all the fun.

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2025 NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS

A look back at a memorable 2025 season

By Bill Burt

» bburt@northofboston.com

Regular season

Game 1

Las Vegas 20,
New England 13

It was by far the worst Patriots game of the season, all phases, as the Raiders, which ended the season with the worst record in the NFL, 2-15, took it to then “new” New England Patriots.

While the Raiders had statistical edge — 389 yards to 336 yards — everything else was even.

Raiders QB Geno Smith (24-34-1, 333 yards, 1 TD) was a little more efficient than his Patriots counterpart, Drake Maye (30-46-1, 276 yards, 1 TD).

Pats lost its 10-7 halftime lead in the third quarter, and a field with 19 seconds left made it the final score.

Key stat line: Linebacker Harold Landry had 2.5 sacks in his first game as a Patriot.

Game 2

New England 33, Miami 27

It was a wild road game in 80 degree weather that started with two Patriots TDs in the first quarter with rookie kicker Andy Borregales missing both extra points.

With Dolphins leading 20-15 in the third quarter the “wild” part started with the teams alternating TDs — Pats, Dolphins, Pats — the last two of which were a 74-yard punt return by Dolphins and a 90 yard kickoff return by Patriot Antonio Gibson for a 30-27 lead.

Borregales redeemed himself in a big way hitting a 53-yarder with 1:47 remaining to key the 33-27 win.



JAIME CAMPOS

Patriots receiver Stefon Diggs (8) celebrates with teammates after a touchdown score during a game between the New England Patriots and the Atlanta Falcons at the Gillette Stadium in Foxborough on November 2.

Game 4

New England 42, Carolina 14

Finally, a home win. After a miserable open to the game, another first drive score for the opposition, the Patriots took over, starting off with an 87-yard punt return for a score to take an early 7-6 lead.

The rest was history. Drake Maye was his typical efficient self — 14 for 17, 203 yards, 2 TDs — and two TDs and the three running backs combining for 98 yards (4.5 yards per carry).

The Panthers were coming off a 30-0 beat down of the Falcons in Atlanta, but they were never in this one after their first score.

It was also Christian Gonzalez’s return to action at cornerback.

Key stat line: Stefon Diggs had his first 100-yard game, 37th of his career.

Game 5

New England 23, Buffalo 20

The biggest win of the year, going to Buffalo on a Sunday night national TV game, with Bills Mafia adorned in white.

The Patriots led 20-10 early in the fourth quarter before the Josh Allen magic got going as the Bills scored a touchdown and field goal tie the game with 2:17 remaining.

But Drake Maye put his cape on, almost pulled down for a sack before finding Diggs for a 12-yard gain on the first play. Another Maye pass to Boutte for 19 yards helped set up Andy Borregales 52-yard kick with 20 seconds remaining to finish off the Bills and their 14-game home win streak.

Key stat line: Rhamondre Stevenson rebounds from Steelers game with two TD runs.



FRANK FRANKLIN/AP photo

Drake Maye passes against the New York Jets during the first half of an NFL game Dec. 28 in East Rutherford, N.J.

Game 6

New England 25,
New Orleans 19

The Patriots were challenged by the Saints, having leads of 14-6 and 22-16.

The teams traded second half field goals to close out the scoring.

Drake Maye was the best player on the field, completing 18 of 26 passes for 261 yards and 3 TDs, including the longest TD pass of his career — 53 yards to Pop Douglas.

It wasn’t pretty, but it was another road win.

Key stat line: Jayshon

Game 3

Pittsburgh 21,
New England 14

The Patriots won the stat sheet, outgaining the Steelers 368 to 203, but gave up five turnovers (four fumbles), two deep in the red zone, to blow another game at Gillette Stadium.

Maye was a little loose with the ball, throwing an interception in the end zone and being stripped of the ball on a sack.

The Steelers didn’t do much, but a big TD drive late in the fourth quarter sealed the game and another disappointing Patriots loss.

Key stat line: Patriots turned ball over five times versus only one for Steelers.

Boutte’s first 2 TD game of his career.

Game 7

New England 31,
Tennessee 13

For a half, it was a game, with Patriots leading 17-13, with backup tight end Austin Hooper making a highlight reel catch, snatching a 3-yard pass in the back of the end zone.

The second half was all Patriots, led by the defense which allowed only 39 rushing yards, picking off a pass and recovering a fumble.

See **SEASON**, Page 15



2025 NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS

» Season

Continued from Page 14

Rhamondre Stevenson rushed for 88 yards with a TD.

Key stat line: Mr. Efficient, Drake Maye, was 20 for 24, 222 yards and 2 TDs.

Game 8

New England 32, Cleveland 12

While the Browns led 7-3 early into the second quarter, the Patriots ran off 23 straight points, scoring on five of six drives to dismantle the struggling Browns.

Hunter Henry, Stefon Diggs and Kayshon Boutte had second half touchdown receptions.

Drake Maye's streak of high-level games continued completing 18 of 24 passes for 282 yards and 3 TDs to go with 50 yards rushing.

Key stat line: Maye had his seventh straight game of 100-plus QB rating.

Game 9

New England 24, Atlanta 23

One of the ugliest wins of this run, the Patriots seemingly had control of the game, 24-14, heading into the fourth quarter.

But the Falcons got a field goal and late touchdown, missing the 2-point conversion to go for the lead.

The Patriots were able to run out the clock in the final minute with Drake Maye connecting with Hunter Henry for a 19-yard gain to clinch it.

Key stat line: Pop Douglas has first 100-yard receiving game of his career.

Game 10

New England 28, Tampa Bay 23

This game was circled in August as a tough one against Baker Mayfield & Co.



TIM JEAN/Staff photo

New England Patriots Milton Williams puts pressure on Raiders quarterback Geno Smith during a NFL game against the Las Vegas Raiders at Gillette Stadium.

Game 12

New England 26, Cincinnati 20

The lowly Bengals made the Patriots work for this one jumping to a 10-0 leader after a 32-yard interception return for a TD.

The Patriots ran off 17 straight points, which the key play being a 33-yard pick-6 for Marcus Jones, the second of his career.

The Patriots gained a season-high 392 yards, holding off a drive in the final two minutes at the Pats' 26 to preserve the win.

Key stat line: Hunter Henry's third 100-yard game receiving of his career.

Game 13

New England 33, N.Y. Giants 15

The Monday night tilt was a special one for the Patriots defense and Drake Maye.

The Patriots jumped out to a 17-0 lead in the first quarter and then added 13 more points after the Giants second quarter TD, leading 30-7 at the half.

The second half was a wash but two big fumbles. Christian Elliss, who forced one of those on big special teams hit, also had the play of the game croaking Giants QB Jaxon Dart on the sidelines.

Key stat line: Marcus Jones 94-yard punt return for TD officially qualified him with highest punt return average in NFL history.

Game 14

Buffalo 35, New England 31

This game was a tale of two halves. The Patriots played their best half of the year in the first half and worst half of the year in the second half.

Jumping out to a 21-0 lead and 24-7 at the half, the Bills and Josh Allen took over the game in the final 30 minutes.

The Bills scored three straight second half TDs before TreVeyon Henderson's 65-yard run got the Patriots back in front.

But the Bills methodically rebounded with the go-ahead score on a James Cook 14-yard TD run.

The Patriots had two more shots, but both drives ended without a first down and the Bills ran out the clock converting a 3rd-and-2 with 1:29 left in the game.

Key stat line: Pats running backs rushed for season-high 246 yards in loss.

Game 15

New England 28, Baltimore 24

The second game against the expected AFC behemoths was another barn-burner.

While the Ravens took early control of the game thanks to some dominating runs by Derrick Henry, a big Henry fumble, forced by safety Jaylinn Hawkins got the Patriots back in it.

And then Lamar Jackson left the game early in the second quarter with a bruised back helping the cause.

But the Ravens, with backup Tyler Huntley, doing a yoeman's work, the Ravens took a 24-13 lead early in the fourth quarter.

A huge 37-yard TD pass from Drake Maye and great catch by Kyle Williams sparked the comeback.

Rhamondre Stevenson finished off another late fourth quarter drive with a 21-yard TD run to give the Patriots a 28-24 lead.

On the Ravens final drive, linebacker K'Lavon Chaisson forced a fumble from Ravens star receiver Zay Flowers to finish the comeback.

Key stat line: Drake Maye — 31-44, 380 yards, 2 TDs — has first 300-yard game of his career.

Game 16

New England 42, N.Y. Jets 10

There aren't many box-to-wire games in the NFL, maybe a dozen for the entire league. Well, this was one of them.

The Patriots did everything with abandon — offense, defense and special teams.

It was another Drake Maye special, completing 19 of 21 passes for 256 yards and career-high five TD passes in just 2.5 quarters.

Stefon Diggs hot streak continued with his fifth 100-yard receiving game.

Key stat line: Hunter Henry sets new single-season career high in receiving yards.

Game 17

New England 38, Miami 10

The Patriots, facing a rookie quarterback Quinn Ewers, were big favorites and needed about 30 minutes to put the Dolphins away and clinch the No. 2 seed in the AFC.

Trying to inject the running game to higher level with the playoffs a week away, the Patriots did just that against the Dolphins, rushing for 243 yards, including Rhamondre Stevenson's 131 yards on just seven carries. Stevenson also continued prop up his receiving hot streak with 22 yards and a TD.

The Patriots defense recovered from a so-so first half by shutting down the Dolphins cold in the second half.

One of the key plays of the game was rookie kicker Andy Borregales booting his career-long 59-yarder as the first half expired.

Key stat line: Pats running backs scored all five of the Patriots TDs.

Playoffs

Wild Card round

New England 16, L.A. Chargers 3

The Patriots defense started its postseason of

See **SEASON**, Page 18



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2025 NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS



Patriots wide receiver Kayshon Boutte (9) catches a touchdown pass against the Texans cornerback during their divisional playoff game Jan. 18.

STEVEN SENNE/AP photo

» Season

Continued from Page 15

dominance allowing only 30 yards rushing while forcing one of the game's top pocket passers, Justin Herbert, into a runner (57 yards). Drake Maye ran a lot, too, for 66 yards. Kicker Andy Borregales led the Patriots with three field goals in the 30-degree day in Foxborough. Maye was solid, 17 for 29, 268 yards, including a 28-yard clinching TD to Hunter Henry.

Key stat line: Chargers only had one play of 20 yards.

Divisional round

New England 28, Houston 16

The Patriots defense stole the show. Again. This time forcing four first half interceptions on Texans QB C.J. Stroud, including a 26-yard TD return by Pats CB Marcus Jones while Drake Maye threw two perfect strikes to DeMario Douglas and Stefon Diggs. And then Maye put the game away with

a 32-yard pass to Kayshon Boutte.

Key stat line: Pats CB Carlton Davis had two interceptions and two other passes defended.

AFC Championship

New England 10, Denver 7

First it was defense. Then it was decision to go for in on fourth down deep in Patriots territory. And then it was snow. The Patriots offense was stale with Drake Maye having his worst statistical game of the season — 10-for-21, 86 yards — but he ran for six first downs, the Patriots only touchdown, and had the key play on the eventual game-winning field goal, connecting on a flea flicker to Mack Hollins. Maye's "secret" run around the left side on 3rd-and-6 clinched it. The Patriots defense did the rest. Christian Gonzalez had his first interception this season.

Key stat: Denver had two turnovers and a failed fourth down conversion vs. none for the Patriots.



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Like Patriots, shrewd moves in free agency and NFL draft help build **Seahawks**' Super Bowl roster

By Andrew Destin

» Associated Press

John Schneider was hired a little over 16 years ago as general manager of the Seattle Seahawks, a job he has held since.

Schneider added the title of president of football operations in 2024. But when asked Thursday if he could have imagined being in charge of the Seahawks' personnel for that long, the 54-year-old had a simple answer: "No."

"It's a total blessing," Schneider said Thursday. "I read this really cool article the other day about culture as an artifact of relationships. Is it that hard to just treat people the right way, work your (butt) off and do it the way you want to do it?"

With the Seahawks preparing to face the New England Patriots in the Super Bowl, it's clear that Schneider's approach was successful this season. His shrewd moves in free agency and the NFL draft helped the Seahawks build a deep, talented roster that won 14 games in the regular season and two home playoff games as the NFC's top seed.

Schneider brought in quarterback Sam Darnold on a three-year, \$100.5 million contract while also signing veteran defensive end DeMarcus Lawrence and wide receiver Cooper Kupp, among others.

Darnold made his second straight Pro Bowl and stabilized the most important position on the field. Lawrence, in his 12th season, had 11 tackles for loss, six sacks and returned two fumbles for touchdowns.

"When you're bringing people into your building, especially in free agency, you want to make sure that the quality of the person, do we know exactly what we're getting?" Schneider said. "So we had a great background with those guys, the character, the person, the work ethic, love of the game, the grit, all the things you've heard for years and years."

The Seahawks have also benefited from a bold move Schneider made four years ago.



Seattle Seahawks general manager John Schneider, center, speaks during a news conference at the NFL team's facilities in Seattle on Jan. 29.

JOHN FROSCHAUER/AP photos

In March of 2022, Schneider traded quarterback Russell Wilson to Denver for a package of draft picks and players. Schneider used those picks to select All-Pro cornerback Devon Witherspoon, left tackle Charles Cross and a pair of edge rushers, Boye Mafe and Derick Hall.

If that wasn't enough, Schneider has a strong record with first-round draft picks in recent years.

This year's first-round pick, left guard Grey Zabel, upgraded the offensive line. Defensive tackle Byron Murphy II, taken in the first round in 2024, had seven sacks.

In 2023, when he also took Witherspoon, Schneider drafted Jaxon Smith-Njigba, who blossomed into the NFL's leader in yards receiving this season.

"Man, Spoon is a heartbeat guy,

the whole building feels him," Schneider said. "They're just these completely different personalities, but in their own right. Everybody just totally respects Jax, the way he handles himself. It was amazing to have two guys that we thought were top five to seven players in that draft."

Seattle has one of the youngest rosters in the NFL, but at the moment, Schneider isn't focused on the future beyond Feb. 8 in Santa Clara, California, when his team will meet the Patriots with the Lombardi Trophy on the line.

It's a rematch of the Super Bowl 11 years ago, when Schneider's Seahawks fell agonizingly short of repeating as champions — by losing to New England.

"Tried not to think about that too much," Schneider said. "That was an amazing game, though. But no, it really doesn't (matter). It's, OK, what's the next team we're playing?"

Seattle Seahawks 2025 schedule

Regular Season

WK	....	OPPONENT	.....	RESULT
1	.....	vs San Francisco	.....	L17-13
2	.....	@ Pittsburgh	.....	W31-17
3	.....	vs New Orleans	....	W44-13
4	.....	@ Arizona	.....	W23-20
5	.....	vs Tampa Bay	.....	L38-35
6	.....	@ Jacksonville	.....	W20-12
7	.....	vs Houston	.....	W27-19
8	.....	Bye		
9	.....	@ Washington	....	W38-14
10	.....	vs Arizona	.....	W44-22
11	.....	@ Los Angeles	.....	L21-19
12	.....	@ Tennessee	.....	W30-24
13	.....	vs Minnesota	.....	W26-0
14	.....	@ Atlanta	.....	W37-9
15	.....	vs Indianapolis	....	W18-16
16	.....	vs Los Angeles	W38-37	OT
17	.....	@ Carolina	.....	W27-10
18	@ San Francisco	W13-3

Postseason

DIV	vs San Francisco	W41-6
CONF	vs	Los Angeles	W31-27



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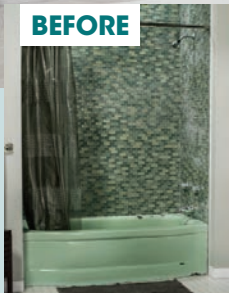


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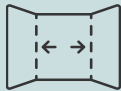
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How the Patriots roster was built

UPDATED: January 27, 2026

YEAR
2020
Anfernee Jennings (3a)
Mike Onwenu (6a)

VETERAN FREE AGENTS (20)

WAIVERS (3)
TRADES (1)

**ROOKIE AND FIRST-YEAR
FREE AGENTS (7)**

2021
Christian Barmore (2)
Rhamondre Stevenson (4)

Hunter Henry (2) (LAC)
Jahlani Tavai (2) (DET)

2022
Marcus Jones (3)

Brenden Schooler (fa)

2023
Christian Gonzalez (1)
Marte Mapu (3a)
Kayshon Boutte (6a)
Bryce Baringer (6b)
DeMario Douglas (6c)

Christian Elliss (fa) (CW-PHI)
Vederian Lowe (6) (tr-MIN)

Alex Austin (7) (BUF)

2024
Drake Maye (1)
Caedan Wallace (3)

Ben Brown (fa) (CIN)
Jaylinn Hawkins (4) (ATL)
Austin Hooper (3) (ATL)

Dell Pettus (fa)
Jack Westover (fa) (SEA)

2025
Will Campbell (1)
TreVeyon Henderson (2)
Kyle Williams (3a)
Jared Wilson (3b)
Craig Woodson (4a)
Brady Swinson (5)
Andy Borreggles (6)
Marcus Bryant (7a)
Julian Ashby (7b)
Kobe Minor (7c)

Garrett Bradbury (1) (MIN)
K'Lavon Chaisson (1) (JAX)
Carlton Davis III (2) (TB)
Stefon Diggs (5) (MIN)
Joshua Dobbs (4) (PIT)
Cory Durden (fa) (DET)
Jack Gibbins (fa) (TEN)
Mack Hollins (4) (PHI)
Harold Landry III (2) (TEN)
Morgan Moses (3) (WAS)
Chad Muma (3) (JAX)
Thayer Munford Jr. (7) (LV)
Robert Spillane (fa) (TEN)
Khyiris Tonga (7) (CHI)
Milton Williams (3) (PHI)

Tommy DeVito (fa) (CW-NYG)
Charles Woods (fa) (CW-LAR)

Efton Chism III (fa)
C.J. Dippre (fa)
Elijah Ponder (fa)



Milton Williams (97), a top Patriots free agent signing for 2025, has anchored the team's defensive line in their playoff run.

AP

NOTE: Team in parenthesis is the player's original team

(#) – indicates round drafted

(fa) – indicates non-drafted free agents

RESERVE/INJURED

Marcellas Dial Jr. (6a)
Yasir Durant (fa) (KC)
Joshua Farmer (4b)
Antonio Gibson (3) (WAS)
Eric Gregory (fa) (CW-CIN)
Isaiah Iton (fa) (TEN)
Terrell Jennings (fa)
Brock Lampe (fa)
Lan Larison (fa)
Jaquelin Roy (7) (MIN)



TIM JEAN/Staff photo



JAIME CAMPOS/Staff photo

First-round pick Will Campbell (66) and second-round pick TreVeyon Henderson (32) lead a highly productive 2025 draft class.



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JAIME CAMPOS

Patriots offensive coordinator Josh McDaniels during the first day of padded practice at Gillette Stadium in July. McDaniels is in his third stint with the Pats.

» Pals

Continued from Page 11

nice,” said O’Brien.

Vrabel’s ability to teach technical aspects on the offensive and defensive line, as a former elite player, is off the charts.

“As a coach he gets in the trenches with the linemen especially. I remember with the Texans he broke out the padded vest and brought it to practice every day,” said O’Brien. “He’s a very physical teacher. I honestly believe he could give you five or six plays. I think his year in Cleveland last year, working with offensive linemen, really helped him a lot, too.”

O’Brien sees McDaniels in a similar light, but more as one of the brightest minds in the sport.

“I’ve seen Josh up close. He is an amazing teacher,” said O’Brien. “His ability to boil things down, things you think are complicated, so player can play fast. Josh is so prepared to the point where he’ll say, ‘When I call a play one or two

things will happen. If it blows up, then there is a third thing.’ You can see how he has made the game slow down for Drake Maye. I believe a big part of Drake’s poise and confidence comes from Josh.”

Last but definitely not least is Marrone, who has worked wonders taking over what was deemed the worst offensive line in the NFL last year.

Their connection goes beyond their work together at Georgia Tech (1996-2000) and later Alabama (2021-22).

Marrone and his then girlfriend Helen (now his wife) introduced O’Brien to Helen’s college former roommate at Boston College, Colleen. They were both in each other’s weddings.

“Doug’s my best friend,” said O’Brien. “He brings a ton of experience. He played for Al Davis and Don Shula. He’s been an offensive line coach his whole career. He’s very technical in the way he teaches. To have two rookies on the left side and getting to a Super Bowl, is a tribute to Doug’s work.”



JOHN RAOUX

Former Jacksonville Jaguars head coach Doug Marrone has spent several years coaching with former Andover resident Bill O’Brien.

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Patriots Super Bowl History



Patriots players reach out to touch the Vince Lombardi Trophy after they beat the St. Louis Rams 20-17 to win Super Bowl XXXVI.

SUPER BOWL XX

Jan. 26, 1986, at New Orleans
BEARS 46, PATRIOTS 10

The Zero: Watching Tony Eason melt in an O-for-6, three-sack performance will forever be etched into Pats history.

The Game-Breaker: Defensive tackle William "Refrigerator" Perry plunges in from the 1 to score as many TDs as the Patriots on this day.

Place in History: New England's amazing "wild card" run, during which they "Squished the Fish" in Miami, ends one win from immortality.

SUPER BOWL XXXI

Jan. 27, 1997, at New Orleans
PACKERS 35, PATRIOTS 21

The Zero: Bill Parcells, immortalized here for saving the franchise and keeping it in New England,

is fitted for goat horns when, realizing he was not to coach the Pats again, he does not fly home with the team.

The Game-Breaker: Desmond Howard's 99-yard kick return for a touchdown seals the Pats' fate.

Place in History: The Parcells era ends but leaves New England football fans insatiably hungry for a championship.

SUPER BOWL XXXVI

Feb. 3, 2002, at New Orleans
PATRIOTS 20, RAMS 17

The Hero: Tom Brady is the game MVP after driving the Pats down the field in the final 90 seconds for the game-winning field goal.

The Game-Breaker: Adam Vinatieri boots the game-winning kick from 48 yards as time expires.

Place in History: Bill

Belichick delivers the first Lombardi Trophy in franchise history.

SUPER BOWL XXXVIII

Feb. 1, 2004, at Houston
PATRIOTS 32, PANTHERS 29

The Hero: Tom Brady wins his second Super Bowl MVP trophy, and the accompanying Cadillac, in three years.

The Game-Breaker: Automatic Adam strikes again, this time knocking home the game-winning 41-yarder with four seconds to play.

Place in History: The foundation for a potential dynasty is now in place.

SUPER BOWL XXXIX

Feb. 6, 2005, at Jacksonville
PATRIOTS 24, EAGLES 21

The Hero: Receiver Deion Branch (11 catches, 133

See **HISTORY**, Page 28

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Patriots strong safety Malcolm Butler (21) intercepts a pass intended for Seattle receiver Ricardo Lockette late in Super Bowl XLIX.

» History

Continued from Page 26

yards) ends Brady's hold on the MVP trophy.

The Game-Breaker: Rodney Harrison ices it in the final minutes with his second interception of the game.

Place in History: Finishing with the trophy at 17-2, the best team in New England Patriots history rests its case.

SUPER BOWL XLII

Feb. 3, 2008, at Glendale, Arizona
GIANTS 17, PATRIOTS 14

The Zero: The offensive line swallows the blame collectively by giving up five sacks to a four-man rush.

The Game-Breaker: It was over when David Tyree wedged a fourth-down conversion catch against the top of his helmet.

Place in History: New England's bid for a perfect season ends at 18-1.

SUPER BOWL XLVI

Feb. 5, 2012, at Indianapolis
GIANTS 21, PATRIOTS 17

The Zero: Is it Wes Welker or Tom Brady? Either way, if they

connect on that fourth-quarter pass, this one is over.

The Game-Breaker: Ahmad Bradshaw puts the Giants ahead for good with the only score of the fourth quarter on a late 6-yard TD run.

Place in History: Suddenly the once-invincible Brady is 3-2 on the game's biggest stage, with both losses coming to an ordinary Eli Manning.

SUPER BOWL XLIX

Feb. 1, 2015, at Glendale, Arizona
PATRIOTS 28, SEAHAWKS 24

The Hero: Tom Brady won the MVP Award, his third. But the real hero was a rookie, backup defensive back Malcolm Butler, who intercepted the ball at the goal line to clinch the deal.

The Game-Breaker: The Patriots trailed 24-14, but scored two fourth-quarter touchdowns, including the game-winner by Julian Edelman before the two-minute warning.

Place in History: The Patriots become one of only six franchises with four Super Bowls. Brady and coach Bill Belichick are the second QB-coach combo with four rings.



Mike Vrabel hauls in a 2-yard pass from Tom Brady for a touchdown against Philadelphia in Super Bowl XXXIX.

SUPER BOWL LI

Feb. 5, 2017, at Houston
PATRIOTS 34, FALCONS 28 (OT)

The Hero: Tom Brady or James White — take your pick. Brady got hot at the right time, completing 12 of 16 passes in

the fourth quarter and overtime for 150 yards. White, like Brady, had been quiet before the comeback — the Pats trailed 28-3 late in the third

See **HISTORY**, Page 30

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» History

quarter. White scored three touchdowns and added a two-point conversion, giving him 20 points, the most ever in a Super Bowl. Brady completed 43 of 62 passes for 466 yards. White finished 29 rushing yards, 14 receptions and 110 yards receiving.

The Game-Breaker: Julian Edelman's incredible 23-yard reception, on the eventual game-tying touchdown drive, was battered and appeared to be an interception before he remarkably snatched the ball, in between two legs, just 2 inches from the turf.

Place in History: Brady and Belichick were the only player and coach to combine for five Super Bowls together.

SUPER BOWL LII

Feb., 4, 2018 at

Minneapolis, Minn.

EAGLES 41, PATRIOTS 33

The Zero: While this game will always be known as the "How-come-Malcolm-

Butler-didn't-play?" game, it could also be known as the worst defensive performance in Super Bowl history. The Eagles only punted once. And they moved the ball way too easily with a backup quarterback-turned-MVP in Nick Foles. The Patriots actually took the lead, 33-32, in the fourth quarter.

The Game Breaker: The Eagles were equally inept on defense for 99 percent of the game. But there was one play with only 2:16 remaining in the game that all but ended the Patriots' and Brady's comeback hopes when defensive lineman Brandon Graham strip-sacked Brady and it was recovered by defensive end Derek Barnett.

Place in history: It was another tough Super Bowl loss. Maybe it wasn't as brutal as the dual losses to the Giants, but it was close. Brady appeared to be leading the Patriots to another championship, in the final minute, only to have it stripped away. Literally.

SUPER BOWL LIII

Feb. 3, 2019 at Atlanta
PATRIOTS 13, RAMS 3

Hero: While Julian Edelman had memorable moments in the Super Bowl wins over Seattle (9 rec., 109 yards, 1 TD) and Atlanta ("The Catch"), his performance against the L.A. Rams, on a day both teams had trouble moving the ball and scoring points was epic. Edelman caught 10 passes for 141 yards, copping the MVP Award.

The Game-Breaker: Tom Brady's 29-yard pass to Rob Gronkowski, setting up the game's only touchdown on the next play, a 2-yard run by Sony Michel, putting the Patriots ahead, for good, at 10-3.

Place in history: The 13-3 win validated Bill Belichick's defensive game plan against the offensive juggernaut Rams and their OC/HC Sean McVay. Also, Belichick, Brady and the Patriots won their sixth Super Bowl title, tying the Steelers with most for an organization.



PAUL BILODEAU/Staff photo

Rob Gronkowski (87) reaches for a catch, setting up a Patriots touchdown in Super Bowl LIII.



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