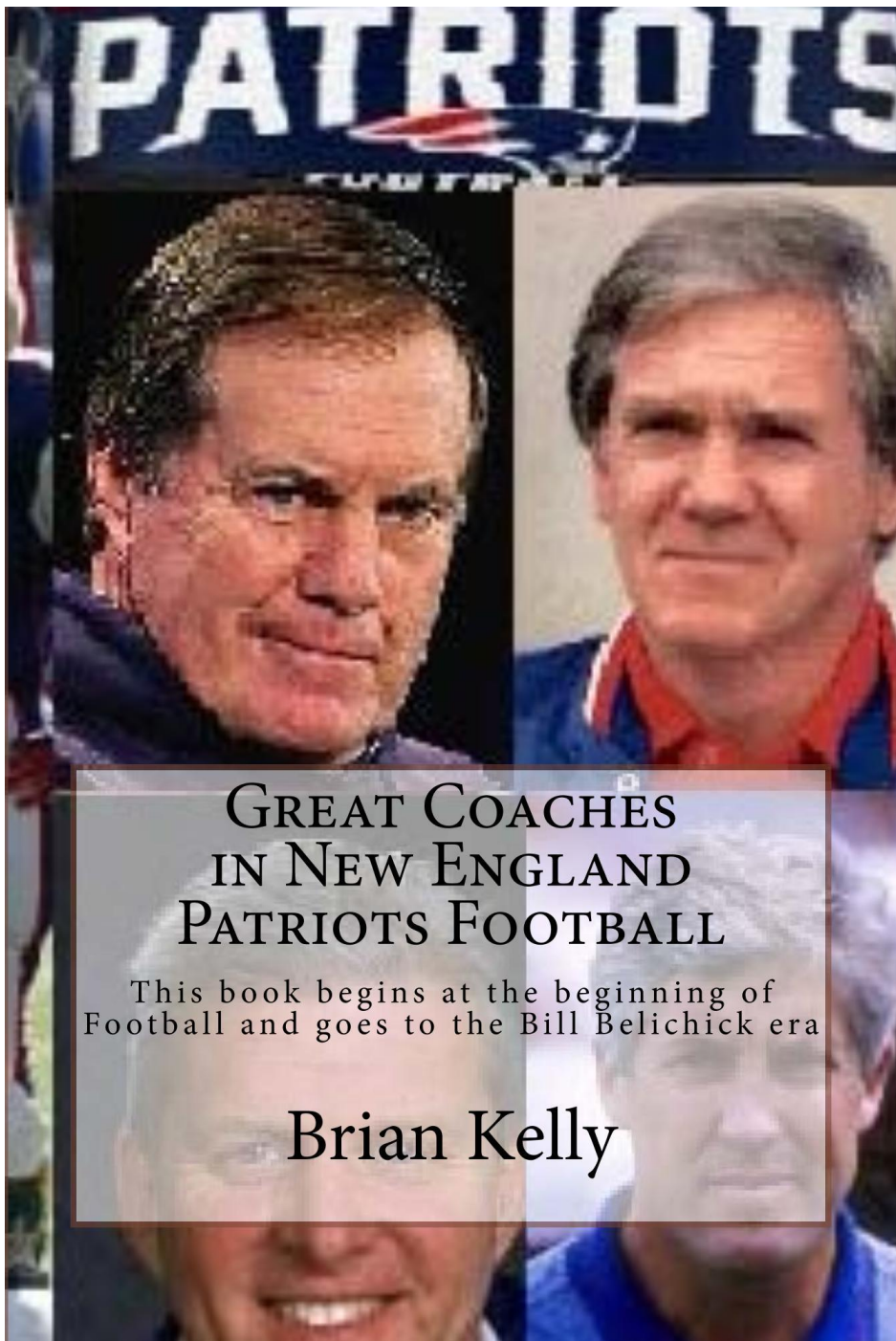


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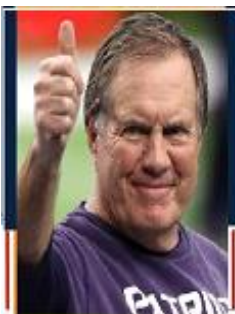
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# GREAT COACHES IN NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS FOOTBALL

This book begins at the beginning of  
Football and goes to the Bill Belichick era

Brian Kelly



#14 Bill Belichick

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS



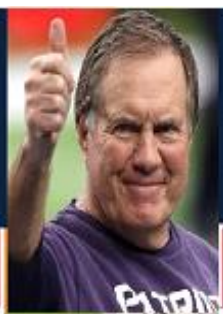
#1 Lou Saban

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS



#2 Mike Holovak

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS



#14 Bill Belichick

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS



#3 Clive Rush

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS



#4 John Mazur

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS



#5 Phil Bengston

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS



#6 Chuck Fairbanks

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS



#7 Ron Erhardt

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS



#8 Ron Meyer

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS



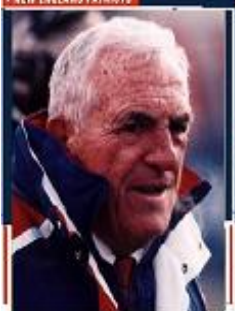
#9 Ray Berry

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS



#10 Rod Rust

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS



#11 Dick MacPherson

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS



#12 Bill Parcells

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS



#13 Pete Carroll

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS



#14 Bill Belichick

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS

iv Great Coaches in New England Patriots Football



# Great Coaches in New England Patriots Football

**This book begins at the beginning of Football and goes to the Bill Belichick era.**

This book is written for those of us who love New England Patriots Football. Those who are not the top fans of the Pats will also want this book, so they can try to get a leg up on the facts missing from the bookshelves of those Patriot fans who do not have this book.

The book first tells the story about the great coaches in Boston Patriots and New England Patriots football. It goes way back to the new American Football League (AFL) team from Boston in 1960 and brings us right up to today.

Eventually the topic becomes the early NFL, then the AFL, and of course the Boston Patriots first football coach in 1960, Lou Saban. Then of course there are the New England Patriots, and the phenomenal Bill Belichick and the great players such as Tom Brady, which he groomed to be the top players in football today.

It seems like yesterday but for those pros trying to create a league out of nothing, there would have been nothing without their hard work. And of course, this great book about the Patriots focuses on the great and soon-to-be-immortal-Patriots' coaches including Lou Saban, Mike Holovak, Chuck Fairbanks, Ray Berry, Bill Parcells, Pete Carroll, and of course the greatest living immortal coach in pro football today, Bill Belichick. The Patriots current coach has topped the list of many pundits from his first year as the Patriot head coach in 2000.

This book captures the great coaches in Patriots Football even before the Patriots were the New England Patriots. This Patriots-first book takes the reader through stories about the Patriots 14 coaches to some great stories about the 58 seasons worth of great games (1018 games) with 523 great wins. The book does not focus on players, but it hits some of the best who played for the Patriots as the coach's games are recounted -- John Hannah, Gino Cappelletti, Bob Dee, Vito "Babe" Parilli, Steve Grogan, Bruce Armstrong, Jim Nance, Dont'e Hightower, Drew Bledsoe, Tedy Bruschi, Ty Law, Willie McGinist, Rob Gronkowski, Wes Welker, as well as the greatest player in football today, Tom Brady. The stories within the flow of the book will add substantially to your reading enjoyment.

I dare you to pick up this book. If you are an avid Patriots fan, you will never put it down again. You cannot ever get enough of Patriots' greatness, but we do provide as many stories together in one spot as we can in this can't miss book.

## Brian Kelly



## Great Coaches in New England Patriots Football

Author:  
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Brian W. Kelly  
Brian W. Kelly  
Brian P. Kelly

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July 2018

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**PUBLISH** 





# New England Patriots Coaches Records from 1960 to 2018

Total 489-386-9 All-time regular season record (1960–2017)  
34-20 All-time postseason record (1960–2017)  
523-406-9 All-time regular & postseason record (1960–2017)

Total Games 1018  
Total Wins 523  
Total Losses 406  
Total Ties 9 \* Prior to Overtime Rules  
Stats from 1960 \* Through Feb 2018

## Boston Patriots

Year	Coach	League	Conf	Div	Pl	Record
1960	Lou Saban	AFL		East	4th	5 9 0
1961	Lou Saban (2–3)	AFL		East	2nd	9 4 1
<b><u>1960-1961 Lou Saban final record (14-14-1)</u></b>						
1961	Mike Holovak (7–1–1)					
1962	Mike Holovak	AFL		East	2nd	9 4 1
1963	Mike Holovak	AFL		East	1st	7 6 1
1964	Mike Holovak	AFL		East	2nd	10 3 1
Gino Cappelletti(MVP)						
1965	Mike Holovak	AFL		East	3rd	4 8 2
1966	Mike Holovak	AFL		East	2 <sup>nd</sup>	8 4 2
1967	Mike Holovak	AFL		East	5th	3 10 1
1968	Mike Holovak	AFL		East	4th	4 10 0
<b><u>1961-1968 Mike Holovak final record (55-46-6)</u></b>						
1969	Clive Rush	AFL		East	3rd	4 10 0
1970	Clive Rush (1–6)	NFL	AFC/	East	5th	2 12 0
<b><u>1969-1970 Clive Rush final record (5-16-0)</u></b>						
1970	John Mazur [ last six games of 1970 (1–6)]					

## New England Patriots

Year	Coach	League	Conf	Div	Pl	Record
1971	John Mazur	NFL	AFC	East	3rd	6 8 0
1972	John Mazur (2–7)	NFL	AFC	East	5th	3 11 0
<b><u>1971-1972 John Mazur final record (9-21-0)</u></b>						
1972	Phil Bengtson [last 5 games of 1972 –(1–4) ]					
<b><u>1972 Phil Bengtson final record (1-4-0)</u></b>						
1973	Chuck Fairbanks	NFL	AFC	East	3rd	5 9 0
1974	Chuck Fairbanks	NFL	AFC	East	3rd	7 7 0
1975	Chuck Fairbanks	NFL	AFC	East	5th	3 11 0
1976	Chuck Fairbanks	NFL	AFC	East	2 <sup>nd</sup>	11 3 0
1977	Chuck Fairbanks	NFL	AFC	East	3rd	9 5 0
1978	Chuck Fairbanks	NFL	AFC	East	1st	11 5 0
<b><u>1973-1978 Chuck Fairbanks final record (46-50-0)</u></b>						
1979	Ron Erhardt	NFL	AFC	East	2nd	9 7 0
1980	Ron Erhardt	NFL	AFC	East	2nd	10 6 0

x Great Coaches in New England Patriots Football

1981 Ron Erhardt	NFL	AFC	East	5th	2 14 0
<b><u>1979-1981 Ron Erhardt final record (21-27-0)</u></b>					
1982 Ron Meyer	NFL	AFC	East	7th	5 4 0
1983 Ron Meyer	NFL	AFC	East	2nd	8 8 0
1984 Ron Meyer (5-3)	NFL	AFC	East	2nd	9 7 0
1984 Ray Berry (4-4)					
<b><u>1982-1984 Ron Meyer final record (18-15)</u></b>					
1984 Ray Berry (4-4)					
1985 Ray Berry	NFL	AFC	East	3rd	11 5 0
1986 Ray Berry	NFL	AFC	East	1st	11 5 0
1987 Ray Berry	NFL	AFC	East	2nd	8 7 0
1988 Ray Berry	NFL	AFC	East	3rd	9 7 0
1989 Ray Berry	NFL	AFC	East	4th	5 11 0
<b><u>1984-1989 Ray Berry final record (47-39)</u></b>					
1990 Rod Rust	NFL	AFC	East	5th	1 15 0
<b><u>1990 Rod Dust final record (1-15)</u></b>					
1991 Dick MacPherson	NFL	AFC	East	4th	6 10 0
1992 Dick MacPherson	NFL	AFC	East	5th	2 14 0
<b><u>1984-1989 Dick MacPherson final record (8-24-0)</u></b>					
1993 Bill Parcells	NFL	AFC	East	4th	5 11 0
1994 Bill Parcells	NFL	AFC	East	2nd	10 6 0
1995 Bill Parcells	NFL	AFC	East	4th	6 10 0
1996 Bill Parcells	NFL	AFC	East	1st	11 5 0
<b><u>1993-1996 Bill Parcells final record (32-32-0)</u></b>					
1997 Pete Carroll	NFL	AFC	East	1st	10 6 0
1998 Pete Carroll	NFL	AFC	East	4th	9 7 0
1999 Pete Carroll	NFL	AFC	East	5th	8 8 0
<b><u>1997-1999 Pete Carroll final record (27-21-0)</u></b>					
2000 Bill Belichick	NFL	AFC	East	5th	5 11 0
2001 Bill Belichick	NFL	AFC	East	1 <sup>st</sup>	11 5 0
2002 Bill Belichick	NFL	AFC	East	2nd	9 7 0
2003 Bill Belichick	NFL	AFC	East	1st	14 2 0
2004 Bill Belichick	NFL	AFC	East	1st	14 2 0
2005 Bill Belichick	NFL	AFC	East	1st	10 6 0
2006 Bill Belichick	NFL	AFC	East	1st	12 4 0
2007 Bill Belichick	NFL	AFC	East	1st	16 0 0
2008 Bill Belichick	NFL	AFC	East	2nd	11 5 0
2009 Bill Belichick	NFL	AFC	East	1st	10 6 0
2010 Bill Belichick	NFL	AFC	East	1st	14 2 0
2011 Bill Belichick	NFL	AFC	East	1st	13 3 0
2012 Bill Belichick	NFL	AFC	East	1st	12 4 0
2013 Bill Belichick	NFL	AFC	East	1st	12 4 0
2014 Bill Belichick	NFL	AFC	East	1st	12 4 0
2015 Bill Belichick	NFL	AFC	East	1st	12 4 0
2016 Bill Belichick	NFL	AFC	East	1st	14 2 0
2017 Bill Belichick	NFL	AFC	East	1st	13 3 0
<b><u>2000-2017 Bill Belichick final record (214-74-0)</u></b>					

Total 489-386-9 All-time regular season record (1960-2017)

34-20 All-time postseason record (1960-2017)[30]

523-406-9 All-time regular & postseason record (1960-2017)

# Dedication

*I dedicate this book*

*To my wife & children and my wonderful brothers and sisters.*

*Wife—Patricia A. Kelly*

*Sons & Daughters—Brian P. Kelly, Michael P. Kelly, Katie P. Kelly*

*Angel Edward J. Kelly, Jr.*

*Carol & Amelia Kelly*

*Nancy "Ann" Flannery & Angel Jim Flannery*

*Mary A. Daniels & Bill Daniels*

*Joseph A. Kelly & Diane Kelly*

*I surely am a lucky person to have*

*Such a great family*

*Mom & Dad—Angels Edward J Kelly Sr. and Irene McKeown Kelly*



# Acknowledgments:

I appreciate all the help that I have received in putting this book together as well as all of the other 157 books from the past.

My acknowledgments were so large at one time that readers complained that they had to go through too many pages to get to page one.

And, so I put my acknowledgment list online, and it continues to grow. Believe it or not, it would cost about a dollar more to print my books with full acknowledgments.

Thank you and God bless you all for your help. Please check out [www.letsGOPublish.com](http://www.letsGOPublish.com) to read the latest version of my heartfelt acknowledgments updated for this book.

In this book, I received some extra special help from many fine American patriots including Dennis Grimes, Gerry Rodski, Wily Ky Eyely, Angel Irene McKeown Kelly, Angel Edward Joseph Kelly Sr., Angel Edward Joseph Kelly Jr., Ann Flannery, Angel James Flannery Sr., Mary Daniels, Bill Daniels, Angel Robert Garry Daniels, Angel Sarah Janice Daniels, Angel Punkie Daniels, Joe Kelly, Diane Kelly, Angel Harry Ashford, Angel Josephine Ashford. Brian P. Kelly, Mike P. Kelly, Katie P. Kelly, Angel Ben Kelly, and Budmund (Buddy) Arthur Kelly.

*Thank you all!*



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## References

I learned how to write creatively in Grade School at St. Boniface. I even enjoyed reading some of my own stuff.

At Meyers High School (HS Diploma) and King's College (BS Data Processing), and Wilkes-University, (MBA Accounting & Finance) I learned how to research, write bibliographies and footnote every non-original thought included in my writings. I learned to hate *ibid*, and *op. cit.*, and I hated assuring that I had all citations were written down in the proper sequence. Having to pay attention to details took my desire to write creatively and diminished it with busy work.

I know it is necessary for the world to stop plagiarism, so authors and publishers can get paid properly, but for an honest writer, it sure is annoying. I wrote many proposals while with IBM and whenever I needed to cite something, I cited it in place, because my readers, IT Managers, and company management, could care less about tracing the vagaries of citations. I always hated to use stilted footnotes, or produce a lengthy, perfectly formatted bibliography. I bet most bibliographies are flawed because even the experts on such drivel do not like the tedium.

I wrote 157 other books before this book and several hundred articles published by many magazines and newspapers and I only cite when an idea is not mine or when I am quoting, and again, I choose to cite in place, and the reader does not have to trace strange numbers through strange footnotes and back to bibliography elements that may not be readily accessible or available.

Yet, I would be kidding you, if in a book about the great coaches in New England Patriots Football, I tried to bluff my way, so you would think that I knew everything before I began to research and write anything in this book. I spent as much time researching as writing. I might even call myself an expert of sorts now for all the facts that I have uncovered.

Without any pain on your part, you can read this book from cover to cover to enjoy the stories about the many great coaches in both the Boston Patriots of the AFL and the New England Patriots of the NFL Both generations of New England Teams made their mark on the football world.

This book is not intended for historians per se, but it does teach a lot of history. It is for regular people of all levels of intelligence. It is for people who want to have a fun read, who like smiling when Patriots Football is the topic. It is fun reading about each of New England's 14 coaches and 523 wins. This book is for people who love New England Patriots' Football and perhaps it is also for some Patriot's detractors who want to have command of facts before they defend a point of view.

There are lots and lots of facts in this book. This book is not for sticklers about the mundane aspects of writing that often cause creative writers to lay bricks or paint houses instead of writing. It is for everyday people, like you and I, who enjoy the Patriots because they are the Patriots and who enjoy football because it is football. It is that simple.

When the Patriots play a team and they win or lose, that is a historical fact, but to discover such facts, it does not require fundamental or basic research. The NFL itself as well as the Patriots, copyright their original material but not public facts. They copyright so they can say "no" if somebody else's creativity affects the league or the franchise negatively. Even the NFL does not own publicly well-known facts that are readily available about legacies such as Mike Holovak or Chuck Fairbanks or Bill Parcells or Raymond Berry, or even the more than immortal Bill Belichick and his many championship seasons.

The championships and the coaches and the great players are well known and well defined, though some may think the facts belong to the NFL. Facts are facts, period. So, what? As the author of this book, I care but it is a sports book. I use a judicious approach to assure that I am not throwing the bull when I intend to be presenting the facts.

Nonetheless, this is not a book about heavy math algorithms, or potential advances to the internal combustion engine, or space travel, or the eight elements necessary to find a cure for cancer. So, I refuse to treat this book 100% seriously. It is a sports book. If you find a fault, I will fix it. This is a book about sports and sports legends and stories about sporting events that have been recorded seven million times already someplace else. New Englanders should be pleased. Though I tried for sure to get it all right and I used the work of others to assure so, I bet I made a mistake or two. Tell me about them. Don't

What is my remedy for the *harmed* if I have made a mistake? I did not write this book to harm anybody. If I did not write this book, would the *harmed individuals* from the book be unharmed. So, at the very least, I can *unpublish* those parts of the book. If any reader is harmed, let me know, and I will do whatever must be done for all to be OK.

# A Bone to Pick with The Boston Globe

Ladies and gentlemen: This page of my comments regarding the Boston Globe's business practices was not intended ever to be in this book. But, in life, people, even authors, must fight with the few tools we are given in life. For the people of New England who must deal with the business practices of the Boston Globe on a daily basis, or opt for a new paper, many of you understand why I am doing what I can with my little power of the press against this huge media power from Boston.

I will be as brief as possible. When I was writing this book in April 2018, I was happy when I found a number of stories in the Boston Globe. I was even happier when I found that I could buy a 99 cent a week 4-week deal from the paper. So, I did and it enabled me to see things I had been shut out from. \$3.96 was charged to my credit card and I was pleased, and the Globe made the deal so I figured they were pleased too. I live in Pennsylvania, so I did not want a long-term deal.

When I was preparing the initial printing of this book, I found a charge on my credit card for \$27.72. from the Boston Globe. I had no time to investigate so I ignored it and figured they got me for something. I have used no services of which I am aware. This week, I got another charge for \$27.72. So, I called Customer Service [1-888-694-5623](tel:1-888-694-5623).

They were most cordial and told me I had ordered more than I thought. They promised to cancel the future invoices and after my pleading my case, they reluctantly decided to take off the recent invoice amount. However, they would not remove the initial \$27.72. regardless of my urgings.

I asked them to tell me what gave them the authority to steal from my credit card and they said I had signed up for it with the four-week \$.99 subscription. I had never seen such a caveat, so I asked them to send me the documentation they said obligated me to pay anything they say I owe. They agreed that I received no benefit for the first invoice, but their policies would not permit a refund. I told them my policies demanded they send me a full refund. Exasperated after several iterations with them holding the upper hand, I took the following action:

I told them I would give them a prominent space in my new book, Great Coaches in New England Patriots Football, where they could print their rationale. They were unimpressed. I gave them the opportunity to put their response on the page after my story; but they did not take me up on the offer. When you have a chance, please give them a call and tell them their use of fine print is at the same level that might prompt their investigative team to call on a scam artist for all to know. That is what they acted like in this circumstance

They finally said that there was information about the order on the pages. which constituted my order, and I had agreed to the whole package from them. They were kind enough to send me their fine print. I can say that it was so obvious I missed it and they never sent me a bill or anything to remind me. They simply charged my credit card, hoping I would miss it. I show their fine print below:

cancel your subscription. Offer valid for those who have not had digital access in the last 90 days. Prices are subject to change. Additional terms and conditions may apply.

# **Response from the Boston Globe:**

**None received!**

# Preface:

All of the other 13 coaches from Patriots teams in the past are in good company with today's field and planning maestro, Bill Belichick at the helm. "Knowing you have a good backup long snapper allows you to sleep good at night" Quote by Bill Belichick, the greatest coach in Patriot Football history. He cannot stand anybody being late, and is known for this famous quote: "Snow is no excuse for being late"

When the 2017 season began, everybody thought the Patriots were going to do well and most thought that Belichick's mastery of the game would have clinched the Pats another Super Bowl. Tom Brady had twenty good games in him from pre-season onward, and few will attempt to deny that Brady is undeniably the best Quarterback who has ever lived—at least in terms of grabbing the most trophies; the most gold medals, and the most kudos from his fellow players.

This great QB can count on his coach Bill Belichick all the time and Bill Belichick can count on Tom Brady to deliver no matter how difficult the odds. And, oh, by the way, somebody found the Fountain of Youth up there in Foxboro because neither of these guys are aging and Patriots fans just love it. Ponce de Leon would be proud.

Looking back in history as we do in this book, we don't really find a ton of great coaches out of the 14 on the Patriot's past coaches' list. The Patriots had a lot of losing seasons, but they hit win #500 before any other team that began ignominiously in the AFL.

The Boston Patriots were just one of many new AFL teams merged into the NFL when the AFL chose to combine with the NFL. Most NFL teams had been around since long before 1960, when the NFL motley crew entered the realm of real football and they made their mark. It took a lot of years and a tenacious coach named Raymond Berry, well known in the past as a Baltimore Colts receiver for the great Johnny Unitas, to show this AFL set of Patriots that they could win games.

Even before the Boston Patriots existed, former Pats coach Raymond Berry was making pro football history. Check out this picture of one of the most famous passes in NFL history caught by none-other than former Patriots' Coach Raymond Berry. The football thrown by Hall of Fame Baltimore Colts quarterback Johnny Unitas to Hall of Fame split

end Raymond Berry for a touchdown occurred in the classic 1958 NFL championship at Yankee Stadium is shown below. It sold for \$62,140 at a Huggins & Scott Auction. Can you imagine when that night was?



The Patriots had been close to pay-dirt in the past, having had coaches get them into the playoffs. The first Super Bowl appearance of course was in 1986 and the coach that night was Raymond Berry.

After a great season and great playoffs, the Patriots could not keep up the momentum and Berry's Patriots lost their first Super Bowl encounter to the Chicago Bears in SB XX, (10-46).

The infamous great coach Bill Parcells brought the Patriots to their next Super Bowl after the 1996 season in Super Bowl XXXI. Parcells had as much luck as Raymond Berry in 1986. The Patriots showed well but lost the game after a great season and a winning playoff series. Nonetheless, the team still did not win the Super Bowl against the Packers in a 21-35 defeat.

Each of the Super Bowl losses made the team stronger and more prepared to dancing in the big dance. Pete Carroll took over the Patriots for three years and though he was a fine coach, he did not get the Pats into the dance. Then, out of nowhere came one of the best coaches ever, Bill Belichick. He changed football forever for New England. He is still with us making things OK after five Super Bowl Victories. There are no doubts Bill Belichick any more.

After writing about Notre Dame, Penn State, Clemson, Alabama, Florida, Syracuse, and Army, Brian Kelly, your author was moved by the Patriots' great seasons and the work of Bill Belichick to take a shot at writing a book about the coaches of one of his favorite pro-teams. Kelly has been rooting for the Patriots in almost every Super Bowl from 1980.

And, so, this new book by Brian Kelly, which highlights the Great Coaches in New England Patriots Football is one of the items that is expected to be available all 52 weeks and in fact all 365 days each year except in LEAP YEAR where the Patriots add an extra day for your book shopping and reading pleasure.

Amazon, Kindle, Barnes & Noble and other online sites in the US and overseas carry this book and it will add to your year-round football experience especially in the off-season. Once you get this book, it is yours forever unless, of course you give it away to one of the many Patriots fans, who will be in awe of your new possession.

Besides the great read, with this book in your hand at your private venue, there is no limit on the hours for book-tailgating. Moreover, there is no charge, as long as you have stocked up on snack victuals before the read.

We all know that in the past, not all New England coaches for example, were named Belichick Berry, Parcels, Carrol, Fairbanks, or Holovak, so not all games were in the W column. However, all teams from 1960 to the present, no matter who the coach was, were Patriots tough, nonetheless. That means they all fought hard for wins for the good of the team and the fans.

Opening with an introduction to Patriots football, this book goes all the way to Coach Bill Belichick's great eighteen years. This coach has stood the test of time changing the record books for New England and pushing the win record well over 500.

This book is written for those of us who love Patriots football as played in many of the great American venues over the years. It book looks at each game by each coach, the victories and losses, and it moves forward from Boston's first game to the great immortal New England coaches of historical fame—Ray Berry, Mike Holovak, and Chuck Fairbanks.

Predicting that another future immortal great is already in our midst, the book then takes us up to the last season with Coach Bill Belichick, a present and future immortal.

This book is all about the great moments in New England Patriots Football. It touches every aspect of the historical and mythical Patriots football teams. It tells exhilarating stories about the 14 head coaches and the 58 seasons worth of great games.

In my role as Editor in Chief of Lets Go Publish! and a die-hard Patriots' fan, I predict you will not be able to put this book down

You are going to love this book because it is the perfect read for anybody who loves the New England Patriots and Patriots football, and who wants to know more about one of the most revered professional athletic teams and coaches in all of football.

Few sports books are a must-read but my dad, Brian Kelly's Great Coaches in New England Patriots Football will quickly appear at the top of Americas most enjoyable must-read books about sports. Enjoy!

Who is Brian Kelly?

Brian Kelly aka Brian W. Kelly, is one of the leading authors in America with this, his 158<sup>th</sup> published book. Brian continues as an outspoken and eloquent expert on a variety of topics, including the kind of sports that New Englanders love. Moreover, Kelly also has written several hundred articles on other topics of interest to Americans.

Most of my dad's early works involved high technology. Later, Brian wrote a number of patriotic books and most recently, he has been writing human interest books such as The Wine Diet and Thank you, IBM. His books are always well received. If I could get the pen out of Dad's hand for just awhile, I might be able to write a few books of my own, but my editing chores at Lets Go Publish! always come first.

Brian Kelly's books are highlighted at [www.letsGOPublish.com](http://www.letsGOPublish.com). They are for sale at Amazon, Kindle, and Barnes & Noble. The link, [Amazon.com/author/brianwkelly](http://Amazon.com/author/brianwkelly), is the best but all Kelly books are available at most fine booksellers.

The best!

Sincerely,

Brian P. Kelly, Editor in Chief  
I am Brian Kelly's eldest son



# About the Author



Brian Kelly retired as an Assistant Professor in the Business Information Technology (BIT) Program at Marywood University, where he also served as the IBM i and Midrange Systems Technical Advisor to the IT Faculty. Kelly designed, developed, and taught many college and professional courses. He continues as a contributing technical editor to a number of technical industry magazines, including "The Four Hundred" and "Four Hundred Guru," published by IT Jungle.

Kelly is a former IBM Senior Systems Engineer. His specialty was problem solving for customers as well as implementing advanced operating systems and software on his client's machines. Brian is the author of 153 other books, including 25 Sports Books, and hundreds of magazine articles. He has been a frequent speaker at technical conferences throughout the United States.

Brian was a candidate for the US Congress from Pennsylvania in 2010 and he ran for Mayor in his home town in 2015. Kelly loves the Patriots and he became a big fan in the 1960's watching AFL games with his dad on Sundays on the 21" Admiral B/W TV.

This is Brian's second "Great Coaches" book about a professional NFL team. Writing about the New England Patriots has been a special treat.



# Chapter 1 Introduction to the Patriots

## The Patriots celebrate 50 years of football



**Everybody loves the Patriots!**

In 2009, New England coaches had been toiling for fifty years bringing the best teams that they could to the game very Sunday. In 50<sup>th</sup> year of Patriots' football in November 2009, the team celebrated the formation of the Boston Patriots, which was soon to be the New England Patriots. The above logo was unveiled to add a special look to the celebration. Here we are eight years later and the coaching has gotten even better and winning has become a persistent pattern with Bill Belichick.

This book celebrates New England Patriots Coaching, the founding; of the team, some struggles, greatness; and the team's football's long-lasting impact on American life and mostly life in New

England. People like me, who love the team from way back when they played tough AFL football, will love this book, as we reach back to the founding and up to the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and now as we approach the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of one of the best organizations that has ever played professional football. Go Pats!



In defining the format of the book, we chose to use a timetable that is based on a historical chronology. Within this framework, we discuss the great coaches in Patriots football history, and there are fourteen of them, though admittedly some were / are better than others.

No book can claim to be able to capture all the great stories of all the great Patriots coaches, as it would be a never-ending story, but we sure try. The great coaches naturally include a lot of great people, who over time would make or break the New England Patriots. The verdict is in. The Patriots are the best team in pro football.

To know the full story of the New England Patriots, you have to go through Boston.

Boston was always ready to welcome NFL teams. The Patriots were not the first but with their great record, New Englanders are hoping, they are the last pro football team ever needed. The first pro football team welcomed by Boston was the Boston Bulldogs. This adventure

lasted only during the 1929 season, but it got the juices of the people in Boston and new England flowing at a brisk pace.

The next NFL pro team to play was the Boston Braves/Redskins, from 1932 to 1936. In 1933 after the inaugural season, there was a name change to the Boston Redskins. Founder George Preston Marshall named the team the Boston Braves after the city's Major League Baseball team. However, after a financially devastating and poorly attended season in 1932, Marshall abandoned the Braves name in favor of the Redskins.

The Braves / Redskins had played first at Braves Field and then they moved to Fenway Park. Unfortunately for the area, the team did not draw well, even in its final season when they reached the NFL Championship Game. They moved to Washington as the Redskins right after the 1936 season.

The Boston Yanks played from 1944 to 1948 before moving to New York to become the New York Yanks football team. The team, which as noted began as the Boston Yanks, at the time was owned by Kate Smith's manager, Ted Collins. None of the Boston NFL teams that we discussed were the precursor team to the Patriots. In other words, they are not in the ancestry of the Boston Patriots from the AFL. There is no DNA match. The old Boston Yanks folded in 1952.

The AFL formed in 1959 and the Boston Patriots were one of the franchises. They played their first game in the Fall 1960. As you can see, the desire for there to be a Boston or New England presence in professional football goes back a long way. As you can see from the Boston Yanks picture below, players had little choice in those days but to go both ways—O & D.



The Boston Yanks: just a few pro players because they had to be paid

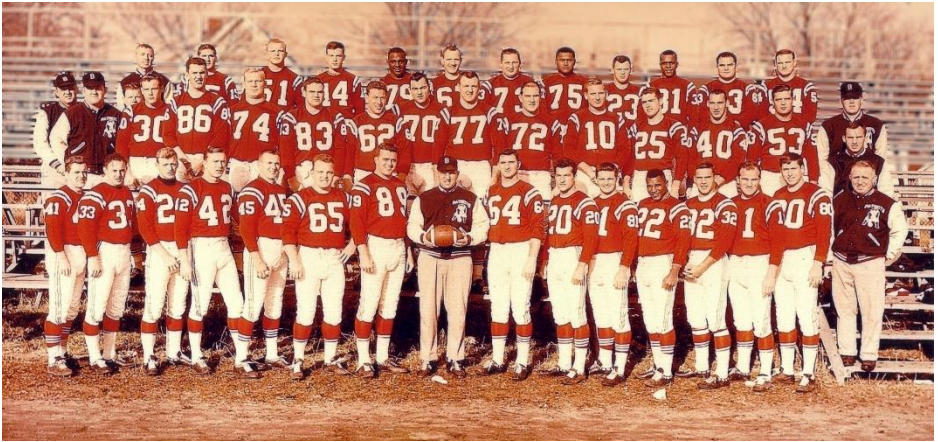
When the AFL was being formed, unlike some other pro-football ventures of the deep past, it looked from the start that it was going to be able to sustain itself and perhaps even surpass the excitement of the NFL. Investors were lining up to become pro-football owners.

It seemed like investors had forgotten the other AFL's that had come before this AFL, and their attempts to out-NFL, the NFL. It was tough slugging. The new upstart AFL clearly operated in direct competition with the more established NFL throughout its ten-year existence.

It was much more successful than earlier rivals to the NFL with the same name, the American Football League (1926), American Football League (1936), American Football League (1940), and the later All-America Football Conference((1944-1950), played in 1946-1949). America had fallen in love with football, and there was a great business out there for a league that could make it.

The Patriots were formed when Boston businessman, William "Billy" Sullivan, an executive of Sullivan Brother Printers, owned by Joseph Sullivan, was awarded the eighth and final franchise of the developing American Football League(AFL) on November 16, 1959. In the next few weeks, locals submitted thousands of ideas for

the Boston football team's official name. On February 20, 1960, Sullivan picked "Boston Patriots" from the lot.



First Boston Patriots team picture—many more players than the Boston Yanks

"Patriots," of course referred to those colonists of the Thirteen Colonies who rebelled against British control during the American Revolution, and who, in July 1776 declared the United States of America an independent nation. "Patriots" as the team nickname had been suggested by 74 fans, among them Larry Kepnes, a regular guy whose signature stood out. Immediately thereafter, artist Phil Bissell developed the "Pat Patriot" logo.

There is not much written about Larry other than his recent obituary. I learned that his full name was Lawrence Kepnes, and he was from Swampscott, Massachusetts. He passed away on Friday November 18, 2016, still a devoted Red Sox and Patriots fan. I can tell he was my kind of guy.

Every football fan alive in 1960, including Larry Kepnes loved the AFL as the folks at home got to see more great football—just like that played in the already mature NFL. The only thing they did not see was the great AFL teams playing the great NFL teams. The leagues were 100% separate and they did not share their proceeds or their secrets or their drafted players until they had to. It would take a little time before the NFL begrudgingly realized that the AFL brand of football was here to stay. Rather than trying to beat them, eventually they joined them.

The old NFL Boston Yanks when they played in Boston, claimed Fenway Park as their home spot and got away with it. However, the Patriots' time in the AFL saw them as homeless. They had no regular home stadium. They played wherever they could find a field-Nickerson Field, Harvard Stadium, even Fenway Park sometimes, as well as Boston College's Alumni Stadium. These stadia were all in or near Boston.

The Patriots were quite happy to have these as home fields during their time in the American Football League.

With Coach Lou Saban, the first Boston Coach, and Coach Mike Holovak, the second Boston coach, the Patriots put forth a number of seasons in which the percentage wins were or at least seemed closer to 1000 than to 500. Those were the great start-up days. Many of the player names from the Boston Patriots teams in the 1960's have slipped into oblivion but there are still some of us, who understand oblivion, and who still recall some early Patriots stars.

The great ones include defensive tackles Jim Lee "Earthquake" Hunt and Houston Antwine; quarterback Vito "Babe" Parilli; and flanker-placekicker Gino "The Duke" Cappelletti (no relationship with John from Penn State). These guys were great to watch. Hunt, Parilli and Cappelletti played every year of the existence of the AFL, with Hunt and Cappelletti spending all ten years with the Patriots.

To fans, the AFL was like a big giant never-ending intramural pickup game that would not end. Nobody wanted it to end. Having a named group of guys playing the teams in the AFL in this great pickup game was great football. Everybody loved the AFL. Everybody loved Boston's Patriots.

With all deference to the NFL, the AFL proved that little guys can make it and that's why the league captured the hearts of American football lovers. The fans still loved their Giants, their Eagles, their Steelers, etc. so it was a big gift to fans to have so many other great teams who never played their teams, who had new-name stars gracing the sidelines each week. Football fans from 1960 to 1969 could actually get away with having two favorite pro teams.



Cappelletti was the all-time leading scorer in the AFL. Later the Patriots were joined by such stars as defensive end Larry Eisenhauer, fullback Jim Nance, and middle linebacker and future Hall of Famer Nick Buoniconti. Cappelletti and Nance were AFL Most Valuable Players, Cappelletti in 1964 and Nance in 1966. Buoniconti and Antwine were later named to the American Football League All-Time Team. Who could ask for more?



Boston Patriots in action

Three years into the AFL, we saw the Boston Patriots defeating the Buffalo Bills in an AFL Eastern Division playoff game in 1963, and we saw the Patriots playing in the 1963 AFL championship game. They lost to the San Diego Chargers 51–10 but as always, they took the bad with the good. Just in their third year of existence, Boston was something. It was good for morale and it was good for Boston Beer sales, which actually were not too bad before the Patriots.

The Patriots as potential champs would not appear again in an AFL or NFL post-season game for another 13 years, but Boston beer sales were still booming in the Fall as well as all over New England. Additionally, the games were great. Before the AFL delivered its swan-song, the Patriots would often challenge the then dominant

AFL Bills for the Eastern Division title. Those of us who remember back then loved those football days.

When the NFL and AFL merged in 1970, I can remember being very disappointed as I had come to like the scrappy, less formal AFL. The Patriots were placed in the AFC East division, where they still play today. Actually, we know that they do more than play. They dominate the AFC East.

It was not long for the Patriots to find a home. They moved to a new stadium in Foxborough, Massachusetts, a suburb of Boston, known as Foxboro Stadium, which would serve as their home for 30 years; the team also changed their name to the New England Patriots to reflect the location change, as well as its following throughout the region. It is the only NFL team (though both New York City teams have substantial followings in parts of Connecticut as well) in New England.



Foxboro Stadium

During the 1970s, the Patriots had success, eventually earning a berth to the playoffs in 1976. It was not a free ride but a wild card-berth. Then, in 1978, Chuck Fairbanks was Head Coach; they made it as AFC East champions. They would lose both playoff games.

In 1985, the Patriots, unaccustomed at the time to glory, returned to the playoffs, and made it all the way to Super Bowl XX, which they lost against the Chicago Bears 46–10. Nonetheless, it was a banner year and new Englanders know how to celebrate and so beer sales finally went up again in the city and the suburbs.

Following their Super Bowl loss, the Patriots barreled back into the playoffs in 1986, but were beaten in the first round. The team kept doing its best with non-Bill-Belichick as coaches, and they would not make the playoffs again for eight more years.

Most fans do not care about ownership changes unless the new owner messes things up. The Pats changed ownership several times in that period, being purchased from the Sullivan family first by Victor Kiam in 1988, who sold the team to James Orthwein in 1992. Orthwein's intention was to move the team to his native St. Louis, Missouri. He chose not to try to do that after visiting some Boston Pubs. OK, that was not his reason.

Nonetheless, he chose to sell the franchise, i.e. the business of the Patriots team two years later to current owner, local businessman Robert Kraft in 1994. Most New Englanders who like football like Kraft because he is a good man and perhaps more importantly, he likes to win.

Orthwein had a short period of ownership and his desire to uproot the team was well-known. Yet he did oversee some major changes to the team. Former New York Giants coach Bill Parcells, who had taken the Giants from misery to stardom was hired in 1993. Nobody could deny Bill Parcells had a unique way of getting the most from any football team he ever coached.

Parcells would bring the Patriots to two playoff appearances, including Super Bowl XXXI, which they lost to the Green Bay Packers by a score of 35–21. Pete Carroll, Parcells' successor, another top NFL coach today with the Seahawks, would also take the team to the playoffs twice. Whodathunk? That a happy-go-lucky, work-if-you-must kinda guy, such as Bill Belichick would out-Parcell and out-Carroll these two great NFL coaches. Yet, he did. Check the record.

Bill Belichick is the Patriots current head coach. He was out hunting one day and was hired in 2000. OK, he may have been doing something else, but he was hired, and it was a great day for the Patriots and for Patriot's fans.

The New England Patriots like Foxborough Mass. However, Foxboro stadium became an old story and the Pats were hoping for a newer, more modern facility. So, the powers that be created a new home field, Gillette Stadium for the Patriots and they opened it in 2002. Coach Belichick was a godsend two-years earlier to those fans in New England who not only liked football but liked to win.

Belichick's teams won five Super Bowls, including three in four years (2001-2004). As a football purist, I happen to love perfect NFL season records almost as much as Super Bowl Wins. Not kidding. For example, in 1972, I loved the perfect season of the Miami Dolphins. Nobody yet, even our famous and fabulous Patriots have outclassed this Dolphins team.

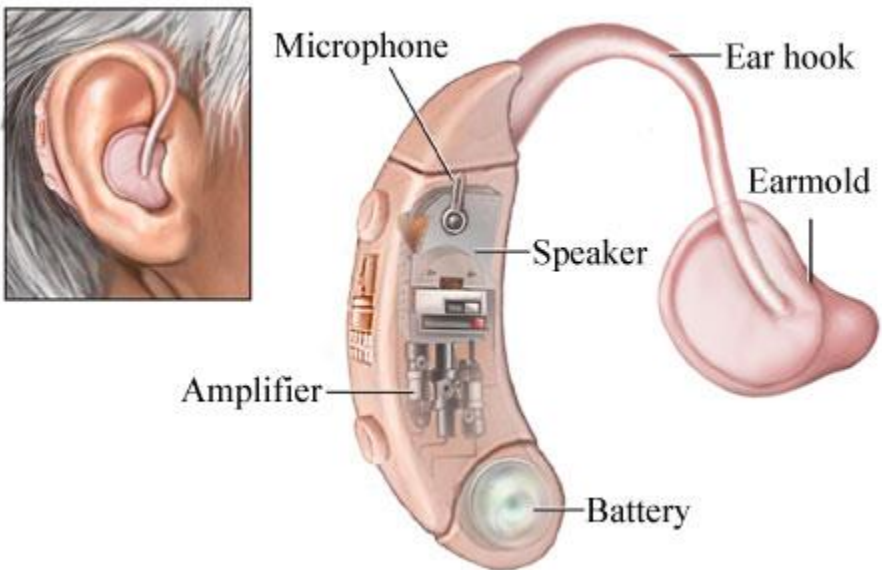


Bill Belichick Loves Winning Super Bowls

The 1972 Dolphins still are the only NFL team to win the Super Bowl with a perfect season. Though the Patriots finished the 2007 regular season with a perfect 16-0 record, becoming only the fourth team in league history to go undefeated, and the only one since the

league expanded its regular season schedule to 16 games; they did not eclipse the Dolphins challenge: “Be perfect!”

And, so, even after two playoff victories, the 2007 Patriots ended that season with an 18-1 record. There was this unfortunate encounter and a subsequent loss to the New York Giants in Super Bowl XLII that stole away the aura of perfection from the New England Patriots.



Look above and think of me firing in the commands to Belichick's ear:

Nobody can argue that the Patriots have made the playoffs in 14 of the 17 seasons that Bill Belichick has been coach, missing them only in 2000 (his first season), 2002, and 2008. They later faced the Seattle Seahawks in Super Bowl XLIX on February 1, 2015, and won by a score of 28-24, and they have won four more times.

I do not count but if I did count, I would miniaturize myself and launch myself from inside a small vessel in Bill Belichick's ear. I would use a miniature loudspeaker that would keep harping to coach Belichick that a perfect season would be a nice way to finish off a miraculous career...Brady too!

Looking at the greats in Patriot's history we find many player names we know such as Doug Flutie, Steve Grogan, Babe Parilli, Jim

Nance, Gino Cappelletti, Irving Fryar, Stanley Morgan, Wes Welker, Ben Coates, Rob Gronkowski, John Hannah, Mike Haynes, Ty Law, Tedy Bruschi, Nick Buoniconti, Richard Seymour, Houston Antwine, Jim Lee Hunt, Vince Wilfork, Stephen Gostkowski, Adam Vinatieri, and other New England greats from over the years.

They all have or have had great reverence for the team for which they played the game of football. That reverence is captured in the subsequent pages of this book. They were all coached by one or several of the great 14 Patriots coaches over the years. With Belichick as # 14, it has been 18 years since that number 14 has grown and nobody is looking for coach #15.

Looking at the quick snapshot of coaches and seasons at the beginning of the book, it is clear that New England has been able to survive a number of coaches who pundits might say could not survive themselves. Meanwhile, the Patriots football program has grown both in acceptance, popularity, and sheer dominance. Look at the coaches in this book to find out why?

Look across the Internet with your web browser and you will be reminded that this year, the New England Patriots are runner-up world champions, having barely lost to the Philadelphia Eagles in February 2018. The Eagles grabbed the coveted Super Bowl Trophy this year. The Patriots have their share of Super Bowl rings for sure. If we listed all of the Patriots' accolades individually, we would have to close this book now with no further additions for a too-many-pages violation.

The 2018 Eagles contest marked the 10th Super Bowl appearance for the New England franchise, eighth of which have come since 2001. This year, 2001, was the year in which Tom Brady led the Pats to a 20-17 win over the Rams. It was in Bill Belichick's second year as head coach.

I think as an intro I have done a fine job. I hope you think so also.

In the full book, I do my best to portray an accurate depiction of the role of its great coaches in the Patriots football history. The records are displayed in a properly summarized format so that none of us are

reading this book forever. There are several hundred pages to this book and its mission is not to tell the whole story, just the role of the coaches. All these pages are in this book so there is more than enough reading to accompany you on those cold winter nights after the close of the football season.

There are a ton of great stories for sure because every Patriots coach has a few good stories and some have a ton. More importantly, none of us should need to search further than this book for the truth about many of the depictions of the coaches highlighted in this book. Its in there!





# Chapter 2 The AFL Brings the Patriots First Football Coach

#1 Coach Lou Saban

Year	Coach	League	Division	Place,	Record
1960	Lou Saban	AFL	Eastern	4th	5 9 0
1961	Lou Saban (2-3)	AFL	Eastern	2nd	9 4 1

**1960-1961 Lou Saban final record (14-14-1)**



Boston Patriots Early Team

The New England Patriots launched their first football team in 1960 under coach Lou Saban. They operated under a different name than we know today. They were the Boston Patriots and they would keep that name until the 1971 season when they would get their own stadium and they would move 25 miles southwest to Foxborough to become the New England Patriots

Most fans do not recall the Boston Patriots heyday, but they do understand the Patriots most recent history which includes ten great shots at the big prize --- the Super Bowl. The Patriots have been very successful in all games with the 1-2 combo of Bill Belichick and Tom Brady, putting whatever was necessary together to win five of those ten Super Bowl Outings. And, there is great news for the future

beginning in the fall. After his well-deserved vacation with his significant other, Bill Belichick plans to be back in 2018 to take New England to another Super Bowl and another set of those huge rings—making it six in all.

New England's debut in the biggest championship game came against the Chicago Bears in Super Bowl XX. The Patriots looked great all season, but Raymond Berry's Patriots were overwhelmed by Mike Ditka's Chicago Bears when game action began. From the opening kickoff at the Louisiana Superdome, led by quarterback Jim McMahon, the Bears had their way that day with a 49-10 big victory.

The Patriots returned to the Super Bowl with Coach Bill Parcells after eleven years for Super Bowl XXXI to face off against Green Bay on January 26, 1997, again at the Louisiana Superdome. It wound up being another big disappointment, but the team looked a lot better than in 1985.

In game action, Desmond Howard returned a kickoff 99 yards for a touchdown and Brett Favre passed for two touchdowns and ran for a score as the Packers won their first Super Bowl in twenty-nine years at the expense of the Patriots. Howard, en-route to garnering the MVP trophy, equaled a Super Bowl record with 244 total return yards.

The Patriots still had not won the big one with this heartbreaking 21 to 35 loss against Green Bay. Finally, after a short wait to Super Bowl XXXVI, the Patriots, with Tom Brady at the close controls and Bill Belichick coaching as he does so well from the sidelines, the New England Patriots broke into Super Bowl Pay dirt and took the gold with their 14<sup>th</sup> and best head coach ever.

The Patriots found the third time to be the charm. They had lost in their first two appearances, but they won big-time on February 2, 2002 against the stubborn St. Louis Rams, 20-17. Bill Belichick was the first and only coach to win a Super Bowl for the Patriots.

For the rest of the world and all the smart pundits checking on who the Patriots really were with their new second-year coach, this game left no more doubts. The Patriots would get no more disrespect—

ever. The New England Patriots had become Champions of the whole World. It was a great game, and it made all the other Super Bowl victories in the ongoing Belichick/Brady era easier to achieve.

In one of the most exciting Super Bowl finishes ever, in this 2002 encounter, the great Adam Vinatieri booted home a 48-yard field goal with no time left on the clock to give his team of no-name warriors a 20-17 Super Bowl win. This put the final touches on the most amazing season in New England sports history at that point in the Patriots' short life.

The New England Patriots would engage the best of the best in the NFL seven more times. With the mini-team of Tom Brady and Bill Belichick, they would win four more Super Bowls. And, according to Belichick and Brady, it ain't over yet!

### **Boston before New England**

Before the New England Patriots were the name of the team, there was already a team in New England playing football in the AFL. The AFL was formed in November 1959 and the first games were played in the fall 1960.

Coach Lou Saban is responsible for molding the players who showed up for the first camp into the Boston Patriots. In 1960 and 1961, Saban did his best to take the raw material and prove to everybody else but the team that the Patriots could win some games. Saban got five wins out of fourteen games in his first season with a bunch of AFL rookies. The NFL was not lending players to the AFL at that time.

In his second season, and the second season for the Boston Patriots, Lou Saban and Mike Holovak together stole nine games from his fellow AFL coaches and gave them back five losses and one tie in return. There was no guarantee at the time that any AFL franchise (they were all new) would be around for a second year. Lou Saban and Mike Holovak set the team up for great things to come with a spectacular two season record of 13-14-1. Actually, Holovak had seven of those wins after taking over for Saban in year two following a 2-3 Saban start.

The most critical time for a new team is in its first several seasons. The Patriots were very lucky they had the mastery of Lou Saban to guide them out of the starting blocks. By the way, there are reports that at his death Lou Saban's wife Joyce confessed that Nick and Lou Saban may have been second cousins. That explains a lot. Both are of Croatia descent.

### **How did the AFL get its players?**

Just like the NFL, the AFL had to draft players for the eight teams that made up the league. Why would any player go with the AFL if they had a shot at the NFL? There are two answers to that question!

#1. Every player after college wants to make as much money in their lifetime as they can as a pro.

#2 Marketing, Marketing, Marketing

It helps to have salesmen selling the product (AFL) like as if they had a shot at selling ice cream to Eskimos. Marketing ultimately gave the AFL its players. The marketers had to have NFL-sized prize money when one of the top college players was ready to go AFL v NFL. There were a lot of guarantees.

A lot of rich people ran the NFL teams and they were getting richer. A lot of rich people were about to run the AFL Teams and they had no problem meeting the salary demands of potential AFL players. It was not a given, but the group with the better marketers were destined to win as the money was not an issue.

How the players would be divvied up in the AFL was just as much an issue as in the NFL. But, the NFL had already solved the how-to!

And so, it was quite legitimate before the league even began playing to conduct a draft to help stock the AFL teams with great players who could win ball-games. You may recall that when the College All Stars played the NFL champs for years during this same time period, sometimes the College All Stars actually beat the pros. They were younger and faster and just as strong. The AFL with money

and marketing were a sure thing. And so, came the first AFL draft before the AFL played game # 1.

The 1960 American Football League (AFL) draft was held on November 22–23, 1959, in Minneapolis, shortly after the organization of the AFL league. The fact that there was a league meant the money and the marketing were in place.

The first AFL draft lasted 33 rounds, enough to fill a team. To make sure it was enough, an additional draft of 20 rounds was held by the AFL on December 2. Considering all of the senior football players graduating from so many colleges, there would be no shortage of qualified players to be picked.

Let's take a look now at the team selected by Boston Patriots coaches did under coach Lou Saban in their first year as a united squad.

### **1960 Lou Saban, Coach #1**

The 1960 Boston Patriots football team competed in their first season of Professional American Football League (AFL) football. They were led by Lou Saban in his first of two as head coach. In this first year in which a Patriots team took the field in a pro game, this Patriots team finished with a losing season record of 5-9-0, winning five games, losing nine, and tying none. They failed to qualify for the playoffs for the first time

By the time July came Lou Saban had the Patriots ready to play football at home in the season opener at Nickerson Field. Let me caution you before we move ahead that you will not find team names such as the New York Giants, Philadelphia Eagles, Pittsburgh Steelers, etc., because they were not in the AFL They were in a league that had been well established known as the NFL.

The AFL had a great model at the time, the NFL so many of their rules and standards were already well known and implemented first in the NFL. One of these notions was a preseason. The first preseason game in American Football League history was played on

July 30, 1960. It featured our Boston Patriots and they played the Buffalo Bills at Buffalo.

I marvel at how in such short order, after coming together in November 1959 as a grand idea and a plan, that by July, there were teams on the field playing the first AFL preseason game ever. It sure was a monumental accomplishment in that the league was formed less than a year prior to the first kickoff. In fact, so much work had gone into the preparation for the new league that many of the founders had not even had the time to assess the magnitude and success of their efforts. For example, one of the famous Hunt Brothers, League co-founder Lamar Hunt was driving home from his office in late-July and he was “tickled pink” when he heard a sports radio program running down the odds of the AFL’s first weekend of action.



Many US cities had taken a shot at pro football before 1960. Some did not make it. Buffalo, NY was one of those that had been there and done that and now were ready to do it again. They were fully excited about the AFL and a chance to have a pro-team in Buffalo again.

Ironically, this was not the first AFL and so some cities such as Buffalo had once had pro football teams in the NFL, the old AFL, as well as the All-America Football Conference. The city was excited when the Bills were part of the new AFL in 1960.

Such was also the case in Buffalo when team founder Ralph Wilson, Jr. watched more than 100,000 fans gather at a rally the night before the preseason opener. The following evening 16,474 curious fans arrived at the newly renovated and renamed War Memorial Stadium.

Though it was just a pre-season game, and would not be counted, it counted for Buffalo and it counted for Boston as the two teams clashed. The Patriots overcame the Bills' home field advantage and the extremely hot temperatures. The Pats defeated Buffalo 28-7. The teams featured a bunch of no-name players who played their hearts out. The star for the evening was Patriots quarterback Butch Songin who tossed two touchdowns to lead the Pats to victory.

Head Coach Lou Saban was so ecstatic that it is reported that he shook hands with every member of the Patriot team and asked them to sign an official AFL ball. Ask yourself: Did this game count? You bet it did.

And so, began the long journey of the very successful American Football League that would eventually and forever change the landscape of professional football.

Lou Saban was Boston's first coach. He was no kid and he knew what he was doing in football. His career had spanned 53 years and included 27 different stops. He was one of the "most traveled coaches" in the history of football. Affectionately dubbed "Much Traveled Lou," the Indiana University graduate compiled a record of 95-99-7 in 16 seasons as a pro football head coach. Lou Saban's record probably would have been much better if he was not always so ready to take a shot at something that was not a sure thing.

Saban started his head coaching career after his four-year playing career as a linebacker with the Cleveland Browns ended in 1949. His first job began the very next season at the Case Institute of Technology in Cleveland. Five years later, Saban was at

Northwestern for two years and then moved to Western Illinois University in 1957. Eventually he came to Boston and his expertise helped launch the Boston Patriots into a permanent spot in the hearts of New Englanders. Everything starts with something. Lou Saban gave the Patriots their start.

After an unsuccessful bid at retirement, Saban's last stop as head coach was at Chowan University in North Carolina in 2001 and '02. Lou Saban, a fine and gracious man and great coach, died on March 29, 2009 at the age of 87 but his lasting legacy and influence can still be seen on the football field today.

The team he led played teams that were unrecognizable in their day. All have survived but not under their 1960 names. That does not mean that you may not recognize the names of all of the teams that played the Patriots in their first year. The League's idea was to play each team twice providing a fourteen-game season in year 1. There was a bye week for a rest. You may recognize some nicknames but not always the City/Nickname combo such as the Los Angeles Chargers who became the San Diego Chargers, but who strangely enough are again the Los Angeles Chargers. Yes, it is the same team.

You may wonder who the New York Titans might be when you see that the Boston Patriots played them in the inaugural 1960 season. They simply changed their last name from Titans to the Jets in 1962. Then there were the Dallas Texans, who the Patriots also played in 1960.

The American Football League (AFL) had a 1960 charter member called the Dallas Texans. However, after the first season, they chose to become the Kansas City Chiefs. In 1997, the Houston Oilers became the Tennessee Titans. The Oakland Raiders left to become the LA Raiders but came back after the 1994 season and have been the Oakland Raiders ever since.

Now, with that AFL team genealogy straightened out, there should be no team in the AFL schedule for the Boston Patriots in 1960 that you do not recognize. Of course, don't expect to find the New England Patriots.



As a point of note, the Dallas Cowboys joined the NFL, not the AFL, as an expansion team in 1960 so there was a lot of good football stuff happening at this time in football history.

Here are the opposing teams in the sequence of the games played in 1960. Check out the team names because for the next ten years, these, for the most part, are the teams that the Boston Patriots played until they joined the NFL with the rest of the AFL in 1970

- 1 Denver Broncos
- 2 New York Titans
- 3 Buffalo Bills
- 4 Los Angeles Chargers
- 5 Oakland Raiders
- 6 Denver Broncos
- 7 Los Angeles Chargers
- 8 Oakland Raiders
- 9 New York Titans
- 10 Dallas Texans
- 11 Houston Oilers
- 12 Buffalo Bills
- 13 Dallas Texans
- 14 Houston Oilers

The AFL was as wild as the old west when it began. They were looking to survive and to eventually be wildly successful. Many of the players could not survive on their AFL salaries and so they tended bar and served other tasks when they got a break from practice and playing. Eventually, it would all come together and like the NFL, a lot of fortunes were made.

One of the first ways the AFL showed their lack of orthodoxy in their methods was in scheduling games. When you look at the Pats schedule for 1960, for example, their first game was a Friday, then a Saturday then back to Friday and Saturday before their first Sunday match came to be. The Patriots played just five Sundays out of a fourteen-week season. That's what you call thinking out of the box. The AFL was so wildly successful that the NFL merged with them just ten years later.

Many did not consider the impact of attendance at high school football games on Friday and college football games on Saturday as being affected by the AFL or pro-football at all. Nonetheless, our Congress, apparently looking for work, having nothing to do, was so concerned about AFL style football becoming dominant on Friday and Saturday, that they passed some laws prohibiting regular season pro games from being played on Fridays and Saturdays.

And you, like me, probably thought the reason Colleges do not play on Sunday is because of some seedy deal with the NFL. Nope. The seedy deal was not a deal at all. It was Congress protecting attendance at HS and college football games. One would think they could have spent their time more wisely but now you know the *rest of the story*.

In the Patriot's first ever season and "home" opener on Friday, Sept 9, the Patriots lost in a close match to the Denver Broncos L (10-13) at Nickerson Field before 21,597. At the NY Titans the following Saturday, Sept 17, the Patriots got their first AFL win W (28-24) in a game played at the Polo Grounds before 19,200. On Sept 23 at home (Nickerson Field), the Pats were shut out by the Buffalo Bills L (0-13) before 20,732. After a bye on Sept 30, on Saturday Oct 8, Boston traveled to LA Memorial Coliseum to play the Chargers. They crushed LA in a 35-0 shutout before 18,226. On the West Coast again on Sunday Oct 16, the Oakland Raiders beat the Patriots L (14-27) before 11,500.

At Denver on Sunday, Oct 23, the Broncos got by the Patriots by one score at Bears Stadium before 12,683. On Friday, Oct 28, at home, the LA Chargers whooped the Patriots L (16-45) before 13,988. At home on Friday, Nov 4, Boston beat Oakland W (34-28) at home before 8,446. Then at home again on Friday November 11, the Patriots outplayed the New York Titans W 38-21) before 11,653

On Friday, Nov 18 at home, the Patriots pounded the Dallas Texans W (42-14) before 14,721. At home on Friday, Nov 25, the Houston Oilers defeated the Boston Patriots L (10-24) before a nice crowd of 27,123. At Buffalo on Sunday Dec 4, the Patriots were defeated by the Bills L (14-38) at War Memorial Stadium before 14,335. At Dallas, on Sunday Dec 11, the Dallas Texans shut out the Patriots L (0-34) in the Cotton Bowl before 12,000. Wrapping up the

inaugural season at Houston on Sunday, Dec 18, the Oilers spoiled the Patriots finale L 21-37) at Jeppesen Stadium before 22,352.

### **1961 Lou Saban, Coach #1**

### **1961 Mike Holovak, Coach #2**

The 1961 Boston Patriots football team competed in their second season of Professional American Football League (AFL) football. They were led by Lou Saban in his last of two as head coach. After assuring the team's viability through 14 games, in 1960, Saban began the 1961 season with a 2-3 record and was fired after the fifth game of the season. He was replaced by Mike Holovak who came in with 7-1-1 helping the Patriots finish with a fine record of 9-4-1 for the whole season. We include both the Saban games and the Holovak games in this chapter. upped the ante and brought forth a fine 9-4-1 winning season.

In the home and season opener on Sat Sep 9, at Nickerson Field on the campus of Boston University, the New York Titans edged out the New England Patriots L (20-21). This was two opening day losses in a row. On Sat Sep 16, the Patriots crushed the Denver Broncos at home W (45 17). Then, at Buffalo the next week, again on Saturday, the Patriots defeated the Bills in a close match W (23-21). At New York on Sunday, Oct 1, the Titans nosed out the Patriots L (30 37)

On Sat Oct 7 at home, the San Diego Chargers neutralized the Patriots L (27 38). That was it for coach Lou Saban. Mike Holovak took over immediately when Lou Saban got his notice. He began his successful tenure with the Pats with a tie. On Fri Oct 13, at home, the Boston Patriots tied Houston Oilers T (31 31). At home on Sun Oct 22, the Boston Patriots lambasted the Buffalo Bills W (52 21). At Dallas on Sun Oct 29. The Patriots prevailed by one point over the Texans W (18-17).

At Houston, on Sun Nov 12, the Oilers beat the Patriots L (15 27). Then, at home on Fri Nov 17, the Patriots beat the Oakland Raiders W (20 17). Wrapping up the season with three away game wins, the first was at Denver as the Pats beat the Broncos W (28-24). The next

was at Oakland as Boston beat the Raiders W (35-21). And then, at San Diego in the season finale, the Patriots shut out the Chargers W (41-0).

# Chapter 3 Coach Mike Holovak 1961 - 1968

## Coach # 2 Mike Holovak

1961 Mike Holovak (7-1-1)

1962 Mike Holovak AFL East 2nd 9 4 1

1963 Mike Holovak AFL East 1st 7 6 1

- Won Divisional Playoffs (at Bills) 26-8
- Lost AFL Championship (at Chargers) 10-51

1964 Mike Holovak AFL East 2nd 10 3 1

Gino Cappelletti(MVP)

1965 Mike Holovak AFL East 3rd 4 8 2

1966 Mike Holovak AFL East 2<sup>nd</sup> 8 4 2

- Jim Nance(MVP)

1967 Mike Holovak AFL East 5th 3 10 1

1968 Mike Holovak AFL East 4th 4 10 0

**1961-1968 Mike Holovak final record (55-46-6)**



1961 Boston Patriots Team Picture

## 1961 Mike Holovak, Coach #2

The 1961 Boston Patriots football team competed in their second season of Professional American Football League (AFL) football. They were led by Lou Saban in his last of two years as head coach.

Lou Saban began the 1961 season with a 2-3 record and was fired after the fifth game of the season. He was replaced by Mike Holovak who came in with 7-1-1, helping the Patriots finish with a fine record of 9-4-1 for the whole season. We include both the Saban games and the Holovak games in Chapter 3 covering the launch of the Patriots in the AFL in the 1960 and 1961 seasons.

In the home and season opener on Sat Sep 9, at Nickerson Field on the campus of Boston University, the New York Titans edged out the New England Patriots L (20-21). This was two opening day losses in a row. See game summaries for 1961 in Chapter 3.

### **1962 Mike Holovak, Coach #2**

Mike Holovak was not a long-anticipated acquisition of Boston. He came in the middle of the prior season and without the benefit that most coaches get, he turned the Patriots team around on a dime by leading the Patriots on a 7-1-1 rampage in which no opposing team was safe. Holovak had a lot of great seasons with the AFL Boston Patriots and eventually he retired and took a cushy job in the front office. By the time he was done, Boston was almost New England. He was a great competitor.

He became a longtime NFL executive but one of his major hallmarks of which he was proud was that he coached the Patriots to their first championship game. He was not a spring chicken it seems ever. He died on a Sunday in 2008 at 88 years of age. He is the first immortal of the Boston / New England Patriots.

He passed away in Ruskin, Fla., of complications from pneumonia. He was well loved wherever he traveled especially at the Patriots and Boston College. A BC spokesman at his funeral, Reid Oslin, said, after speaking with Holovak's wife, Pauline Scudder Holovak. Acknowledged that Holovak was a former football star and a fine coach at Boston College.

He still stands as the Patriots' second winningest coach, Holovak led the Boston Patriots to the AFL League title game after the 1963 season. The team burped in the championship game in a loss to San Diego, 51-10. Mr. Holovak later became vice president of player

personnel and general manager of the Houston Oilers and he stayed on when they moved to Tennessee and became the Titans.

He was a rugged football player who began his NFL career playing for the Chicago Bears and Los Angeles Rams before he became freshman football coach at Boston College in 1949 and varsity coach in 1951.

"Mike Holovak was a great coach and a wonderful person," Patriots owner Robert Kraft said in a statement issued by the team. "I remember watching Mike's Boston College teams in the 1950s and his Patriots teams in the 1960s.

"I was fortunate to have the opportunity to spend time with him on several occasions. Our team has lost one of its founding fathers and the entire Patriots family is saddened by Mike's passing."

Holovak had a 53-47-9 record as Patriots coach, including playoffs.

Only Bill Belichick had more wins, 105 at the time of Holovak's obituary.

When the Boston Patriots became part of the new AFL in 1960, Holovak was their first director of player personnel and served as offensive backfield coach. They were 5-9 that season under Lou Saban and the team missed the playoffs.

After they started the 1961 season at 2-3, Holovak was asked to replace Saban and led them to a 7-1-1 record the rest of the campaign, finishing with a 41-0 smash-mouth win at San Diego and a four-game winning streak.

In 2008, The New England Patriots reached the Super Bowl by beating the Chargers 21-12 in the AFC championship game. On Sunday, about 15,000 fans attended a departure rally for Coach Holovak at Gillette Stadium at which Kraft and several players spoke.

The Patriots went 9-4-1 in 1962 and missed the playoffs but made it for the first time the following year after posting a 7-6-1 record.

They beat Buffalo 26-8 in their first playoff game, then traveled to San Diego for the AFL championship game. The Patriots didn't return to the playoffs before Holovak was replaced after the 1968 season by Clive Rush.

"Mike was a mentor, a coach, a friend, and above all, a consummate gentleman," said Gino Cappelletti, the second leading receiver on the 1963 Patriots and sixth in club history. "His contributions as coach and general manager in the critical early years of the Patriots' franchise were monumental."

Holovak had to live a long and fruitful life for God wanted him to touch a lot of successful ventures and help make people and those ventures into more than they otherwise would have been. He did so wherever he coached or worked such as when he coached and held administrative positions with the San Francisco 49ers, Oakland Raiders and New York Jets.

"Mike was the quintessential 'football guy,'" Titans owner Bud Adams Jr. said in a statement issued by Boston College. "It is rare when you see a person excel in all three areas of the sport: a great player in college, a successful coach and great talent evaluator, but Mike was one of the special people."

A memorial mass was planned for the Boston College campus on Feb. 9, 2008 at about the same time God welcomed Mike into his eternal reward. A great man is gone, and we had him just 88 years.

## About the 1962 Season

The 1962 Boston Patriots football team competed in their third season of Professional American Football League (AFL) football. They were led by Mike Holovak in his second of eight years as head coach. The team had a fine record of 9-4-1 and finished in second place in the AFL Eastern Division but did not make the playoffs. Today, for sure, that record would have brought a Wild Card Berth.

In the home and season opener on Sat Sep 9, at Nickerson Field on the campus of Boston University, the New York Titans edged out



the New England Patriots L (20-21). This was three opening day losses in a row. Looking for a good season starter in 1963.

In the Season opener on Saturday, Sept 18 at Kansas City, The Patriots were defeated by the Chiefs L (28-42) before 32,000. On Sunday, Sept-18, the Patriots got the best of the Tennessee Titans at home, W (34-21) before 32,276. Rolling up the steam, the Patriots put a whooping on the Denver Broncos on September-18 at home W (41-16) before 21,038. At New York, the Patriots guns were not missing on Sat October-18 with a blowout victory over the Jets W (43-14) before 14,412. Then, on Fri Oct 18 at home, the Patriots took it on the chin from Kansas City as the chiefs dominated L (7-27) before 23,874.

At home on Friday, Oct-18 the Patriots out gunned the San Diego Chargers W (24-20) before 20,888. Again at home on Fri Oct-19, the Patriots bested the Oakland Raiders W (26-16) before 12,514. Then, on Sat Nov 18 at Buffalo, the Bills tied the Boston Patriots T (28-28) before 33,247. At Denver on Sun Nov-18, the Pats again prevailed W (33-29) before 28,187. The Tennessee Titans (Houston Oilers) stopped the Patriots roll on Nov 18, L (17-21) before 35,250

On Fri Nov-23 the Patriots beat the Buffalo Bills W (21-10) before 20,021. Then on Fri November-30, the Patriots defeated the New York Titans W (24-17) before 20,015. At San Diego on Sun December-9, the Patriots beat the Chargers W (20-14) before 19,887. At Oakland on Sun December-16, the Patriots could not squeeze out the season finale and lost to the Raiders L (0-20) before just 8,000 fans

## **1963 Mike Holovak, Coach #2**

The 1963 Boston Patriots football team competed in their fourth season of Professional American Football League (AFL) football. They were led by Mike Holovak in his third of eight years as head coach. The Patriots had a winning record again, 7-6-1 and they made the playoffs. They beat the Buffalo Bills W (26-8) in the Divisional Playoffs and they lost the AFL Championship (AFL equivalent of the Super Bowl) at the Chargers L (8-26).

After having played their first three seasons at Nickerson Field on the campus of Boston University, the Patriots moved operations to Fenway Park. Though this was their best overall accomplishment in terms of the playoffs in their four years, the Patriots hovered around the .500 mark all season, and were not a dominant team in the division. But, neither were the others.

Nonetheless, at the end of the season, they were in position to win the Eastern Division title outright with a victory on their final game. The 35–3 road loss to the defending champion Kansas City Chiefs allowed the Buffalo Bills catch up and both finished at 7–6–1. This required a divisional playoff game, the AFL's first ever.

Both teams had a bye the following week, postponed from the Sunday after the assassination of President Kennedy. So, the tiebreaker playoff was scheduled for Saturday, December 28, at Buffalo's War Memorial Stadium. The teams had split their two games during the regular season, with the home team winning each. Therefore, in this tie-breaker, the host Bills were slight favorites.

Despite the predictions, the visiting Patriots won the playoff game 26–8 on a snowy field. All-everything quarterback Babe Parilli ruled the day by throwing two touchdown passes to fullback Larry Garron. End Gino Cappelletti, put on his other hat and kicked three field goals.

With the win, the Boston Patriots became the Eastern Division champions, while the Western champion San Diego Chargers (11–3) were idle. The AFL championship game was played the following week in southern California on January 5, where San Diego had no problem routing the Patriots 51–10 at Balboa Stadium.

On Sunday, Sept 8, in a game played at Alumni Stadium for the home team Patriots, the Holovak squad beat the NY Jets W (38-14) before 24,120. On Saturday, Sept 14 at San Diego, the Patriots were defeated by the Chargers at Balboa Stadium before 26,097. Then on Sept 22 at Oakland, the Pats beat the Raiders W (20–14) at Frank Youell Field before 17,131. At Denver on Sept 29, the Patriots lost a tight match L (10-14) at Bears Stadium before 18,636. At NY Oct 5,

the Jets beat the Patriots L (31–24) at the Polo Grounds before 16,769.

On Oct 11 at home the Patriots beat the Oakland Raiders W(20–14) at Fenway Park before 26,494. On Oct 18 at home in a game played at Fenway Park, Boston beat up on the Denver Broncos W (40–21) at Fenway Park before 25,418. This brought the record to winning status at 4-3, On Oct 26 at Buffalo, the Patriots fell to the Bills L (21-28) at War Memorial Stadium before 29,243. Then on Nov1, at home against Houston, the Patriots ripped the Oilers W (45-3) at Fenway Park before 31,185. On Nov 10 at home against San Diego at Fenway Park, the Chargers beat the Patriots L (6-7) before 28,402

At home on Nov 17, Boston tied Kansas City T (24–24) at Fenway Park before 17,200. On Nov 24, all AFL games were postponed to December 22 because of the Kennedy Assassination. On Dec 1, the Patriots beat the Buffalo Bills W (17–7) at Fenway Park before 16,981. At Houston on Dec 7, the Patriots pounded the Oilers W (46–28) at Jeppesen Stadium before 23,462. Closing in on a winning season, in the finale on Dec 14, at Kansas City, the Patriots lost to the Chiefs L (3-35) at Municipal Stadium before 12,598 bringing in a another winning record of 7–6–1 and qualifying for the playoffs. On Dec 22, the Patriots received their Bye week, which had originally been scheduled for December 1.

## 1963 Divisional Playoff Game

On Dec. 28, 1963, at Buffalo, the AFL divisional playoff game was contested. The Boston Patriots prevailed over Buffalo's Bills by a score of 26 to 8. On a slippery field at War Memorial Stadium in Buffalo with an inch of snow, visiting Boston led 16–0 at halftime and won 26–8. The defense stole the show as the Patriots dominated the Bills in front of a War Memorial Stadium crowd of 33,044. Boston allowed only 7 yards rushing while forcing three fumbles and making four interceptions. Quarterback Babe Parilli was “on” that day connecting with fullback Larry Garron on two touchdown passes . Gino Cappelletti kicked four field goals.

## 1963 AFL Championship Game

On January 5, 1964, at San Diego, in the American Football League (AFL) Championship game, San Diego walloped the Boston Patriots 51-10 to win the AFL Championship. It was just one week after stuffing the Bills, no matter what they tried, the Patriots could not stop the Chargers' ground attack. San Diego's Keith Lincoln amassed 206 yards on 13 carries (15.8-yard average) and the Chargers put up 610 total yards. It was not pretty.

### 1964 Mike Holovak, Coach #2

The 1964 Boston Patriots football team competed in their fifth season of Professional American Football League (AFL) football. They were led by Mike Holovak in his fourth of eight years as head coach. Billy Sullivan was the owner. The Patriots had a better record this year 10-3-1 with three additional victories. They missed the playoffs but finished second in the AFL's Eastern Division.

They beat the Buffalo Bills W (26-8) in the Divisional Playoffs and they lost the AFL Championship (AFL equivalent of the Super Bowl) at the Chargers L (8-26).



Fenway Park was converted into a home for the Patriots starting in 1963. This photo was taken in December 1964 after snow fell. See the goal posts.

In season opener Sunday Sept. 13 at Oakland, the Patriots beat the Raiders W (17-14) in a close match at Frank Youell Field before 21,126. The following week, Sept 20, at San Diego, the Patriots got by the Chargers W (33-28) at Balboa Stadium before 20,568. On Sept 27, the Patriots beat the New York Jets W ( 26-10) at Alumni Stadium before 22,716. On Sunday, Oct 4, at Denver's Mile High Stadium, the Patriots remained unbeaten at 4-0-0 by trouncing the Broncos W (39-10) before 15,485.

After this, the Patriots got their first blemish as they played the first of three Friday games in a row on Oct 9 at home against the San Diego Chargers L (17-26) at Fenway Park before 35,096. On Friday, Oct 16, they tied the Oakland Raiders T (43-43) at Fenway Park before 23,279. Then on Fri Oct 23, the Patriots beat the Kansas City Chiefs W( 24-7) at Fenway Park before 27,400. At New York On Oct 31, Boston was whipped by the Jets e L (14-35) at Shea Stadium before 45,003. At Fenway Park on Nov 6, , the Patriots squeaked by with a pine point margin over the Houston Oilers W (25-24) before 28,161. Next at Buffalo, the Patriots beat the Bills on Nov 15 W (36-28) at War Memorial Stadium before 42,308

On Nov 20, Boston neat Denver W (12-7) at Fenway Park before 24,979. On Nov 29, at Houston, the Patriots defeated the Oilers W (34-17) at Jeppesen Stadium before 17,560. At Kansas City on Dec 6, the Patriots beat the Chiefs W ( 31-24) at Municipal Stadium before 13,166. In the final game of the season, on Dec 20, the Buffalo Bills defeated the Boston Patriots L (14-24) at a full house at Fenway Park before 38,021.

## **1965 Mike Holovak, Coach #2**

The 1965 Boston Patriots football team competed in their fifth season of Professional American Football League (AFL) football. They were led by Mike Holovak in his fifth of eight years as head coach. Billy Sullivan was the owner. The Patriots had a losing record this year 4-8-2 with six less victories. They missed the playoffs, finishing third in the AFL's Eastern Division.

The pundits look back and cannot figure out how the miserable 1965 season with a 4-8-2 record could have found a spot to squeeze in after a 10-3-1 season in 1964 and an 8-4-2 season in 1966. They are even more puzzled, and you will be too when we examine the miserable 1967 and 1968 seasons which resulted in Mike Holovak being forced to become a professional Backgammon Player at Boston's historic Green Dragon Tavern. Sorry, just kidding! But, I am getting thirsty.

At Buffalo on Sept 11 in the season opener. The Bills defeated the Patriots L (7-24) before 45,502. On Sept 9, at Houston, the Oilers defeated the Patriots L (10-31). Then on Sept 24, at home, in Fenway Park, Denver beat the Patriots L (10-27) making it three losses in a row. So far, not good! There would be two more losses before a tie would break the losing string. At KC, the Chiefs defeated the Patriots on Oct 3, L (17-27). At home, on Oct 8, Oakland beat the Pats L (10-24).

On Oct 17, at home, the Patriots tied the San Diego Chargers T (13-13) before 20,924 at Fenway. On Oct 24, at Oakland, the Patriots lost L (21-30). On Oct 31, at San Diego, the Patriots grabbed their first win of the year against the Chargers W (22-6) before 33,366. At home on Nov 7, Buffalo defeated Boston L (7-23). On Nov 14, at home, the New York Jets beat the Patriots L (20-30) before 24,415

At home on Nov 21, the Patriots tied Kansas City T (10-10) before 13,056. On Nov 28, at New York, the Patriots beat the Jets in a close match W (27-23) before a big crowd for the AFL of 59,334. After the bye week, on Dec 12, at Denver, the Patriots beat the Broncos W (28-20). At home again in the season finale against the Houston Oilers, the Patriots won big W (42-14).

## **Merger of AFL & NFL**

As much as fans loved all the football that they got with two leagues, it created some havoc for the NFL. They chose to end the issues by agreeing to a merger with the AFL in 1966. The merger among other things assured the long-term viability of the prior AFL teams. They would survive and thrive in the merged NFL.

On June 8, 1966, the two rivals—the National Football League (NFL) and the American Football League (AFL)—jointly announced that they would merge. The first “Super Bowl” between the two leagues took place at the end of the 1966 season. The Boston Patriots were in a slump at the time and during the transition, they were not Super Bowl contenders.

It took until the 1970 season for the leagues to unite their operations and integrate their regular season schedules. Meanwhile for fans it was just like the AFL still existed.

Looking back to the beginning of the AFL, in America, when there is a business opportunity, the business persons capable of entering the marketplace assure themselves of a spot in the game. By 1958, pro football as played in the NFL, appeared to be on a pretty solid basis. Further proof came in the 1958 National Football League championship game between the Baltimore Colts and New York Giants. The game drew 45 million viewers on NBC TV and established pro football as an entertainment commodity to rival baseball, which until then was known as the national pastime.

It was as if American businessmen were waiting for an event so they could get their share. The NFL was not 100% ready to capitalize on their own opportunity to expand successfully though there was a huge line of businessmen waiting to purchase new franchises in new markets. Most were as the pundits say: “arrogantly turned away.” Not only would they be doomed not share in the fun and profits of pro-football, but the current owners seemed to gloat over their own success and just as much in their ability to turn others away.

Keeping cats out of the sport of football, we know that there are more ways than one of digging for money. But it is admitted that to dig for money, often requires a lot of money. The potential for riches and an awful lot of fun prompted Lamar Hunt, the wealthy son of an oil tycoon, to recruit seven other businessmen from cities that were hungry for pro football. Hunt’s idea was to form a rival league to the NFL. If they could not join them, this group of businessmen were ready to beat them. They did not enjoy one bit being tossed into the rubbish by the NFL

Clearly this was not a good thing for the NFL. Nonetheless NFL Commissioner Bert Bell was a fine gentleman and he publicly welcomed the new league stating that “competition would stimulate both leagues.” For the NFL an alarm clock went off and they went to work rather than sit idly by and wait for the AFL to gain market share. Out of nowhere, new franchises were made available. The first was right in Lamar Hunt’s hometown of Dallas and then into Minneapolis, another of the cities the AFL had already designated for a franchise.

There was too much at stake for a small setback to become a major setback and so the American Football League quickly chose Oakland as a replacement for Minneapolis. The rest of the original eight cities were Lamar Hunt’s Dallas (Texans), which soon moved to Kansas City. There was also Boston, Buffalo, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles, and New York.

The league immediately piqued fan interest with a highly entertaining product on the field, and a high-flying aerial brand of football that contrasted with the stingy defenses and running attacks of the older NFL. By 1962, the AFL had drawn 1 million fans to its games. It was destiny with so much support and a dedicated fan base that the AFL was going to make it and make it big.

In 1965, the AFL got a big television contract with NBC. That same year, New York Jets owner Sonny Werblin lured quarterback Joe Namath out of the University of Alabama to the AFL with the biggest contract in pro football history. The NFL’s prediction and hope that the AFL would attract only second-rate players and has-been former NFL players was not how this game was being played.

Instead, the two leagues became major competitors in all aspects from players to fans to coaches. An unspoken agreement that one league would not sign the other league’s players was broken in 1966 when the NFL’s New York Giants signed place-kicker Pete Gogolak away from the AFL’s Buffalo Bills. As neither league felt that they could afford a bidding war, owners soon began to talk of a merger.

Under the merger agreement that was announced on June 8, 1966, the new league would be called the NFL, and split into the American Football Conference (AFC) and the National Football



Conference (NFC) All eight of the original AFL teams would all be absorbed by the NFL.

This was unlike the move by the NFL in 1946 in which the NFL merged with the older rival All-America Football Conference but only brought in the Baltimore, Cleveland and San Francisco franchises and dissolved four other teams. My speculation is that if the NFL tried this, the four teams left would find four other teams and rebuild a new league to compete against the “merged” league. But, it did not happen.

In the first two Super Bowls, the NFC, which was really the former NFL, made a much better showing than the AFC but the notion of the NFC being the end all and beat all would soon be diminished.

For the first games, Vince Lombardi’s Green Bay Packers handled their AFC challenger quite easily. In Super Bowl III, however, Jersey Joe Namath, a brash braggadocio type predicted an “AFL” victory” and he pulled it off. The New York Jets upset the favored Baltimore Colts, and this created a brand-new era of greater parity and respect between the two leagues.

I do not have to tell you that the Super Bowl, played between the AFC and NFC champions at the end of every NFL season, is now the most watched televised sporting event in the world with more than 140 million viewers.

## **1966 Mike Holovak, Coach #2**

The 1966 Boston Patriots football team competed in their fifth season of Professional American Football League (AFL) football. They played most of their games in Fenway Park except when competing with the Red Sox for a ballpark. They were led by Mike Holovak in his sixth of eight years as head coach. Billy Sullivan was the owner. The Patriots had a great record again this year of 8-4-2 with four more victories. They missed the playoffs, and they finished second in the AFL’s Eastern Division. It was another great season, but it would be Mike Holovak’s last in the winner’s circle as the team as you will see went down the big slide in 1967 and 1968.

Even after Holovak left, and he did at the end of 1968, things would not get better immediately for Boston. I sure wish I could bring somebody else in to tell the fine New England Patriots' but since I can't I will do the (What's the opposite of honors?). This season is one to be enjoyed in the writing and in the reading as it would be the last winning season the Patriots posted as an AFL team. The Patriots would not have another such season until 1976, by which time the team was in the NFL as the New England Patriots. Enjoy this season summary. I know I will.

As we display the season summaries, because it is in some ways non-essential information to the games themselves, we will not always show the attendance but will again at times. Note that the attendance continues to go up as the interest in pro-football and AFL football in particular kept mounting through the 1960's until the NFL took a big notice and made an offer to the AFL that it could not refuse.

After the first game, the season opener on Saturday, Sept 10 at San Diego, in which the Chargers shut out the Patriots L (0-24) at Balboa Stadium before 29,539, Patriot fans were not at all pleased with the season prognosis. After a 4-8-2 season the year before, the fans were looking for more than miserable.

The Patriots proved they could win in the second game at Denver, beating the Broncos W (24-10) at Mile High Stadium before 25,337. At home in game 3, on Sept 25, the Patriots were soundly beaten by the Kansas City Chiefs L (24-43) at Fenway Park before 22,641. On Oct 2, the Patriots tied the NY Jets T (24-24) at Fenway Park. At Buffalo on Oct 8, the Patriots doubled the Bills score in winning the game W (20-10) at War Memorial Stadium bringing the 1966 record to 2-2. The Buffalo game was seen by 45,542 fans. After the Bye week, the Patriots came back ready to take no prisoners.

On Oct 23 at home, the Patriots beat the San Diego Chargers W (35-17) at Fenway Park before 32,371. At home again, on Oct 30, the Patriots got by the Oakland Raiders W (24-21) at Fenway Park. Again, at home on Nov 6, the Denver Broncos beat the Patriots L (10-17) before 18,154. On Nov 13, at Fenway Park, the Patriots beat the Houston Oilers W (27-21) in a close match.

At Kansas City, the Chiefs tied the Patriots T (27-27) in Municipal Stadium bringing their very positive record to 5-3-2. Before 41,475 fans. Then, against the Miami Dolphins for the first time ever on Nov 27 in a game played at the Miami Orange Bowl, the Patriots took the prize, W (20-14) before 22,754. On Dec 4, at Fenway, the Patriots squeaked by W (14-3) before 39,350. At Houston on Dec 11, the Patriots defeated the Oilers big-time W (38-14) in Rice Stadium before 17,100. Ending the season, the Patriots were looking for a win but got nothing more than a respectable showing on Dec 17, against the New York Jets L (28-38) at Shea Stadium before 58,921. And, so the Patriots finished well at 8-4-2.

Now, let's move on to the dark years.

## **1967 Mike Holovak, Coach #2**

The 1967 Boston Patriots football team competed in their eighth season of Professional American Football League (AFL) football. They played most of their games in Fenway Park except when competing with the Red Sox for a ballpark. They were led by Mike Holovak in his seventh of eight years as head coach. Billy Sullivan was the owner. The Patriots had a losing record this year of 3-10-1. They missed the playoffs, and they finished fifth in the AFL's Eastern Division.

The season this year was still fourteen games but there were two byes scattered about the games. The season opener was played at Denver on September 3, 1967. The Broncos beat the Patriots L (21-26) before 35,488. At San Diego on Sept 9, the Chargers beat the Patriots L (14-28). On Sept 17, at Oakland, the Raiders prevailed L (7-35) before 26,289. For the fourth game out of territory in a row, at Buffalo, the Patriots finally got a win (23-0) against the Bills on Sept 24. After a bye week, San Diego played the Patriots to a tie T (31-31) at home before 23,620

On Oct 15 at home, the Pats beat the Miami Dolphins W (41-10). Then, on Oct 22 at home, the Oakland Raiders pummeled the Patriots L (14-48) before 25,057. The NY Jets were drawing huge numbers of fans to their games. On Oct 29, before 62,784, the other team from NY beat the Patriots L (23-30). At home on Nov 5, the Patriots beat the Houston Oilers W 18-7 before 19,422. Then, on

Nov 12 at home the Kansas City Chiefs drubbed the Patriots L (10-33) before 23,010.

At home on Nov 19, The Patriots lost in a close match to the New York Jets L (24-29) before 26,790. On Nov 26 at Houston, the Oilers beat the Patriots L (6-27) before 28,044. After the second bye week, at home, on Dec. 9, the Buffalo Bills thumped the Patriots L (16-44) before. The next week, the Patriots played the at Miami against the Dolphins on Dec 17 and lost their last game of the season L (32-41) before 25,969

### **1968 Mike Holovak, Coach #2**

The 1968 Boston Patriots football team competed in their ninth season of Professional American Football League (AFL) football. They played most of their games in Fenway Park except when competing with the Red Sox for a ballpark. This would be the last year for Fenway Park. The following year, the Patriots would play at Boston College's Alumni Stadium. They were led by Mike Holovak in his eight and last year as head coach. Billy Sullivan was the owner. The Patriots had a losing record this year of 4-10, just a hair better than the 3-10-1 season of 1967. They missed the playoffs, and they finished fourth in the AFL's Eastern Division.

In the season opener on Sept 8 at Buffalo, the Patriots grabbed a rare opening day victory against the Bills W (16-7) before 38,865. After a very early bye week, the Patriots lost to the NY Jets at home in Fenway Park on Sept 22 L (31-47) before 22,002. On Sept 29, at Fenway, the Patriots won again—this time against the Denver Broncos W (20-1& bringing their early record to 2-1 for the year. On Oct 6, at Oakland, the Raiders whooped the Patriots L (10-41) before 44,253. Then at home, on Oct 13, the Houston Oilers shut out the Patriots L (16-0) before 32,502

On Oct 20, at home, the Patriots beat the Buffalo Bills at home W 23-6 before 21,082. At NY on Oct 27, the Jets pounded the Patriots L (14-48) before 62,351. On Nov 3, at home, the Denver Broncos defeated the Patriots L (35-14). At home again on Nov 10, the San Diego Chargers beat the Patriots L (17-27). Next, on Nov 17, at Kansas City, the Chiefs prevailed L (17-31).

On November 24, at home, the Miami Dolphins beat the Patriots L (10-34) before 18,305. At home on Dec 1, the Patriots beat the Cincinnati Bengals W (33-14). Then, on Dec 8 at Miami, the Patriots were squashed by the Dolphins L (7-38). In the last game of the 1968 season on Dec 15 at Houston, the Oilers smothered the Patriots L (17-45) before 34,198



## Chapter 4 Coach Clive Rush 1969-1970

Coach #3 Clive Rush  
Coach #4 John Mazur

<u>Year</u>	<u>Coach</u>	<u>League</u>	<u>Conf</u>	<u>Div</u>	<u>Pl</u>	<u>W-L-T</u>
1969	Clive Rush	AFL	East		3rd	4 10 0
1970	Clive Rush (1-6)	NFL	AFC	East	5th	2 12 0
<b><u>1969-1970 Clive Rush final record (5-16-0)</u></b>						
1970 John Mazur (1-6)						



Clive Rush 3<sup>rd</sup> Head Coach Boston Patriots

### Clive Rush & John Mazur, Boston Coaches

Before arriving in Boston, Clive Rush put in six good seasons (1963-1968) as the New York Jets offensive coordinator. He meticulously constructed what would become the AFL's first Super Bowl-winning offense. After experiencing such championship successes, Rush became a hot commodity as a potential head coach, and he was not about to stay an assistant coach with all the calls he was getting.

Eventually, he answered the phone and it was the Boston Patriots. After a few conversations, they offered Rush a contract that he could

not refuse, and he was named as head coach of the Boston Patriots for the 1969 season. Despite the hype, the Pats did not improve their record. And finished with a 4-10 record again in 1969. This was not what was expected as there was no spark or so there seemed that could take the offense, having finished eighth of the 10 AFL teams in scoring.

Rush was a man of action and he moved quickly as Patriots head coach, trading away stars Leroy Mitchell and Nick Buoniconti almost immediately. There was no magic wand and it led to his early release in 1970. In favor of John Mazur.

Clive Rush's tenure in Boston was shorter than expected. With the 4-10 repeat performance, nobody was looking to keep Rush any longer than need be. The Pats bought his contract seven games into the 1970s season when he was sidelined by health issues. He was replaced by Coach John Mazur

When Mazur took over for Rus, he became the historical last coach of the Boston Patriots and then the following year, he would become the first head coach of the New England Patriots

He coached pro football for 19 years with the Bills, Patriots, Eagles, and Jets, and he received two AFL championship rings from his days as Buffalo's offensive coordinator. He's a tough Marine -- there are no ex-Marines. Mazur once ordered star running back Duane Thomas, participating in his first workout with the Patriots after being acquired from the Dallas Cowboys, off the team. He had the guts and the courage of his convictions. Mazur said Thomas reported to training camp in Amherst and brought attitude with him. That was that.

Mazur was once a quarterback on the Notre Dame team that won the national championship in 1949. In 1951, he was an honorable mention All-American. He coached at Tulane, Marquette, and Boston University before joining the Bills in 1962. There he successfully instituted the two-man quarterback system with Daryle Lamonica and Jack Kemp and enjoyed postseason success. Mazur wears one of the championship rings; the other he gave to his son. He will never sell it, he said.



He joined the Patriots in 1969 as offensive coordinator. In 1970 he was named interim coach when Clive Rush was fired in midseason and finished 1-6. In 1971, he was given a one-year contract before Upton Bell was named general manager. He lost 25 pounds worrying about drafting quarterback Jim Plunkett. He slept in his office at Schaefer Stadium and compiled a 6-8 record, the team's best record in five years.

At the end of the 1971 season, GM Bell, who wanted to hire his own coach, made a deal with the Patriots board of directors and owner Billy Sullivan. If Mazur lost the last game to the reigning Super Bowl champion Colts, Mazur would be fired.

But wide receiver Randy Vataha caught an 88-yard touchdown pass in the fourth quarter to give the Patriots a stunning 21-17 upset. News accounts said Bell looked like he was rooting against his own team.

"That's true, I heard that same story," Mazur said. "That made me feel like I wanted to punch him in the mouth, but I couldn't do it. That would've ruined me, which would have given him satisfaction, too. I didn't want to give him any." He was offered a one-year contract. His instincts told him not to take it. His wife told him that all the other coaches would get fired and they had families, too. "I led with my heart," he said.

By mid-1972, after six straight losses, Mazur resigned, his head coaching record just 9-21. Not everything happens the way it is supposed to.

Mazur liked New England even though as he said, they did not have the greatest of talent at the time, but they had a lot of great guys who gave the team their hearts.

Mazur, who is struggling on a skimpy pension and is riddled with Parkinson's disease, is a big Bill Belichick fan. He thinks the head coach is doing a hell of a job. And he knows Belichick is a good guy, too. He knew his old man when he was coaching at the Naval Academy."

Mazur says that a lot of guys are suffering like him with small pensions from the NFL. He said his is \$1,500 per month pension had not increased in more than a quarter century. He would not mind if somebody called his attention to owner today's owner, Bob Kraft. Mazur does not want to appear like a beggar, but things are tough. He is quoted as saying this about Kraft: "I understand he's a pretty nice fellow. Maybe guys like that can get together and say, 'Let this guy take his trip to Boston.'" Maybe he doesn't know about my situation."■

### **1969 Clive Rush, Coach #3**

The 1969 Boston Patriots football team competed in their tenth and last season of Professional American Football League (AFL) football. In 1970, the NFL / AFL merger would be complete, so this was the last year of the Patriots playing in the AFL. However, the Boston Patriots team would live-on for one more season.

The Boston Patriots this year played their games in Boston College's Alumni Stadium. This would be a one year's engagement as the following year, games would be played at Harvard Stadium. The Patriots were led by Clive Rush his first of two years as head coach. Billy Sullivan was the owner. The Patriots had a losing record this year of 4-10, exactly the same as the prior year. They missed the playoffs, and they tied for third place in the AFL's Eastern Division.

The 1969 Season began on September 14, 1969 at Denver. The Broncos blasted Boston L (7-35) at Mile High Stadium before 43,679. At home v Kansas City on Sept 21, the Chiefs blanked Boston L (0-31) at the first game at Alumni Stadium before 22,002

On Sept 28 at home the Oakland Raiders beat Boston at home L 23-38) before 19,069. On Oct 5, the defending Super Bowl Champ, New York Jets beat Boston at L (14-23) at Alumni Stadium. On Oct 11, at Buffalo, the Bills beat the Patriots L (16-23) before 25,584.

At home on Oct 19, the San Diego Chargers just beat the Patriots by a score of L (10-13) at Alumni Stadium before 18,346. At New York on Oct 26, the Jets defeated the Patriots L (17-23) before 62,298. On Nov 2, at home, the Patriots beat the Houston Oilers W (24-0). At

Cincinnati on Nov 16, the Patriots defeated the Bengals W (25–14) at Nippert Stadium before 27,927.

On Nov 23 at home, Boston beat Buffalo W (35–21) in Alumni Stadium before 25,584. On Nov 30, at Miami, Boston beat the Dolphins W (38–23) before 32,121. On Dec 7 at San Diego, the Chargers won W (18–28). On Dec 14 in the season finale, at Houston, the Oilers prevailed L (23–27) before 39,215

## The Merged NFL / AFL AKA, the NFL

There was a lot of disagreement in taking the sixteen NFL teams at the time of the merger and seamlessly folding in the new AFL teams. The final format agreed on included two conferences, the NFC and the AFC, and six divisions with each conference having an East, Central, and a West. The final configuration for 1970 looked like this:

- **NFC East:** Dallas, New York (Giants), Philadelphia, St. Louis, Washington
- **NFC Central:** Chicago, Detroit, Green Bay, Minnesota
- **NFC West:** Atlanta, Los Angeles, New Orleans, San Francisco
- **AFC East:** Baltimore, Buffalo, Miami, Boston, New York (Jets)
- **AFC Central:** Cincinnati, Cleveland, Houston, Pittsburgh
- **AFC West:** Denver, Kansas City, Oakland, San Diego

This final arrangement of cities / teams would keep most of the pre-merger NFL teams in the NFC and the AFL teams in the AFC. Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Baltimore were placed in the AFC in order to balance it out, while the NFC equalized the competitive strength of its East and West divisions rather than sorting out teams just geographically.

Division alignment in 1970 was largely intended to preserve the pre-merger setups, keeping traditional rivals in the same division. Plans were also made to add two expansion teams—the Tampa Bay

Buccaneers and Seattle Seahawks—but this would not take place until 1976, seven years after the merger.

As you can see, Boston played the 1970 season as part of the AFC East.

**1970 Clive Rush, Coach #3**

**1970 John Mazur Coach #4**

The 1970 Boston Patriots football team competed in their first eleventh season overall and their first season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They were in the EAST Division of the American Football Conference (AFC). They played their games in Harvard Stadium. The use of Harvard's stadium would be a one year's engagement. The following year, they would move into their own newly built arena known as Schaefer Stadium.

The 1970 Patriots were led by Clive Rush in his second year for the first half of the year in which they had a record of 1-6-0. Rush was replaced mid-season by John Mazur who also compiled a 1-6-0 record. Billy Sullivan was the owner. The Patriots had a combined losing record this year of 2-10. It was the worst Patriot's season ever. They missed the playoffs for the seventh straight season, and they finished in fifth place (last) in the AFL's Eastern Division.

This was the last season the Patriots would be called the "Boston" Patriots. The following year, they would turn in the "Boston" name and instead they would operate from then to now as the "New England" Patriots. Their final season known as Boston did not go as anybody had planned, as the Patriots would struggle all season and would finish 2-12 with two coaches--the worst record in the NFL.

After winning their first game against the Miami Dolphins, the Patriots would lose 9 in a row before beating the Buffalo Bills on the road. The season concluded with an embarrassing 45-7 loss to the Cincinnati Bengals in Cincinnati. Head coach Clive Rush would quit the season at the midpoint because of medical reasons.



Coach Mazur, Adams, Vataha & Plunkett

His replacement, John Mazur, did not do much better of a job. Mazur would end up coaching the team next season. The Patriots would score the fewest points in the league in 1970, scoring only 149 points, while allowing 361. Watch the games played this season as with 25 other teams in the expanded NFL, the Patriots play a number of teams, such as the NY Giants for the first time this year.

Boston's last season and home opener as the Boston Patriots was played on September 20, 1970 at Harvard Stadium. The Patriots broke the scourge from the prior season and defeated the Miami Dolphins W (27-14) before 32,607. At home again on Sept 27, the New York Jets beat Boston L (21-31). For the third home game in a row, the Baltimore Colts slid by the Patriots on Oct 4, in a close match L (6-14). This was followed at Kansas City on Oct 11, as the Chiefs beat Boston L (10-23). On Oct 18 at home, the Patriots were shut out by the New York Giants L (16-0)

At Baltimore on Oct 25, the Colts manhandled the Patriots L (3-27) before 60,240. At home on Nov 1, the Buffalo Bills smothered the Patriots L (10-45) before 31,148. At St. Louis, on Nov 8, the

Cardinals shut out the Patriots L (0-31) before 46,466. John Mazur took over the helm for the Patriots from this point in the season until the end. At home, on Nov 15, the San Diego Chargers defeated Boston L (14-16). Then, on Nov 22 at New York, the Jets beat the Patriots L (3-17) before 61,822.

On Nov 29 at Buffalo, the Patriots got their second win of the season—this one against the Bills W (14-10). That was the last win of the season and the last win ever for the Boston Patriots. At Miami on Dec 6, the Dolphins beat the Patriots L 20-37) before 51,032. At home on Dec 13, the NFL Expansion Vikings beat the Patriots W (35-14) before 37,819. On Dec 20, 1970 in the season finale and the last game played as the Boston Patriots, the team took a big beating from the Bengals at Cincinnati L (7-45) before 60,157.

## Chapter 5 Coach John Mazur 1970-1972

Coach #4 John Mazur

Coach #5 Phil Bengtson

1970 John Mazur (1-6)

### New England Patriots

<u>Year</u>	<u>Coach</u>	<u>Leag</u>	<u>Conf</u>	<u>Div</u>	<u>Pl</u>	<u>W-L-T</u>
1971	John Mazur	NFL	AFC	East	3rd	6 8 0
1972	John Mazur (2-7)	NFL	AFC	East	5th	3 11 0

1971-1972 John Mazur final record (9-21-0)

1972 Phil Bengtson (1-4)

1972 Phil Bengtson final record (1-4-0)



## 1971 John Mazur, Coach #4

The 1971 former Boston Patriots football team competed in their twelfth season in professional football and their second season in the National Football League (NFL). This year the team would change its name to the New England Patriots and it would move into Shaeffer Stadium, (named after the brewery). The stadium would be renamed several times in its lifetime before being replaced in 2002 by the luxurious Gillette Stadium.

The Patriots were led by John Mazur in his second and only full-year of three years as head coach. Billy Sullivan was the owner. The Patriots had a losing record this year of 6-8-0 and showed promise. They missed the playoffs, and they tied for third place in the AFL's Eastern Division.

The 1971 season would be the first that the team played as the New England Patriots, having changed its name from the Boston Patriots, briefly to the Bay State Patriots before changing it again to the New England Patriots. Their idea in the New England name was to help regionalize the franchise's equal distance from Boston and Providence.

Their record of six wins and eight losses, was much better than the past several years but it was no cigar. It brought them to a third-place finish in the AFC East Division. The Patriots enjoyed playing in a brand new stadium known as Schaefer Stadium in Foxborough, Massachusetts after playing in three different stadiums the previous three seasons in Boston and four stadiums overall in their time as the Boston Patriots.

Mazur showed who was boss in training camp, after the team with the urging of GM Upton Bell had acquired Duane Thomas from the Dallas Cowboys, where he had a label as a "disgruntled running back." To get Thomas, the Patriots had given up Carl Garrett and Halvor Hagen. Almost upon arriving, Thomas became embroiled in a conflict with coach John Mazur, prompting Patriots general manager Upton Bell to request that Commissioner Pete Rozelle to void the trade three days after it had been made. Rozelle granted Bell's request, and the traded players returned to where they had been prior to the deal.



The Patriots kept Hagen and Jackson in exchange for a second (#35-Robert Newhouse) and third round draft choices in the 1972 NFL draft. Thomas returned to the Cowboys, but decided to keep silent all season long, refusing to speak to teammates, management, and the media.

Thomas's story is interesting even though he made life unpleasant for everybody with whom he came in contact. He was not very likeable, but he was a great football player. There is no question that he helped Dallas win all the marbles including the Super Bowl (VI). His stoical demeanor and cheap shots at pundits apparently cost him Super Bowl MVP.

He was as reportedly voted as the Super Bowl Most Valuable Player by an overwhelming margin. Thomas, however, had boycotted the media throughout the season as well, and Larry Klein, editor of Sport, which presented the award, didn't know how Thomas would act at a banquet in New York. With this in mind, Klein chose to announce Dallas QB Roger Staubach as the winner.

During the 1972 offseason he became even more isolated and insubordinate, so he was traded in early August to the San Diego Chargers in exchange for Mike Montgomery and Billy Parks. Some guys never learn. Kudos to John Mazur for recognizing a sour apple.

The 1971 season began on September 19, 1971 at home against the Oakland Raiders. The Patriots prevailed in the first ever game at Schaefer Stadium in Foxborough Massachusetts W (20-6) before 55,405. At home again on Sept 26, the Detroit Lions beat the New England Patriots L (7-34) before a packed house of 61,057. At home for the third game in a row, on Oct 3, the Baltimore Colts beat the Patriots L (3 23) before 61,232. On Oct 10 at home, the Patriots shut out the Jets W (20 0) before 61,357. At Miami on Oct 17, the Dolphins drubbed the Patriots L (3 41) at the Orange Bowl before 58,822.

At Dallas on Oct 24, the Cowboys beat the Patriots L (21 44) at Texas Stadium before 65,70. Then, on Oct 31 at San Francisco, the Patriots went down L (10 27) at Candlestick Park before 45,092

At home on Nov 7 the Patriots defeated the Houston Oilers W (28 20) before 53,155. On Nov 14, at home, the Patriots beat the Buffalo Bills 38 33 at Schaefer Stadium before 57,446. At Cleveland, on Nov 21, the Browns beat the Patriots L (7-27) at Cleveland Municipal Stadium before 65,238.

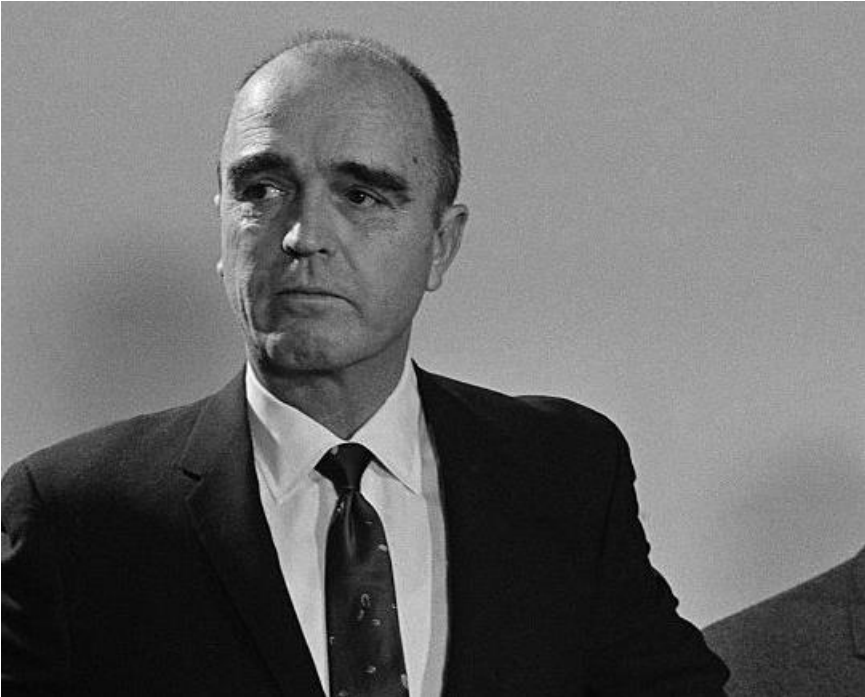
On Nov 28 at Buffalo, the Bills beat the Patriots L (20-27) at War Memorial Stadium before 27,166. At home on Dec 5, the Patriots defeated the Miami Dolphins W (34 13) at Schaefer Stadium before 61,457. At New York in Shea Stadium, on Dec 12, the Jets beat the Patriots L (6-13) before 63,175. In the final game of the season Dec 19 at Baltimore, the New England Patriots bet the Colts W (21 17) at W. Memorial Stadium before 57,942.

**1972 John Mazur, Coach #4**

**1972 Phil Bengtson Coach #5**

The 1972 former Boston Patriots football team competed in their thirteenth season in professional football and their third season in the National Football League (NFL). This was the second year the team would be using the name “New England Patriots” and it was the second year in which Shaeffer Stadium was their home venue. The stadium would be renamed several times in its lifetime before being replaced in 2002 by the luxurious Gillette Stadium.

The Patriots were led by John Mazur in his third season. Mazur would resign before the end of the season and he was replaced by Phil Bengtson for the last five games. Billy Sullivan was the owner. The Patriots had a losing record this year of 3-11-0 and showed no improvement. They missed the playoffs, and they finished in fifth (last) place in the AFC East.



Phil Bengston, Interim Coach New England Patriots (1-4-0)

The New England Patriots were not impressing anybody with a 3-11 record sheared between coaches Mazur and Bengston, contributing to their last place finish in the AFC East Division. The Patriots continued what pundits now call their “period of futility” as they slumped to another poor record of 3-11 and missed the playoffs for the 9th straight season.

After being embarrassed 31-7 in their home opener against Cincinnati, the Patriots would manage to win their next 2 games against Atlanta and Washington. But, they would pick up their midseason misery, as they lost 9 straight games to a miserable 2-10-0 record before finally winning again.

They won their first (and only) road game against the New Orleans Saints. They were winless against AFC opponents. Besides their embarrassing home opening loss, the Patriots had plenty of other bad moments during the season. One good example was a 52-0 thrashing given to them by the powerful Miami Dolphins. This loss

went down as the worst loss in Patriots history and the most points they've ever allowed in a game in franchise history.

Although they did manage to win three games, the 1972 Patriots had the second-worst point differential of any team in a 14-game NFL season, ahead of only the expansion 1976 Buccaneers. They lost eight of their fourteen games by three touchdowns or more, and their first two wins were by a single point. Knowing that eventually Bill Belichick and Tom Brady would come along, makes it easier to endure these early days as the teams was figuring out how to be great.

The 1972 season and home opener was held on September 17, 1971 against the Cincinnati Bengals. The Bengals won the match L(7-31) before 60,999. On Sept 24 at home, the Patriots beat the Atlanta Falcons by one-point W (21-20) before 60,999. On Oct 1, the Patriots beat the Redskins in another cliffhanger W (24-23). Then, on Oct 8 at Buffalo, the Bills overpowered the Patriots L (14-38) before 41,749. Then, on October 15, the Patriots got scorched by the New York Jets L (41-13).

At Pittsburgh, on Oct 22, 1972, the Steelers put a steel hurt on the Patriots in a game decided at the opening kickoff, L (3-33) before 46,081. At New York's Shea Stadium, the Jets whooped the Patriots L (10-34) before 62,867. At home on Nov 6, the Baltimore Colts nosed out the Patriots L (17-24) before 60,998. Then at Miami on Nov 12, the powerful Dolphins shellacked the hapless Patriots by a ton in a shutout L (0-52) before a huge crowd of 80,010. John Mazur had had enough. At this point of the season, Phil Bengston replaced John Mazur on the sidelines. Mazur's record was 2-7 going into game 10.

At home on Nov 19, in game 10, the Patriots lost a close match to the Buffalo Bills L (24-27). At Baltimore on November 26, the Colts skunked the Patriots L (0-31) 1972 before 54,907. At home, on Dec 3, Miami prevailed over New England L (21-37). At New Orleans on Dec 10, the Patriots woke up and snatched a win from the Saints, W (17-10) before 64,889. Then, to close the season at Denver, the Broncos were unstoppable, piling it up on the Patriots to a L (21-45) victory before 51,656 at Mile High Stadium.

## Chapter 6 Coach Chuck Fairbanks, 1973 to 1978

### Coach #6 Chuck Fairbanks

<u>Year Coach</u>	<u>League</u>	<u>Conf/Div</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Record</u>
1973 Chuck Fairbanks	NFL	AFCEast	3rd	5 9 0
1974 Chuck Fairbanks	NFL	AFCEast	3rd	7 7 0
1975 Chuck Fairbanks	NFL	AFCEast	5th	3 11 0
1976 Chuck Fairbanks	NFL	AFCEast	2 <sup>nd</sup>	11 3 0
• Lost Divisional Playoffs (at Raiders) 21–24				
1977 Chuck Fairbanks	NFL	AFCEast	3rd	9 5 0
1978 Chuck Fairbanks	NFL	AFCEast	1st	11 5 0
• Lost Divisional Playoffs (Oilers) 14–31[15]				
<b><u>1973-1978 Chuck Fairbanks final record (46-50-0)</u></b>				

### Who was Coach Chuck Fairbanks

Chuck Fairbanks was a fine coach. Like most NFL coaches, he got his training by coaching college teams. There are so few Heisman Trophy winners given out that a coach who helps produce a Heisman winner often shares in the accolades. Fairbanks produced a Heisman at the University of Oklahoma, Steve Owens, and he later spent six seasons as one of the better coaches of the era with New England. He passed away on April 2, 2013 in Scottsdale, Ariz. at 79. Years of age. It was tough.



Chuck Fairbanks on the sidelines doing what he did best--coaching

The University of Oklahoma announced his cause of death as brain cancer. As the Sooners head coach, Fairbanks was as good as it gets. He pulled off a 52-15-1 in six years with the Sooners, including an Orange Bowl victory his first season. His squad then won consecutive Sugar Bowl wins in 1971-72 before he took over the Patriots. It was no wonder that he was selected as the Patriots were looking to turn their professional program around. Fairbanks quickly got the program in gear, winning 46 games at New England in his time there, which was a Patriot record at the time.

It took a while to get the team in gear but then after a few years of Fairbanks Seasoning, they were ready to go. The Patriots made the playoffs in their fourth season under Fairbanks in 1976 and then two years later, they were on their way to their first outright AFC East title when owner Billy Sullivan, for his own reasons, pulled an ownership prerogative that affected the team negatively.

He angrily suspended Fairbanks for the final regular-season game. The Patriots did not need the game to be in the playoffs, but it was unsettling for the team. Why, you may ask, would the owner step and do something dumb like that? Nobody could fire the owner for a dumb move. Even though fans would have been pleased if he were asked to go. Fairbanks had had enough of pro football. He had agreed to become the coach at the University of Colorado. Coaches go where it suits them best all of the time.

Mr. Fairbanks was asked, and he returned for the playoffs, but with the disruption in continuity, New England lost to Houston. Fairbanks thus ended his time at 0-2 in the playoffs with New England. The unexpected suspension shook up Fairbanks.

At Colorado, Mr. Fairbanks could not rustle up a winner. Nothing good happens overnight anywhere and there was not enough time for Chuck Fairbanks, as there had been at New England for him to have **his** team ready to go as a winner. His record was 7-26 in three seasons, including an 82-42 loss at home to the Sooners and his replacement there, Barry Switzer.

Fairbanks left the Colorado Buffaloes to become coach and general manager of the New Jersey Generals of the USFL. He was fired after one season.

In Fairbanks's first year coaching in 1967, the Oklahoma Sooners had a great record of 10-1 and they beat Tennessee in the Orange Bowl. His teams won 11 games each in his last two seasons with OU, beating Auburn and Penn State in the Sugar Bowl.

When queried, Fairbanks admitted that he had agreed to the suggestion of Switzer, his offensive coordinator, to install the wishbone offense at OU after Texas used it to win a national championship in 1969. A wishbone offense is a formation in which the fullback is positioned closer to the quarterback, with two halfbacks positioned farther back. It's a formation that lends itself to a strong running game.

After becoming head coach, Switzer used the wishbone to win three national titles, matching the number Bud Wilkinson won at Oklahoma from 1947 to 1963, a tenure that included a record 47-game winning streak.

Charles Leo Fairbanks was born to play and to coach football in Detroit on June 10, 1933. He played for Michigan State's 1952 national title team and he served as an assistant at Arizona State and Houston before joining the OU staff in 1966. Owens became one of five Heisman winners for Oklahoma after rushing for 1,523 yards and 23 touchdowns in 1969.

Fairbanks was great at what he did but everything does not always work out all the time. He moved on after football to a great career in real estate and golf-course development. He occasionally worked as a consultant for NFL teams in training camp, including with the Dallas Cowboys when Bill Parcells was coach. He was one of football's good guys.

## **1973 Chuck Fairbanks Coach # 6**

The 1973 New England Patriots football team competed in their fourteenth season in professional football and their fourth season in the National Football League (NFL). This was the third year that

the team would be using the name “New England Patriots” and it was the third year in which Shaeffer Stadium was their home venue. As previously noted, the stadium would be renamed several times in its lifetime before being replaced in 2002 by the luxurious Gillette Stadium.

The Patriots were led by Chuck Fairbanks his first of six seasons. Billy Sullivan was the owner. The Patriots had a losing record this year of 5-9-0 but showed much improvement. They missed the playoffs, and they finished in third place in the AFC East.

Summarizing for clarity, the New England Patriots finished the National Football League's 1973 season with a record of five wins and nine losses. It was not a good season but better than many. It gave the Pats third place in the five-team AFC East Division. It was the first year under head coach and general manager Chuck Fairbanks, hired in January after six seasons as head coach of the Oklahoma Sooners.

Fairbanks hoped to make the team better by drafting great players right out of college. His selections in the 1973 NFL Draft included John Hannah, Sam Cunningham, Ray Hamilton, and Darryl Stingley. The assistant coaches on his offense included future NFL head coaches Ron Erhardt, Sam Rutigliano, and Red Miller. Fairbanks had a great mind and a great coaching ability and his time in New England was well spent for Patriot fans.

## Games of 1973

In the season and home opener at Schaefer Stadium, in Foxborough, Mass., the Patriots took one on the chin from the Buffalo Bills in a losing effort L (13-31) before 56,119 At home again on Sept 23m the Kansas City Chiefs beat New England L (7-10). At Miami on Sept 30, the Dolphins pounded the Patriots L (23-44) before 57,918.

At Miami on Sept 30, the Patriots could not keep up and lost to the Dolphins L (23-44) before 62,508. At home on Oct 7, the Patriots got the best of the Baltimore Colts W (24-16) before 57,044. Then, on Oct 14, the Patriots lost in a two-point game to the New York Jets L (7-9) before 58,659.



At Chicago on Oct 21, the Patriots triumphed over the Bears W (13–10) before 47,643. On Oct 28, at home, the Miami Dolphins whooped the Patriots L (30–14) before 57,617. At Philadelphia, the first time for these two teams to meet, on Nov 4, the Eagles managed a one-point win L (23–24) before 65,070. On Nov 11, at New York's Shea Stadium, the Jets whooped the Patriots L (13–33) before 51,034. When the tough Green Bay Packers came to Foxborough on Nov 18, though unexpected, the Patriots took a piece out of the packers in a fine W (33–24) victory before 60,525.

On Nov 25, at Houston, the Patriots beat the Oilers in a nice shutout W (32–0 before 27,344. At home on Dec 2, the Patriots beat the San Diego Chargers W (30–14) before 58,150. At Buffalo on Dec 9, the Bills powered over the Patriots L (13–37) before 72,470. Wrapping up the season on Dec 16 at Baltimore, the Colts took down the Patriots L (14–18) before 52,065

### **1974 Chuck Fairbanks Coach # 6**

The 1974 New England Patriots football team competed in their fifteenth season in professional football and their fifth season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Chuck Fairbanks his second of six seasons. Billy Sullivan was the owner. The Patriots had a break-even record after a great start this year finishing at 7-7-0. They showed much improvement. They missed the playoffs, and they finished tied for third place in the AFC East.

New England stunned the Super Bowl Champion Miami Dolphins in Week 1 at Schaffer Stadium. The Pats went on to win their first five games on their way to a 6–1 start. However, they struggled in the second half of the season, winning only one game before finishing with a 7–7 record.

In the season and home opener at Schaefer Stadium, in Foxborough, Mass, the Patriots unexpectedly defeated the Super Bowl Champion Miami Dolphins W (34–24) at Schaefer Stadium before 55,006. At New York, on Sept 22, the Patriots beat the Giants at the Yale Bowl W (28–20) before 44,082. At home at Schaefer Stadium on Sept 29,

the Patriots defeated the Los Angeles Rams W (20–14) before 61,279. Then, on Oct 6 at home, the Pats scorched the Baltimore Colts W (42–3) before 59,502. At NY on Oct 13, the Patriots shut out the Jets W (24-0) at Shea Stadium before 57,825.

At Buffalo on Oct 20, in the sixth game of the year, the Patriots fell to the Bills in a tight match L (28–30) at Rich Stadium before 78,935. At Minnesota, the Patriots defeated the Vikings on Oct 27 at Metropolitan Stadium before 48,177. At home on Nov 3, the Buffalo Bills won another squeaker against the Patriots L (28-29) before 61,279. Then on Nov 10 at home the Cleveland Browns beat the Patriots by a TD L (9-21) before 61,279. The following week at home on Nov 10, the NY Jets beat the Patriots by less than a touchdown L (16-21) before 57,115.

At Baltimore, the Patriots finally won another game, and this one was against the Colts W (27-17) bringing the season to 7-4. The Patriots would lose their last three games of the season right after this win. On Dec the Oakland Raiders won L (26–41) at the Oakland Coliseum before 50,120. On Dec 8, the Pittsburgh Steelers won L (17–21) at home in Schaefer Stadium before 52,107. Finally, the Super Bowl Champion Miami Dolphins played the Patriots to a T (7-7) tie in the Miami Orange Bowl before 56,920. This closed out the best season for the Patriots since Mike Holovak's Boston Patriots in 1966.

## **1975 Chuck Fairbanks Coach # 6**

The 1975 New England Patriots football team competed in their sixteenth season in professional football and their sixth season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Chuck Fairbanks his third of six seasons. Billy Sullivan was the owner. The Patriots fell backwards to a record of 3-11-0 this year when there were great expectations. They had a break-even record after finishing 1974 at 7-7-0. a great start this year finishing at 7-7-0. They showed much improvement. They missed the playoffs, and they finished tied for fourth place in the AFC East.

The Patriots had big designs for the 1975 season after a good year in 1974. They were hoping to make the playoffs for the first time since

1963. However, New England continued its forgetful period of the '70s, as they finished 3–11 and they missed the playoffs for the 12th straight season. They started bad, middles OK and then finished miserably, losing their final 6 games to conclude the season. Although they tied the New York Jets for last place in the AFC East, they lost the tiebreaker by virtue of New York winning both matchups during the season.

In the season and home opener at Schaefer Stadium, in Foxborough, Mass, on Sept 28, the Patriots were defeated in a L (0-7) shutout by the Houston Oilers before 51,934. On Sept 28 at home the Miami Dolphins L (22–14) before 60,602. Then, on Oct 5 at New York, the Jets walloped the Patriots L (7-36) before 57,365. At Cincinnati on Oct 12, the Bengals beat the Pats L (10-27) before 51,220. At home on Oct 19, the Patriots beat the Baltimore Colts W (21–10) before 51,417

On October 26 at home the Patriots beat the San Francisco 49ers W (24–16) before 60,358. Then, at St. Louis, on Nov 2, the Cardinals beat the Patriots L (17-24) before 45,907. At San Diego, on Nov 9, the Patriots defeated the Chargers W (33-19) for their last win of the year. Before 24,349. On Nov 16, at home, the Dallas Cowboys nipped the Patriots for the win L (31-34) before 60,905. At Buffalo on Nov 23, the Bills beat the Patriots L (31-45) before 65,655.

At Miami on Dec 1, the Dolphins beat the Patriots all the way from the opening whistle L (7-20) before 61,963. On Dec 7, the Patriots were defeated by the New York Jets L (28-30) before 53,989. Then on Dec 14, at home the Buffalo Bills beat the Patriots L (14-34) before 58,393. In the season finale, the Pats would go out losing on Dec 21 to the Baltimore Colts L (21-34) before 48,678

## **1976 Chuck Fairbanks Coach # 6**

The 1976 New England Patriots football team competed in their seventeenth season in professional football and their seventh season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Chuck Fairbanks his fourth of six seasons. Billy Sullivan was the owner. The Patriots were a great team this year with a record of 11-

3-0 this year. They showed great improvement. They made the playoffs and they finished in second place in the AFC East.

This season was worth waiting for. After a nine-year stretch, (the forgettable years) in which New England / Boston posted just one non-losing season amid eight losing years, the Patriots turned around their fortunes, going 11-3. It goes down in history as their first winning season as an NFL team (their last winning season came in 1966, when the team was still in the AFL).

As we know, the team had gone just 3-11 the previous season, and was considered a "Cinderella team" in 1976. Nobody expected what a great year they would have. Coach Chuck Fairbanks was named NFL Coach of the Year, and cornerback Mike Haynes was named NFL Rookie of the Year.

The 1976 Patriots not only had a great record; they had great stats. The team rushed for a total of 2,957 yards (averaging five yards per carry) and scored 376 points, both second-best in the league. The 2,957 yards rushing were the fifth-highest total in NFL history at the time. The team's 5.0 yards per carry was the best in the NFL and remains higher than all Super Bowl champions except the 1973 Miami Dolphins whose run game was 5.0 yards per carry.

The Patriots also were great thieves on defense as they led the league in takeaways at 50. The Pats finished third in the league in turnover differential at plus-14.

The Patriots made only their second playoff appearance in their history and their first since 1963, but lost to the eventual Super Bowl champion Oakland Raiders in the first round of the playoffs. Earlier in the season, the Patriots handed the Raiders their only loss of the season with a blowout final score of 48-17. However, controversial roughing the passer penalty on Ray Hamilton on a Raiders drive late in the playoff game dimmed the Patriots' hopes of defeating the Raiders again, but they were in the game all the way.

Despite the playoff loss, the team has been considered one of the most talented in Patriots history; in 2004, Patriots head coach Bill Belichick, who was an assistant coach for the Detroit Lions in 1976, called this Patriots team "loaded", a "who's who team." Bill

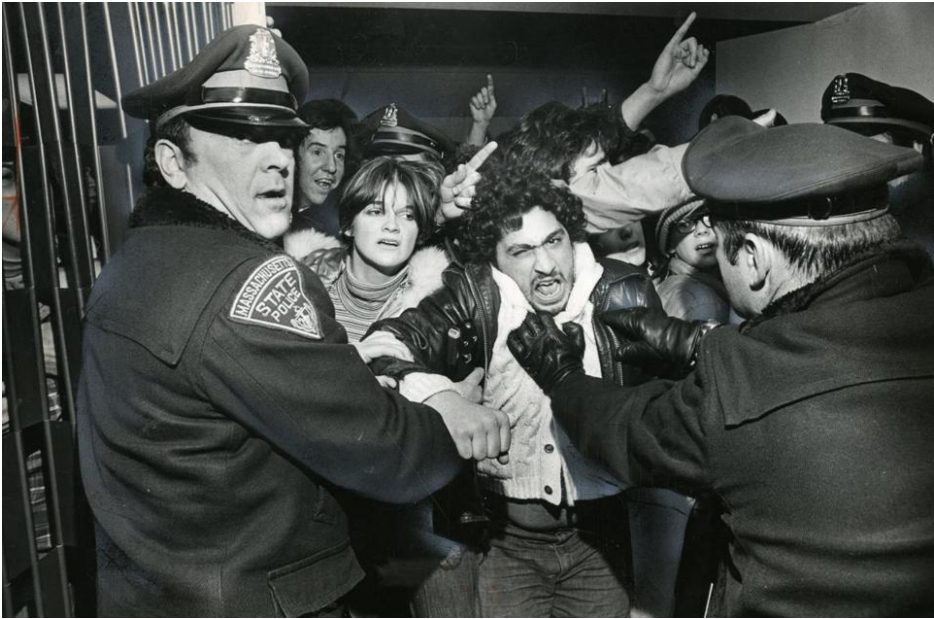
Belichick has earned the right like EF Hutton that “When Bill Belichick speaks, people listen!” And, how!

Despite such a great season, the home and season opener was disappointing on Sept 12 as the Baltimore Colts beat the Patriots L (13–27) at Schaefer Stadium before a sparse attendance of 43,512. On Sept 19 at home, New England defeated Miami W (30–14). Schaefer Stadium 1–1 46,053. At Pittsburgh on Sept 26, the Patriots barely beat the Steelers W (30–27) at Three Rivers Stadium before 47,379. At home again on October 3, New England thumped Oakland W (48–17) at Schaefer Stadium before 61,068. At Detroit on Oct 10, in the Pontiac Silverdome, the Lions beat the Patriots L (10-30) before 60,174.

On October 18, the Pats hammered the New York Jets W (41–7) at Schaefer Stadium before 50,883. At Buffalo on Oct 24, the Patriots beat the Bills W (26-22) before 45,144. Then at Miami on Oct 31, the Dolphins beat the Patriots L (3-10), in a close match. This would be the last loss of the year. On Nov 7, at home, New England beat Buffalo W (20–10) at Schaefer Stadium before 61,157. At Baltimore on Nov 14, at Memorial Stadium, the Patriots defeated the Colts f W 21–14 before 58,226.

At New York, on Nov 21 the Patriots out-battled the Jets at Shea Stadium W (38-24) before 49,983. At home on Nov 28, New England blasted Denver W 38–14 at Schaefer Stadium before 61,128. Then on December, the Patriots got a nice clean win against the New Orleans Saints W (27–6) at Schaefer Stadium before 53,592. At Tampa Bay in the end of season match, the Patriots got the best of the Buccaneers on Dec 12 W (31–14) in Tampa Stadium before 41,517. New England proudly accepted their 11-3 regular season record and prepared for the playoffs.

Coming in #2 in the AFC East, the Patriots needed to compete in the Divisional Playoffs, hoping to be moving on to the Super Bowl. The game was on Dec 18 against the Oakland Raiders. In a game marked with controversy, the New England Patriots never gave up and almost pulled it off but did not, losing by three points L (21–24) in the Oakland Coliseum before 53,045



In the photo above, on Dec. 19, 1976, the day after the Playoff defeat, Massachusetts State troopers tried to contain fans who crushed against a wire gate at Logan airport. The fans, who came to meet the Patriots' plane, were upset with the officiating in a bitter 24-21 playoff loss to the Oakland Raiders. Ken Stabler, the Raiders quarterback, dived into the end zone with the game-winning touchdown while only 10 seconds remained on the clock. There was controversial officiating in the wild final drive to the score.

What happened?

The final score tells everybody the game was close, but Patriot fans believe Oakland officiating with the thumb on the scale for the Raiders helped move the core in the Raiders' favor.

Oakland 24, New England 21 is a heartache score. The Patriots played well and for a time at the end of the game they appeared to have the game in the bag with a 21-17 lead late in the fourth quarter. Then Kenny, the Snake Stabler took control of the game. He threw a pass on third and 18 and fortunately, it fell incomplete. However, referee Ben Dreith put his thumb on the scale and made a controversial roughing-the-passer call on Ray Hamilton. That call gave the Raiders a new set of downs on the 13-yard line. The Snake

eventually ran in for the go-ahead touchdown and that's all she wrote.

## 1977 Chuck Fairbanks Coach # 6

The 1977 New England Patriots football team competed in their eighteenth season in professional football and their eighth season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Chuck Fairbanks in his fifth of six seasons. Billy Sullivan was the owner. The Patriots were a fine team this year with a record of 9-5-0. They lost two more games than in 1976 but still finished the year in a respectable third place in the AFC East. They did not make the playoffs, but they looked pretty good most of the year.

In the home and season opener for New England on September 18, 1977, the Patriots defeated the Kansas City Chiefs W (21-17) before 58,185, at Schaefer Stadium in Foxborough Massachusetts. At Cleveland, on Sept 26, the Browns beat the Patriots in a close match L (27-30) before 76,418. At New York, on Oct 2, 1977, the Jets beat the Patriots L (27-30) before 38,227. At home on Oct 9, the Patriots shut-out the Seattle Seahawks W (31-0) at Schaefer Stadium before 45,927. At San Diego, on Oct 16, New England beat San Diego W (24-20) before

On Oct 23, New England got the best of the Baltimore Colts W (17-3) at home before 60,958. At home on Oct 30, 1977, the patriots bested the New York Jets W (24-13) before 61,042. Then, on Nov 6 at home. Buffalo beat New England L (14-24). At Miami on Nov 13, the Dolphins prevailed L (5-17). At Buffalo the following week, the Patriots whipped the Bills W (20-7) before 27,598.

At home, on Nov 27, the Patriots got the best of the Philadelphia Eagles W (14-6) before 57,893. At Atlanta on Dec 4, the Patriots beat the Falcons W (16-10) before 57,911. At home on Dec 11, New England defeated Miami W (14-10) before 61,064. Then, on Dec 18 in the last game of the 1977 season at Baltimore, the Patriots could not finish the season a winner, but they tried. They were rooted out by the Baltimore Colts L (24-30) before 42,250

## 1978 Chuck Fairbanks Coach # 6

The 1978 New England Patriots football team competed in their nineteenth season in professional football and their ninth season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Chuck Fairbanks in his last of six seasons. Billy Sullivan was the owner. The Patriots were a fine team this year with a better record than 1977's record of 9-5-0. This year, they hit the mark at 11-5-0 as the league chose to play sixteen instead of fourteen games per season. They won two more games than in 1977 and finished the year as the #1 ranked team in the AFC East. They made the playoffs winning the AFC East and they played in the Divisional Playoffs in which they lost. They looked pretty good for most of the year and none too shabby in the playoff game.

As noted, the Patriots finished the season with a record of eleven wins and five losses, and finished tied for first in the AFC East, winning their first division title in franchise history over Miami by a built-in tiebreaker.

The 1978 Patriots were another great team. They set an NFL record for most rushing yards in a single season, with 3,165 yards on the ground. You may recall some of these names. The Pats had four different players who rushed for more than 500 yards, beginning with running back Sam "Bam" Cunningham, 768; running back Andy Johnson, 675; running back Horace Ivory, 693; and quarterback Steve Grogan, 539. The team also picked up an NFL-record 181 rushing first-downs. This is one of those Patriot teams that had enough to win it all but just didn't win it all.

The season and home opener for New England was played on Sept 3 with the Washington Redskins prevailing L (14-16) at Schaefer Stadium before 55,037. At S St. Louis on Sept 10, the Patriots beat the Cardinals W (16-6) at Busch Memorial Stadium before 48,233. At home on Sept 19, the Baltimore Colts beat New England L (27-34) at Schaefer Stadium before 57,284. At Oakland on Sept 24, the Patriots beat the Raiders W (21-14) at the Alameda County Coliseum before 52,904.

On Oct 1 at home, the Patriots beat the San Diego Chargers W (28-23) at Schaefer Stadium before 60,781. On Oct 8, at home, the



Patriots beat the Philadelphia Eagles W (24–14) at Schaefer Stadium before 61,016. At Cincinnati on Oct 15, the Patriots beat the Bengals W (10–3) at Riverfront Stadium before 48,699. At home, on Oct 22, the Patriots beat the Miami Dolphins W (33–24) at Schaefer Stadium before 60,424

At home again, on Oct 29, the Patriots blew out the New York Jets W 55–21 at Schaefer Stadium before 60,585. At Buffalo, on Nov 5. The Patriots barely beat the Bills W (14–10) at Rich Stadium before 44,897. On Nov 12, in a close match the Houston Oilers beat the New England Patriots L (23–26) at Schaefer Stadium before 60,356. Then at New York, on Nov 19 at Shea Stadium, the Patriots slid by the Jets in a close match W (19–17) before 55,568.

At Baltimore on Nov 26, New England clobbered the Colts W (35–14) at Memorial Stadium before 42,828. At Dallas on Dec 3, the Cowboys prevailed over the Patriots L (10–17) at Texas Stadium before 63,263. At home on Dec 10, New England won in a lose match against the Buffalo Bills W (26–24) at Schaefer Stadium before 59,598. In the final regular season game on Dec 18, at Miami's Orange Bowl Stadium, the Dolphins got the best of the Patriots spoiling their season finale L (3–23) before a great crowd of 72,071

## **Divisional Playoffs Patriots 31, Houston 14**

The final score was New England 14, Houston 31. After they beat the Dolphins in a wild card game. the Oilers were on a high. They traveled up to New England to face the Patriots at Schaefer Stadium before 61,297 chilled fans. The Oilers were not fazed by the cold. They earned their trip to Pittsburgh with a trip to the Super Bowl on the line. The Patriots had to wait until 1979 for another shot at the top marbles. The game as all Oilers. QB Dan Pastorini threw three touchdown passes in the second quarter. That was more than enough to defeat the Patriots in their first home playoff game. Home field gave the Pats no edge on this particular day.



# Chapter 7 Coach Ron Erhardt 1979 to 1981

## Coach #7 Ron Erhard

<u>Year Coach</u>	<u>League</u>	<u>Conf/Div</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Record</u>
1979 Ron Erhardt	NFL	AFCEast	2nd	9 7 0
1980 Ron Erhardt	NFL	AFCEast	2nd	10 6 0
1981 Ron Erhardt	NFL	AFCEast	5th	2 14 0
<b><u>1979-1981 Ron Erhardt final record (21-27-0)</u></b>				



Coach Ron Erhardt on the field

## Ron Erhardt, a Talented Coach

Ron Erhardt is a native of Mandan, North Dakota,. He got his Bachelor's Degree from Jamestown College in 1953, and then entered the military where he put in two years. After retiring from the service, in 1956, he became an assistant coach at Williston High School in Williston, North Dakota. The next year he began a six-year run as a head coach at two North Dakota Catholic high schools where his combined record was 45-9-2 .

Erhardt's early success helped him be discovered at the collegiate level. He first served as an assistant at North Dakota State University in 1963 for three years. Then, in 1966, he was named

head coach at the school. This appointment set the stage for another strong tenure, in which Erhardt amassed a 61-7-1 record in his seven years. Erhardt also served as the Bison athletic director, winning a pair of college national championships. He was a great coach.

After missing the playoffs in 1977, the Patriots were ready to go for the Super Bowl in 1978. At the end of the last chapter we recounted their loss in the divisional playoffs. As noted, prior to the last regular season game on December 18, head coach Chuck Fairbanks announced he was leaving the team to accept a contract offer from the University of Colorado. The team ownership, to say the least was very upset.

They responded to the new by immediately suspending Fairbanks and they made Erhardt and fellow assistant Hank Bullough co-coaches for the final game of the season. The Patriots dropped that contest, then lost their opening round matchup to the Houston Oilers in the divisional playoffs.

Fairbanks was permitted to leave for Colorado, with Erhardt officially taking the reins of the team as head coach on April 6, according to Erhardt. Having had a .890 winning percentage at North Dakota State upon taking the position, Erhardt said, "I've never been a loser in football and I don't intend to start now."

He might not have been a loser but to the owners, he did not measure up. But, maybe nobody could. The Patriots "underachieved" with a 19-13 record in the 1979 (9-7) and 1980 (10-6) seasons, missing the playoffs by one game each year. Considering from whence they had come over the years, almost winning making the playoffs was not really that bad. The team was playing well in this period with 441 points scored in 1980. It was a club record not broken until 2007.

But then, inexplicably, the Patriots fell apart the third year under Erhardt to a 2-14 record in 1981. Owner Billy Sullivan, who some pundits say was responsible for all four letters in the word "gaff," used the calculatus-eliminatus method to determine that Erhardt was "just too nice a guy," to be the coach of the Patriots. Owner Billy Sullivan dismissed this coach after one terrible performance year on December 22, just two days after the conclusion of the season.

There are lots of good coaches who think Ron Erhardt is a good coach who wound up with a not-so-good owner. Ron Erhardt, the three-season head coach of the New England Patriots coach turned his football fortunes around by becoming the offensive architect of the New York Giants' two Super Bowl titles. He did this when Bill Parcells was at the helm and Parcells saw him as one of the best. On March 21, 2012, this great coach "Erhardt" passed away at 80-years of age as one of the best with a great and solid football legacy despite his 1981 experience with the Patriots.

The Giants made the press announcement that the one-time head coach of the New England Patriots and the long-time NFL offensive coordinator had passed away in retirement in Boca Raton, Fla. Accolades came in from all directions.

"Ron was a wonderful man and a great coach," Giants chief executive John Mara said. "He was a big part of our success in the 1980s and was an important contributor to our first two Super Bowl championships."

When it was time for Ron Erhardt to abruptly leave the Patriots, Ray Perkins was the head coach of the Giants. He brought Erhardt in as offensive coordinator of the Giants in 1982, about a month after Erhardt was released by the Patriots.

When Perkins left in 1982 for the University of Alabama, the Giants named Bill Parcells as the head coach. He kept Erhardt, who he knew from some experience he had with the Patriots in 1980. Erhardt was a fine head coach for New England the Patriots but he was an even better offensive coordinator for eight seasons with the Giants. With Erhardt calling the plays, the Giants reached the playoffs five times, won three NFC East titles and picked up two Super Bowls to boot.

Phil Simms was the QB for the first Super Bowl over Denver after the 1986 season, and Jeff Hostetler took the QB spot on the Giants team en route to the second title after Simms broke his left foot late in the 1990 season.

"I learned an awful lot from him. He went on and did some amazing things offensively," Hostetler said. "What amazes me, is that system is still out there, still being used, and it works as successfully as ever. It is - without a doubt, out of all the systems I've been involved with and that's probably five, six, or seven different systems - the simplest as far as verbiage, and most consistent."

Under Erhardt's mentoring, the Giants consistently had one of the NFL's most productive rushing attacks. Joe Morris rushed for more than 1,000 yards three times, including 1,516 in the Giants' first Super Bowl season. With Erhardt doing the offensive teaching, The Giants also finished in the Top 10 in the league in passing in 1984, '85 and '87.

Not all good things last and eventually somebody did not want what Erhardt had to offer. He lost his play-calling duties when Bill Parcells left the Giants after the 1991 season and Ray Handley wanted somebody else. Erhardt went with Pittsburgh as their offensive coordinator in 1992 and he spent four good years with them, helping them reach the Super Bowl after the 1995 season. He also put in one season as the Jets O-coordinator in 1996.

Before becoming the head coach at New England, Erhardt had other duties with the Patriots. He became the Patriots backfield coach in 1973. He stayed in the that position for four seasons before becoming the New England offensive coordinator. Erhardt was a natural to become New England's head coach and he was appointed to serve after Chuck Fairbanks left after the 1978 season. Erhardt did not have the best record in his three years from 1979-81, compiling a record of 21-27.

Fired after one bad year. Was that the best medicine for the Patriots or for Coach Erhardt. Could Billy Sullivan have been the real problem with the Patriots for all those years. Considering that Erhardt, a native of Mandan, N.D., as 67-7-1 as a head coach in college and won two college division national championships at North Dakota State University, one does wonder.

## 1979 Ron Erhardt Coach # 7

The 1979 New England Patriots football team competed in their twentieth season of professional football and their tenth season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Ron Erhardt in his first of three seasons. Erhardt had co-coached the Patriots in the last game of the 1978 season, but we do not count that in this book as a coached season. Billy Sullivan was still the owner of the Patriots. This year, the new overtime rule would be applied to tie games so that fewer games would end in ties.

The Patriots were an OK team this year with a better than 500 records of 9-7-0. They finished the year as the #2 ranked team in the AFC East. They were one game away from making the playoffs. They looked pretty good for most of the year but not enough to win a box of cigars.

In their season opener the Patriots faced the Pittsburgh Steelers on Monday Night as Darryl Stingley returned to Schaffer Stadium. Patriots fans gave the paralyzed star a long sustained standing ovation. However, the emotion did not carry over as the Pats lost 16-13 in overtime. The Pats would find themselves at 8-4, as the team featured a more wide-open offense under quarterback Steve Grogan. However, a three-game losing streak ended their playoff chances, as the team settled for what became a disappointing 9-7 season

3 In the season and home opener at Schaefer Stadium on September 3, 1979, the Pittsburgh Steelers beat the New England Patriots in a single OT match L (13-16) before 60,978. At home again on Sept 3, the Patriots crushed the New York Jets W (56-3) at Schaefer Stadium before 53,113. At Cincinnati on Sept 16, the Patriots defeated the Bengals W (20-14) at Riverfront Stadium 2-1 41,805  
23 4 San Diego Chargers W 27-21 Schaefer Stadium 3-1 60,916.

The second loss of the season came at the hands of the Green Bay Packers L (14-27) on Oct 1 at Lambeau Field before 52,842. On Oct 7, at home, the Patriots won by a TD over the Detroit Lions W 24-17 at Schaefer Stadium before 60,629. In Oct 14, at Chicago, the Patriots dominated the Bears W (27-7) at Soldier Field before

54,128. At home on Oct 21, at Schaefer Stadium, the Patriots dominated the Miami Dolphins W (28–13) before 61,096.

At Baltimore on Oct 28, the Colts beat the Patriots by a skosh L (26–31) at Memorial Stadium before 41,029. On Nov 4, at Buffalo, the Patriots overwhelmed the Bills W (26-6) at Rich Stadium before 67,935. Then, on Nov 11 at Denver, the Broncos lambasted the Patriots L (10–45) at Mile High Stadium before 74,379. At home on Nov 18 in Schaefer Stadium, the Patriots walloped the Colts W (50-21) before 60,879.

On Nov 25 at Schaefer Stadium, the Buffalo Bills beat the New England Patriots L (13-16) before 60,991. At Miami on Nov 29, the Dolphins triumphed L (24-39 (at the Miami Orange Bowl before 69,174. At New York, on Dec 9, the Patriots lost a one-point game to the Jets L (26-27) before 45,131. At home in the final game of the season, the Patriots put it all together to beat the Minnesota Vikings W 27–23 at Schaefer Stadium before 54,719

## **1980 Ron Erhardt Coach # 7**

The 1980 New England Patriots football team competed in their twenty-first season of professional football and their eleventh season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Ron Erhardt in his second of three seasons. Billy Sullivan was the owner. The Patriots were a fine team this year with a better record (10-6) than the 9-7-0 from 1979. They finished the year again as the #2 ranked team in the AFC East. They were one game away from making the playoffs. They looked pretty good for most of the year but again, not quite enough to compete for the big cigar.

Running Back Sam Cunningham decided he wanted more this season from the Patriots and he held out all season. For their part, the Patriots turned to rookie Vagas Ferguson to carry the bulk of the rushing game. Ferguson responded by breaking the team's rookie rushing record. The Patriots were rolling along quite well right before the mid-season point and it looked like a good year to make the playoffs. Unfortunately, the Pats managed to win just two of their next seven games, and they finished with a 10–6 record that saw them fall a game short of a wild card berth.



Bill Parcells, then the linebackers coach with the team, has stated that the players on this Patriots team gave him his famous "Tuna" nickname when he asked, "What do you think I am, Charlie the Tuna?" Parcells had high regards for coach Ron Erhardt.

The home and season opener was played at Schaefer Stadium in Foxboro on Sept 7 against the Cleveland Browns. The Patriots prevailed W (34–17) before 49,222. The Patriots first loss came early On Sept 14 in the second game at Shaefer Stadium L (21-37) against the Atlanta Falcons before 48,321. On Sept 21, at Seattle's Kingdome, the Patriots beat the Seahawks W (37–31) before 61,035. On Sept 29 at home in Schaefer Stadium, the Patriots beat the Denver Broncos W (23–14) before 59,602.

At New York on Oct 5 in Shea Stadium, the Patriots defeated the Jets W (21-11) before 53,603. At home again, on Oct 12, the Patriots shut out the Miami Dolphins W (34–0) at Schaefer Stadium before 60,377. On Oct 19, at Baltimore, the Patriots outplayed the Colts W (37–21) at Memorial Stadium before 53,924. At Buffalo on October 26, the Bills beat the Patriots L (13–31) at Rich Stadium before 75,092.

At home again on Nov 2, the Patriots beat the New York Jets W (34–21) at Schaefer Stadium before 60,834. Then, at Houston, on Nov 10, the Oilers defeated the Patriots L (34–38) at the Astrodome before 51,524. The next loss was at home against Los Angeles on Nov 16, L (14-17) at Schaefer Stadium before 60,609. The Baltimore Colts then came to Schaefer Stadium on Nov 23 and were smothered by the Patriots W (47–21) before a packed house of 60,994.

At San Francisco on November 30, the 49ers won a close match against the Patriots L (17–21) at Candlestick Park before 45,254. At Miami on Dec 8, the Dolphins got the best of the Patriots L (13–16) in (OT) in a game played at the Miami Orange Bowl before 63,292. The Patriots won their last two games of the season. The first was on Dec 14 at home against buffalo W (24-2) before 58,324 and the second and also the last game of the season was on Dec 21 at New Orleans against the Saints W (38–27) in the Superdome before 38,277.

## 1981 Ron Erhardt Coach # 7

The 1981 New England Patriots football team competed in their twenty-second season of professional football and their twelfth season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Ron Erhardt in his last of three seasons. Billy Sullivan was the owner. The Patriots were a different team this year, seeming having lost the fire that was the hallmark of Erhardt's first two years at the helm. They finished with a dismal 2-14 record, tied for fourth (last) in the AFC East. They were out of all post season contention. Two days after the season, Billy Sullivan fired coach Ron Erhardt as it was tough to take a 2-14 season at any time.

The season went as you would expect for a 2-14 year. The team lost their first four games, and then ten of their last eleven, including the last nine games of the season. They could not do anything right or, so it seemed.

The games were close, but nobody was giving trophies for almost wins. The Patriots were defeated in both the first and last games of the season by the Baltimore Colts. Ironically what became known as the Patriots' bookend losses proved to be Baltimore's only two wins of the 1981 season.

It was known that the loser of that last game would have the first pick in the 1982 NFL Draft, and so the pundits enjoyed nicknaming this last game, "The Stupor Bowl. " With the Patriot loss, the team had the first pick, choosing University of Texas defensive end Kenneth Sims, an eventual draft "bust" as first overall pick in the NFL draft. Even their draft pick consolation prize did not work out in 1981.

The home and season opener was played at Schaefer Stadium in Foxboro on Sept 6 against the Baltimore Colts and Browns. The Patriots lost the game by one-point L (28-29) before 49,572. At Philadelphia on Sept 13, the Eagles beat the Patriots L (3-13) before 71,089. At home on Sept 21, 1981 the Dallas Cowboys beat the Patriots L (21-35) before 60,311. At Pittsburgh on Sept 27, the Patriots lost their fourth straight game v the Steelers L (21-27) before 53,344.

The KC Chiefs came to Schaefer Stadium on Oct 4, my anniversary, and were defeated by the Patriots W (33-17) for their first win of the year before 55,931. At New York, on Oct 11, the Jets beat the Patriots in a close match L (24-28) before 55,093. In another home game at Schaefer Stadium, on Oct 18, the Patriots trounced the Houston Oilers W (38-10) before 60,474. At Washington, on Oct 25, the Redskins beat the Patriots y two points L (22-24) before 50,394.

At Oakland on Nov 1, the Raiders beat the Patriots L (17-27) before 44,246. At home on Nov 8, in Schaefer Stadium, the Miami Dolphins prevailed over the Patriots in a three-point match L (27-30) before 60,436. On Nov 15, the New York Jets beat the Patriots at home in Schaefer Stadium L (6-17) before. The next week at Buffalo, on Nov 22, in another cliff hanger close match, the Bills beat the Patriots L (17-20) before 71,593.

At home on Nov 29, the St. Louis Cardinals defeated the New England Patriots L (20-27) before 39,946. At Miami on Dec 6, the Dolphins beat the Patriots L (14-24) before 50,421. On Dec 13 at home, New England lost to Buffalo L (10-19 before 42,549. In the season finale, on Dec 20 at Baltimore, the Colts won the two-point game L (21-23) before 17,073



# Chapter 8 Coach Ron Meyer 1982 to 1984

**Coach #8 Ron Meyer**

**Coach #9 Raymond Berry**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Coach</u>	<u>League</u>	<u>Conf/Div</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Record</u>
1982	Ron Meyer	NFL	AFC East	7th	5 4 0
				• Lost First Round (at Dolphins) 13-28	9 game season w/strike
1983	Ron Meyer	NFL	AFC East	2nd	8 8 0
1984	Ron Meyer (5-3)	NFL	AFC East	2nd	9 7 0
	Raymond Berry (4-8)				
<b><u>1982-1984 Ron Meyer final record (18-15)</u></b>					



Former Coach Ron Meyer on sidelines with Patriots

## **Ron Meyer replaces Ron Erhardt as Pats head coach**

Reprinted from the UPI Web Archives

March 9, 1982

FOXBORO, Mass. -- Ron Meyer has promised the New England Patriots will be one of the best-conditioned teams in the NFL next season. And he's getting an early start on his grand plan -- starting his first mini-camp this weekend.

Meyer, who replaced the fired Ron Erhardt as the Pats' coach after New England went 2-14, is allowed an extra mini-camp under NFL rules. It took him a few weeks to complete his coaching staff, but no time at all to schedule the mini-camp.

All but six Patriots are scheduled to report to Schaefer Stadium on Friday. There will be team meetings, tests for strength, flexibility and conditioning, and a practice on Sunday to wrap-up the three-day affair.

The six not participating, because they are free agents, are Harold Jackson, John Lee, Bill Matthews, Tom Owen, Carlos Pennywell and Garry Puetz.

'We want to introduce the players to a year-round flexibility, weight-training and conditioning program, to our basic football philosophy -- what it takes to win,' Meyer said.

'You can't lay out certain idioms or axioms on what it takes to win. We've evaluated the existing personnel on film. It's a beneficial teaching aide but we're not locking ourselves in with a pre-conceived idea of each player. It (the mini-camp) will give us an update on where the players are and give us an idea on where our weaknesses may occur,' the coach said.

Another purpose of the mini-camp will be to allow the players to meet the new coaches. Meyer hired former Oakland assistant Lew Erber to head the offense and former Seattle assistant Jim Mora to head the defense. He also brought six coaches -- and the team's first-ever strength coach -- with him from Southern Methodist.

'It's a two-way street,' Meyer said when queried as to whether veterans might be a bit wary of a new coach and a new system. 'We're also going to be tested. Those guys are going to come in and say, 'who are they, what do they know, what kind of men are they and will they help me to become a better football player?' 'To say it'll be an adverse relationship, I certainly hope not,' Meyer continued. 'It's going to be a 'we'-togetherness rather than a dogmatic type of relationship. We've got too much at stake to worry about personalities.'

One disgruntled veteran, Tim Fox, is expected to report, the team said. Fox is upset with his contract and told the Boston Globe he wouldn't attend the camp. The team said Fox is under contract.



Ron Meyer Patriots Coach

## 1982 Ron Meyer Coach # 8

The 1982 New England Patriots football team competed in their twenty-third season of professional football and their thirteenth season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Ron Meyer in his first of two and a half seasons. Billy Sullivan was the owner. The Patriots were a better team this year, and they were able to put the prior 2-14 season behind them. This season was strike-shortened from 16 games to nine. The Patriots finished well at 5-4 and gained a spot in the playoffs. The team finished seventh in the American Football Conference. As noted, the 1982 season was shortened from 16 regular season games to 9, due to the 57-day players strike.

## Schedule / Results

Because this was a strange season with games scheduled and rescheduled and canceled and moved from one week to another. We present this seasons games in tabular form rather than by telling the

story of the season as we have since the 1960 season. The information in the table from left to right will be shown in this sequence with commas separating the values in the table. Away games show an “at” in front of the opponent’s name.

- Actual Week
- Original week
- Opponent
- Result (W or L)
- Score
- Record
- Venue
- Attendance

1, 1, at Baltimore Colts, W, 24–13, 1–0, Memorial Stadium, 39,055

2, 2, New York Jets, L, 7–31, 1–1, Schaefer Stadium, 53,515

\*, 3, Seattle Seahawks, Canceled, , , Schaefer Stadium,

\*, 4, at Buffalo Bills, Canceled, , , Rich Stadium,

\*, 5, Cincinnati Bengals, Canceled, , , Schaefer Stadium,

\*, 6, at Miami Dolphins, Canceled, , , Miami Orange Bowl,

\*, 7, St. Louis Cardinals, Canceled, , , Schaefer Stadium,

\*, 8, at New York Jets, Canceled, , , Shea Stadium,

\*, 9, Baltimore Colts, Canceled, , , Schaefer Stadium,

\*, 10, Buffalo Bills, Canceled (played Jan 2, 1983), , , Schaefer Stadium,

11, 3, at Cleveland Browns, L, 7–10, 1–2, Cleveland Stadium, 51,781

12, 4, Houston Oilers, W, 29–21, 2–2, Schaefer Stadium, 33,602

13, 5, at Chicago Bears, L, 13–26, 2–3, Soldier Field, 36,973

14, 6, Miami Dolphins, W, 3–0 (Snowplow Game), 3–3, Schaefer, 25,716

15, 7, at Seattle Seahawks, W, 16–0, 4–3, Kingdome, 53,457

16, 8, at Pittsburgh Steelers, L, 14–37, 4–4, Three Rivers Stadium, 51,515

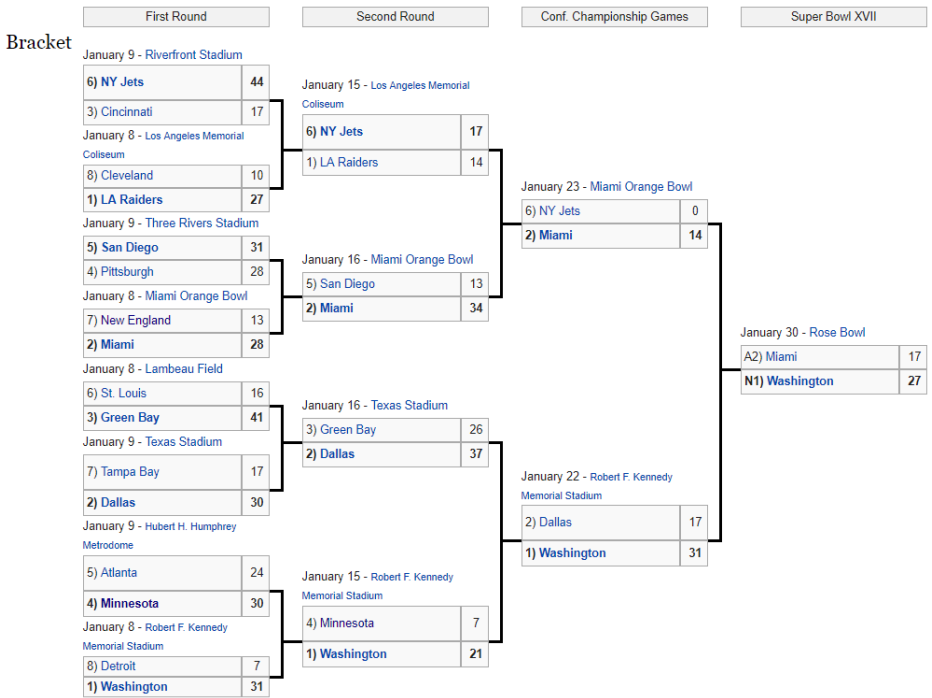
17, 9, Buffalo Bills, W, 30–19, 5–4, Schaefer Stadium, 36,218

## Post Season Bracket Tournament (like March Madness)

If it were not for the fact that in the type of post season tournament that was conducted this year, a team might play just *one* tournament game, there were those who thought perhaps the whole 1982 season should be played as a tournament to make it more exciting—rather than play the nine-game season. Besides the post season tournament, the other big change was that there were no divisions in play this year. The top eight teams of the fourteen teams in each conference played a tournament to decide who would play in the Super Bowl. Almost all teams saw action



The bracket for this unusual and special post season tournament is shown below:



The League Playoffs began on January 8, 1983. The postseason tournament concluded with the Washington Redskins defeating the Miami Dolphins in Super Bowl XVII, 27–17, on January 30, at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California.

As noted, there was a 57-day players' strike which reduced the regular season to nine games. Thus, the league used this special 16-team playoff format (dubbed the "Super Bowl Tournament"), just for this year and never again. As noted, there were no Division standings. Eight teams from each conference were seeded 1–8 based on their regular season records. The Patriots were seventh in their conference.

This year marked the first time in NFL history in which a team that qualified for the playoffs had a losing record (< .500), as both Cleveland and Detroit finished with 4–5 records (.444). Both of these

teams lost in the first round of the playoffs as did the Patriots who sported a 5-4 conference record.

## **AFC: Playoffs Dolphins 28, New England 13**

The game began at 4:00 PM EST. The weather was 76 degrees at the Miami Orange Bowl in Miami Florida, the home team of the Dolphins/ 68,842 fans attended the game.

This was the Dolphins game right from the opening kickoff. The Dolphins owned most of the game with their attack which included four long touchdown drives. They intercepted Patriots quarterback Steve Grogan twice.

Miami QB David Woodley was at his peak during the game, completing 16 of 19 passes for 246 yards and two touchdowns (both to tight end Bruce Hardy). The Miami QB threw no interceptions, and he rushed for 16 yards. For the game, his rating was through the roof at 153.8.

Andrea Franklin, Miami's star running back, ran 26 times for 112 yards and a touchdown. The Dolphins outgained the Patriots by a mile (448yds to 237yds) and rushing yards (214 to 77).

### **1983 Ron Meyer Coach # 8**

The 1983 New England Patriots football team competed in their twenty-fourth season of professional football and their fourteenth season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Ron Meyer in his second of two and a half seasons. Billy Sullivan was the owner. The Patriots had an 8-8 record this year. This season was back to normal with 16 games being scheduled and played

The Pats tied for second in the AFC East Division. The team played inconsistently all season. Nonetheless in the last game, with an 8-7 record going in, they still had a shot, at a playoff spot as long as they managed a in their final game of the season in Seattle. It did not happen. The Patriots would have problems with turnovers the whole

game as rookie quarterback Tony Eason was gobbled up in a 24-6 loss to the Seahawks.

In the home and season opener on September 4, 1983 the Baltimore Colts defeated New England L (23-29) before 45,526. At Miami on Sept 11, the Dolphins beat the Patriots L (24-34) before 59,343. At Schaefer Stadium, on Sept 18, the Patriots beat the New York Jets W (23-13) before 43,182. At Pittsburgh, on Sept 25, New England defeated the Steelers W (28-23) before 58,282

At home at Schaefer Stadium on Oct 2, the San Francisco 49ers whipped the Patriots L (13-33) before 54,293. At Baltimore on Oct 9, the Colts beat the Patriots L (7-12) before 35,618. Then, on Oct 16, at home, the Patriots defeated the San Diego Chargers W (37-21) before 59,016. At Buffalo on Oct 23, the New England Patriots walloped the Bills in a shutout W (31-0) before 60,424.

At Atlanta on Oct 30, the Falcons defeated the Patriots L (13-24) before 47,546. On Nov 6, New England beat the Buffalo Bills at Schaefer Stadium W (21-7) before 42,604. Then, on Nov 13, the Patriots beat Miami at home W (17-6) before 60,771. The next week on Nov 20, the Cleveland Browns shut out the Patriots L (0-30) before 40,987.

At New York, on Nov 27, the Jets dominated New England L (3-26) before 48,620. The New Orleans Saints lost to the Patriots on Dec 4, 1983 by one TD W (7-0) at Schaefer Stadium before 24,579. At Los Angeles on Dec 11, the Patriots beat the Rams W (21-7) before 46,503. In the final game of the season on Dec 18 at Seattle, if New England won the game, they were in the playoffs. They could not pull it off and were beaten by the Seahawks L (6-24) before 59,688.

### **1984 Ron Meyer Coach # 8**

### **1984 Raymond Berry Coach # 9**

The 1984 New England Patriots football team competed in their twenty-fifth season of professional football and their fifteenth season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Ron Meyer in his third of two and a half seasons. Meyer would be

replaced halfway through this season after a dispute with owners. Meyer was 5-3 at the time. Billy Sullivan was the owner. Ray Berry took on the task of coaching the second half of the season. He was 4-4. The Patriots had an 9-7 record this year between the two coaches. The Patriots finished second in the AFC East Division.

As noted, head coach Ron Meyer, who had coached the Patriots for the previous two seasons, was fired halfway through this season. Meyer had angered several of his players with public criticism. After the team's 44-22 loss to Miami in Week 8, Meyer decided to fire popular defensive coordinator Rod Rust; Meyer himself was fired by Patriots management shortly thereafter.

The Patriots did not hire Meyer's replacement from within. Instead they found Raymond Berry, who had been New England's receivers coach from 1978 to 1981 under coaches Chuck Fairbanks and Ron Erhardt. Berry had been working in the private sector in Medfield, Massachusetts, when the Patriots called him to replace Meyer.

Berry's first order of business was to immediately rehire Rust. Under Berry's leadership, the Patriots won four of their last eight games. Berry's importance to the team was reflected less in his initial win-loss record than in the respect he immediately earned in the locker room – "Raymond Berry earned more respect in one day than Ron Meyer earned in three years," according to running back Tony Collins. Everybody has an opinion.

In the season opener on September 2, 1984 at Buffalo, the Patriots beat the Bills W (21-17) as Steve Grogan threw two touchdowns before 48,528 fans. At Miami on Sept 9, the Dolphins beat the Pats L (7-28) before 66,083. Then, on Sept 16, 1984 at the newly renamed Sullivan Stadium (formerly Schaefer Stadium) the Patriots defeated the Seattle Seahawks W (38-23) after erasing a 23-0 gap before 43,140. At home on Sept 23, Washington defeated New England L (10-26) in Tony Eason's first start before 60,503.

At New York on Sept 30 at New York, New England beat the Jets W (28-21) before 68,978. Then, on Oct 7 at Cleveland in a one-point difference match, the Patriots beat the Browns W 17-16 before 53,036. Then, on Oct 14, 1984 the New England Patriots defeated the Cincinnati Bengals W (20-14) before 48,154. At home on Oct

21, the Miami Dolphins ran over the Patriots L (24-44) before 60,711. Hard coach Ron Meyer was fired after this game, ending his part of the season at 5-3.

On Oct 28, the Patriots beat the New York Jets W (30-20) with new coach Raymond Berry at the helm. At Denver on Nov 4, the Broncos defeated the Patriots L (19-26) before 74,908. At home on Nov 11, the New England Patriots defeated the Buffalo Bills W (38-10) before 43,313. At Indianapolis on Nov 18, the Patriots shellacked the Colts W (50-17) before 60,009.

At Dallas on Nov 22, the Cowboys squeaked out a victory over the Patriots L (17-20) on the Patriots first Thanksgiving Day game before 55,341. At home on Dec 2, the St. Louis Cardinals drubbed the New England Patriots L (10-33) before 53,558. At Philadelphia on Dec 9, the Eagles got the best of the Patriots L (17-27) before 41,581. At Sullivan Stadium in the final game, on Dec 16, the Patriots beat the Indianapolis Colts W (16-10) before 22,383



# Chapter 9 Coach Ray Berry 1985 to 1989

## Coach #9 Ray Berry

Year	Coach	League	Conf/Div	Place	Record
1984	Ray Berry	(4-4)			
1985	Ray Berry	NFL	AFC-East	3rd	<b>11-5-0</b>
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Won Wild Card Playoffs (at Jets) 26-14</li> <li>• Won Divisional Playoffs (at Raiders) 27-20</li> <li>• Won Conference Championship (at Dolphins) 31-14</li> <li>• Lost Super Bowl XX (vs. Bears) 10-46</li> </ul>
1986	Ray Berry	NFL	AFC-East	1st	<b>11-5-0</b>
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lost Divisional Playoffs (at Broncos) 17-22</li> </ul>
1987	Ray Berry	NFL	AFC-East	2nd	<b>8-7-0</b>
1988	Ray Berry	NFL	AFC-East	3rd	<b>9-7-0</b>
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• John Stephens(OROY)</li> </ul>
1989	Ray Berry	NFL	AFC-East	4th	<b>5-11-0</b>
<b><u>1984-1989 Ray Berry final record (47-39)</u></b>					

## Raymond Berry: Great Person, Great Player, Great Coach



1985 AFC Divisional Playoffs – LA Raiders Vs New England Patriots – 3rd Qtr

Raymond Berry was a great receiver who caught passes for the Colts from a guy who is one of the greatest QB's of all time, Johnny

Unitas. Berry liked to say: "Luck is something which happens when preparation meets opportunity. One play may make the difference in winning or losing a game. I must be prepared to make my own luck."

Those who capture the Raymond Berry story find a man of determination, dedication and desire. Berry, had a little-known handicap which forced him to wear special shoes because one leg was shorter than the other. He did not become a starter on his high school football team until his senior year – even though his father was the coach.

After all is said and done Ray Berry proved his worth. He played as a split end for the Baltimore Colts from 1955 to 1967, and after several assistant coaching positions, he landed the head coach job of the New England Patriots from 1984 to 1989.



Ray Berry was an end for Southern Methodist. He caught just 33 passes in three seasons. It is still a mystery why the Baltimore Colts selected him, even as a "future choice" on the 20th round of the 1954 draft.

He was diminutive and unassuming, and at first appeared not to be destined for football greatness. But you could not tell him that. His subsequent rise to the Pro Football Hall of Fame has been touted as one of American football's most wonderful Cinderella

stories. He made up for his lack of athleticism through rigorous practice and attention to detail, and was known for his near-perfect route running and sure handedness.



Raymond Berry was a definite long-shot to make the Colts. To say Raymond was determined is an understatement. He practiced and practiced, catching passes from anyone willing to throw to him. He concentrated on making the most difficult catches and running perfect patterns to make it easy for any QB to get him the ball.

He was not the fastest receiver in the world either. He had just average speed. He loved football and practiced his way into being one of the best players to ever play the game.

Despite not being fast, he was definitely tricky. By his own count, he developed 88 different moves to get open. He ran patterns within inches of how they were diagramed. If Raymond Berry were to offer advice today to young football players about how to become a great player, I am convinced he would give a three-word sermon: Practice! Practice! Practice! In 1956, when Johnny Unitas became the Colts' QB, Berry put all of his many hours of practice to good use.

Together, Berry and Unitas gave the Baltimore Colts one of the greatest pass-catch teams of all time. Three straight times Raymond Berry led the league in receptions and caught a then-record 631 passes for 9,275 yards and 68 touchdowns in his 13-year career. A first-or-second-team All-Pro choice in 1957 through 1961 and again in 1965, Ray Berry was selected to play in six Pro Bowl games during his career. A sure-handed receiver, Berry holds a record nobody keeps. He fumbled only once in 13 years.

The pundits say that his greatest football moment was in the famous overtime 1958 NFL Championship Game. He set what was then a record with 12 catches for 178 yards and a touchdown. Several of his grabs came in the Colts' life-or-death, last minute drive to gain the tying touchdown. In the overtime period, two receptions good for 33 yards were the major gains in Baltimore's drive for the winning score. You guessed it. It was Ray Berry, who was the difference maker. He was a difference maker as a coach for the Patriots also.

With the Colts, Berry led the NFL in receptions and receiving yards three times and in receiving touchdowns twice, and he was invited to six Pro Bowls. He and the Colts won consecutive NFL

championships, including the 1958 NFL Championship Game—known as "The Greatest Game Ever Played"—in which Berry caught 12 passes for 178 yards and a touchdown. As a head coach, he led the Patriots to Super Bowl XX following the 1985 season, where his team was defeated by the Chicago Bears, 46–10.

As noted, Berry was a favorite target of quarterback Johnny Unitas, and the two were regarded as the dominant passing and receiving duo of their era.

After his playing career, Berry coached wide receivers for the Dallas Cowboys, the University of Arkansas, Detroit Lions, Cleveland Browns, and Patriots. He became the Patriots' head coach in 1984 and held that position through 1989, amassing 48 wins and 39 losses.

In recognition of his playing career, Berry was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1973. He is a member of the NFL 75th Anniversary All-Time Team as one of the best players of the NFL's first 75 years. His number 82 jersey is retired by the Indianapolis Colts and he is a member of the Patriots' 1980s All-Decade Team. He was a fine coach but he coached at a time in Patriot's history in which it was tough to be a great coach.

### **1985 Raymond Berry Coach # 9**

The 1985 New England Patriots football team competed in their twenty-sixth season of professional football and their sixteenth season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Ray Berry in his first full season of five and a half seasons. Berry replaced Ron Meyer half way through the 1984 season (4-4). Billy Sullivan was the owner. Patrick Sullivan was the GM. The Patriots had a nice 11-5 record this year. It was good enough for third place in the AFC East Division. Their fine record got them a wild-card berth and coach Berry took them to the Super Bowl game played in 1986. After winning three playoff games, the Bears beat the Patriots in the Super Bowl for the big Cigar.

Think about this. When hired, Ray Berry was not working in the NFL at the time he was snagged mid-season in 984 to coach the Patriots. One year later, he had them in the Super Bowl. Let that

sink in. Please. It is a tribute to New England Coach Ray Berry and the New England organization was not known at the time, at least, as the most welcoming spot for a great coach to get comfortable enough to stay the course or to be asked to stay the course.

Ray Berry sent out his Patriots on September 8 in the home and season opener at Sullivan Stadium to face the always tough Green Bay Packers. Berry's squad beat the visitors W (26-20) at Sullivan Stadium before 49,488 to jump start a great season. At Chicago on Sept 15, the bears laid a loss at the feet of coach Berry's Patriots L (7-20) at Soldier Field before 60,533. At Buffalo in game #3, the Patriots dug in to defeat the Bills at Rich Stadium before 40,334. After a long flight to Los Angeles on Sept 29, the Patriots were defeated by the Raiders L (20-35) at Sullivan Stadium before 60,686.

At Cleveland on Oct 6, St. Bruno's Feast Day, the Browns dug in and beat the Patriots L (20-24) at Cleveland Municipal Stadium before 62,139. Then, at home, New England on Oct 13, whooped the Buffalo Bills W (28-6) at Sullivan Stadium before 40,462. At home again, on Oct 20, the Patriots defeated the New York Jets W (20-13) at Sullivan Stadium before 58,163. Then, at Tampa on Oct 27 the Patriots slugged out a nice win against the Buccaneers W (32-14) before 34,661.

At home on Nov 3, New England beat Miami W (17-13) at Sullivan Stadium before 58,811. This was followed by a nice win on Nov 10 at Sullivan Stadium against the Indianapolis Colts W (34-15) before 54,176. At Seattle the next week, the Patriots beat the Seahawks at the Kingdome W (20-13) before 60,345. At New York, a week later on Nov 24, the Jets edged out the Patriots at The Meadowlands before 74,100.

At Indianapolis on December 1, 1985. Ray Berry's tough Patriots nosed out the Indianapolis Colts in a slugfest W (38-31) at the Hoosier Dome before 56,740. At home on Dec 8, the Patriots whooped the Detroit Lions at Sullivan Stadium W (23-6) before 59,078. At Miami on Dec 16 the Dolphins assured a split in this year's two-game series by beating the Patriots by a field goal L (27-300) at the Miami Orange Bowl before 69,489. On Dec 22, in the final game of the season, the New England Patriots would not take a

loss for an answer and they teed off against the Cincinnati Bengals in victory W (34–23) at Sullivan Stadium before 57,953.

## **The Playoffs got the Pats to the big game.**

You may not believe the trivia about the 1985 Patriots ascendancy to the Super Bowl Game. Maybe it is not trivia. Maybe it was vital. The 1985 Patriots became the first team in NFL history ever to advance to the Super Bowl by winning 3 playoff games on the road, defeating the New York Jets 26–14, the Los Angeles Raiders, 27–20, and then they went on to stun the football world and did the impossible as they pulled out a massive and stunning upset over the Miami Dolphins 31–14, in the AFC Championship game.

The Patriots' win in Miami was their first victory in that stadium since 1969. The win over the Dolphins in that game has gone down as one of the greatest upsets in NFL history, as the Dolphins were heavily favored. Ray Berry told his team they could win.

But despite the Patriots' success in the playoffs, they proved unable to compete with the acclaimed 17–1 Chicago Bears in Super Bowl XX, losing 46–10 in what was at the time the most lopsided defeat in Super Bowl history.

Coach Ray Berry took 100% of the blame for the Super Bowl loss. That was the kind of guy he was. "We couldn't protect the quarterback, and that was my fault. I couldn't come up with a system to handle the Bears' pass rush," head coach Raymond Berry recognized and admitted.

### **1986 Raymond Berry Coach # 9**

The 1986 New England Patriots football team competed in their twenty-seventh season of professional football and their seventeenth season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Ray Berry in his second full season of five and a half seasons. Patrick Sullivan was the GM. The Patriots had a nice 11-5 record this year for the second season in a row. It was good enough for first place in the AFC East Division.

Their fine record got them past having to play in a wild-card game as they simply advanced to the AFC v NFC championship game. Unfortunately, they lost that game by a skosh, 22-17 to the Broncos and that was their last playoff game for 1986. The Giants would beat the Broncos 39-20 in the Super Bowl. A lot of Giants were found smoking those huge cigars and wearing those huge rings.

In the home and season opener on September 7, 1986, at Sullivan Stadium, the Patriots squashed the Indianapolis Colts W (33-3) before 55,208. At New York on Sept 2, in a game played at the Meadowlands before 72,422, the Patriots beat the Jets W (20-6). Then, on Sept 21 at home, the Seattle Seahawks beat the Patriots at Sullivan Stadium L (31-38) before 58,977. At Denver. On Sept 28, in Mile High Stadium, the Broncos beat the Pats L (20-27) before 75,804.

At home On Oct 5, at Miami, the Patriots smothered the Dolphins W (34-7) at Sullivan Stadium before 60,689. The Next week on Oct 12, the Jets came to Foxboro and beat the Patriots L (24-31) before 60,342. At Pittsburgh's Three River Stadium, on Oct 19, the Steelers shut out the Pats in a big win W (34-0) at Three Rivers Stadium before 54,743. At Buffalo the next week on Oct 26, the Bills did not fare as well, losing to the Patriots L (3-23) before 77,808.

At home on Nov 2, the Atlanta Falcons lost to the Patriots W (25-17) at Sullivan Stadium before 60,597. At Indianapolis on Nov 9, the Colts went down W (21-3) at the Hoosier Dome before 56,890. At LA at Anaheim Stadium on Nov 16, the Patriots on beat the Rams W (30-28) in a close match before 64,339. At home v Buffalo on Nov 23, the Patriots beat the Bills W (22-19) before 60,455.

At New Orleans on Nov 30, in a one-point game, the Patriots nosed out the Saints W (21-2) before 58,259. On Dec 7, at home, Cincinnati beat New England L (7-31) before 60,633. Then, on Dec 14, at Sullivan Stadium, the 49ers beat the Patriots before 60,787. At Miami on Dec 22, the Patriots won their last game of the season at the Orange Bowl W (34-27) before 74,516.

## **Divisional Playoffs: Mile High Stadium, Denver Denver Broncos beat Patriots L (22–17) before 76,105**

It was a close ball game, but the Patriots did start off behind. Broncos QB John Elway ran for a touchdown and passed for another one as it was an Elway show all the way for Denver over the Patriots—but the game was darn close. Denver running back Sammy Winder put in a nice 102 yards and caught a pass for another 16 to help move the score.

The one battle won by New England was *turnovers*, but this was a rare game in which that was not a deciding factor. Winning turnovers by 2-0, the Pats were outgained on the ground by 441 to 271. The worst part of the Patriots game was that the O-line permitted five sacks of NE QB Tony Eason.

There were times of brilliance but none long-lasting.

### **1987 Raymond Berry Coach # 9**

The 1987 New England Patriots football team competed in their twenty-eighth season of professional football and their seventeenth season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Ray Berry in his third full season of five and a half seasons. Billy Sullivan was the owner in his last year at the top spot. Patrick Sullivan was the GM. The Patriots had a winning 8-7 record in this strike-shortened season. It was good enough for a second-place tie in the AFC East Division.

Before we discuss the 1987 regular season, let's look at a great article for the times by Elizabeth Merrill in June 2011. She is an ESPN Senior Writer. She penned this piece looking back into 1987 and she makes some sense out of the players / owners' turbulence of the time. The article discusses the replacement player environment and is very good though it is not specific to New England. Her great perspective on these times is titled:

## NFL replacements part of history

NFL owners hate the idea of a strike today as much as they hated it back when. They just figured out how to keep the peace.

After the strike that shortened the season to 9 games, the peace lasted 5 years, but the players say that during that time, they watched the NFL owners just get richer, with even bigger TV contract incomes. The players had never gotten what they felt was their due-- 55% of owners gross. But, they were still looking for it,

While both sides took losses in the 1982 strike, it was widely considered that the players won. The players felt the owners would yield again. They never dreamed the owners would go on with a football season....without them. But, they did. Enter the replacement players.

The players finished the first two weeks of the 1987 season, much like they had done in '82. Players would leave their sidelines in both work stoppages just before the kickoff, come out to half way point of the field, and shake hands to the Boos of the fans. After week two, football on Sundays stopped.

But, just for one week. This time the owners had a plan. They got players to cross the picket lines. In their normal lives, these new NFL players were Cops, Bankers, Cooks—anyone who had played a little college ball lined up to try out for their local teams. The coaches were not on strike. The players union did not like that one bit and so the new guys were called scabs, and the teams they played for got all kinds of new nick-names. They are funny but these times were quite serious:

- Chicago Spare Bears
- New Orleans Saint-Elsewheres
- San Francisco Phony Niners
- Miami Dolfinks
- Seattle SeaScabs
- Los Angeles Scabs.

Most guys who were not in the NFL and never were, simply could not help themselves. They saw this as their chance of a lifetime. Coaches like before, urged teams players not to strike but to come out and play--stick together. Some teams did not stick to this plan.

The most famous of the line crossers were the Dallas Cowboys. Several hall of fame players joined in with scrubs, and the Cowboys LOST to a 100% replacement team for the Washington Redskins. The Skins in fact, were the only team without a single line-crosser, and some say this unity helped propel them to the Super Bowl that year. That, and the fact the real teams would actually get together and practice, on their own. The skins upset of Dallas that season even served as the backdrop for a movie, "The Replacements" with Keanu Reaves. I think it is OK with the players and the NFL if you choose to go see the movie.

## Games of the 1987 Season – Coach Berry

### Some NE Patriots Season Particulars

The 1987 NFL season featured a number of games that were predominantly played by replacement players as the National Football League Players Association (NFLPA) players were on strike from weeks four to six. The New England Patriots were 8-7 in the shortened season and the team was 2-1 using replacement players season ended with Super Bowl XXII, with the Washington Redskins defeating the Denver Broncos 42–10 at Jack Murphy Stadium in San Diego. The Broncos suffered their second consecutive Super Bowl defeat. At this point it had been just a few years since the broncos beat the Pats in the Super Bowl

The Replacement players were quite active and actually helpful to New England in 1987. Having Raymond Berry as coach had to help getting everything ready to play. The pundits joked about the positive impact of the “new” players on performance. For example, placement player Mike LeBlanc gave the team something it did not have in quite a while—a running game. Le Blanc was a nice addition though like all replacement players, he was unexpected at the beginning of the season.



Those who like to gobble steam statistics already know that in 1986, the Patriots became the first team in 20 years to average less than 3 yards a carry. Yet, on October 11 in the second replacement game, Le Blanc accumulated 213 yards rushing as New England beat the Buffalo Bills 14-7.

LeBlanc ironically had just been giving his “don’t call us” papers from Winnipeg of the CFL and he was then signed by the Patriots as a replacement, had gained 146 yards on 35 carries. Though LeBlanc ran circles around the Bills, his showing was not viewed by many New England fans. He outran the Bills before the smallest Sullivan Stadium crowd ever -- 11,878 rain-soaked fans. Meanwhile, the striking Patriots were quietly walked the picket line.

Nobody was messing with anybody outside the stadium. No incidents were reported on the New England picket line during the second week of demonstrations by striking NFL players at games played by replacement players.

LeBlanc assured a major running attack that accumulated the most New England rushing yards since the final game of the 1985 season, the year in which the Patriots used a ground attack to reach the Super Bowl.

LeBlanc played exactly like we thought he would before we got him, New England coach Raymond Berry said. 'He cut and slashed all over the place.'

'I don't know if we planned on running as much as we did, I think the weather had a lot to do with that. The running game was there, and we stayed with it. We moved the ball fairly well,' said New England running back Bruce Hansen.

While they got excellence from LeBlanc, the New England passing game was pitiful. Bob Bleier completed just 4 of 13 throws for 43 yards and he gave up an interception.

Ray Berry described it aptly but was happy for the win: 'It's kind of like stepping into the batter's box in major-league baseball and hitting a 95-mph fastball,' said Berry of the poor passing game. 'It's a

very advanced skill and takes time in the amount of work preparation. It's just easier handing the ball off.'

The Patriots put up with a lot by way of the elements. They dealt with a cold rain, stiff winds and they endured three blocked punts. Nonetheless they won the game, bringing their record to 2-2. This win moved the Patriots into a four-way tie for first place in the AFC East. As the definition of humor involves the unusual, having the defeated Bills, at 1-3, after this game meant that they were the only team in the division that was not in first place.

The Bills were simply outgained 256 yards to 168, struggled on offense for the second consecutive week. They had gotten shellacked by Indianapolis 47-6 just last week. The Bill coach offered commentary of the game:

'We missed too many tackles today,' Bills coach Marv Levy said. 'The players tried harder and I'm proud of them for that. They played with spirit and I admire them for that.'

New England began with a 7-0 lead at 8:34 of the first quarter on a Carl Woods 4-yard touchdown run. LeBlanc had a 42-yard burst that put New England on the 23-yard line. Inching closer, at 6:36 left in the third quarter, Bleier scored on a 1-yard touchdown run to raise New England's lead to 14-0. The score had been set up when linebacker Greg Moore recovered quarterback Willie Totten's fumbled snap at the Buffalo 19. LeBlanc took it in the 14 yards to register the score.

Buffalo made it to 14-7 with 3:03 gone in the fourth quarter. Totten tossed a 13-yard touchdown pass to Thad McFadden. Buffalo linebacker Scott Watters partially blocked Alan Herline's punt to put the Bills on the Patriot 16. The Bills then had a shot at tying the game when big defensive lineman Dino Mangiero sacked Totten for an 8-yard loss to the New England 30 as time went to zero.

The reason none of the names in the *1987 game 4 highlights* are familiar is because even the fans at the time had no idea who the no-name replacement players were. After packing in about 60,000 fans each game, having just 11,000 at this Patriots game meant there were not too many in the stands to be telling tall tales about the replacement player game they saw that day.

On Sept 13, the Patriots, with their regular players in uniform, won their home and season opener against the Miami Dolphins W (28–21) before 54,642. At New York, with the normal players on the field at Shea Stadium, the Jets beat the Patriots L (24-43) before 70,847. The September 28 game against Washington's Redskins was canceled due to the player's strike. On October 4, my wedding anniversary, the Cleveland Broan's replacement players defeated the New England Patriot's replacement players L (10-20) before 14,830. Notice the difference in the # of fans.

At home on Oct 11, at home, with a crisp running attack led by Replacement Mike LeBlanc, New England defeated Buffalo Bills W (14–7) before 11,878. At Houston, in the last replacement player game of 1987, the Patriots defeated the Oilers W (21-7) before 26,294. On Oct 25, at Indianapolis, the regular players were back in action after the strike, and the Colts had their way with the Patriots L (16-30) before 48,850. On Nov 1, at home, the Patriots beat the Los Angeles Raiders W (26–23) before 60,664. At New York, on Nov 8, the Giants defeated New England L (10-17) before 73,817) at Giants Stadium in the Meadowlands.

On Nov15, at home in Sullivan Stadium, the Dallas Cowboys defeated the New England Patriots L (17-23) before 60,567. At home on Nov 22, New England shut-out Indianapolis before 56,906. At home again the following week, on Nov 29, the Eagles beat the Patriots L (31-34) before 54,198. At Denver on Dec 6, the Broncos beat the Patriots L (20-31) before 75,795.

On Dec 13, the Patriots whipped the New York Jets W 42–20 before 60,617. On Dec 14, at Buffalo before 74,945, the Patriots beat the Bills W (13–7) bringing the record to 7-7. At Miami on Dec 21, the Patriots beat the Dolphins W (24–10) before 61,192 finishing the strike-shortened season at 8–7.

### **1988 Raymond Berry Coach # 9**

The 1988 New England Patriots football team competed in their twenty-ninth season of professional football and their nineteenth season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were

led by Ray Berry in his fourth full season of five and a half seasons. Victor Kiam bought the Patriots this year from 28-year owner Billy Sullivan and he assumed #1 duties this year. Patrick Sullivan remained as the GM. They went back to a sixteen-week schedule after the strike, the Patriots had a winning 9-7 record this year. It was good enough for a tie for second place in the AFC East Division.

It would take until 1994 for the Patriots to record another winning record. As noted, for this season, the Patriots slightly improved on their 8-7 record 1987, winning one more game due to one game being cancelled the previous season. Despite the winning record, the Patriots again did not reach the postseason. They finished tied for second place in the AFC East with the arch rival Colts, but when the record books were closed for 1988, they actually finished in 3rd place because the Colts had a better record against common opponents than the Patriots did.

**1988 Games:** On Sept 4, 1988 in the home and season opener at Sullivan Stadium in Foxboro, New England beat the New York Jets W (28-3 0 before 44,027. On Sept 11, at Minnesota, the Vikings beat the Patriots L (6-36) before 55,545. At home on Sept 18, the Buffalo Bills beat the NE Patriots L (14-16) before 55,945. On Sept 25, at Houston, the Oilers triumphed L (6-31) before 38,646.

On Oct 2 at Sullivan Stadium, the Patriots beat the Indianapolis Colts W (21-17) before 58,050. At Green Bay on Oct 9, the Packers clobbered the Patriots L (3-45) before 51,932. On Oct 16, the Patriots defeated the Cincinnati Bengals W (27-21) before 59,969. At Buffalo on Oct 23, the Bills beat the Patriots L (20-23) before 76,824.

On Oct 30 at home, the Patriots pummeled the Chicago Bears W (30-7) before 60,821. On Nov 6 at home, the Miami Dolphins were beaten by the Patriots W (21-10) before 60,840. At New York, on Nov 13, the Jets lost by one point to the Patriots W (14-13) before 48,358 At Miami on Nov 20, the Pats beat the Dolphins W (6-3) before 53,526.

On Nov 27, at Indianapolis, the Colts edged out the Patriots L (21-24) before 58,157. On Dec 4, the Patriots beat the Seattle Seahawks

W (13–7) before 59,086. At home in Sullivan Stadium on Dec 11, 1988, New England defeated Tampa Bay W (10–7) before 39,889. At Denver on December 17, the Broncos beat the Patriots L (10-21) before 70,910

## 1989 Raymond Berry Coach # 9

The 1989 New England Patriots football team competed in their thirtieth season of professional football and their twentieth season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Ray Berry in his fifth and final full season of five and a half seasons (1/2 season in 1984). Victor Kiam was the owner. Patrick Sullivan remained as the GM. The Patriots had their worst record of Ray Berry's tenure at 5-11 this season. It was good enough for fourth place in the AFC East Division.

As a side note, the Patriots' pass defense surrendered 7.64 yards-per-attempt in 1989, one of the ten worst totals in NFL history. 1989 was not one of the Pats finest seasons for sure but looking back from 2018, we know that there are many fine seasons to come after 1994.

After the season, Head Coach Raymond Berry was fired and replaced by Rod Rust.

Working through the 1989 side notes, we've got a big one coming up. Looking at the end of the season, Rod Rust was not first choice for being the new coach. Before Parcells, Carroll, and Belichick, Victor Kiam an owner who looked at the cause and effects of having a winning team, winning, tried to hire another Hall of Fame coach before the age of the big three noted above.

The Boston Globe's late, great Will McDonough had it on good authority that, then-Patriots owner Victor Kiam offered New England's head coaching /G.M. roles to former 49ers coach Bill Walsh. However, Walsh turned down the offer, citing his commitment to continue working for NBC, the Globe reported. Still, a coaching change was coming for New England, which had fallen to 5-11 with Ray Berry in '89.

After the 1989 season, the Patriots parted ways with head coach Raymond Berry. There is always a good reason and it was not the great coaching with little talent that Berry had done before 1989. It was reported as a conflict over the hiring of New England's offensive and defensive coordinators.

Berry himself knew a little bit about football and how to be a great as he was a Hall of Fame wide receiver. He was a successful NFL head coach, too. He led the Patriots to a 51-41 mark, with New England making the Super Bowl for the first time in its history in his first full season on the job. Overall, the Patriots won more than they lost in four of his full campaigns from 1985-1988.

When Walsh said no; the Patriots would select Steelers defensive coordinator Rod Rust to replace Berry, but he did not last very long and was fired after one year at the helm in 1990. New England went from 5-11 to 1-15 proving that it can get worse. It was the league's worst record in 1990.

The Pats then looked to Syracuse head coach Dick McPherson, who was a great coach at Syracuse. He improved their lot and took the team to a 6-10 mark in '91. However, even though MacPherson was a great immortal coach at Syracuse, it got worse the following year with a 2-14 mark in '92. MacPherson had missed seven games because of illness. He was given no more chances and was replaced in January 1993.

After this, the Patriots had an unlimited wallet and they looked to New York to hire Super Bowl Bill Parcells. Parcells took the Patriots to the playoffs in his second season and the Super Bowl in his fourth season. Then came the three-season stint for Pete Carroll (1997-1999), who was then replaced by Belichick.

Hard as it is to believe before this great trio of coaches, there was a 9-39 stretch in which the Patriots endured in the three seasons after Berry's departure. Would things have been different if the Patriots lured Walsh east, or if Berry had stayed on? One would presume so, but nobody has a crystal ball.

If Walsh succeeded in New England, would Parcells ever have had reason to join the franchise? How would franchise history have been altered?

We'll never know. But we do know this: Raymond Berry, like Belichick and Carroll, won more than he lost in his time in Foxboro, and he has his own spot in Patriots history.

Before we completely close out the Ray Berry Era, I would like to share a nicely done article by Dan Flaherty to serve as a closing article for Raymond Berry, who considering the obstacles he overcame, was a fine coach for sure.

## **Raymond Berry: A Great Patriots Coach**

If we walk back to December 1989, the Patriots were looking to be consistent winners and they knew a great coach mattered. They were looking at hall of Fame type people.<sup>f</sup>

The story told by the late, great Will McDonough of the Boston Globe, was that before Robert Kraft, then-Patriots owner Victor Kiam offered New England's head coaching /G.M. roles to former 49ers coach Bill Walsh. However, Walsh turned down the offer, citing his commitment to continue working for NBC, as the Globe reported.

Still, one could feel a coaching change was coming for New England, which fell to 5-11 in 1989. The Patriots had a great coach, Ray Berry who had gotten them into the Super Bowl but the team had a history of disputes between good coaches and team management.

The Patriots must not have thought Berry was as special as they parted ways over a dispute. It was apparently over a conflict about the hiring of New England's offensive and defensive coordinators.

A Hall of Fame wide receiver, Berry was already a a successful NFL head coach, too. He led the Patriots to a 51-41 mark, with New

England making the Super Bowl for the first time in its history in his first full season on the job. Overall, the Patriots posted winning records in his first four full campaigns (1985-1988). That was unusual for sure for the early patriots.

The Patriots would tab Steelers defensive coordinator Rod Rust to replace Berry, but he was fired after New England was a league-worst 1-15 in 1990. The Pats then turned to Syracuse head coach Dick McPherson, who led New England to a 6-10 mark in '91. However, New England was 2-14 in '92, with McPherson missing seven games because of illness. McPherson had earned his stripes at Syracuse and was surely a great college football coach.

He was replaced in January 1993. From there, the Patriots hired Parcells, who led New England to the playoffs in his second season. My perception at the time was that Bill Parcells could work with guano if need be and he could make it smell sweet. He got the Pats into a Super Bowl in his fourth year. Then came the three-season stint for Pete Carroll (1997-1999), who was replaced by Belichick.

But before that trio of great coaches came the franchise endured a 9-39 stretch in the three seasons after Berry's departure. Would things have been different if the Patriots lured Walsh to the east, or if Berry stayed on? If Walsh succeeded in New England, would Parcells ever have had reason to join the franchise? How would franchise history have been altered? Would Bill Belichick be kicking but today for the Patriots?

You and I will never know. But we do know this: Raymond Berry, just like Belichick and Carroll, won more than he lost in his time in Foxborough, and he surely has his own great spot in Patriots history

## **Games of the 1989 Season**

In the season opener at New York on September 10, 1989, the Patriots beat the Jets in a close game W (27-24) before 64,541. On Sept 17, at Sullivan Stadium (home opener), the Miami Dolphins beat the New England Patriots L (10-24) before 57,043



At Sullivan again on Sept 24, 1989 the Seattle Seahawks beat the Patriots L (3-24) before 48,025. Then, at Buffalo on Oct 1, the Bills beat the Patriots before 78,921

On Oct 8, at Houston, the Oilers were beaten by the Patriots W (23-13) before 59,828. At Atlanta on Oct 15, in a one-point match, the Falcons nosed out the Patriots before 39,697. At San Francisco on Oct 22, the 49ers beat the Patriots L (20-37) before 51,781. At Indianapolis on Oct 29, the Patriots beat the Colts W (23-20) before 59,356.

Then, on Nov 5, at home in Sullivan Stadium, the New York Jets defeated the Patriots L (26-27) before 53,366. On Nov 12, at home, the New Orleans Saints beat the Patriots L (24-28) before 47,680. At home on Nov 19, the Patriots beat the Buffalo Bills W (33-24) before 49,663. At Los Angeles, on Nov 26, the Raiders defeated the Patriots L (21-24) before 38,747

On Dec 3 at Sullivan Stadium, the Patriots defeated the Indianapolis Colts W (22-16) before 32,234. At Miami on Dec 10, the Dolphins squashed the Patriots L (10-31) before 55,918. At Pittsburgh, on Dec 17, the Steelers whopped the Patriots L (10-28) before 26,594. Then, in the season finale, on Christmas Eve, Dec 24, 1989 the Los Angeles Rams beat the Patriots L (20-24) before 27,940, closing out the season and Raymond Berry's coaching career with the Patriots.



# Chapter 10 Coach Rod Rust--1990

Coach #10 Rod Rust

Year	Coach	League	Conf/Div	Place	Record
1990	Rod Rust	NFL	AFC-East	5th	1-15-0

**1990 Rod Rust final record (1-15)**

**ROD RUST • HEAD COACH**

Long-time NFL assistant became New England head coach February 26, 1990, replacing Raymond Berry... Spent 11 years as NFL defensive coordinator with Kansas City (1978-1982), New England (1983-87), Chiefs again (1988), and Pittsburgh (1989)... Steelers' defense improved from dead last (twenty-eighth) in NFL in 1988 to nineteenth under his tutelage last season... His 1985 Patriots unit ranked third in AFC and was largely responsible for team's Super Bowl XX berth... Got NFL start coaching Eagles linebackers under head coach Dick Vermeil in 1976-77.

Born: Webster City, IA  
 Birthdate: 8/2/28  
 College: Iowa State

NFL Experience:  
 Head Coach: 1st year  
 Player: None

Official Photo and Stat Card of the NFL.  
 © 1990 National Football League.

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Coach Rod Rust Pro Football Card

## 1990 Rod Rust #10

The 1990 New England Patriots football team competed in their thirty-first season of professional football and their twenty-first season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Rod Rust in his first of one full season. Victor Kiam was the owner. Patrick Sullivan was the GM. The Patriots outdid their final Ray Berry 5-11 record with an even worse 1-15 record this year. It was last in the AFC East Division and last in the entire league.

This was the worst record in franchise history. When it looked like they could do no worse, they managed to do the impossible. For example, they lost a nationally televised game to the Washington

Redskins in which they were down 9–0 before the Redskins even ran an offensive play. The Redskins' two first-quarter scores had come on a Kurt Gouveia fumble return for a touchdown (#1), and after the kickoff, the Patriots snapped the ball out of the end zone for a safety. The rain was coming down in buckets and so the announced crowd for the game was 22,286.

In a humiliating Week 9 blowout loss in Philadelphia, Eagles' QB Randall Cunningham scored on a long run in which the defense was split between Patriots who did not even try to tackle Cunningham and another few who completely missed him on such attempts. To make it worst, this became the most played highlight reel on all the national NFL-related TV shows (including ESPN's NFL Primetime and Monday Night Football). It unfortunately made the 1990 Patriots' incompetence both a national story and a collective joke. It was not good.

Eventually to end the pain, the Patriots' final game of the season finally came. It was against the eventual Super Bowl champion New York Giants. The game drew a sellout crowd to Foxboro, but over 40,000 fans were rooting for the visitors, as tickets to Giants home games (the Giants were having a banner year) were nearly impossible to come by for non-season-ticket holders.

The Patriots' accumulated a negative-265 point-differential (181 points scored, 446 points surrendered). It was the worst total of any team in the 1990s. Raymond Berry began to look like a miracle worker for taking this team to five wins in the prior season.

The Patriots opponents this year were almost all top teams. Compared with the previous season's Dallas Cowboys, the Patriots played only three teams with non-winning records – divisional rivals the Indianapolis Colts and New York Jets plus one game against the Phoenix Cardinals – all season.

The 1990 Patriots and 1981 Baltimore Colts are the only NFL teams since 1940 to have eleven losses during which they never led in one season. No team wants records or notable acts such as these.

The 1990 Patriots became the third team to end a season at 1-15, and were matched by the 1991 Colts the following year. They also tied the 1976 Tampa Bay Buccaneers for most consecutive losses

inside one season (the Buccaneers lost all 14 games at a time when the NFL had not adopted a 16-game schedule yet). The Bucs record later was eclipsed by the 15-straight losing 2001 Carolina Panthers. It was then topped by the 0-16 2008 Detroit Lions and the most recent 0-16 2017 Cleveland Browns.

Budweiser renamed Schaefer Stadium in 1983 to Sullivan Stadium in honor of the long-term owner family. In 1990, shortly after the Sullivan's sold their majority interest in the team to Victor Kiam, the stadium was officially renamed to "Foxboro Stadium." Note that the official spelling of the town in which the stadium is built is "Foxborough," the shorter spelling is used for the stadium.

**The Games:** The season and home opener was played on Sept 9 at home in the newly renamed Foxboro Stadium. Miami beat New England L (24–27) before 45,305. At Indianapolis on September 16, the Patriots won their only game of the season by beating the Colts W (16–14) in the Hoosier Dome before 49,256. On Sept 23, at Cincinnati, the Bengals beat the Patriots L (7–41) in Riverfront Stadium before 56,470.. On Sept 30. The New York Jets beat New England L (13–37) at home before 36,724.

On Oct 7. The Seattle Seahawks defeated the Patriots L (20–33) at home in Foxboro Stadium before 39,735. On Oct 14, the Patriots drew a bye week. On Thurs., Oct 18 at Miami, the Dolphins beat the Patriots L (10–17) in Joe Robbie Stadium before 62,630. On Oct 28, the Buffalo Bills beat the NE Patriots L (10–27) in Foxboro Stadium before 51,959. On Nov 4, at Philadelphia, the Eagles beat the Patriots L (20–48) in Veterans Stadium before 65,514.

On Nov 11., the Indianapolis Colts beat New England L (10–13) at home in Foxboro Stadium before 28,924. On Nov 18, at Buffalo, the Bills beat the Pats L (0–14) in Rich Stadium before 74,270. Then, on Nov 25 at Phoenix, the Cardinals beat the Patriots L (14–34) in Sun Devil Stadium before 30,110. On Dec 2, the Kansas City Chiefs whooped the NE Patriots L (7–37) at home in Foxboro Stadium before 26,280.

On Dec 14 at Pittsburgh, the Steelers got the best of the Patriots L (3–24) in Three Rivers Stadium before 48,354. On Dec 15, the Washington Redskins beat the Patriots L (10–25) at home in

Foxboro Stadium before 22,286. On Dec 16, at New York, the Jets walloped the Patriots L (7–42) in the Meadowlands before 30,250. On Dec 30, the day before New Year’s Eve, in the last game of the season, the New York Giants beat the NE Patriots L (10–13) at home in Foxboro Stadium before 60,410.

# Chapter 11 Coach Dick McPherson 1991-1992

## Coach #11 Dick MacPherson

1991 Dick MacPherson NFL	AFC-East	4th	6-10-0
• Leonard Russell(OROY)			
1992 Dick MacPherson NFL	AFC-East	5th	2-14-0
<u>1991-1992 Dick MacPherson final record (8-24-0)</u>			



## 1991 Dick MacPherson #11

The 1991 New England Patriots football team competed in their thirty-second season of professional football and their twenty-second season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Dick MacPherson in his first of two seasons with the team. Victor Kiam was the owner. Nobody carried the GM tie in 1991. The Patriots record was 6-10-0 and they finished in fourth place in the AFC East Division.

This year was not very good; but it was better than the 1-15 from the prior year under Coach Rust. Though the Patriots scored twenty or

more points just five times during the 1991 season, they were able to upset playoff-bound teams such as the Houston Oilers, Buffalo Bills and New York Jets. This was the last season where the Patriots were owned by Victor Kiam, who was forced to sell the team to St. Louis businessman James Orthwein in order to settle a debt. The Franchise would change hands again before it found its way into the hands of the Kraft family, the current owners.

In the season opener on September 1, 1991 at Indianapolis, the Patriots beat the Colts W (16–7) before 49,961. On Sept 8. At Foxboro, the Cleveland Browns beat the Patriots L (0-20) before 35,377. Then, at Pittsburgh on Sept 15, the Steelers beat the Patriots L (6-20) before 53,703. At Foxboro on Sept 22, the Patriots beat the Houston Oilers W (24–20) before 30,702.

At Phoenix on Sept 29, the Cardinals beat the Patriots L (10-24) before 26,043. At Foxboro on Oct 6, the Miami Dolphins beat the NE Patriots L (10-20) before 49,749. The week of Oct 14 was a bye. Then, on Oct 20, the Patriots beat the Minnesota Vikings W 26–23 before 45,367. On Oct 27, at Foxboro, the Denver Broncos beat the Patriots L (6-9) before 43,994.

At Buffalo on Nov 3, the Bills beat New England L (17-22) before 78,278. At Miami on Nov 10, the Dolphins beat the Patriots L (20-30) before 56,065. On Nov 17, at home in Foxboro, the New York Jets beat the Patriots L (21-28) before 30,743. On Nov 24, at home, the Pats beat the Buffalo Bills W (16–13) before 47,053.

On Dec 1, at Denver, the Broncos beat the Patriots L (3-20) before 67,116. On Dec 8, the NE Patriots defeated the Indianapolis Colts W (23–17) before 20,131. At New York on December 15, the Jets were beaten by the Patriots W (6–3) before 55,689. In the season finale on Dec 22, at Cincinnati, the Bengals beat the Patriots L (7-29) before 46,394

## **1992 Dick MacPherson #11**

The 1992 New England Patriots football team competed in their thirty-third season of professional football and their twenty-third season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were



led by Dick MacPherson in his last of two seasons with the team. James Orthwein. Orthwein would be an active owner of the New England Patriots during the 1992 and 1993 seasons. He sold the team in 1994. Nobody carried the GM tie in 1992. The Patriots record was 2-14, and they finished in fifth (last) place in the AFC East Division.

Every Patriot season during this period had a series of sub-plots and Dick MacPherson's swan-song season (1992) is no different. The Patriots' two wins in weeks eleven and twelve of the 1992 season came after a horrendous 0-9 start, and they were followed by a five-game losing streak to end the season. They received the first overall pick in the following year's draft. Nobody would consider trading that record for a #1 draft pick.

This was the first season of the ownership bonanza as this version of the team was owned by James Orthwein. He bought the team from previous owner Victor Kiam to settle a debt. This was also the last season in which Dick MacPherson would be the head coach after a two-year tenure. It was also the last season to feature the Patriots' original colors and logo on their primary uniforms, which were overhauled for use in the following season. Things were changing. Soon the Patriots would begin to win games again.

The 1992 Patriots opened up the season with a bye. That means that by scheduling design they missed week 1 of the football playing season. But, they came back in week 2 for their season opener at Los Angeles in which the Rams shut out the Patriots L (0-14) before 40,402. In the home opener at Foxboro the following week on Sept 20, the Seattle Seahawks managed a win from the Patriots L (6-10) before 42,327. At Foxboro on Sept 27, the Buffalo Bills hammered the New England Patriots L (7-41) before 52,527. Then, at New York on Oct 4, the Jets beat the Patriots by nine, L (21-30) before 60,180.

At Foxboro on Oct 11, the San Francisco 49ers beat the Patriots L (12-24) before 54,126. On Oct 18, at Miami, the Dolphins mauled the Patriots L (17-38) before 57,282. Back at home in Foxboro Stadium, the Cleveland Browns beat the Patriots in a two-point match L (17-19) before 32,219. Next, at Buffalo on Nov 1, the Bills beat the Patriots L (7-16) before 78,268.



A very young Coach Bill Belichick in 1992, head coach of the Cleveland Browns

At home in Foxboro Stadium on Nov 8, the New Orleans Saints scorched the Patriots L (14–31) before 45,413. At Indianapolis the next week, on Nov 15, the Patriots scored their first win of the season over the Colts W (37–34) before 42,631. The second win W (24–3) came the next week at home in Foxboro Stadium on Nov 22 against the New York Jets before 27,642. At Atlanta after the big win streak was over, the Falcons whipped the Patriots in a nice shutout L (0–34) before 54,494.

On Dec 6, at home in Foxboro Stadium, the Patriots lost to the Indianapolis Colts L (0–6) before 19,429. At Kansas City on Dec 13, the Chiefs beat the Patriots L (20–27) before 52,208. At Cincinnati on Dec 20, the Bengals defeated the Patriots L (10–20) before 45,355. Then, at home in Foxboro Stadium on Dec 27, the Miami Dolphins wrapped up the New England season by grabbing a close victory from the Patriots L (13–16) before 34,726

# Chapter 12 Coach Bill Parcells 1993 to 1996

## Coach #12 Bill Parcells

<u>Year</u>	<u>Coach</u>	<u>League</u>	<u>Conf</u>	<u>Div</u>	<u>Pl</u>	<u>W-L-T</u>
1993	Bill Parcells	NFL	AFC-East	4th		5 11 0
1994	Bill Parcells	NFL	AFC-East	2nd		10 6 0
						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lost Wild Card Playoffs (at Browns) 13–20</li> <li>• Bill Parcells(COY)[18]</li> </ul>
1995	Bill Parcells	NFL	AFC-East	4th		6 10 0
						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curtis Martin(OROY)</li> </ul>
1996	Bill Parcells	NFL	AFC-East	1st		11 5 0
						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Won Divisional Playoffs(Steelers) 28–3</li> <li>• Won Conference Championship(Jaguars) 20–6</li> <li>• Lost Super Bowl XXXI (vs. Packers) 21–35</li> </ul>
<b><u>1993-1996 Bill Parcells final record (32-32-0)</u></b>						



Coach Bill Parcells taking it seriously against Indianapolis

## 1993 Bill Parcells #12

The 1993 New England Patriots football team competed in their thirty-fourth season of professional football and their twenty-fourth

season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots hired Bill Parcells to turn the team around after he had brought two world championship Super Bowl victories to the New York Giants in his eight years with the last one being in 1990 at a time in which the Patriots were floundering. So, the 1993 team was led by Bill Parcells in his first of four seasons with the team. James Orthwein was still the owner this year. He sold the team in 1994. Nobody carried the GM title in 1993. The Patriots record was 5-11 even with Bill Parcells running the show. They finished in fourth place in the AFC East Division.

Lots was happening organizationally and preparation-ally in 1993. Bill Parcells was brought to New England to create a champion. Could he do it? Could he wait it out? We'll see soon.

## Additional Information

With ownership changes, there are most often rumors of planned moves for the teams affected. They were aplenty when Orthwein from St. Louis took over the Patriots club as owner. There were natural rumors that the team would move to St. Louis and become the Stallions (even to the point of a team logo being unveiled and hats being printed). Despite the confusion, the Patriots ran through the year. It was the first at New England as head coach for Bill Parcells but as an assistant, he had familiarity with Patriot operations.

He had been a linebackers' coach in Foxboro in 1980 under Ron Erhardt. The Patriots drafted Drew Bledsoe as the #1 pick in 1993 and he was named to be the starter in his first year with the club. As noted, big changes were afoot in the organization even before the team took the field this season. Bill Parcells cleaned house.

All coaches from the 1992 season with the exception of Dante Scarnecchia and Bobby Grier were fired and replaced with new ones. Scarnecchia would become a special assistant while Grier would move to the front office. The roster had undergone substantial changes; among the holdovers from the 1992 season were Marv Cook, Ben Coates, Kevin Turner, Michael Timpson, Sam Gash, Greg McMurtry, Vincent Brown, Maurice Hurst, Leonard Russell,

Bruce Armstrong, Mike Arthur, and Pat Harlow. The 1993 season was also the first season the current Patriots logo and font was used (though the current variation would undergo a tweak in 2000 with a slight color change).

The Patriots got off to a poor start when they hit the field. They lost their first four games, even after forcing overtime against the Lions and seeing a last-minute field goal attempt against Seattle bounce off the crossbar.

In Week 5, Drew Bledsoe was injured, Scott Secules was named the starting quarterback, and he managed to win the game with two passing touchdowns and one rushing TD in the team's close 23–21 win over the Cardinals. Scott Secules was then benched after a 28–14 loss to the Oilers. Bledsoe started for the Patriots but did not set any records on fire. In fact, he stunk out the place along with the rest of the team.

The Pats lost seven straight before eking out a 7–2 win against the Bengals (it was the last occurrence until the 2013 Jaguars of a team scoring only a safety in a game). After this win, the team managed a 20–17 victory over the Cleveland Browns coached by Parcells' longtime assistant Bill Belichick and then they unloaded a 38–0 massacre of the Indianapolis Colts in brutal wind-chill conditions.

The season ended none-too-soon on January 2, 1994, with many in the sellout crowd at Foxboro Stadium believing it would be the final ever game for the New England Patriots before moving to St. Louis; unknown to most, though, was that stadium owner Robert Kraft was working to force the selling of the team to him, and his control of the team's lease ensured no move could take place until 2002 at the earliest.

Before we discuss the season finale in Parcells first year, let me bring you up to date on what was happening besides the name changes of Schaefer Stadium to Sullivan Stadium to Foxboro Stadium. The ownership of the stadium was in flux and this fact is one of the only facts that are on the side of New England Fans wanting to keep an NFL franchise in Boston and surrounds.

We know that Sullivan's financial troubles ultimately forced him to sell controlling interest of the Patriots to Victor Kiam in 1988. Fortunately, or unfortunately, the stadium itself lapsed into bankruptcy. Enter Robert Kraft, current owner.

In 1988, Kraft outbid several competitors, including Kiam, to buy the stadium out of bankruptcy court from Sullivan for \$22 million. In other words, from 1988-on, neither Sullivan, nor Kiam, nor Orthwein owned the stadium. It was the sole possession of Robert Kraft. Sullivan was ready to bail as he needed the cash and he wanted as much as he could get for the stadium built less than 20 years earlier for about \$7 million. Kraft was ready to pay a reasonable amount.

For many without alternative motives, the stadium appeared to be cheap and outdated on its opening day. For potential purchasers, the facility was considered to be outdated by reasonable standards for its day and nearly worthless. However, the purchase price for the lucky buyer included the stadium's lease to the Patriots, which ran through 2001. Kraft won the bid.

Those who examined the lease have concluded that it was ironclad enough to end Sullivan's three-decade involvement with the Patriots. And, so, when Sullivan and Kiam tried to move the team to Jacksonville, Kraft refused to let them break the lease. He, as a stadium owner was able to exert a New-England influence on the transaction. As a result, when Kiam was nearly brought down by bad investments of his own, he was forced to sell the Patriots team to somebody. That somebody happened to be James Orthwein.

Ever since Orthwein had bought the team in 1992, there had been constant rumors that he wanted to move the Patriots to St. Louis. In 1994, Orthwein offered a ton of cash to Kraft. In fact, it was \$75 million. He wanted to buy out the remainder of the team's lease at what was now Foxboro Stadium. Had Robert Kraft accepted Orthwein's offer, it would have cleared the last significant hurdle to moving the team to St. Louis, Podunk, or Tim-Buk-Tu. However, Kraft turned it down. New England footballers thank Robert Kraft every day of their lives...at least they should.

There are a lot of great games and great stories in the off years of the Patriots. Having a guy who bagged two Super Bowl Rings already as your head coach means for sure that your team is a contender.

This season finale itself became one of the most dramatic games in the club's history. The Patriots were hosting the Dolphins. When Starter Dan Marino went out for the year in week 5, the Dolphins fell to 9–6. The Dolphins needed a win to make the playoffs.

In the game, the Patriots led 10–7 at halftime and twice stopped the Dolphins on downs, but early in the third, a Bledsoe fumble led to a Dolphins field goal and a tie game. Then a blocked punt by the Dolphins' Darrell Malone led to a touchdown by Scott Mitchell to Mark Ingram. The game was topsy-turvy at this point as the lead had tied or had changed five times in the fourth quarter alone.

In the fourth, the Dolphins were moving and ended a drive with a Terry Kirby touchdown run, even though Andre Tippett had sacked Mitchell for a ten-yard loss – it was the 100th career sack for the future Hall of Fame linebacker.

In the final 3:40 Bledsoe took the Patriots down to a Ben Coates touchdown catch. But it was not enough as the Dolphins forced overtime on a Pete Stoyanovich field goal.

In the overtime the Dolphins punted after Chris Slade forced a fumble. Then, Drew Bledsoe threw a pick to J.B. Brown before the Dolphins lined up to punt again. The Pats got the ball. Vincent Brisby caught a ten-yard pass but fumbled and teammate Leonard Russell recovered the ball and ran 22 yards. The team was moving.

Bledsoe then absorbed a Dolphins blitz and launched a 36-yard touchdown to Michael Timpson, ending a wild 33–27 Patriots win and finishing their season at 5–11, but with four straight wins to close it out and subsequently, the Patriots had eliminated the Dolphins from the playoffs.

Several weeks later owner James Orthwein completed sale of the entire Patriots team to Robert Kraft, Rumor has it included the deeds to all New England properties. That's how much New England was willing to give up for their football team. Later the

residents learned their deeds were safe as Robert Kraft promised to take care of New England and New Englanders as long as he could get a lot of wins out of the franchise. Well, maybe Kraft demanded no such thing, but he got it anyway. For those reading that think the Patriots do not have blood and guts in their roots, think again. Just like Paul Revere and the whole notion of Patriotism, the New Englanders I know would never give up their team, the New England Patriots. Let St. Louis find a few beautiful red Cardinal flying birds to launch their spirits high into the sky.

### **The 1993 Games:**

In the Season opener on September 5, 1993 at Buffalo, the Bills thumped the Parcels Patriots L (14-38) before 79,751. On Sept 12, the Detroit Lions beat the Patriots L (16-19) in (OT) before 54,151. At Foxboro on Sept 19, the Seattle Seahawks beat the Patriots in a close match L (14-17) before 50,392. At New York, on Sept 26, the Jets shellacked the Patriots L (7-45) before 64,836. In Week 5, on Oct 3, the Patriots had a bye week.

At Phoenix, on Oct 10, the Patriots beat the Cardinals W (23-21) before 36,115. At home in Foxboro Stadium on Oct 17, the Houston Oilers beat the Pats L (14-28) before 51,037. At Seattle on Oct 24, the Seahawks won a one-point match L (9-10) before 56,526. Then, on Oct 31, at Indianapolis, the Colts prevailed L (6-9) before 46,522.

At home at Foxboro Stadium on Nov 7, the Buffalo Bills beat the Patriots L (10-13) before 54,326. On Nov 14 in Week 11, the Patriots experienced their second bye of the season. At Miami on Nov 21, the Dolphins prevailed v the Patriots L (13-17) before 59,982. On Nov 28, the New York Jets beat the Patriots L (0-6) before 42,810. Then, on Dec 5, at Pittsburgh the Steelers were victorious over the Patriots L (14-17) before 51,358.

On Dec 12, the Cincinnati Bengals were defeated by the Patriots W (7-2) before 29,794. At Cleveland, on Dec 19, the Patriots defeated the Browns W (20-17) before 48,618. On what is Boxers Day in Canada, Dec 26, the Indianapolis Colts skinned the Patriots W (38-0) before 26,571. In the last regular season game on January 2, 1994 the Patriots beat the Miami Dolphins W (33-27) in (OT) before



53,883. And, that was it for the first Bill Parcells season, 1993. Amen!

Drew Bledsoe was a patriot from right after the draft. He was the first overall pick in the 1993 NFL Draft and then for the next eight years, Bledsoe, a fine quarterback was considered the face of the Patriots franchise.

During his nine-year Patriots career, Drew Bledsoe set the records that Tom Brady would eventually eclipse. Bledsoe broke the Patriots' career passing records for attempts (4,518), completions (2,544) and yards (29,657). Keeping Brady from achievements would assure that Bledsoe would still hold the Patriots' single-season passing record for attempts (691) and completions (400) and would keep him as the only player in franchise history to pass for over 400 yards multiple times

Drew Bledsoe still holds the NFL record for attempts in a season (691 in 1994) and both attempts (70) and completions (45) in a game against Minnesota in 1994 that sparked a seven-game win streak. This propelled the Patriots to their first playoff berth in eight years. Bledsoe led the Patriots to the playoffs four times in his first six seasons, helping the team earn back-to-back division titles and three consecutive playoff berths for the first time in franchise history.

In 1996, he continued his great play by guiding the Patriots to their second AFC Championship in franchise history and a trip to Super Bowl XXXI. Bledsoe is the only quarterback in NFL history with four seasons of at least 600 pass attempts, including three-straight from 1994-96 with the Patriots. If he had not gotten hurt, he might still be playing for the Patriots. Well, maybe not but he would have lasted longer.

## **1994 Bill Parcells #12**

The 1994 New England Patriots football team competed in their thirty-fifth season of professional football and their twenty-fifth season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Coach Bill Parcells in his second of four years. This was the first year under new owner Robert Kraft who purchased full rights to

the team in 1994. Bill Parcells in many ways served as GM. The Patriots record was much improved at 10-6 giving them a 1<sup>st</sup> place finish (tied for first) in the AFC East Division and qualifying the team for the playoffs.

Robert Kraft as noted, purchased the team after preventing previous owner James Orthwein from moving the Patriots to St. Louis. Yes, folks, Robert Kraft kept the Patriots in New England. The team began the 1994 season with a 3-6 record before getting in gear and winning their final seven games, finishing 10-6 and qualifying the playoffs. Many see Bill Parcells as a miracle worker.

With Robert Kraft helping instead of hurting operations, it helps to remember that The Patriots were just two seasons removed from a 2-win season. They made the playoffs for the first time since 1986 and only the seventh time in the franchise history. It was also their first winning season since 1988. The winning streak started with a 26-20 overtime win over the Minnesota Vikings.

## **The First Robert Kraft Season – Highlights**

Robert Kraft bought the New England Patriots in 1994. In 1994 the fate of the Patriots was changed forever and for better. Robert Kraft, a lifelong Patriots fan, purchased the team for \$172 million. Since Kraft has taken over the franchise, the Patriots have been on an upward trajectory towards perfection. The Patriots are globally renowned for being a successful, consistently winning team.

Kraft has made excellent decisions as the owner, like giving the reins of player personnel to Belichick, or keeping their star Tom Brady happy. His moves and investment in the team has led to 16 playoffs appearances in 21 years, 7 Super Bowl, and 5 championship victories, which are tied for second-most in the NFL. The Patriots are the benchmark of success in modern sports.

The Robert Kraft season opener was played at Miami on September 4, 1994, where the Dolphins outscored the Patriots L (35-39) before 71,023. This game was a big deal for the Pats as it was the debut game of Robert Kraft as team owner and the second season for Bill

Parcells who had already put his shape on the team. In this game, the pundits called out both quarterbacks, Drew Bledsoe and Dan Marino for put on a passing clinic.

They combined for 894 passing yards and nine touchdowns. Two TD's were caught by Ben Coates of the Patriots and three were snagged by Irving Fryar of the Dolphins. The game was Marino's first game back from a ruptured Achilles tendon. The Dolphins squeaked out a victory 35-39 after the Patriots failed to convert a touchdown in the Dolphins red zone in the final minute of the game. Ben Coates nearly fumbled the ball to the Dolphins on the drive.

In an almost identical outcome on September 11 at home in Foxboro Stadium, in the first home opener for Robert Kraft, the Buffalo Bills edged out the Patriots L (35-38) before 60,274. In the third game, on Sept 18 at Cincinnati, the Patriots defeated the Bengals for their first W of the year (31-28) before 46,640. In this game, the Patriots wore throwback uniforms and helmets, returning the former Pat Patriot logo after it was retired following the 1992 season.

At Detroit in the fourth 1994 game on September 25, the Patriots picked up their second win W (23-17) against the Lions before 59,618. The Green Bay Packers lost to the Patriots W (17-16) in the fifth game of the season on Oct 2, at Foxboro before 57,522. The Patriots then went on a four-game skid in a five-week period, which included a bye week and a 3-23 loss to Miami after the rest.

The first loss was against the Los Angeles Raiders L (17-21) in week six on Oct 9 before 59,889 at home in Foxboro Stadium. Drew Bledsoe fired off two touchdowns in the second quarter for a 17-7 Patriots lead but the Raiders snagged three Bledsoe INTs. The first run back for a score was by Terry McDaniel). Jeff Hostetler threw orchestrated two touchdowns (one on the ground) to win by four points.

The second loss in a row came on Oct 16 in week seven at New York. The Jets grabbed a one-TD victory L (17-24) before 71,123. After the bye on Oct 30, the Miami Dolphins did not give the Patriots much room to score, closing the gates with a L (3-23) before 59,167 at Foxboro. In week ten on November 6, at Cleveland, the

Patriots had not gotten rid of all the loss *heebie-jeebies*. This would be the last loss of the regular season. The Browns upended the Patriots L (6–13) before 73,878. Since the Pats would play the Browns in the playoffs, this game turned out to be a playoff preview with similar results.

In week 11 on Nov 13, at home in Foxboro Stadium, the Patriots showed resolve in overcoming their losing streak, pulling out a nice victory over the Minnesota Vikings W (26–20) before 58,382. In week 12 at home in Foxboro, the Patriots beat the San Diego Chargers W (23–17) to close in on the season 500 mark (5–6) before 59,690. At Indianapolis on Nov 27, in week 13 of the season, the Patriots defeated the Colts W (12–10) before 43,839.

On Dec 4 in week 14, at home in Foxboro, the Patriots defeated the Jets W (24–13) 60,138. On Dec 11, in week 15, the Patriots beat the Indianapolis Colts W (28–13) before 57,656. On Dec 18, at Buffalo in week 16, the Patriots smashed the Bills W (41–17) before 56,784 a week before Christmas, 1994. On Christmas Eve in week 17, at Chicago, the Patriots glided past the Bears W (13–3) before 60,178.

Going into the game, Parcells knew that his team needed the win to make the playoffs. With little offense and a strong defense, the Patriots overtook the Bears 13–3, for their seventh consecutive win. They ended the regular season with a 10–6 record tied for first place in the AFC Eastern Division. It was their first playoff appearance since 1986 and their first double-digit win season since that year as well. The next game would be a repeat with Belichick's Browns

## Wildcard Cleveland Browns v NE Patriots

In the AFC Wildcard playoffs, on January 1, 1995, the Browns defeated the Patriots L (13–20) before 77,452 at Cleveland. Their last defeat had been at the hands of the Browns on Nov 6. After winning seven in a row the Patriots were flat in their 20–13 loss in their first playoff game since 1986. Drew Bledsoe had a tough time locating Patriot receivers and was picked off three times.

## 1995 Bill Parcells #12

The 1995 New England Patriots football team competed in their thirty-sixth season of professional football and their twenty-sixth season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Coach Bill Parcells in his third second of four years. This was the second year under new owner Robert Kraft who purchased full rights to the team in 1994. Bill Parcells in many ways served as GM. The Patriots record was not as positive and came in below 500 at 6-10 giving them a 4th place finish in the AFC East Division. This was Parcells 2nd-worst season. The Pats did not qualify for the playoffs.

Unlike 1994, when Drew Bledsoe was sharp all year, the previous year, he had a poor season. He threw just 13 touchdowns and was picked off 16 times. His completion percentage was just 50.8% of his passes. The bright spot on the team was rookie running back Curtis Martin. The youngster shined with a Pro Bowl season and would be the Patriots' feature back for two more seasons before the Patriots traded him to the New York Jets during Pete Carroll's tenure in 1998.

In the season and home opener at Foxboro Stadium, on September 3, 1995, the Patriots made amends for the major losses last year against the Cleveland Browns by gaining the win W (17-14) before 60,126. At home again on Sept 10, the Miami Dolphins had little trouble with the Patriots L (3-20) before 60,239. At San Francisco on Sept 17, the 49ers pummeled the Patriots L (3-28) before 66,179. The next week on Sept 24, was a bye. On Oct 1, in week 5 of the season, at Atlanta, the Falcons defeated the Patriots L (17-30) before 47,114.

On Oct 8 at home at Foxboro, the Denver Broncos hammered the Patriots L (3-37) before 60,074. The games were not as close as the prior two seasons under Parcells. At Kansas City on Oct 15, the Chiefs outplayed the Patriots by L (26-31) before 77,992. At home in Foxboro Stadium, the Patriots woke up and beat the Buffalo Bills W (27-14) before 60,203. On Oct 29, at home, the Carolina Panthers beat the Patriots by a field goal L (17-20) before 60,064.

At New York, on Nov 5, the Patriots beat the Jets W (20-7) before 61,462. At Miami on Nov 12, the Patriots prevailed W (34-17)

before 70,399. At home on Nov 19, the Indianapolis Colts defeated the Patriots L (10–24) before 59,544. In week 13, on Nov 26, at Buffalo, the Patriots beat the Bills W (35–25) before 69,384.

At home in Foxboro on Dec 3, the New Orleans Saints prevailed L (17–31) before 59,876. On Dec 10, at home, the Patriots defeated the New York Jets in a close match W (31–28) before 46,617. Then, at Pittsburgh on Dec 16, the Steelers beat the Patriots L (27–41) before 57,158. At Indianapolis in the final game of the season, the Colts beat the Patriots L (7–10) before 54,685.

### **1996 Bill Parcells #12**

The 1996 New England Patriots football team competed in their thirty-seventh season of professional football and their twenty-seventh season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Coach Bill Parcells in his last of four seasons. This was the third year under new owner Robert Kraft who purchased full rights to the team in 1994. Bill Parcells in many ways served as GM. Under Kraft in addition to being head coach. The Patriots record was 11-5 and they finished in first place in the AFC East Division. This was Parcells best season. The Pats qualified for the playoffs and would take the challenge right to the Super Bowl. Bill Parcells would not return to the Patriots after the Super Bowl.

After a very disappointing 1995 season, Drew Bledsoe bounced back with confidence and 4,086 passing yards. He also threw 27 touchdown passes to just 15 interceptions while Curtis Martin had another outstanding Pro Bowl season. The team went the distance in the playoffs but then lost Super Bowl XXXI to the Green Bay Packers.

Team owner Robert Kraft and coach Bill Parcells had a good relationship that simply collapsed as Parcells was able to guide the team as he saw fit... until... In the NFL draft, Parcells was determined to draft a defensive lineman, but Kraft overruled him, giving head scout Bobby Grier the choice of a player. Receiver Terry Glenn was selected. Parcells stormed out of the Patriots draft war room after the choice was made and vowed to reporter Will

McDonough that he was done with New England after 1996. He kept his word.

Despite this issue before the practice season even began, Parcells prepared the team for a championship as was his style. When the season got off to a poor start, the Patriots rallied from their 0–2 start to finish 11–5. They then proceeded to defeat the Pittsburgh Steelers and the upstart Jacksonville Jaguars to advance to Super Bowl XXXI. The season saw the arrival of former Cleveland Browns coach Bill Belichick as an integral part of the coaching squad taking over the coaching of New England's defensive backs. This was the second time that Belichick had worked for Parcells and the two respected each other.

The date was February 16, 1996: Parcells and Belichick were accustomed to working with each other for years in the Patriots and Giants organization. It is no wonder that just one day after being fired as head coach of the Browns, Belichick was hired by Parcells as the Patriots' assistant head coach and secondary coach. We know from the record book that in the Giants organization the two brought championships when they worked together. In their only season together with the Patriots, New England reached Super Bowl XXXI, losing to the Packers in the end.

## The Rest of the story

Since a good part of the story about Bill Parcells is in this chapter and he is joined by Bill Belichick in 1996 and since Bill Belichick has such a great history with the New England Patriots, and we all know that Bill Belichick is the current highly successful New England Patriots coach... I would like to take the time now to tell you the rest of the story of Parcells and Belichick. It is far from over in 1996 and it is very interesting. It is also very germane as we go over the forthcoming great moments in New England Patriots football.

Just five days after coaching the Patriots in the Super Bowl, on January 31, 1997, Bill Parcells stepped down as head coach. There was heavy speculation centering on Parcells, who had a reputation as a fixer, that the talented coach was on his way to New York, this

time to coach the Jets. Though Parcells had told him earlier in the year, he was finished, Patriots owner Robert Kraft did not want to have to replace the coach who had finally brought wins to the franchise. So, Kraft asked the NFL to review Parcells' contract and to step in and block him from coaching anywhere in 1997. The NFL sided with New England, and the ruling forbade Parcells from coaching anywhere else in 1997.

There is so much history in such a short period of time here that even long-time Patriots history buffs have some room for confusion. Though I knew for example that Pate Carroll would be the next coach, the conditions were perfect with Bill Belichick already on the scene for Robert Kraft to bring him in a few years earlier to be the new England Head coach. Instead, he hired Pete Carroll.

Here's how that went down. We have been over some of this already. We know that Bill Parcells had already signed out from the Patriots after becoming frustrated with owner Robert Kraft's not permitting him to, as they say, "shop for the groceries" in compiling a roster, or at least having yes/no on names. In early 1997 after the Super Bowl, Parcells and Robert Kraft agreed to disagree Kraft wanted to maintain owner control of the roster but eventually agreed to a deal brokered by then-NFL commissioner Paul Tagliabue, in which the New York Jets sent the Patriots four draft picks in exchange for Kraft releasing Parcells from his contract.

Parcells thus became the Jets' head coach, and Kraft was able to hire Pete Carroll to follow the legend.

Rich Cimini, an ESPN staff writer offers this quote as to the value of simply having Bill Parcells become the coach of your team, even if no Super Bowl is forthcoming. Parcells had to be special when Bill Belichick kept signing up for refresher course lessons from the master. Cimini: "Before Bill Parcells arrived in 1997, the New York Jets provided plenty of fodder for David Letterman's Top Ten list. They were hilariously inept. Parcells changed that the minute he walked in the building. For that, the franchise's long-suffering fans should be eternally grateful."

For the record, Bill Belichick sometimes regrets his decision to bail from New England after the Super Bowl. It could have been both



fun and productive (my words). It was not long ago that in an interview Parcells told USA Today that he regretted quitting the New England Patriots after the '96 Super Bowl run. Why? "because it was a young, talented team still on the rise."

However, he was OK with his decision to leave the Jets when chances are he may have brought in another champion. He offered remorse and said he never second-guessed himself for leaving the Jets' job.

"No, I've never thought of that, I really haven't," Parcells said in a phone interview. "It's a transient business nowadays. There was new ownership, and you never know what's going to happen when that happens. It was time where they could start again with their own philosophy and a new owner."

Going back to the original confusion in February 1997 the Jets had hired Belichick as their head coach and since Parcells was banned from coaching originally, the Jets skirted the rules and hired Parcells as a consultant. The Patriots were not happy playing against a Parcells team anyplace as they believed he should be coaching for New England.

They filed another NFL complaint asking that Parcells not be allowed to work at all for the Jets, but the negotiated Tagliabue deal eventually ended that dispute. By the time it was all over on Feb 10, 1997, Parcells was named Jets head coach and Belichick, a very loyal "friend" of Bill Parcells was named as his assistant coach.

Meanwhile back at New England, Pete Carroll was the man on the scene. He had just year of NFL head coaching experience, having gone 6-10 with the Jets in 1994. Parcells had taken what might exaggeratingly be called a moribund New England franchise -- one that hadn't been to the playoffs since 1986 and which had posted a meager 14-50 record in the four seasons before Parcells' arrival -- and he took the team to a Super Bowl. We begin three sections in the next chapter about the Pete Carroll New England experience

Finally, after three years of Pete Carroll, on Jan 3, 2000, New England fires Pete Carroll and sends a fax to the Jets requesting permission to interview Belichick for its recently opened head-

coaching job. However, Parcells retires as Jets head coach. "Bill's not coming back," Parcells said at the time. "You can write that on your chalkboard." The six-year contract Belichick signed with the Jets in 1997 called for him to be elevated to Jets head coach whenever Parcells decided to leave, preventing the Pats from speaking with him about their opening.

Belichick is a smart cookie and he did not want to be boxed into any job. So, on Jan. 4, 2000, he resigned as head coach of the New York Jets one day after being elevated to the job. He was concerned and said that it was questions about the Jets' future, including the team's impending sale that convince him to leave. "I just don't feel I can lead the Jets in the year 2000," Belichick said at the time. "I just know what I need to do. I just don't feel I can do it right now."

Knowing he was still boxed in, on Jan. 6, 2000, Bill Belichick filed a grievance with the NFL in an attempt to get out of the contract he had negotiated with the Jets. The NFL is owned by the owners not the coaches and so on Jan. 21, 2000, as expected, NFL commissioner Paul Tagliabue ruled in favor of the Jets, rejecting Belichick's grievance.

Bill Belichick was not ready for slave labor encampment and so he filed suit against the Jets and the NFL looking for relief via a temporary restraining order. He wanted out of the Jets, and he wanted to be able to be free to negotiate with other teams who may want him as their coach.

By January 27, 2000, it became an owner v owner and owner v NFL issue. Even before resolution, Belichick was named to be the head coach of the Patriots after New England and the Jets agreed on compensation. The Patriots really wanted coach Belichick as they gave New York their No. 1 draft pick in the 2000 draft and a fourth- and seventh-rounder in 2001. The Jets gave the Patriots a No. 5 in 2001 and a No. 7 in 2002. Clearly the Patriots saw the same bright light of winning seasons and a winning mentality as Bill Parcells saw in Bill Belichick as Parcells mentored him in his early years.

Just like Bill Belichick is a smart man, so is owner Robert Kraft: "For a No. 1 draft choice, we can bring in a man that I feel certain can do something, rather than the uncertainty of a draft choice,"

Kraft said at the time. "And it wasn't even close when I thought about it that way."

The good connection continued as in Feb. 12, 2000, Scott Pioli, Parcells' son-in-law, who also served as the Jets' director of pro personnel, was hired by Bill Belichick as the Patriots' director of pro personnel.

After having graduated several times from the Bill Parcells school of great football ideas and attitudes, and having been a major instructor, it was not a surprise that as the Patriots coach on February 3, 2002 both the newly charged Patriots and Bill Belichick would win Super Bowl XXXVI.

Bill Parcells was not finished with his fixer career and he must have enjoyed it because he permitted himself to be hired again on Jan. 2, 2003. The Dallas Cowboys hired Bill Parcells, and so he was not thinking it was a slave-labor deal they threw in a four-year, \$17.1 million deal.

This is not a book about the Dallas Cowboys and so far, I am not inclined to write one, but it is a book about the New England Patriots and we all know that their current successful head coach is a former disciple of Bill Parcells. Therefore, this little set of paragraphs sets up a fitting ending for the Bill Parcells period at New England.

In the Parcells period at Dallas, there were supportive writers who had penned "Before the past two years, the Cowboys have been 8-8, just missing the playoffs with a disappointing finish in the final week of each season, bringing the frustration level within Cowboys Nation to seemingly an all-time high...

But imagine being 5-11 for three straight years and not even coming close to the postseason."

When the Cowboys were looking for a Bill Parcells' type, the real deal, the real Bill Parcells was still available and ready to go to work.

The Cowboys were exactly there following the 2002 campaign. Jerry Jones who hates to lose, knew that a huge change was in order. He also knew it was time to make a splash that would not only change

the current perception of the team, but more importantly the culture, and the team's ability to win, win, and then win again. Only a Bill Parcells type change would do.

Why was Parcells happy at Dallas? Here it is in his words: "...But Jerry isn't like that. You want to be somewhere where it's important to the people and certainly it's a high-profile franchise without question. I just felt like those are the kind of things I look forward to. I was trying to do something at a place like that. I like them. I think they're a good group. I think they're passionate. I think they're trying to be successful in the business. Hey, that's all a coach can ask for."

Without a Super Bowl, Bill Parcells me in Dallas was productive and successful. Parcells affects team attitudes to get into the soul of the team. As for his time in Dallas, he never got the acclaim for the same postseason success. The Cowboys' drought for playoff wins continued on Parcells' watch. But nobody who is a Parcells watcher thinks that his time with America's Team wasn't exceptionally meaningful.

Whether you like the Cowboys or not, Bill Parcells was not a fan of any team. He was a professional. He quietly turned Dallas into a competitive franchise again and he did it almost immediately. The Cowboys went 10-6 in his first year of 2003, never bragging but knowing they had been magically changed after just one year. This came after a disappointing 6-10 finish in 2004. After the 10-6, the club went 9-7 in each of the next two seasons, 2005-06.

The latter included another demoralizing playoff defeat, this time to the Seahawks, which would be Parcells' final game as a head coach. Parcells may regret not staying at Dallas to see the seeds bear fruit as he wished the same for New England and the Jets. Parcells talent seeds are all over the NFL. The New England Patriots enjoy the product of Bill Parcells coaching seeds in Bill Belichick whose loyalty to the game of football through the great vision of Bill Parcells is unquestioned.

**Games:** In the season opener on September 1, 1996, the Miami Dolphins defeated the Patriots L (10-24) at Joe Robbie Stadium before 71,542. At home on Sept 8, the Buffalo Bills beat the Patriots

L (10–17) at Rich Stadium before 78,104. On Sept 15 at home, New England shut-out the Arizona Cardinals W (31–0) at home in Foxboro Stadium before 59,118. Then at home again on Sept 22, the Patriots beat the Jacksonville Jaguars W (28–25) in (OT) in Foxboro Stadium before 59,446. The Patriots would stay at 500 or above for the rest of the season. On Sept 29, the team drew a bye

On Oct 6, at Memorial Stadium in Baltimore, the Patriots beat the Ravens in a shootout W (46–38) before 63,569. At home in Foxboro Stadium on Oct 13, the Washington Redskins beat the Patriots L (22–27) in Foxboro Stadium before 59,638. On Oct 20, the Indianapolis Colts were defeated by the New England Patriots W (27–9) at the RCA Dome before 58,725. On Oct 27, the Patriots defeated the Buffalo Bills W (28–25) at home in Foxboro Stadium before 58,858.

On Nov 3, the Patriots drubbed the Miami Dolphins W (42–23) at Foxboro Stadium before 58,942. In the Meadowlands, on Nov 10, the Patriots beat the New York Jets W (31–27) before 61,843. On Nov 17, at home in Foxboro Stadium, the Denver Broncos overpowered the Patriots L (8–34) before 59,457. Then, on Nov 24, the Patriots beat the Indianapolis Colts W (27–13) at home in Foxboro Stadium before 58,226.

On Dec 1, the Patriots thumped the San Diego Chargers W (45–7) at Jack Murphy Stadium before 62,541. On Dec 8, the Patriots whipped the New York Jets W (34–10) at home in Foxboro Stadium before 54,621. Then, in the second-last game of the season in Texas Stadium, the Dallas Cowboys eked out a win L (6–12) against the Patriots before 64,578. In the finale, on Dec 21, the Patriots barely beat the New York Giants W (23–22) in a one-point match shown on NBC at 12:30pm in Giants Stadium before 65,387.

## The Playoffs

### New England v Pittsburgh January 5, 1997

In the Divisional Playoffs on January 5, 1997, the Patriots defeated the Pittsburgh Steelers W 28–3 at 12:30pm at Foxboro Stadium before 60,188. In the Conference Championship on January 12, 1997, the Patriots defeated the Jacksonville Jaguars W 20–6 at 4:00pm in Foxboro Stadium before 60,190. This brought the Patriots to Bill Parcells Super Bowl XXXI game played on January 26, 1997, against the Green Bay Packers in which they lost by two touchdowns L (21–35) at 6:00pm in the Louisiana Superdome before a crowd of 72,301

### Conference Championship January 12, 1997

#### New England 20 v Jacksonville 6

Sometimes the stats are not on your side and you win the game. That's how it was for New England on January 12, 1997 in the Conference Championship against the Jacksonville Jaguars. The Patriots grabbed the 20-6 win after picking up just 234 yards compared to the Jags 289. However, they made up the difference by playing crisp defense, forcing four turnovers, including three consecutive takeaways on the last three Jacksonville possessions of the game.

### Super Bowl XXXI January 26, 1979

This is a SUPER BOWL FLASHBACK

by Anthony Gulizia from the Boston Globe January 27, 2015

#### Green Bay packed a punch against Patriots in XXXI

Think Deflategate was a distraction?

It's a good thing Twitter wasn't around when the Patriots were preparing for Super Bowl XXXI with coach Bill Parcells's imminent departure hovering like a thunder cloud over old Foxboro Stadium.

On Jan. 26, 1997, Parcells's 11-5 Patriots lost to Mike Holmgren's 13-3 Packers, 35-21, and five days later, the Big Tuna stepped down to become coach of the New York Jets. "It kind of clouded the run to the game, which is disappointing, because you get to that game and want to enjoy the ride," said quarterback Drew Bledsoe.

And what a ride it was.

In the first home playoff win in team history, Bledsoe and the Patriots defeated the Pittsburgh Steelers, 28-3, in a game Bledsoe remembered most for the thick fog that blanketed the stadium.

"The fog held the noise in and it was the loudest I ever heard that stadium," Bledsoe said.

The next week against the Jaguars, there was a brief power outage at the old stadium and the New England defense turned the lights out on the Jacksonville offense. Otis Smith's 47-yard fumble return in the final minutes sealed a 20-6 AFC Championship victory.

In the Super Bowl, it was Reggie White and the Packers defense that worried Bledsoe.

After Green Bay took a 10-0 lead, Bledsoe answered with touchdowns on the next two drives, and it looked as if this would be a shootout between him and Brett Favre.

But the Packers scored the next 17 points before a Curtis Martin touchdown cut the lead to 27-21 in the third quarter.

Then Desmond Howard returned the ensuing kickoff 99 yards to bury the Patriots. New England never crossed midfield in the fourth quarter.

"That really took the wind out of our sails," Bledsoe said. "It's bittersweet. I'm still really proud of the fact we made it. The truth is I've never watched that Super Bowl. It's too painful."

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# Chapter 13 Coach Pete Carroll 1997 to 1999

## Coach #13 Pete Carroll

Year	Coach	Leag	Dic/Conf	Place	Record
1997	Pete Carroll	NFL	AFC/ East	1st	10 6 0
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Won Wild Card Playoffs(Dolphins) 17-3</li> <li>• Lost Divisional Playoffs (at Steelers) 6-7</li> </ul>
1998	Pete Carroll	NFL	AFC/East	4th	9 7 0
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lost Wild Card Playoffs (at Jaguars) 10-25</li> </ul>
1999	Pete Carroll	NFL	AFC/East	5th	8 8 0
<b><u>1997-1999 Pete Carroll final record (27-21-0)</u></b>					



Coach Pete Carroll with the Patriots

## 1997 Pete Carroll #13

The 1997 New England Patriots football team competed in their thirty-eighth season of professional football and their twenty-eighth season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Coach Pete Carroll in his first of three seasons. Robert Kraft was the owner. The Patriots record was 10-6, one win less than

Parcells' last year at the helm. The Patriots again finished in first place in the AFC East Division. They won the Wild Card game W (17-3) v the Miami Dolphins, and lost in the Division Playoffs in a tough match L (6-7) against the Pittsburgh Steelers. Pete Carroll got off to a fine start as New England's head coach

## A Lookback at Parcells

It was no secret in January, when the Patriots were preparing to face the Green Bay Packers in Super Bowl XXXI, that head coach Bill Parcells was at least mentally preparing to move to another team after the game. Parcells' beef was that he was not given enough control over personnel matters.

We have already discussed that in the 1996 NFL Draft, the fiery talented coach's relationship with owner Robert Kraft soured when Kraft selected wide receiver Terry Glenn against Parcells' wishes. When the Patriots lost to Green Bay in Super Bowl XXXI, Parcells resigned from the Patriots, using the phrase "If they want you to cook the dinner, at least they ought to let you shop for some of the groceries."

Pete Carroll took Parcells' place with the Patriots. Ironically, Carroll had been the Jets' head coach in 1994 and now, Parcells was the Jets' coach. Carroll's Patriots began the season 5-1 but featured a 6-5 record later in the season. The Patriots came back and finished 10-6 and sewed up first in the AFC East for the second straight season. With the third seed in the AFC playoffs, the Patriots defeated the Miami Dolphins 17-3 in the Wild Card Game but, were defeated by the Pittsburgh Steelers, 7-6, on the road the next week. Again, let me say, it was a great start for Pete Carroll.

**Games:** In the season and home opener for Pete Carroll's Patriots on August 31, 1997 in Foxboro Stadium, the Patriots hammered the San Diego Chargers W (41-7) before 60,190. On Sept 7, at the RCA Dome in Indianapolis the Patriots beat the Colts W (31-6) before 53,632

At home on Sept 14, in Foxboro Stadium, the Patriots defeated the New York Jets W (27-24) in (OT) before 60,072. At home in

Foxboro on Sept 21, the Patriots whooped the Chicago Bears W (31–3) before 59,873. On Sept 28, the Patriots drew a bye week.

At Mile High Stadium in Denver on Oct 6, the Broncos defeated the Patriots L (13–34) before 75,821. Then, on Oct 12, at home in Foxboro Stadium, New England pummeled the Buffalo Bills W (33–6) before 59,802. At New York, on Oct 19 in The Meadowlands, the Jets won in a close match over the Patriots L (19–24) before 71,061. Then, on Oct 27, at home in Foxboro Stadium, Green Bay got the best of New England L (10–28) before 59,972

On Nov 2, at the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome in Minnesota, the Vikings triumphed L (18–23) before 62,917. Then at Buffalo's Rich Stadium on Nov 9, the Patriots at beat the Bills W (31–10) before 65,783. At Houlihan Stadium in Tampa Bay, the Buccaneers dominated L (7–27) before 70,479. At home again in Foxboro Stadium on Nov 23, the Patriots defeated the Miami Dolphins W (27–24) before 59,002.

On Nov 30, in Foxboro Stadium, the Patriots beat the Indianapolis Colts W (20–17) before 58,507. On Dec 7 at Jacksonville Municipal Stadium, the Patriots beat the Jaguars W (26–20) before 73,446. Back again at home in Foxboro Stadium on Dec 13, the Pittsburgh Steelers edged out the Patriots L (21–24) in (OT) before 60,013. In the final game of the 1979 season on Dec 22, at Joe Robbie Stadium in at Miami, the Patriots beat the Dolphins W (14–12) before 74,379.

## **AFC Wild Card Playoff Game Dec. 28, 1997.**

Played at home in Foxboro Stadium, the Patriots beat the Miami Dolphins W (17–3) before 60,041.

This was the first time in Marino's 15-year career (including 14 postseason games) that he did not throw a touchdown pass in a playoff game. The Patriots played without star running back Curtis Martin, and though they pulled out a win, the squad could only generate 228 offensive yards. Key to the win was their ball security. They avoided losing any turnovers for the entire game.

## AFC Divisional Playoff Game January 3, 1998.

Played at Three Rivers Stadium in Pittsburgh, the Steelers managed to win a close game against the Patriots L (6–7) before 61,228

### 1998 Pete Carroll #13

The 1998 New England Patriots football team competed in their thirty-ninth season of professional football and their twenty-ninth season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Coach Pete Carroll in his second of three seasons. Robert Kraft was the owner. The Patriots record was 9-7, one win less than the prior year. The Patriots finished in fourth place in the AFC East Division. They made the playoffs and lost the Wildcard game against the Jaguars, L (10-25). That ended the 1998 season for the Patriots.

In the offseason, the Patriots put restricted free agent running back Curtis Martin up for the highest possible tender. This gained the Patriots a first and third-round draft pick if any team were to sign him and the Patriots were to decide not to match the offer. There had been a long-standing rivalry between the NY Jets and the Patriots from the Parcels days. The Jets went ahead and signed Martin, who had been the 1995 NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year. Because the signing was restricted, they were compelled to give their first and third-round picks in the 1998 NFL Draft to the Patriots.

With the first-round pick the Patriots selected another running back Robert Edwards, who rushed very well for over 1,000 yards in his rookie campaign.

Drew Bledsoe suffered a broken finger in November, and was thus unable to start the team's final two regular season games. He was replaced by Scott Zolak. With their 9–7 record, the Patriots finished fourth in the AFC East, but they still were able to earn a sixth seed in the AFC playoffs. With Zolak still at the helm, the Patriots were

defeated on the road by the Jacksonville Jaguars, the second straight playoff defeat for second-year head coach Pete Carroll, and as of 2017, the only game the Patriots have ever lost to the Jaguars.

In the 1998 season opener on Sept 7, at Denver, the Broncos beat the Patriots L (21–27) before 74,745. At home on Sept 13 at Foxboro Stadium, the Patriots slugged the Indianapolis Colts W (29–6) before 60,068. On Sept 20, at home in Foxboro Stadium, the Patriots defeated the Tennessee Oilers W (27–16) before 59,973. On Sept 27, the team drew a bye week. Then, on Oct 4, my wedding anniversary, at New Orleans, the Patriots beat the Saints W (30–27) before 56,172.

At home in Foxboro Stadium on Oct 11, the Patriots smoked the Kansas City Chiefs W (40–10) before 59,749. On Oct 19 at home in Foxboro Stadium, the New York Jets defeated the New England Patriots L (14–24) before 60,062. At Miami on Oct 25, the Dolphins squeaked out a win against the Patriots L (9–12) before 73,973. At Indianapolis on Nov 1, the Patriots defeated the Colts W (21–16) before 58,056.

On Nov 8 at home in Foxboro Stadium, the Atlanta Falcons shellacked the New England Patriots L (10–41) before 59,790. At Buffalo on Nov 15, the Bills defeated the Patriots by a field goal L (10–13) before 72,020. At home on Nov 23, the Patriots were happy to score enough to beat the Miami Dolphins W (26–23) before 58,729. On Nov 29, the Patriots edged out the Buffalo Bills W (25–21) before 58,304.

Then, on Dec 6, at Pittsburgh, the Patriots beat the Steelers W (23–9) before 58,632. At St. Louis, on Dec 13, the Rams overpowered the Patriots L (18–32) before 48,946. At home on Dec 20, New England nosed out the San Francisco 49ers W (24–21) before 59,153. In the 1998 season finale on Dec 27 at New York, the Jets beat the Patriots L (10–31) before 74,302. So ended the games for the 1998 Patriot's season.

## **1998 Playoff Games January 3 1999 – Wildcard Jacksonville 25 New England 10**

It was Jacksonville v New England again and this time it was Jacksonville taking the honors. Nothing worth having is easy. Making it to the playoffs in fourth place with a 9-7 record is a good

thing for any team. But, when good fortune comes your way, you need to back it with good performance. That was the missing ingredient and the Patriots lost the game.

### **1999 Pete Carroll #13**

The 1999 New England Patriots football team competed in their fortieth season of professional football and their thirtieth season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Coach Pete Carroll in his last of three seasons. Robert Kraft was the Patriot's owner. The Patriots record was 8-8—again it was one win less than the prior year. The Patriots finished tied for fourth place in the AFC East Division.

The Pats came into the 1999 season without second-year running back Robert Edwards due to a knee injury. He had rushed for over 1,100 yards in 1998. He got a serious knee injury playing in a rookie beach game in Hawaii after the 1998 season. Taking his place were veteran Terry Allen and rookie Kevin Faulk, but neither was able to gain 1,000 yards rushing. And, so, overall the Patriots' rushing offense denigrated to 23rd in the NFL.

Nonetheless, the team started off very well with a 6-2 record, but then they stumbled down the stretch and finished 8-8 and were out of the playoffs for the first time since 1995. Following the last game of the season, third year head coach Pete Carroll was fired, while the vice president of player personnel, Bobby Grier was retained only until the 2000 NFL Draft was completed.

In May, the Patriots publicized their plans for the future. They announced their intention to pull out of a publicly financed stadium deal in Hartford, Connecticut. Instead the organization decided to work towards building a privately financed new stadium, which would be called Gillette Stadium. The new facility would be at the site of the existing Foxboro Stadium in Foxborough, Massachusetts.

In the season opener at New York on September 12, 1999, the Patriots beat the Jets by 2 points, W (30-28) before 78,227. In the home opener, which was played in week 2 at Foxboro Stadium, the win differential moved up to 3 points as the Patriots beat the

Indianapolis Colts on Sept 19, before 59,640. On Sep 26 at home in Foxboro Stadium, the Patriots edged out the New York Giants W (16–14) before 59,169. In Week 4 on Oct 3, the Patriots got their fourth win in a row W (19-7) at Cleveland against the Browns before 72,368.

At Kansas City on Oct 10, the Chiefs delivered the first loss of the year to the Patriots L (14–16) before 78,636. At home in Foxboro Stadium on Oct 17 New England defeated Miami L (30–31) before 60,006. At home on Oct 24 at Foxboro Stadium, the Patriots nosed out the Denver Broncos W (24–23) before 60,011. On Oct 31, at Arizona, the Patriots squashed the Cardinals W (27-3) before 55,830. In the following week, #9, the Patriots drew a bye.

On Nov 15, at home in Foxboro Stadium, the New York Jets beat the Patriots L (17–24) before 59,077. At Miami on Nov 21, the Dolphins defeated the Patriots L (17–27) before 74,295. Then, at Buffalo on Nov 28, the Bills beat the Patriots L (7–17) before 72,111. At home on Dec 5, the Patriots beat the Dallas Cowboys W (13–6) before 58,444.

At Indianapolis, on Dec 12, the Colts beat the Patriots L (15–20) before 56,975. Then, at Philadelphia, on Dec 19, the Eagles beat the Patriots L (9–24) before 65,475. On Dec 26 at home in Foxboro Stadium, the Buffalo Bills defeated the Patriots L (10–13) before 55,014. At home in Foxboro Stadium in the season finale on Jan 2, the Patriots whipped the Baltimore Ravens W (20-3) before 50,263





# Chapter 14 Coach Bill Belichick Part I 2000 to 2005

## Coach Bill Belichick # 14

<u>Year</u>	<u>Coach</u>	<u>League</u>	<u>Conf-Div</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Record</u>
2000	Bill Belichick	NFL	AFC-East	5th	5 11 0
2001	Bill Belichick	NFL	AFC-East	1 <sup>st</sup>	11 5 0
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Won Divisional Playoffs (Raiders) 16–13 (OT)</li> <li>• Tom Brady(SB MVP)[20]</li> <li>• Won Conference Championship (at Steelers) 24–17</li> <li>• Won Super Bowl XXXVI (1) (vs. Rams) 20–17</li> </ul>
2002	Bill Belichick	NFL	AFC-East	2nd	9 7 0
2003	Bill Belichick	NFL	AFC-East	1st	14 2 0
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Won Divisional Playoffs (Titans) 17–14</li> <li>• Tom Brady (SB MVP)</li> <li>• Won Conference Championship(Colts) 24–14</li> <li>• Bill Belichick(COY)</li> <li>• Won Super Bowl XXXVIII (2) (vs. Panthers) 32–29</li> </ul>
2004	Bill Belichick	NFL	AFC-East	1st	14 2 0
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Won Divisional Playoffs (Colts) 20–3</li> <li>• Deion Branch (SB MVP)</li> <li>• Won Conference Championship (at Steelers) 41–27</li> <li>• Won Super Bowl XXXIX (3) (vs. Patriots) 24–21</li> </ul>
2005	Bill Belichick	NFL	AFC-East	1st	10 6 0
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Won Wild Card Playoffs(Jaguars) 28–3</li> <li>• Tedy Bruschi(CBPOY)</li> <li>• Lost Divisional Playoffs (at Broncos) 13–27</li> </ul>



Brady, coach Bill Belichick, and John Friesz at training camp in July 2000

Nothing happens without great people and the coach is the most important item for a football team as long as there is a good owner.

The Patriots hired Bill Belichick as their Head Coach in 2000. This was a big deal. Belichick has proven to be one of the greatest coaches in the history of the NFL. His achievements are extensive and his ability to consistently put together a contending team in unparalleled.

He's won for New England five Super Bowl Championships and has been awarded the coach of the year title 3 times. Belichick has created a culture of winning in New England, one that demands perfection from every member of the team. He's established the Patriots as a true dynasty and placed them near the top of best franchises in the NFL. In many ways, Belichick should be the model for coaching methodologies for any coach of any sport.

### **2000 Bill Belichick #14**

The 2000 New England Patriots football team competed in their forty-first season of professional football and their thirty-first season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Coach Bill Belichick in his first of eighteen seasons (so-far). Robert Kraft was the Patriot's owner. The Patriots record was 5-11—three wins less than Pate Carroll's last year. The Patriots finished in fifth place (last) in the AFC East Division. The Patriots did not qualify for the playoffs this year. Bill Belichick would move the Patriots way out of the cellar in future years.

I never met Patriots owner Bob Kraft but from what I see, he is a fine person, who has his own mind about things. But Kraft can be talked out of certain things if the alternative is good/better and the pitch is well done. From the picture of Bob Kraft that I have in my head, he was very familiar with Bill Belichick's body of work over the years especially what he did when he was with the Patriots as a protégé of Bill Parcells. I have inserted two paragraphs below of a post that explores the Parcells (Two Bills) relationship fully.

Below Two paragraphs of a posted by Michael David Smith on January 22, 2018, 6:43 PM EDT



ESPN

“Bill Belichick is getting ready to try to win his sixth Super Bowl with the Patriots. But a victory at Super Bowl LII would actually earn Belichick his eighth Super Bowl ring, as he won two as defensive coordinator for Bill Parcells with the Giants.

“The long relationship between Belichick and Parcells is explored in the new 30 for 30 documentary--“The Two Bills,” which premiered on ESPN on February 1. It details the decades-long relationship with the two men, which started when Belichick applied for a job on Parcells’ staff at Air Force, moved to Belichick working for Parcells with the Giants, saw them coach against each other when Belichick was in Cleveland and Parcells was in New England, and then saw Belichick work for Parcells again with the Jets before leaving for the Patriots.”

Bob Kraft was well aware of Bill Belichick and during the Pete Carroll era, he wanted him to be coaching the Patriots. Who can blame him? Following the firing of three-year head coach Pete Carroll in January 2000, Patriots owner Bob Kraft decided to do his best to make Jets one-time assistant head coach Bill Belichick the Patriots' head coach. Pete Carroll left the Patriots with one of the best records of any coach at Boston or New England. So, he did not get fired because he did not do a good job for the Pats. Bob Kraft was ready to do better and so he sought out Bill Belichick to help make the Patriot dream happen.

As for Belichick learning he got the position in New England, we get the idea of just how close he and Bill Parcells actually are. It was not Bob Kraft or another Patriots' official who broke the news. It was none other than "The Big Tuna" who called Bill Belichick with the news that got the job at New England. Belichick was flabbergasted when he got the call at 7 a.m. from Parcells. Kraft wasted no time and called Belichick at 10 a.m. Belichick wasted no time after the call. He was in Foxboro, Mass., within hours. At 6 p.m., Belichick was introduced as the Patriots' coach. It was for real.

In previous chapters, we discussed that Bill Belichick was an assistant coach under Bill Parcells with the Patriots in 1997. He then followed Parcells to the Jets and was contractually named as Parcells' successor in case Parcells resigned from the Jets. Just one day after the 1999 season, Parcells did resign as head coach of the Jets and he then made his second retirement from NFL coaching.

In the next best edition of "Musical Chairs," Bill Belichick, who had been assistant head coach of the Jets, immediately became the Jets' next head coach. It was all so fast that the following day, at a press conference called to announce his hiring, Belichick quickly penned a resignation note on a napkin ("I resign as HC of the NYJ.") That was it.

He then talked for a half-hour in what was viewed as a resignation speech to the press. Even then, there were rumors that he had been offered the Patriots' vacant head coaching position. In the speech, Belichick cited the Jets' uncertain ownership situation following the death of owner Leon Hess earlier that year as the reason for his resignation.

In the "nothing easy is easy" category, the Jets had denied Belichick permission to speak with other NFL teams, and the NFL upheld Belichick's contractual obligations to the Jets. Belichick then filed an antitrust lawsuit against the NFL in federal court. Because of the uncertainty of the outcome of the suit, Bob Kraft was holding off on his decision to pony up a first-round draft choice to resolve the Jets / Patriots coach dispute

Bill Parcells became the peacemaker and the broker as he and owner Bob Kraft spoke seriously for the first time since Parcells' resignation from the Patriots. They agreed to settle their differences. The Pats and the Jets agreed to a compensation package that was anything but simple. It allowed Bill Belichick to become the Patriots' head coach.

For their part, Bob Kraft sent the Patriots' first-round pick in the 2000 NFL Draft and fourth and seventh-round picks in the 2001 NFL Draft to the Jets, while he also received the Jets' fifth-round selection in 2001 and a seventh-round pick in the 2002 NFL Draft.

Belichick got his modeling clay out when it was done, and afterwards in the off-season, he restructured the team's personnel department. When it was time for the Patriots players to report to camp, a number of them showed up out of shape. Coach Belichick then proclaimed so that it was well understood, that the team "could not win with 40 good players while the other team has 53."

He was not kidding. In 2000, the Patriots went on to finish the season 5–11, as the 5<sup>th</sup> and last team in AFC East and missing the playoffs for the second straight season. As of 2017, this year, "2000," represents the Patriots' most recent losing season. The team has been showing up in shape for training camp ever since.

## Games of the 2000 Season

In the home and season opener on September 3, 2000 in Bill Belichick's first game as Patriot's head coach, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers defeated the New England Patriots at Foxboro Stadium L (16–21) before 60,292. At New York on Sept 11, the Jets beat the Patriots L (19–20) before 77,687. At home on Sept 17 at Minnesota, the Vikings beat the Patriots at Foxboro Stadium L (13–21) before 59,835. At Miami on Sept 24, the Dolphins beat the Patriots bringing the season record to 0-4 before 73,344.

At Denver on Oct 1, 2000, the Patriots won their first game of the season against the Broncos W (28–19) before 75,684. At home in

Foxboro Stadium. New England beat Indianapolis on Oct 8, W (24–16) before 60,292. On Oct 15 at home in Foxboro Stadium, the New York Jets squashed the Patriots L (17–34) before 60,292. At Indianapolis on Oct 22, the Colts defeated the Patriots L (23–30) before 56,828. In week 9 on Oct 29, the Patriots drew a bye.

On Nov 5, 2000, the Buffalo Bills beat the Patriots at home in Foxboro Stadium before 60,292. At Cleveland, on Nov 12, the Browns beat the Pats L (11–19) before 72,618. Then at home on Nov 19, the Cincinnati Bengals were beaten by the Patriots W (16–13) before 60,292. At Detroit on Nov 23, the Lions buried the Patriots L (9–34) before 77,923.

On Dec 4, the Patriots beat the Kansas City Chiefs W (30–24) before 60,292. At Chicago on Dec 10, the Bears defeated the Patriots L (17–24) before 66,944. Then, at Buffalo, on Dec 17, the Patriots beat the Bills W (13–10) in (OT) before 47,230. On Dec 24, at home in Foxboro, the Miami Dolphins beat the Patriots by a field goal L (24–27) before 60,292

## **2001 Bill Belichick #14**

The 2001 New England Patriots football team competed in their forty-second season of professional football and their thirty-second season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Coach Bill Belichick in his second of eighteen seasons (so-far). Robert Kraft was the Patriot's owner. The Patriots record was 11-5. They finished in first place in the AFC East Division, advanced to the Super Bowl and won the World Championship in Bill Belichick's second year at the helm. Things would never be the same

What an amazing year. A Super Bowl XXXVI victory after a 5-11 fifth (last) place finish. In the span of one season, the New England Patriots under Bill Belichick went from the last to the first—from the worst in the league to the best in the league

If expectations were realized, the Patriots would still be waiting for this Super Bowl Victory as nobody expected such great things after the 2000 season. But, it came nonetheless.

Things began with bad news on August 6, when QB coach, Dick Rehbein, died of cardiomyopathy at the young age of age of 45. In the second game of the regular season, nine-year starting QB, Drew Bledsoe, who had received a 10-year contract extension in March, was injured after a big hit by New York Jets linebacker Mo Lewis. To replace Bledsoe, backup Tom Brady, who was a sixth-round draft pick in 2000, got the call to finish the game.

The Patriots did not come back and found their record at 0–2, after the second game. Tom Brady was spot on and he was durable and able to start the final 14 games of the season. His record as a starter was 11–3. He surely answered the call. His great play and Belichick's tenacious coaching combined to propel the Patriots to a clinch of the 2nd seed in the AFC playoffs and a first round bye. It was one for the record books as the Patriots became only the 2nd team in NFL history to win the Super Bowl after starting the season 2–3, behind the 1980 Oakland Raiders.

With a great push in the AFC playoffs, the Patriots faced-off against the Oakland Raiders at home in Foxboro Stadium after a first-round bye in the final game at Foxboro Stadium. It was in a snowstorm, when a Patriots drive late in the fourth quarter was kept alive in an application of the now-famous tuck rule.

This rule was used in overturning a Brady fumble into an incomplete pass. Shortly after the ruling, Adam Vinatieri pounded in a 45-yard field goal through the snow. This went down as one of the most clutch field goals in NFL history, and it sent the game into OT. In OT, another Vinatieri field goal won the game.

After defeating the top-seeded Pittsburgh Steelers in the AFC Championship Game, the Patriots faced the heavily favored St. Louis Rams. The game became known as "The Greatest Show on Turf", aka Super Bowl XXXVI. Guess how it ended? Once again, Vinatieri kicked a game-winning field goal. This 48-yarder sailed through the uprights as time hit all zeroes. Exciting!

This kick and all the play beforehand, gave the Patriots their first ever Super Bowl victory in what has been considered by many to be a "Cinderella" season. This of course means that the situation in

which New England engaged enabled them to achieve far greater success than would reasonably have been expected.

Though Bill Belichick was respected by the many coaches in the league, he was an unknown to most fans across the US and the globe. He had always been the man behind Bill Parcells but this accomplishment this year was all-Belichick. Tom Brady, a 6<sup>th</sup> round draft pick from Michigan at QB was another unknown. He was expected to be groomed and be able to take over some time over the next ten years as Drew Bledsoe played as many of his ten contract years as he could.

As it would turn out the 2001 season served as a launching pad for the team, the once unknown coach, and the once unknown star quarterback. In the next 16 seasons, this combination would win their division 14 times, win the AFC Championship 7 more times, win 4 additional Super Bowl titles, and achieve an undefeated regular season (followed by a 2–1 playoff record) in 2007. How's them apples?

In the season opener at Paul Brown Stadium in Cincinnati, on Sept 9, the Bengals defeated the Patriots L (17–23) before a crowd of 51,521. In the home opener at Foxboro Stadium, in the last year the Stadium would be used for Patriot games, on Sept 23, the New York Jets defeated the NE Patriots L (3-10) before 60,292. At home in Foxboro Stadium on Sept 30, in Tom Brady's first start, the Patriots clobbered the Indianapolis Colts W 44–13 before 60,292. Then, at Miami on Oct 7, the Dolphins thumped the Patriots L (10–30) at Pro Player Stadium before 72,713.

At home in Foxboro Stadium on Oct 14, the Patriots defeated the San Diego Chargers W (29–26) in (OT) before 60,292. At Indianapolis on Oct 21, the Patriots scorched the Indianapolis Colts W (38–17) before a crowd of 56,022. At Denver, on Oct 28, the Broncos defeated the Patriots L (20–31) at Invesco Field at Mile High Stadium before 74,750. At Atlanta's Georgia Dome, on Nov 4, the Patriots beat the Falcons W (24–10) before 44,229.

On Veterans day, Nov 11, 2001 the Patriots beat the Buffalo Bills W (21–11) at home in Foxboro Stadium before 60,292. At home, on Nov 18, the St. Louis Rams defeated the Patriots L (17–24) in



Foxboro Stadium before 60,292. At home on Nov 25, the Patriots neutralized the New Orleans Saints W (34–17) in Foxboro Stadium before 60,292. At New York, on Dec 2, the Patriots nosed out the Jets W (17–16) in Giants Stadium before 78,712.

At home on Dec 9, New England belted Cleveland W (27–16) at Foxboro Stadium before 60,292. At Buffalo on Dec 16, the Pats beat the Bills in OT W (12–9) at Ralph Wilson Stadium before 45,527. On Dec 22 at home, New England defeated Miami W (20–13) at Foxboro Stadium before 60,292. In week 16, on Dec 29, the Patriots drew a bye. In week 17. The season finale on January 6, 2002 at Carolina, the Patriots slammed the Panthers W (38–6) before 71,907. Because the Patriots won the AFC East Championship, they drew a bye in the Wild Card Playoffs.

## End of Season Playoff Game Summaries

### East v West

In the East v West contest at 8:00 pm on EST January 19, 2002, the Patriots defeated the Oakland Raiders in OT W (16–13) at Foxboro Stadium in a packed house of 60,292.

The Boston Globe always sees things on the side of New England or we would stop buying the paper. Here is their crisp summary of this great game:

### Conference AFC v NFC

In the Conference Championship, at 12:30 pm on EST January 27, 2002 at Pittsburgh, the NE Patriots beat the Steelers W 24–17 at Heinz Field before 64,704. Belichick got to the Super Bowl with the Patriots again, this time as the head coach, not a Bill Parcells underling.

## Super Bowl XXXVI

The Game Winning Field Goal in this Super Bowl (36) (XXXVI) against the Rams in 2002 was historical. This game had a huge impact on the Patriots as a franchise. From the top, it was the beginning of a Tom Brady we're all now accustomed to watching.

You may recall that the Rams had just tied the game at 17 – 17 with a little over a minute left in the fourth quarter. Despite being young and out of timeouts, Brady knew what was at stake and he methodically drove his team down the field to set up the game-winning field goal. So much more importantly, this victory marked the beginning of what today is the Patriots dynasty. This group of can-do players transformed from simply a good team, to the team to beat, a role that they've now held for basically an entire decade.

The Super Bowl B XXXVI kickoff was at 5:30 pm CST February 3, 2002. Led by first-year starter Tom Brady, the Bill Belichick-led NE Patriots defeated the St. Louis Rams in the Louisiana Superdome before 72,922. Smiles were reported being observed on all of the Patriot Players, even the coaches, even Bill Belichick! Owner Bob Kraft like many, had a difficult time containing his pleasure after working so hard for such a result.

### 2002 Bill Belichick #14

The 2002 New England Patriots football team competed in their forty-third season of professional football and their thirty-third season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Coach Bill Belichick in his third of eighteen seasons (so-far). Robert Kraft was the Patriot's owner. The Patriots record was 9-7 after their Super Bowl victory. They finished in second place in the AFC East Division and did not make the playoffs.

After stoking away their victory in Super Bowl XXXVI just seven months earlier, the Patriots had to face the reality of again being a competitive football team, not a bunch of championship players ready to tip their hats for applause. Baptism of fire was when they played their first game in their new Gillette Stadium in the NFL's

prime-time Monday Night Football opener against the Pittsburgh Steelers. The Patriots ate the fire and were ready for more.

They soon had won two more to begin the season, including a 44–7 road shellacking against the division rival New York Jets. Life does not always stay good. The Patriots went forward and lost five of its next seven games, allowing an average of 137 rushing yards a game during that span. Temporarily, they forgot their roots and Bill Belichick was well aware of what he needed to do.

In the final week of the season, the Patriots defeated the Miami Dolphins on an overtime FG by Adam Vinatieri to give both teams a 9–7 record. Ironically, it was just a few hours later when the Jets, who had defeated the Patriots the week prior, also finished with a 9–7 record with a win over the Green Bay Packers.

Due to their record against common opponents, the Jets won the tiebreaker for the division title, which unfortunately eliminated the Patriots and Dolphins from the playoffs. As of 2017 this was the last season the Patriots failed to win at least 10 games. That is how good the Belichick / Brady combination was, is and still is.

**Games:** In the season and home opener and the first game ever played in the brand-new Patriots' Gillette Stadium in Foxborough Massachusetts at 9:00 PM on Monday September 9, 2002, the New England Patriots checkmated the Pittsburgh Steelers W (30–14) in a sellout crowd of 68,436 for ABC's Monday Night Football.

At New York on Sept 15, the Patriots smothered the Jets W (44–7) at Giants Stadium before 78,726. At Gillette Stadium on Sept 22, the Patriots squeezed past the Kansas City Chiefs W (41–38) in OT before a packed house. At San Diego on Sept 29, the Chargers beat the Patriots L (14–21) at Qualcomm Stadium before 66,463.

At Miami on Oct 6, the Dolphins defeated the Patriots L 13–26 at Pro Player Stadium before 73,369. At home on Oct 13, the Green Bay Packers picked off the New England Patriots L (10–28) at Gillette Stadium before 68,436. In the week of Oct 20, New England drew a bye. On Oct 27, 2002, the Denver Broncos beat the Super-Bowl Champion Patriots for their fourth loss in a row L (16–24),

bringing the record to 3–4. The game was played at home in Gillette Stadium before a packed house of 68,436. At Buffalo on Nov 3, 68,436, Bill Belichick's Patriots broke the losing streak and slammed the Bills W (38-7) in Ralph Wilson Stadium before 73,448

On Nov 10 at Chicago, the Patriots edged out the Bears W (33–30) in Memorial Stadium before 63,105. At Oakland on Nov 17, the Raiders beat the Patriots L (20–27) in Network Associates Coliseum before 62,552. At home on Nov 24, New England defeated Minnesota W (24–17) in Gillette Stadium before 68,436. At Detroit on Nov 28, the Patriots beat the Lions W (20–12) at Ford Field before 62,109.

At home on Dec 8, the Patriots defeated the Buffalo Bills W (27–17) in Gillette Stadium before 68,436. At Tennessee on Dec 16, the Titans beat the Pats L (7–24) in The Coliseum before 68,809. At home on December 22, the New York Jets outscored the New England Patriots L (17–30) before 68,436. In their season finale as reigning Super Bowl Champions, on Dec 29, 2002, the New England Patriots defeated the Miami Dolphins in an OT thriller W (27–24) at Gillette Stadium before 68,436

### **2003 Bill Belichick #14**

The 2003 New England Patriots football team competed in their forty-fourth season of professional football and their thirty-fourth season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Coach Bill Belichick in his fourth of eighteen seasons (so-far). Robert Kraft was the Patriot's owner. The Patriots record was 14-2. They finished in first place in the AFC East Division, advanced to the Super Bowl and won the World Championship in Bill Belichick's fourth year at the helm. Bill Belichick, like his mentor, Bill Parcells had learned to make a habit of winning the big ones. The 14-2 record was the best record ever at the time for a Patriot's squad under any coach.

In rapid fire succession, Bill Belichick brought his charges and fans another Super Bowl this season, just two seasons after winning Super Bowl XXXVI. In 2002, the team had a bit of a letdown, but

the Patriots rolled into 2003 ready for game after missing the playoffs in 2002.

In a salary cap-related move, captain and Pro Bowl safety Lawyer Milloy was released five days before the start of the 2003 regular season. This was followed by some second-guessing of head coach Bill Belichick among Patriot fans. Additionally, there was an ESPN report by Tom Jackson that the Patriots players "hated their coach." The report was later denied by the players.

Milloy signed with the Buffalo Bills. Some attribute Milloy's playing for Buffalo as a big reason why Buffalo pummeled the Patriots, 31–0, in the season opener. Obviously in this Super Bowl season, the Patriots would rebound. In fact, they did not lose another game after starting with a 2–2 record.

This year also saw the Patriots suffer more injuries than normal. Because of all the disabled, the Patriots started 42 different players during the season. The NFL keeps records on everything. This was an NFL record for a division winner until the Patriots started 45 different players in 2005.

The Patriots were undefeated at home, leading nose tackle Ted Washington to coin the phrase "Homeland Defense" for a Patriots' defense, which had been boosted by the acquisitions of Washington and San Diego Chargers castoff safety Rodney Harrison in the offseason. The Patriots "D" gave up a league-low 14.9 points per game en route to a 14–2 regular season record.

Thirty-one to zip became the bookend score for the beginning game and ending game of the season. Losing 0-31 in the first game, and then winning 0-31 against the Bills in both games, the fans were looking to Rod Serling for an explanation, but he had passed away in 1975. The last win gave the Patriots a perfect 8–0 record at home in the regular season as noted, the 14–2 season was a club record. In fact, it was the first time the Patriots ever won more than 11 games in a season.

After a first-round bye in the AFC playoffs, the Patriots faced the Tennessee Titans at home in one of the coldest games in NFL

history and won, setting up an AFC Championship Game matchup with the Indianapolis Colts. The top-seeded Patriots intercepted Colts quarterback Peyton Manning, the league's co-MVP, four times, winning 24–14 and advancing to Super Bowl XXXVIII against the Carolina Panthers. With a tied game late in the fourth quarter, Adam Vinatieri kicked the game-winning field goal with seconds remaining, giving the Patriots their second Super Bowl victory in three seasons. Vinatieri was one heck of a big weapon for the Patriots throughout the years.

In the season opener on Sept 7, 2003 at Buffalo, the Bills pounded the Patriots L (0–31) at Ralph Wilson Stadium. At Philadelphia on Sept 14, the Patriots beat the Eagles W (31–10) at Lincoln Financial Field. On Sept 21, the Patriots defeated the New York Jets W (23–16) at home in Gillette Stadium. Then, at Washington, on Sept 28, the Redskins edged out the Patriots L (17–20) in FedEx Field. With a 2-2 record, New England had gotten all their bumbles out for the season. The next twelve games would be all wins.

5 On Oct 5, New England defeated Tennessee W (38–30) at home in Gillette Stadium. At home on Oct 12, the Patriots beat the New York Giants in Gillette Stadium. At Miami on Oct 19, the Patriots beat the Dolphins W (19–13) in OT at Pro Player Stadium. At home on Oct 26, New England defeated the Cleveland Browns W (9–3) in Gillette Stadium.

At Denver on Nov 3, the Patriots defeated the Broncos W (30–26) in Invesco Field at Mile High Stadium. On Nov 10, the team drew a bye. On Nov 16, the Patriots shut out the Dallas Cowboys W (12–0) at home in Gillette Stadium. At Houston, on Nov 23, the Patriots beat the Texans in OT at Reliant Stadium W (9-2). At Indianapolis on Nov 30, the Patriots defeated the Colts W (38–34) at the RCA Dome.

On Dec 7, New England defeated Miami at home W (12-0), in Gillette Stadium. On Dec 14, at home, the Patriots beat the Jacksonville Jaguars W (27–13) at Gillette Stadium. At New York on Dec 20, the Pats beat the Jets W 21–16 at Giants Stadium. In the season finale, on Dec 27, in the second Buffalo bookend game, the Patriots whooped the Bills W (31–0) at home in Gillette Stadium,

thereby finishing a great regulars season of 14-2. The Patriots then went on to the playoffs

## **The 2003 Season Playoffs Jan 10, 2004**

### **New England Patriots 17 Tennessee Titans 14**

This game began at 8:00 PM on January 10, 2004 at Gillette Stadium in Foxborough, Massachusetts. The weather was 4 °F, and it was clear and very cold. There was a packed house at the new stadium of 68,436.

This playoff round goes down in pro football history as one of the coldest games in NFL history. Nonetheless, it was a home game and the Patriots did what had to be done to win the game. Steve McNair of the losing Titans put on quite a show and was named co-MVP. He was more difficult for the Patriots than the bitter cold. In the end, the Patriots had to count on yet another clutch field goal from kicker Adam Vinatieri late in the fourth quarter, coupled with a stiff defensive stand.

## **AFC Championship: Sunday Jan 18, 2004**

### **New England Patriots 24, Indianapolis Colts 14**

This game began at 3:00 PM on January 18, 2004 at Gillette Stadium in Foxborough, Massachusetts. The weather was 32 °F, and it was cloudy with occasional snow. There was a packed house at the new stadium of 68,436.

New England's offense did not have to show for most of the game but they did anyway. The defense was compelling, allowing only 14 points, intercepting four passes, recording four sacks, and forcing a safety. That was a major mission accomplished.

## Super Bowl XXXVIII

The Super Bowl XXXVIII kickoff was at 6:25 EST February 1, 2004. Led by first-year starter Tom Brady, the Bill Belichick-led NE Patriots defeated the Houston Texans at the Reliant Stadium, Houston, TX. before a packed house of 71,525.

This fine write-up from the Boston Globe gave New England fans enough of the Super Bowl that they felt they were there. Nice job Bob Ryan. He titled his article:

### Perhaps the greatest Super Bowl ever played

Subtitle: Patriots' win against Panthers was epic NFL game



By [Bob Ryan](#) GLOBE COLUMNIST FEBRUARY 02, 2004

HOUSTON -- And that, ladies and gentlemen, is why a couple of billion people around the globe are hooked on sport. Hype doesn't matter. Prognostications don't matter. Talk doesn't matter. When the game starts, performance is all that matters, and the two teams playing in Super Bowl XXXVIII gave everything they could possibly summon, sometimes from who-knows-where, to produce what may very well go down in history as the greatest of all Super Bowls.

Even Bill Belichick took note. "That was a terrific football game to watch," said the coach whose team gave him a 32-29 victory that makes him a two-time Super Bowl championship mentor. "But it was not a terrific game to coach. I was having a heart attack out there."

These teams sure gave us a decent bang for the buck. For a game that remained scoreless longer than any previous Super



Bowl, it turned into a wild west shootout with 61 points over the last 33 minutes, with the subplot being the greatest quarterback duel the title game has ever seen. Game MVP Tom Brady played the game we've come to expect (32 of 48, 354 yards, 3 touchdown passes, and 1 near-disastrous interception), but he had to be an MVP-type because Panthers counterpart Jake Delhomme made the most improbable personal in-game turnaround ever.

After starting out 1 for 9 with huge negative yardage, he connected on 15 of his final 24 passes, good for 323 yards and three TDs. He accomplished what neither Steve McNair nor Peyton Manning could, eating up huge chunks of real estate against a suddenly baffled Patriots defense that was helpless to stop him.

Like, what happened?

"They made some nice adjustments," acknowledged defensive coordinator Romeo Crennel. "We played a little bit more conservative in the second half, but they made adjustments and found some soft spots in our zone."

"We just started moving around, hitting seams," said Carolina veteran wideout Ricky Proehl, who caught the tying touchdown with 1:08 remaining. "We started getting into a rhythm, and they got a little tired."

Once the offenses got rolling, the defenses had no answer. "It was supposed to be defense vs. defense," said Patriots offensive coordinator Charlie Weis, "but it turned out to be offense vs. offense." It meant the coordinators did what they had to do, which, in the Patriots' case, meant utilizing linebacker Mike Vrabel as a pass receiver in the red zone. Vrabel drifted out of the line of scrimmage to catch a 1-yard touchdown with 2:51 remaining.

"136 X-cross Z-flag," explained Vrabel. "The play was put in, and I knew on that one I'd have a chance."

The defenses simply lost control of the game, which suddenly turned into an Indianapolis-Kansas City shootout, completely unlike anything the Patriots had engaged in all year. Sure, they had to hold off the Colts in that famous 38-34 game Nov. 30, but they had been ahead, 31-10, before they got careless and Manning got hot. Once this one got rolling, it was a matter of “Can you top this?”

“Two good, tough football teams,” said Vrabel. “It was Ali-Frazier. We hit them. They hit us. We hit them. They hit us. But I’ll take my chances with Tom Brady, Troy Brown, David Givens, and Adam Vinatieri any day of the week.” It was, frankly, a humbling experience for both defenses.

“It was a horrifying game,” acknowledged Ty Law, who found himself on the field with the likes of Asante Samuel and Shawn Mayer after regulars Rodney Harrison (broken arm) and Eugene Wilson (hip flexor) were forced out of the game. “Both defenses were tired. We knew it would come down to the end and we knew we’d have the advantage because we have Adam Vinatieri.”

Oh, him. After missing a 31-yard try and having another one blocked, Vinatieri was summoned to the field in a virtual instant replay of the proceedings in New Orleans two years ago. He, of course, knocked the Super Bowl-winning field goal right down Broadway, or whatever happens to be the main drag in Rapid City, S.D. And in another *deja-vu-all-over-again* scenario, Proehl was once again a member of the victimized team.

“I will have nightmares about Adam Vinatieri for a long time,” Proehl acknowledged.

There really is no way for the participants to have grasped just what they were a part of. It just doesn’t work that way, because it’s just too hard doing it, let alone analyzing it. The one thing the Patriots know is that they have some key people to trust when things get sticky, like, say, with 1:08 remaining and the score tied at 29.

"Tom's a winner," acknowledged Belichick. "The quarterback's job is to do what he needs to do to help his team win, and that's what Tom does."

And Troy Brown. He is the most flat-out reliable Patriot receiver ever. He's not the most talented, but he is the most reliable.

"I want the ball in the big situations," Brown said. "A lot of people depend on me, and I don't want to let them down." He came through when he had to, as did David Givens, as did Tom Brady, as did Adam Vinatieri.

"We made one more play than they did," said Law with a smile.

What they all did, Patriots and Panthers alike, was elevate sport into something noble. Lawdy, Lawdy, was this a football game, or what?

-- end of Boston Globe Article SB XXXViii

## **2004 Bill Belichick #14**

The 2004 New England Patriots football team competed in their forty-fifth season of professional football and their thirty-fifth season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Coach Bill Belichick in his fifth of eighteen seasons (so-far). Robert Kraft was the Patriot's owner. The Patriots record was 14-2.

They finished in first place in the AFC East Division, advanced to the Super Bowl and won the World Championship in Bill Belichick's fourth year at the helm. Bill Belichick, like his mentor, Bill Parcells had learned to make a habit of winning the big ones. The 14-2 record tied the best record ever (2002) at the time for a Patriot's squad under any coach. This was the Patriots second straight 14-2 record before advancing to and winning Super Bowl XXXIX, their third Super Bowl victory in four years.

There is always room for improvement and with players getting a year older every year, eventually, positions need to be refreshed. After the 2003 Super Bowl win, the Patriots looked to improve their running game in the offseason. Replacing Antowain Smith with longtime but disgruntled Cincinnati Bengals running back Corey Dillon was their major option. He was acquired in a trade days before the 2004 NFL Draft. It was a good move. Dillon would rush for a career-high 1,635 yards in 2004.

The Pats won their first six games of the season. With this, they set an NFL record for consecutive regular season victories (18), which was later broken by the 2006–2008 Patriots (21), and consecutive regular season and playoff victories before losing to the Pittsburgh Steelers on October 31. In that game, Pro Bowl cornerback Ty Law injured his foot and was lost for the season. Just two weeks earlier, the team had lost the services of the other starting cornerback Tyrone Poole. And, so, the Patriots were forced to complete the regular season and playoffs by using second-year cornerback Asante Samuel, undrafted free agent Randall Gay, and longtime Patriots wide receiver Troy Brown at cornerback, among others.

Their 14–2 record was excellent, and they gained second seed in the AFC playoffs. And, so, New England defeated the Indianapolis Colts at home in the playoffs for the second-straight year. They held the Colts' top offense to three points. The Patriots kept it rolling by then defeating the top-seeded Pittsburgh Steelers on the road, 41–27, in the AFC Championship Game.

Prior to the Patriots' matchup with the Philadelphia Eagles in Super Bowl XXXIX, Eagles wide receiver Freddie Mitchell was heard saying that he did not know the names of the Patriots' defensive backs. This was taken as a sign of disrespect by the Patriots' "replacement" secondary. The Patriots would go on to defeat the Eagles 24–21 in their second straight Super Bowl victory and third championship in four seasons, leading to some labeling the Patriots of the era a sports dynasty. Of course; they were!

In the home and season opener on September 9, 2004, the New England Patriots defeated the Indianapolis Colts W (27–24) in Gillette Stadium. At Arizona on Sept 19, the Patriots defeated the Cardinals W (23–12) in Sun Devil Stadium. Sept 24 was a bye. At

Buffalo on Oct 3, the Patriots beat the Bills W (31–17) in Ralph Wilson Stadium. At home on Oct 10, the Patriots beat the Miami Dolphins W (24–10) at Gillette Stadium.

At home on Oct 17, New England defeated Seattle W (30–20) in Gillette Stadium. On Oct 24 at home, the Patriots beat the New York Jets W (13–7) in Gillette Stadium. On Oct 31, the Patriots suffered their first loss after 18 wins in a row at the hands of the Pittsburgh Steelers L (20–34) at Heinz Field. At St. Louis, on Nov 7, the St. Louis Rams were thumped by the Patriots W (40–22) at the Edward Jones Dome.

On Nov 14, the Patriots whipped the Buffalo Bills W (29–6) at home in Gillette Stadium. At KC, on Nov 22, 2004, the Pats beat the Chiefs W (27–19) at Arrowhead Stadium. At home, on Nov 28, the Patriots hammered the Baltimore Ravens W (24–3) in Gillette Stadium. Then, on Dec 5, 2004 at Cleveland, the Patriots smashed the Browns W (42–15) at Cleveland Browns Stadium.

At home on Dec 12, in a one TD match, the Patriots defeated the Cincinnati Bengals W (35–28) in Gillette Stadium. At Miami on Dec 20, in a one-point match, the Dolphins nosed out the Patriots L (28–29) at Pro Player Stadium. At New York on Dec 26, the Pats beat the Jets W (23–7) at Giants Stadium. Then, in the final game of the 2004 season, on Jan 2, the Patriots finished the season with a 14–2 record, their second in a row, by beating the San Francisco 49ers W (21–7) at home in Gillette Stadium.

## **The 2004 Playoffs Division Round Jan 16, 2005**

### **AFC: New England Patriots 20, Indianapolis Colts 14**

This game began at 4:30 PM on January 16, 2005 at Gillette Stadium in Foxborough, Massachusetts. The weather was 25 °F, and it was cloudy and snowing. There was a packed house at the new stadium of 68,756 at Gillette Stadium, Foxborough, Massachusetts.

There was a New England snowstorm going on at Foxborough on January 16 that day and early evening when Bill Belichick and the Patriots set their mind on dismantling the league's highest scoring team. The Patriots forced three turnovers and held the Indianapolis Colts to just 276 yards and 3 points. It was the Colts lowest point production since their opening game of the 2003 season.

## **AFC Championship Jan 23, 2005**

**New England Patriots 41, Pittsburgh Steelers 27**

This game began at 6:30 PM on January 23, 2005 at Heinz Field in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The weather was 11 °F, and it was cold and fair. There was a packed house of 65,242 at Heinz.

Even for football, the temperatures in Pittsburgh during this game were raw, hovering around 11 °F (-12 °C). As far as record cold goes, this was the second-coldest game ever in Pittsburgh and the coldest ever in Steel City playoff annals. Despite the cold being owned by Pittsburgh, the Patriots delivered rookie Ben Roethlisberger his first loss as a starter after a 14-game winning streak. This had been the longest win streak by a rookie QB in NFL history.

Brady was the field general for the whole game completing passes when needed for 14 of 21 for 207 yards and directing the team the whole while. Dillon was on the money again rushing for 73 yards and a touchdown. Branch caught 4 passes for 116 yards, rushed for 37 yards, and scored two touchdowns. Roethlisberger threw well for 226 yards and 2 touchdowns, and he even rushed for 45 yards. However, his three interceptions were very costly. Heinz Ward caught 5 passes for 109 yards and a touchdown. New England would advance to the Super Bowl after this fine victory.

## **Super Bowl XXXVIII**

The Super Bowl XXXIX kickoff was at 6:38 EST February 6, 2005. Led by Tom Brady, the Bill Belichick NE Patriots defeated the

Philadelphia Eagles in Alltel Stadium in Jacksonville Florida before a packed house of 78,125.

This fine write-up from the Boston Globe again gave New England fans enough of the Super Bowl that they felt they were there. Nice job Nick Cafardo. He titled his article:

**By [Nick Cafardo](#) GLOBE STAFF FEBRUARY 07, 2005**

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — The red, white, and blue confetti floated in the sky and dropped ever so gently on their latest field of dreams. There were hugs, pats on the backs, and family moments with children hugging their hero dads, and wives kissing their hero husbands.

There was Bill Belichick, Romeo Crennel, and Charlie Weis, the brain trust of the Super Bowl XXXIX champions embracing for the final time, with Weis off to Notre Dame and Crennel off to Cleveland.

The Vince Lombardi Trophy was touched, kissed, and embraced like a loved one.

The New England Patriots, draped in blood, sweat, and tears, won the Super Bowl for the 3rd time in four years, beating the Philadelphia Eagles, 24-21, last night before 78,125 at Alltel Stadium.

### **Dynasty?**

“We’re champions now,” said Patriots safety Rodney Harrison. “I don’t know about dynasty right now.”

Football historians will look back upon the current run by the Patriots and decide if it is indeed a dynasty. But for now, it’s clear that no football team in the world is better.

The Patriots broke a 14-14 tie and took control with two fourth-quarter scores against the Eagles, who couldn't stop Tom Brady and Co. when it counted most.

Brady, who played with a heavy heart with his 94-year-old grandmother passing away Wednesday, completed 23 of 33 passes for 236 yards and two touchdowns for a 110.2 quarterback rating.

He was the calm, cool quarterback who had been there and done that. His Eagles counterpart, Donovan McNabb (30 of 51 for 357 yards, three touchdowns, and three interceptions), looked jittery at times in his Super Bowl debut.

Brady's favorite target was Deion Branch, who tied a Super Bowl record with 11 catches for 133 yards and was named the game's most valuable player.

"It doesn't make a difference who gets what," said Branch. "Our plan was to come in here and win the game. We had a lot of doubters and we showed them that we are a big team and we came out and won tonight."

The Patriots boosted their lead to 24-14 in the fourth quarter courtesy of Adam Vinatieri's 22-yard field goal, which capped an eight-play, 43-yard drive.

McNabb, who has a history of overthrowing receivers at crucial times, got the ball with 5:40 remaining and tried to rally the Eagles.

The Patriots played another stout defensive game, showing McNabb looks — including lining up two linemen and five linebackers — he may have never seen on film. They had to adapt after losing free safety Eugene Wilson for more than half the game with what was thought to be a broken arm.

The Eagles pulled within 24-21 with 1:48 remaining when McNabb found Greg Lewis for a 30-yard touchdown pass over rookie safety Dexter Reid — Wilson's replacement. That capped a 13-play, 79-yard drive that consumed 3 minutes 52 seconds.



The Eagles attempted an onside kick, but it was recovered by Christian Fauria at the Eagles' 41. While the Eagles forced a Patriots punt, McNabb couldn't pull off the heroics, with Harrison icing the game with his second interception.

While the Eagles received a strong performance from Terrell Owens (nine catches, 122 yards), the flamboyant receiver never found the end zone.

"Obviously we had a lot of turnovers," said Owens. "My hat goes off to the New England Patriots. They're a good team. It was a hard-fought ballgame. We just gave it away."

"I think we had everyone on the edge of their seats when we went back out there with 50 seconds left. We possibly could have won that game," McNabb said.

You could sense the Patriots were taking over late in the second quarter, and by the time Paul McCartney had finished "Hey Jude" at halftime, Belichick's troops were ready to take the field and carry on the momentum.

Offensive coordinator Weis said the 25-minute halftime allowed him time to figure out how to beat the Philadelphia blitz. He did it with short passes and screen passes.

The Eagles were still intent on blitzing, and the Patriots were happy to see it.

"They were blitzing up the middle with [Jeremiah Trotter] in an attempt to make Brady get out of the pocket and so we had to do something to combat it. We used the screens and the shorter passing game, and it really opened things up for us," Weis said.

Brady was picking it up very nicely, spotting Branch for gains of 27 and 21, the latter giving the Patriots a first down at the Philadelphia 2-yard line. From there, Brady went to designated short-yardage tight end Mike Vrabel, who gathered a tipped pass for his second touchdown reception in as many Super Bowls, giving the champs a 14-7 lead with 11:09 left in the third.

A fired-up Brady returned to the sideline and screamed to his teammates, "Let's keep it going! Let's keep it going!"

Yet the Eagles answered quickly, evening things at 14 with 3:35 remaining in the third. It was turning into a heavyweight title fight, and McNabb appeared poised for the challenge.

The Eagles targeted rookie corner Randall Gay, throwing at him often during the drive. McNabb completed passes of 15, 4, and 10 to Brian Westbrook, the last catch good for 6 points. He also found Lewis and Owens twice each on the drive. His favorite first-half target, Todd Pinkston, was cramping up and was in the locker room receiving intravenous fluids.

The chains kept moving and even with a blitzing Willie McGinest coming at him, McNabb managed to drill a pass to Westbrook between two Patriots for the tying score.

With the score even after three quarters (a Super Bowl first), the Patriots started a well-orchestrated drive to regain the lead. Brady was very methodical in leading the Patriots 66 yards, using Kevin Faulk as a key component.

Faulk caught passes of 13 and 14 yards (both beating Eagle blitzes) and ran twice for 20 yards in picking up three first downs on the drive. Corey Dillon capped it with a 2-yard touchdown run off left tackle with 13:44 remaining, giving the Patriots a 21-14 lead.

"We were 0 for 4 on first downs in the first quarter and we really couldn't get into any rhythm offensively," said Brady. "We just didn't move the ball. We tried to run it and didn't gain a whole lot of yards. We made a few more plays in the second half."

At one point in the first quarter, the Eagles led the battle of first downs, 9-1. The Patriots committed costly penalties early and Pinkston made two beautiful catches on the first scoring drive, which culminated in McNabb hitting L.J. Smith in the end zone with 9:55 remaining in the first quarter.

On their next possession, the Patriots tried to answer but Brady fumbled when his hand hit Faulk's hip at the Eagles' 5-yard line (New England's first turnover of the postseason).

New England finally scored when Brady hit David Givens for 4-yard score to make it 7-7 with 1:10 left before intermission.

That was not respectable for the three-time Super Bowl champions.

In the end, they adjusted, they executed, and they conquered.

## **2005 Bill Belichick #14**

The 2005 New England Patriots football team competed in their forty-sixth season of professional football and their thirty-sixth season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Coach Bill Belichick in his sixth of eighteen seasons (so-far). Robert Kraft was the Patriot's owner. The Patriots record was 14-2. They finished in first place in the AFC East Division, son the Wild Card playoffs against the Jaguars W (28-3) but lost the Divisional Playoffs to the Broncos L (13-27).

Life is not always good even for good people. It was widely reported that popular and talented linebacker Tedy Bruschi suffered a stroke just ten days after the Patriots victory in Super Bowl XXXIX. He initially planned to miss the entire season. However, a determined and well-cared for Bruschi returned to the field against the Buffalo Bills on October 30.

Cornerback Ty Law was released in the offseason, and injuries at the cornerback position, as well as a season-ending injury to safety Rodney Harrison in Week 3, forced the Patriots to break-in a number of players in the secondary very early in the season. Overall, injuries caused the Patriots to start 45 different players at one point or another during the season. This was an NFL record for a division champion (breaking the record of 42 set by the Patriots in 2003).

And, so things did not begin as well as they could have for the Patriots after a Super Bowl victory. They got off to a slow 4-4 start.

Among other things, the Pats lost their first game at home since 2002 against the San Diego Chargers in Week 4. They did make a fine comeback by ending the season on a 6-2 run for an overall 10-6 record. This was not at all shabby as it gave them their third straight AFC East title. In another one for the record books, (The Patriots were the first team in NFL history to alternate wins and losses in each of their first nine games.

They were announced as fourth seed in the AFC playoffs. In the Wild Card Playoffs, the Patriots defeated the Jacksonville Jaguars, but they could not keep up the playoff streak and the lost to the Denver Broncos on the road in the Divisional Playoffs, after having committed five turnovers in the game.

### Games of the 2005 Season

In the home and season opener on September 8, 2005, the New England Patriots defeated the Oakland Raiders W (30-20) at Gillette Stadium. At Carolina on Sept 18, the Panthers beat the Patriots L (17-27) in Bank of America Stadium. At Pittsburgh on Sept 25, the Patriots beat the Steelers W (23-20) at Heinz Field. Then, at home, on Oct 2, the San Diego Chargers whipped the Patriots L (17-41) at Gillette Stadium.

At Atlanta on Oct 9, the Patriots beat the Falcons W (31-28) at the Georgia Dome. At Denver, on Oct 16, the Broncos beat the Patriots L (20-28) at Invesco Field at Mile High Stadium. In week 7, Oct 23, the Pats drew a bye. At home on Oct 30, New England defeated Buffalo W (21-16) at Gillette Stadium. On Nov 7, at home, the Indianapolis Colts pounded the New England Patriots L (21-40) in Gillette Stadium.

At Miami on Nov 13, the Patriots beat the Dolphins W (23-16) at Dolphins Stadium. At home, on November 20, the Patriots beat the New Orleans Saints W (24-17) at Gillette Stadium. At Kansas City, on Nov 27, the Chiefs beat the Patriots L (16-26) at Arrowhead Stadium. At home, on Dec 4, New England defeated the New York Jets W (16-3) at Gillette Stadium.

At Buffalo, on Dec 11, the Patriots scorched the Bills W (35-7) at Ralph Wilson Stadium. At home, on Dec 17, the Patriots skunked

the Tampa Bay Buccaneers W (28–0) at Gillette Stadium. At New York on Dec 26, the Patriots beat the New York Jets W (31–21) at Giants Stadium. In the Season finale on New Years Day, Jan 1, 2006 the Miami Dolphins edged out the Patriots at Gillette Stadium. The Pats finished with a 10-6 record and went on to win the Wildcard playoffs and then they lost in the Divisional round.

## **Wild Card Playoffs**

In the Wild Card playoffs at 8:00 PM EST, on January 7, 2006 the New England Patriots defeated the Jacksonville Jaguars W 28–3 at Gillette Stadium

The three-time Super Bowl champion Patriots, this time had to win three games to advance to the Super Bowl. They defeated the Jaguars 28–3 in the wild card match.

## **Divisional Playoffs**

In the AFC Divisional Playoffs at 8:00 PM EST on Jan 14, 2006 at Denver, the Broncos beat the Pats L (13–27) at Mile High Stadium. That ended the 2005 season



# Chapter 15 Coach Bill Belichick Part II

## 2006-2011...

Coach Bill Belichick # 14

2006 Bill Belichick	NFL AFC East	1st	12 4 0
• Won Wild Card Playoffs (Jets) 37–16			
• Won Divisional Playoffs (at Chargers) 24–21			
• Lost Conference Championship (at Colts) 34–38			
2007 Bill Belichick	NFL AFC East	1st	16 0 0
• Won Divisional Playoffs(Jaguars) 31–20			
• Tom Brady(MVP, OPOY)			
• Won Conference Championship(Chargers) 21–12			
• Bill Belichick(COY)			
• Lost Super Bowl XLII (vs. Giants) 14–17			
2008 Bill Belichick	NFL AFC East	2nd	11 5 0
Jerod Mayo(DROY)			
2009 Bill Belichick	NFL AFC East	1st	10 6 0
• Lost Wild Card Playoffs (Ravens) 14–33			
• Tom Brady(CBPOY)[27]			
2010 Bill Belichick	NFL AFC East	1st	14 2 0
Lost Divisional Playoffs (Jets) 21–28			
• Tom Brady(MVP, OPOY)			
• Bill Belichick(COY)			
2011 Bill Belichick	NFL AFC East	1st	13 3 0
• Won Divisional Playoffs(Broncos) 45–10			
• Won Conference Championship(Ravens) 23–20			
• Lost Super Bowl XLVI (vs. Giants) 17–21			
2012 Bill Belichick	NFL AFC East	1st	12 4 0
• Won Divisional Playoffs (Texans) 41–28			
• Lost Conference Championship(Ravens) 13–28			



## 2006 Bill Belichick #14

The 2006 New England Patriots football team competed in their forty-seventh season of professional football and their thirty-seventh season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Coach Bill Belichick in his seventh of eighteen seasons (so far). Robert Kraft was the Patriot's owner. The Patriots record was 12-4. They finished in first place in the AFC East Division, won the Wild Card playoffs against the Jets W (37-16; won the Divisional playoffs against the Chargers W (24-21) & then the Patriots lost the Conference Championship to the Colts L (34-38).

The Patriots were short from the beginning of the season without their two starting wide receivers from 2005; David Givens, who left in free agency and Deion Branch, who held out for a new contract before being traded in early September. No player shifts are easy. Replacing them eventually were Reche Caldwell and Jabar Gaffney. They signed as free agents in October.

It was a tough season to endure. There were back-to-back losses in November, which ended the team's streak of 57 games without consecutive losses. The Pats were three games shy of the NFL record in this marker.

With a 12–4 record and being the champs for the fourth time in a row in the AFC East, the Patriots entered the playoffs as the fourth seed. They proceeded to defeat the New York Jets in the Wild Card Playoffs. They then achieved a close win over the top-seeded San Diego Chargers on the road. This win set the Patriots up to face their rival Indianapolis Colts in the AFC Championship. Nothing is assured despite the odds. Despite having a 21–3 lead, the Patriots floundered down the stretch at the RCA Dome and the Colts grabbed the 38–34 victory. The Patriots were o-u-t for 2006.

In the home and season opener at 1:00 pm EDT September 10, 2006, in a two-point match, the New England Patriots defeated the Buffalo Bills W (19–17) in Gillette Stadium to get the ball rolling for the season ahead. At New York, on Sept 17, the Patriots overcame the Jets at Giants Stadium. At home on Sept 24, the Denver Broncos beat the Patriots L (7–17) at Gillette Stadium. On Oct 1, in



Paul Brown Stadium, at Cincinnati, Ohio, the Patriots smothered the Bengals W (38–13).

On Oct 8 at home, the Patriots beat the Miami Dolphins W (20–10) at Gillette Stadium. On Oct 15, the team drew a bye. Then, at Buffalo, after a week’s “rest,” on Oct 22, the Patriots belted the Bills W (28–6) at Ralph Wilson Stadium. At Minnesota on October 30, the Patriots clobbered the Vikings W (31–7) at the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome. At home on Nov 5, the Indianapolis Colts defeated the Patriots L (20–27) at Gillette Stadium.

At home on Nov 12, the New York Jets edged out the Patriots L (14–17) at Gillette Stadium. At Green Bay on Nov 19, the Patriots skunked the Packers W (35–0) at Lambeau Field. At home on Nov 26, the Patriots beat the Chicago Bears W (17–13) at Gillette Stadium. At home again on Dec 3, the Patriots defeated the Detroit Lions W (28–21) at Gillette Stadium.

At Miami on Dec 10, the Dolphins shut out the Patriots L (0–21) at Dolphin Stadium. At home on Dec 17, New England thumped the Houston Texans W (40–7) at Gillette Stadium. At Jacksonville, on Dec 24, the Patriots defeated the Jaguars W (24–21) at ALLTEL Stadium. At Tennessee on Dec 31, the Patriots defeated the Titans in a shootout W (40–23) at LP Field. The Patriots finished the season with a 12-4 regular season record and moved on to the playoffs.

## Post Season

In the playoffs, the Patriots won the Wild Card Playoffs against the New York Jets. 37–16. They also won the Divisional Playoffs against the San Diego Chargers, 24–21. And in the Conference Championship, Peyton Manning’s good fortune in winning his first Conference Championship was bad luck for the Patriots, who lost the conference game L (34–38). As an aside, this year, Peyton Manning who prior to this season had a playoff jinx, bagged his first Super Bowl XLI v the Chicago Bears 29-17.

## 2007 Bill Belichick #14

The 2007 New England Patriots football team competed in their forty-eighth season of professional football and their thirty-eighth season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Coach Bill Belichick in his eighth of eighteen seasons (so-far). Robert Kraft was the Patriot's owner. The Patriots record was 16-0-0. They finished in first place in the AFC East Division, and they won the Championship for the sixth of the past seven years. They won the Wild Divisional Playoffs against the Jaguars W (31-20); won the Conference Playoffs against the Chargers W (21-12); & then the Patriots lost Super Bowl XLII to the New York Giants by three points L (17-14).

The Patriots finished the 2007 regular season by winning all sixteen of their games. The regular season was perfect, but the total season was not perfect because the Patriots lost their last game—the Super Bowl. So we have the proper perspective, a perfect season is a sports season that includes any requisite playoff portion, in which a team remains and finishes undefeated and untied. The feat as you might expect, is extremely rare at the professional level of any team sport. It has occurred more commonly at the collegiate and scholastic levels in the United States. A perfect regular season (known by other names outside the United States of America) is a season excluding any playoffs, where a team remains undefeated and untied; it is less rare than a complete perfect season but still exceptional.

A multi-season winning streak may include a perfect season. Exhibition games are generally not counted toward standings, for or against. For example, the 1972 Miami Dolphins had a perfect season of 14 regular season games and three playoff games on their way to the world championship. In this season, Miami lost three of their preseason ("exhibition" games in 1972 NFL vernacular) games but are considered to have had a perfect season.

The Patriots became only the fourth team in NFL history to finish a regular season undefeated, and first to do so since the 1972 Miami Dolphins. The Patriots were also the first team with a perfect regular season since the NFL expanded its schedule to sixteen games in 1978.

Thus, they broke the record for victories in a single regular season that had been shared by the 1984 San Francisco 49ers, the 1985 Chicago Bears, the 1998 Minnesota Vikings, and the 2004 Pittsburgh Steelers, and later tied by the 2011 Green Bay Packers and 2015 Carolina Panthers. They each finished with a record of 15–1. The 1984 49ers and 1985 Bears would win Super Bowl XIX and Super Bowl XX, respectively, the 1998 Vikings and 2004 Steelers would lose their conference championship games, the 2011 Green Bay Packers would lose their first playoff game, and the 2015 Panthers would lose Super Bowl 50. The Patriots are in rare company with the 2007 season and 16 wins. Wow!

After so many great years in a row, the Patriots unfortunately were not able to join the 1984 49ers and 1985 Bears as Super Bowl champions, losing the Super Bowl and failing to go 19–0 and claim their fourth Super Bowl victory. At the time, they would have become just the fourth team to win at least four Super Bowls (joining the 49ers, Steelers, and Dallas Cowboys, each of whom had won five at the time). In Super Bowl XLII, the New York Giants defeated the Patriots 17–14 in one of the biggest upsets in NFL history. Between 2008 and 2017, the Patriots would be a perennial contender and make it to four more Super Bowls, winning two of the four for the New England fans.

At New York, in the season opener 1:00 EDT on September 9, 2007, the Patriots scorched the New York Jets W (38–14) at Giants Stadium. In the home opener at Gillette Stadium, on Sept 16, the Patriots scorched the San Diego Chargers by the same score as last week's game W (38–14. At home on Sept 23, 2007 the Patriots whipped the Buffalo Bills W (38–7) in Gillette Stadium. Then at Cincinnati on Oct 1, the Patriots whooped the Bengals W (34-13).

The twelve games below are all recorded as victories for the New England Patriots in this perfect 16-0 season. Therefore, we will not repeat the New England Patriots name in the following games 5 through 16 season summaries:

On Oct 1, the Cincinnati Bengals lost W (34–13) at Paul Brown Stadium. At home on Oct 7, the Cleveland Browns lost W (34–17) in Gillette Stadium. At Dallas, on Oct 14, 2007 the Cowboys lost W

(48–27) at Texas Stadium. At Miami, on Oct 21, the Dolphins lost W (49–28) at Dolphin Stadium. At home, on Oct 28, the Washington Redskins were walloped W (52–7) in Gillette Stadium

At Indianapolis on Nov 4, the Colts lost W (24–20) at the RCA Dome. On week 10, Nov 11, the Patriots drew a bye. At Buffalo on Nov 18, the Bills were hammered W (56–10) at Ralph Wilson Stadium. On Nov 25 at home, the Philadelphia Eagles were edged out W (31–28) in Gillette Stadium. At Baltimore, on Dec 3, the Ravens lost W (27–24) at M&T Bank Stadium.

At home on Dec 9, the Pittsburgh Steelers lost W (34–13) at Gillette Stadium. At home, on Dec 16, the New York Jets lost W (20–10) in Gillette Stadium. At home on Dec 23, the Miami Dolphins lost W (28–7) at Gillette Stadium. In the season finale, at New York, on Dec 29, the New York Giants lost in a three-point match W (38–35) at Giants Stadium. The Patriots finished at a fantastic 16-0 and played in the playoff games as well as the super Bowl.

## **The Playoffs Overview**

In the postseason, the Patriots won the Divisional Playoffs v the Jaguars, W (31–20). Tom Brady was named Offensive player of the year. The Patriots won the Conference Championship against the Chargers—W (21–12). Bill Belichick was named NFL Coach of the Year. The Patriots wrapped up the season with a very close match in the Super Bowl against the New York Giants, in a losing effort L (14-17).

### **2008 Bill Belichick #14**

The 2008 New England Patriots football team competed in their forty-ninth season of professional football and their thirty-ninth eighth season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Coach Bill Belichick in his ninth of eighteen seasons (so far). Robert Kraft was the Patriot's owner. The Patriots record was 11-5-0. They finished second in the AFC East Division, and they did not qualify for the playoffs.

The Patriots were the defending AFC champions. They had a fine record in 2008 but not good enough. At 11-5, they did not qualify even for a Wild Card berth. For this they set a record as the first 11-win team since the expansion to a 12-team playoff in 1990 to not make the playoffs, as well as only the second team (after the 1985 Denver Broncos) since the NFL expanded to a 16-game regular season in 1978. Considering that just one year prior, the team finished with the only 16-0 regular-season record in NFL history, not making the playoffs was unexpected.

Of course, the Patriots had one major excuse for not getting that one extra win. In the season opener, quarterback Tom Brady, who was the NFL's MVP in 2007, suffered a torn anterior cruciate ligament against the Chiefs. Brady missed the rest of the season. Backup quarterback Matt Cassel replaced Brady and did as well as could be expected. The team did not fall apart.

Cassel took the team to a win in Week 2 against the New York Jets. It was his first start since high school. The following week against the Miami Dolphins, the Patriots had their 21-game regular-season winning streak broken. This record stood until the Indianapolis Colts broke it 2009.

The Patriots had a three-week winning streak going when it engaged the last week of the season. However, the Belichick's squad were not in control of their own destiny. In addition to needing a Week 17 win, they also needed either a Dolphins loss to win the AFC East, or a Baltimore Ravens loss to earn a wild card berth. However, both Baltimore and Miami won, and the Dolphins, Ravens and Patriots each finished the season with an 11-5 record.

Miami qualified for the playoffs by winning the AFC East division over the Patriots on the fourth divisional tiebreaker (better conference record: 8-4 to 7-5). Baltimore qualified for the playoffs as a wild card team, defeating the Patriots on the second wild card tiebreaker (better conference record: 8-4 to 7-5).

Since Tom Brady and Bill Belichick teamed and played a Super Bowl in 2001, this is, as of 2017/2018, the only season since 2002 that New England failed to qualify for the playoffs. What a team.

Like the Patriots or hate them, they are the best football team in the modern era because of two people—Bill Belichick and Tom Brady. Like most Patriot fans, I sure hope that they both continue for as many years as possible.

In the home and season opener at 1:00 PM EDT on September 7, 2008, the Patriots defeated the Kansas City Chiefs W (17–10) at Gillette Stadium. This was the last game Tom Brady played until the 2009 season. At New York on Sept 14, 2008 at New York Jets in his first time at the helm, Matt Cassell led the Patriots to a win W (19–10) against the Jets at Giants Stadium. At home on Sept 21, the Miami Dolphins whipped the Patriots L (13-38) at Gillette Stadium CBS Recap In week 4, on Sept 28, the Patriots drew a bye. Then, on Oct 5, at San Francisco, the Patriots beat the 49ers W (30–21) at Candlestick Park.

At San Diego on Oct 12, 2008, the Chargers defeated the Patriots L (10–30) at Qualcomm Stadium. At home on Oct 20, the Patriots walloped the Denver Broncos W (41–7) in Gillette Stadium. Then, at home on Oct 26, the St. Louis Rams were defeated by the New England Patriots W (23–16) at Gillette Stadium. At Indianapolis on Nov 2, 2008 the Colts edged out the Patriots in Lucas Oil Stadium L (15-18).

At home on Nov 9, the Patriots beat the Buffalo Bills W (20–10) in Gillette Stadium. At home on Nov 13, the New York Jets edged out the Patriots L (31–34) in single OT in Gillette Stadium. At Miami on Nov 23, the Patriots smothered the Dolphins W (48–28) at Dolphin Stadium. At home on Nov 30, the Pittsburgh Steelers slammed the Patriots L (10–33) in Gillette Stadium.

At Seattle, on Dec 7, 2008 the Patriots edged out the Seahawks W (24–2) at Qwest Field. At Oakland, on Dec 14, the Patriots lambasted the Raiders W (49–26) at the Oakland–Alameda County Coliseum. At home on Dec 21, the Patriots squashed the Arizona Cardinals W (47–7) in Gillette Stadium. Then, in the season finale at Buffalo, the Patriots shut out the Bills W (13–0) at Ralph Wilson Stadium.

## 2009 Bill Belichick #14

The 2009 New England Patriots football team competed in their fiftieth season of professional football and their fortieth season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Coach Bill Belichick in his tenth of eighteen seasons (so-far). Robert Kraft was the Patriot's owner. The Patriots record was 10-6. They finished first in the AFC East Division, and they qualified for the playoffs. The Wild Card game was played on January 10, 2010, against the Baltimore Ravens. The Patriots won the game L (14-33).

As noted in the 2008 section for Bill Belichick, the Patriots missed the playoffs that year. This was not looked upon as a random happening by management and so the offseason was marked by a number of front office, coaching, and personnel changes. Vice President of Player Personnel Scott Pioli, who had been head coach Bill Belichick's personnel director since 2000, took off to become the general manager of the Kansas City Chiefs, while offensive coordinator Josh McDaniels was named head coach of the Denver Broncos.

QB Matt Cassel, knew after his fine season after Brady was injured that he could manage a pro team as QB. He led the team to 11 wins in 2008. With Brady coming back, the Patriots traded Cassel along with veteran linebacker Mike Vrabel in March. Defensive starters Tedy Bruschi and Rodney Harrison both retired, while All-Pro defensive end Richard Seymour was traded to the Oakland Raiders for a first round pick in the 2011 NFL Draft...just days before the start of the regular season.

When the season opener came, it was broadcast on a Monday Night Football program, as the Patriots celebrated their 50th anniversary season. It was an American Football League "legacy game" against the Buffalo Bills. It did not all go as planned for an anniversary as the Pats were down 11 points late in the fourth quarter. Nonetheless, they put it all together and scored two TDs to secure a victory in Brady's first game back from his injury.

In November, the 6-2 Patriots had a scheduled road trip to Indianapolis to face the undefeated Colts. In this game, with a six-

point lead late in the fourth quarter, the Pats tried to convert a 4th and 2 inside their own 30-yard line but failed. This circumstance set up a Colts TD and brought the Patriots' their third loss of the season.

New England lost another two games out of three, but then they went on to win their next three games, securing a division title.

Someone once said: “the harder you work the luckier you get.” Many great football coaches do not discount the role of chance or luck in football. Others find it hokey. The Patriots with Bill Belichick work hard and they were lucky to win three Super Bowls as of 2008. They put in the hard work and the good play but sometimes the element of luck is not there, like this year and despite how well or how hard they play, they lose anyway—not intending to lose.

This year, the Patriots finished with their fourth perfect regular season record at home in seven years. They are still a great team and were a great team in 2008. With their third seed in the AFC playoffs, the Patriots faced the Baltimore Ravens at home in the Wild Card Playoffs. The Ravens opened a 24–0 lead in the first quarter and the Patriots could not recover, ending their season.

### Games of the 2008 season

In the season and home opener for the Patriots' 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary game played at 7:00 pm EDT, on September 14, 2009, the Patriots defeated the Buffalo Bills† W (25–24) at Gillette Stadium. At New York, on Sept 20, the Jets beat the Patriots L (9–16) at Giants Stadium. At home, on Sept 27, the Patriots defeated the Atlanta Falcons W (26–10) in Gillette Stadium. Then, at home again, on Oct 4, my wedding anniversary, the Patriots beat the Baltimore Ravens W (27–21) in Gillette Stadium.

At Denver on October 11, the Broncos beat the Patriots in OT L (17–20) in Invesco Field at Mile High Stadium. At home on Oct 18, New England squashed the Tennessee Titans† W (59–0) in Gillette Stadium.

On Oct 25, 2009 at a game against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, the Patriots whipped the Bucs W (35–7) in Wembley Stadium—



London, England. On Nov 1, the team drew a bye. Then, at home, on Nov 8, the Patriots defeated the Miami Dolphins W (27–17) in Gillette Stadium.

Then at Indianapolis, on Nov 15, the Colts picked up a one-point-match victory against the Patriots L (34–35) in Lucas Oil Stadium. At home on Nov 22, the New York Jets were smothered by the New England Patriots W (31–14) at Gillette Stadium. At New Orleans on Nov 30, the Saints hammered the Patriots L (17–38) at the Louisiana Superdome.

At Miami on Dec 6, the Dolphins picked up a one-point victory over New England L (21–22) in Land Shark Stadium. At home on Dec 13, the Patriots beat the Carolina Panthers W (20–10) in Gillette Stadium. Then, at Buffalo, on Dec 20, the Patriots got the win against the Bills W (17–10) in the Ralph Wilson Stadium. At home on Dec 27, 2009 New England pummeled Jacksonville W (35–7) in Gillette Stadium. Then, in the season ender, at Houston, the Texans got the best of the Patriots L (27–34) at Reliant Stadium. And, so the next game for the Patriots would be the Wild Card playoffs.

## **The Wild Card Playoffs 2009 January 10, 2010 Baltimore Ravens 33; New England Patriots 14**

The Wild Card playoffs commenced with a 1:00 pm EST kickoff on January 10, 2010. The New England Patriots took on the Baltimore Ravens but the gods of New England were someplace else that day as the Patriots lost L (14–33) at Gillette Stadium before a packed house of 68, 756. The temperature was 20 °F (–7 °C), sunny and cold. The Patriots felt the chill of defeat.

### **2010 Bill Belichick #14**

The 2010 New England Patriots football team competed in their fifty-first season of professional football and their forty-first season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Coach Bill Belichick in his eleventh of eighteen seasons (so-far).

Robert Kraft was the Patriot's owner. The Patriots record was 14-2. They finished first in the AFC East Division, and they qualified for the playoffs. Luck, the invisible marker in all football games appeared on the opposite side of the preferable Patriots fate. The New England Patriots lost their only playoff game this year in the Divisional Playoffs to the New York Jets, L (21-28). It would take another year for the Patriots to have another go at a few more of those huge, and meaningful, Super Bowl Rings.

This year was one of those rebuilding years for a team that never dropped too far from the very top. After losing to Baltimore in the 2009 playoffs, the Patriots lost their offensive and defensive coordinators. The trading blocks were also busy.

Wide Receiver Randy Moss, who was not long with the team was sent to Minnesota on October 6 and this action eventually led to the return of trade sent All-Pro wide receiver Randy Moss to the Minnesota Vikings, and eventually led to the return of Deion Branch from the Seattle Seahawks in a separate deal. After re-acquiring Branch, the Patriots won 11 of their last 12 games of the season to finish with a 14-2 record. This was a great record and secured them homefield advantage throughout the playoffs.

Tom Brady was at his best this year. He finished the regular season with an NFL-record 335 consecutive pass attempts without an interception. Additionally, Brady broke his own 2007 TD to INT ratio record with 9:1 and was named NFL MVP.

The Patriots held on to the ball this year, committing NFL-record low 10 turnovers on the season. They also snagged another NFL record with seven consecutive games without a single turnover.

Luck always has something to do with football. When players are not themselves or things just are not right, we might suggest that Mr. Luck is at work. In their Divisional playoff game against the Jets, the Patriots were a victim of bad luck. They got down 14-3 by halftime and they could not recover. Moreover, they were held to their lowest scoring total in their last 11 weeks, dropping this contest 28-21 to the underdog Jets.

Statistics site Football Outsiders calculated that the Patriots 2010 offense was not only more efficient, play-for-play, than their record-setting 2007 offense, but was actually the best offense they calculated in their history. As of 2017, this is the last season the Patriots failed to reach the AFC Championship game. What a shame after such a fine season.

In the home and season opener at 1:00 pm EDT September 12, 2010, the New England Patriots defeated the Cincinnati Bengals W (38–24) at Gillette Stadium before a packed house of 68,756. At New York on Sept 19, the Jets beat the Patriots L (14–28) in Meadowlands Stadium before 78,535. At home on Sept 26, the Patriots defeated the Buffalo Bills W (38–30) at Gillette Stadium before 68,756. At Miami on Oct 4, my wedding anniversary, the Patriots thumped the Dolphins W (41–14) in Sun Life Stadium before 69,090. In week 5, Oct 11, the team drew a bye.

At home on Oct 17, New England beat Baltimore Ravens in OT W (23–20) in Gillette Stadium. At San Diego on October 24, the Patriots repeated the prior week's score of W (23–20) and beat the chargers in Qualcomm Stadium before 68,836. At home on Oct 31, the Patriots beat the Minnesota Vikings W (28–18) in Gillette Stadium. At Cleveland, on Nov 7, the Cleveland Browns beat the Patriots L (14–34) in Cleveland Browns Stadium.

At Pittsburgh, on November 14, the Patriots defeated the Steelers W (39–26) in Heinz Field. before 64,359. At home, on Nov 21, the Patriots beat the Indianapolis Colts W (31–28) in Gillette Stadium. At Detroit on Nov 25, 2010, the Patriots pounded the Lions W (45–24) at Ford Field before 60,065. On Dec 6, at home, the Patriots pummeled the New York Jets W (45–3) in Gillette Stadium.

At Chicago, on Dec 12, the Patriots smothered the Bears W (36–7) at Soldier Field before 62,347. At home on Dec 19, the Patriots beat the Green Bay Packers W 31–27 in Gillette Stadium. At Buffalo, on Dec 26m the Patriots slammed the Bills W (34–3) at Ralph Wilson Stadium before 68,281. At home on January 2, 2011 in the season finale, the Patriots walloped the Miami Dolphins W (38–7) in Gillette Stadium, finishing with the best record in the NFL at 14-2.

## The Divisional Playoffs January 16, 2010

New York Jets 21 New England Patriots 28

This divisional playoff game began at 4:30 PM on January 16, 2010 at Gillette Stadium, Foxborough, Massachusetts. The weather was 30 °F, clear and cold. There was a packed house of 68,756 at this Patriots home game. After a 14-2 regular season record, the Patriots were tripped up by the New York Jets L (21-28). Mark Sanchez was the Jets QB and he had a nice day with 16 of 25 completions for 194 yards and three touchdowns. Sanchez led the Jets to victory, thereby avenging a 45-3 loss to New England in December.

### 2011 Bill Belichick #14

The 2011 New England Patriots football team competed in their fifty-second season of professional football and their forty-second season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Coach Bill Belichick in his twelfth of eighteen seasons (so-far). Robert Kraft was the Patriot's owner. The Patriots record was 13-3.

They finished first in the AFC East Division, and they qualified for the playoffs and went on to play in the Super Bowl, where they lost by just four points L (17-21) to the Giants. It was the seventh Super Bowl trip in franchise history, and the fifth for head coach Bill Belichick and quarterback Tom Brady.

There was a tone of sadness to the 2011 Patriots season as the team dedicated the season. The Patriots dedicated their 2011 season to the memory of Myra Kraft, the wife of owner Robert Kraft, who died on July 20, 2011 after a long fight against cancer. It gave an idea of how much the Patriots respect and appreciate the owner family. At both home and away games, in commemoration, the Patriots wore patches bearing Kraft's initials, MHK, on their uniforms.

In fact, The Patriots elected to wear their Super Bowl patches on the right side of their uniforms, so that they could keep the MHK patch on the left side as it had been all season.

The Patriots continued superiority came through again this season as they were the only 2011 division winner that had won their division the previous season. As noted, in a heartbreaking defeat, The Patriots lost in the Super Bowl to the New York Giants by a score of 21–17.

As was the case in their previous appearance against these same Giants in Super Bowl XLII, the Pats had a chance to join the San Francisco 49ers, the Dallas Cowboys, the Pittsburgh Steelers, and the Green Bay Packers as the only teams to win at least four Super Bowls. The Packers had entered the 2011 season as the defending champions had not yet won a fourth Super Bowl when the Patriots had last appeared.

Instead, without a victory this year, the Patriots tied what was then an NFL record for most losses in a Super Bowl. This record had been set by the Minnesota Vikings and tied by the Denver Broncos and Buffalo Bills, each of whom had lost four.

With the loss, along with losses in 1985, 1996, and 2007, the Patriots tied with the Denver Broncos, Buffalo Bills and Minnesota Vikings for most Super Bowl losses at four (although the Broncos would lose their fifth against the Seattle Seahawks two years later).

In the six years from 2012 through 2017, the Patriots would make the playoffs all six times and would play three times in the Super Bowl. They would win two of their three Super Bowl encounters with the last one being after the 2016 season.

At Miami in the season opener on September 12, the Patriots defeated the Dolphins W (38–24) at Sun Life Stadium. At home on Sept 18, the Patriots beat the San Diego Chargers W (35–21) in Gillette Stadium. At Buffalo on Sept 25, the Bills defeated the Patriots L (31–34) at Ralph Wilson Stadium. At Oakland, on Oct 2, the Patriots defeated the Raiders W (31–19) at the Coliseum.

At home on Oct 9, the Patriots beat the New York Jets W (30–21) in Gillette Stadium. At home on Oct 16, the Patriots defeated the Dallas Cowboys W (20–16) in Gillette Stadium. On Oct23, there was a bye. Then, after the rest, on at Pittsburgh on October 30 the

Steelers beat the Patriots L (17–25) at Heinz Field. At home on Nov 6, the New York Giants beat the New England Patriots L (20–24) in Gillette Stadium.

At New York on Nov 13, the Patriots beat the Jets W (37–16) at MetLife Stadium. At home on Nov 21 the Patriots shellacked the Kansas City Chiefs W (34–3) in Gillette Stadium. At Philadelphia, on Nov 27, the Patriots beat the Eagles W (38–20) at Lincoln Financial Field. At home on Dec 4, the Patriots beat the Indianapolis Colts W (31–24) in Gillette Stadium.

At Washington, on Dec 11, the Patriots defeated the Redskins W (34–27) at FedEx Field. At Denver on Dec 18, the Patriots shipped the Broncos W (41–23) in Sports Authority Field at Mile High Stadium. At home, on Dec 24, the Patriots beat the Miami Dolphins W (27–24) in Gillette Stadium. At home on Jan 1 in the final game of the season, the Patriots scorched the Buffalo Bills W (49–21) in Gillette Stadium. The Patriots finished with a 13-3 record and 1<sup>st</sup> in the AFC East.

## **The Divisional Playoffs January 14, 2012**

**New England Patriots 45; Denver Broncos 10**

This divisional playoff game began at 8:00 PM on January 14, 2012 at Gillette Stadium, Foxborough, Massachusetts. The weather was 24 °F, partly cloudy and cold. There was a packed house of 68,756 at this Patriots home game. After a 13-3 regular season record, the Patriots walloped the Denver Broncos W (45-10).

Clearly this game could have been subtitled as The Tom Brady Show as this All-Pro-QB really put on a show for America. He tied an NFL playoff record by throwing six touchdown passes in a playoff game. He tied a number of all-time greats in this great showing—such as Daryle Lamonica's six scores in the Oakland Raiders' 1969 Divisional round victory over the Houston Oilers and Steve Young's six scores in Super Bowl XXIX over San Diego.

## AFC Championship Playoffs January 22, 2012. Patriots 23; Ravens 20

This AFC Championship game began at 3:00 PM on January 22, 2012 at Gillette Stadium, Foxborough, Massachusetts. The weather was 29 °F, cloudy and cold. There was a packed house of 68,756 at this Patriots home game. After a 13-3 regular season record, the Patriots played a close match with the Baltimore Ravens, winning the contest W (23-20).

## Super Bowl XLVI February 5, 2012

	1	2	3	4	Total
<b>Giants</b>	9	0	6	6	<b>21</b>
Patriots	0	10	7	0	<b>17</b>

The Super Bowl XLVI kickoff was at 6:30 EST February 5, 2012. Led by starter Tom Brady, the Bill Belichick-led NE Patriots were defeated. Lucas Oil Stadium, Indianapolis Indiana, before a packed house of 68,658. After a 13-3 regular season record, the Patriots played a close match with the New York Giants, losing the contest W (17-21). (color commentator),





# Chapter 16 Coach Bill Belichick Part III 2012-2017...

## Coach Bill Belichick # 13

- 2012 Bill Belichick NFL AFC East 1st 12 4 0
- Won Divisional Playoffs (Texans) 41–28
  - Lost Conference Championship(Ravens) 13–28
- 2013 Bill Belichick NFL AFC East 1st 12 4 0
- Won Divisional Playoffs (Colts) 43–22
  - Lost Conference Championship (at Broncos) 16–26
- 2014 Bill Belichick NFL AFC East 1st 12 4 0
- Won Divisional Playoffs (Ravens) 35–31
  - Rob Gronkowski(CBPOY)
  - Won Conference Championship(Colts) 45–7
  - Tom Brady(SB MVP)[29]
  - Won Super Bowl XLIX (4) (vs. Seahawks) 28–24
- 2015 Bill Belichick NFL AFC East 1st 12 4 0
- Won Divisional Playoffs (Chiefs) 27–20
  - Lost Conference Championship (at Broncos) 18–20
- 2016 Bill Belichick NFL AFC East 1st 14 2 0
- Won Divisional Playoffs (Texans) 34–16
  - Tom Brady(SB MVP)
  - Won Conference Championship(Steelers) 36–17
  - Won Super Bowl LI (5) (vs. Falcons) 34–28 (OT)
- 2017 Bill Belichick NFL AFC East 1st 13 3 0
- Won Divisional Playoffs (Titans) 35–14
  - Tom Brady(MVP)
  - Won Conference Championship(Jaguars) 24–20
  - Lost Super Bowl LII (vs. Patriots) 33–41
- 2000-2017 Bill Belichick final record (214-74-0)**



## 2012 Bill Belichick #14

The 2012 New England Patriots football team competed in their fifty-third season of professional football and their forty-third season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Coach Bill Belichick in his thirteenth of eighteen seasons (so-far). Robert Kraft was the Patriot's owner. The Patriots record was 12-4. They finished first in the AFC East Division, and they qualified for the playoffs. They first won the AFC Divisional Playoffs against the Texans 41–28, and then in the AFC Championship, they lost to the Ravens 13–28, and again, the Patriots missed the big dance, the rings, and the sweet cigars. But soon again!

This was the 11th season in which the Patriots played all of their home games at Gillette Stadium. The 2012 Patriots featured a prolific offense that had it all together and were ready to take it all the way. Then again, there is that luck factor.

The Patriots broke the record for first downs in a season, with 444, and they finished third all-time in scoring, with 557 points, finishing only behind the 2011 Green Bay Packers and their previous 2007 record setting season. Additionally, this was the third consecutive season that the Patriots exceeded 500 points scored, which tied the record set by the 1999–2001 St. Louis Rams.

The Patriots did what was important until their second playoff game. They also ranked first in the league with a turnover margin of +25. This 12-win season marked the Patriots' tenth consecutive 10-win season, a feat exceeded only by the San Francisco 49ers' streak of 16, from 1983 to 1998, and it was their twelfth consecutive winning season. They are still a football phenomenon and as you will see, their Super Bowl days at this point are not behind them.

Unfortunately, on January 20, 2013, they were defeated by the Baltimore Ravens in the AFC Championship Game, marking their first AFC title game loss at home. The Patriots, Bill Belichick, Tom Brady, and company would be back with a vengeance.

In the season opener at Tennessee on September 9, the Patriots pounded the Titans W (34–13) at LP Field. At home on Sept 16, the Arizona Cardinals beat the Patriots by two points L (18–20) in

Gillette Stadium. At Baltimore on Sept 23, in a one-point contest, the Ravens beat the Patriots L (30–31) at M&T Bank Stadium. Then, at Buffalo, on Sept 30, the Patriots delivered a big wallop to the Bills W (52–28) in a shootout at Ralph Wilson Stadium.

At home, the Patriots defeated the Denver Broncos W (31–21) at Gillette Stadium. At Seattle, on Oct 14, the Seahawks beat the Patriots in a one-point match L (23–24) at CenturyLink Field. Then, at home, on Oct 21. In OT, the Patriots beat the New York Jets W (29–26) in Gillette Stadium. Then, in Wembley Stadium in London England, on Oct 28, the Patriots smashed the St. Louis Rams W (45–7) In Week 9 on Nov4, the team drew a bye.

At home on Nov 11, New England beat Buffalo W (37–31) in Gillette Stadium. At home again on Nov 18, the Patriots thumped the Indianapolis Colts W (59–24) in Gillette Stadium. At New York on Nov 22, the Patriots lambasted the Jets W (49–19) at MetLife Stadium. Then, on Dec 2 at Miami, the Patriots beat the Dolphins W (23–16) at Sun Life Stadium.

At home on Dec 10, New England hammered Houston W (42–14) in Gillette Stadium. On Dec 16, the San Francisco 49ers beat the Patriots L (34–41) in Gillette Stadium. On Dec 23 at Jacksonville, the Patriots defeated the Jaguars W (23–16) at EverBank Field. Then in the season-ender at home, on Dec 30, the Patriots shut-out the Miami Dolphins W (28–0) in Gillette Stadium. The Patriots record was 12-4 and they would win the Divisional Championship playoffs and then compete in the Conference Championship.

## **The Divisional Playoffs January 13, 2013**

### **Patriots 41; Houston Texans 28**

at Gillette Stadium, Foxborough, Massachusetts

This divisional playoff game began at 4:30 PM on January 13, 2012 at Gillette Stadium, Foxborough, Massachusetts. The weather was 51 °F, cloudy and mild. There was a packed house of 68,756 at this Patriots home game. After a 12-4 regular season record, the Patriots overwhelmed the Texans in this game W (41-28).

## AFC Championship Playoffs January 20, 2013

### New England Patriots 13 ; Baltimore Ravens 28

	1	2	3	4	Total
Ravens	0	7	7	14	28
Patriots	3	10	0	0	13

This Conference Championship Game began at 6:30 PM on January 20, 2010 at Gillette Stadium, Foxborough, Massachusetts. The weather was 41 °F, clear and windy. There was a packed house of 68,756 at this Patriots home game. After a 12-4 regular season record, the New England Patriots were overpowered by the Baltimore Ravens in this game L (13-28).

### 2013 Bill Belichick #14

The 2013 New England Patriots football team competed in their fifty-fourth season of professional football and their forty-fourth season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Coach Bill Belichick in his fourteenth of eighteen seasons (so far). Robert Kraft was the Patriot's owner. The Patriots record was 12-4 for the second year in a row and the team grabbed the #2 seed for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year in a row along with a first round playoff bye for the fourth year in a row. T

They finished first in the AFC East Division, and they qualified for the playoffs. They first won the AFC Divisional Playoffs against the Colts W (43–22), and then in the AFC Championship, they lost to the Broncos L (16-26), and again, the Patriots missed the big dance, the rings, and the sweet cigars. But soon again! How about the next year?

In the season opener at Buffalo on September 8, 2013, the Patriots squeezed out a W 23–21 win against the Bills at Ralph Wilson Stadium. On September 12 in the home opener, the Patriots beat the New York Jets W (13–10) at Gillette Stadium. At home again on Sept 22, the Patriots defeated the Tampa Bay Buccaneers W (23–3) in Gillette Stadium. At Atlanta on Sept 29 for the fourth win in a

row with no losses, the Patriots beat the Falcons W (30–23) at the Georgia Dome.

At Cincinnati on Oct 6, the Bengals defeated the Patriots L (6–13) at Paul Brown Stadium. On Oct 13, in OT, the New Orleans Saints were taken down by the New England Patriots W (30–27) in Gillette Stadium. At New York, on Oct 20, in OT, the Jets beat the Pats L (27–30) at MetLife Stadium. At home on October 27, New England's Patriots defeated Miami's Dolphins W (27–17) in Gillette Stadium.

On Nov 3, in a shootout at home, the Patriots defeated the Pittsburgh Steelers W (55–31) in Gillette Stadium. On Nov 10, there was a bye week. Then, at Carolina on Nov 18, the Panthers beat the Patriots L (20–24) in Bank of America Stadium. At home on Nov 24 in OT, the Patriots beat the Denver Broncos W (34–31) in Gillette Stadium. At Houston on Dec 1, the Patriots defeated the Texans W (34–31) in Reliant Stadium.

At home on Dec 8, in a one-point match, the Patriots got the best of the Cleveland Browns W (27–26) in Gillette Stadium. At Miami on Dec 15, the Dolphins beat the Patriots L (20–24) at Sun Life Stadium. At Baltimore, on Dec 22, the Patriots smashed the Ravens W (41–7) at M&T Bank Stadium. At home for the season finale at Gillette Stadium, on Dec 29 the Patriots defeated the Buffalo Bills W (34–20).

The Patriots record was a healthy 12-4 and they would make the playoffs and they would win the Divisional Championship playoffs. Ten, they would compete in the Conference Championship.

## **The Divisional Playoffs January 11, 2014 New England Patriots 43; Indianapolis Colts 22**

*At Gillette Stadium, Foxborough, Massachusetts*

This divisional playoff game began at 8:15 PM on January 11, 2014 at Gillette Stadium, Foxborough, Massachusetts. The weather was

57 °F, rainy and windy. There was a packed house of 68,756 at this Patriots home game. After a 12-4 regular season record, the Patriots overwhelmed the Colts in this game W (43-22).

The Patriots are such a phenomenal team even though they may not register number one in the NFL each year, they get their share of #1 finishes. If there were no playoffs, it would be difficult declare a number one other than the Patriots once you see them play. I have watched the Boston Patriots and now the New England Patriots play in the archives and the recent record books from the 1960 Boston Patriots. I admit that I am impressed. Anybody who is honest with themselves feels the same. The Patriots are impressive and with Bill Belichick and Tom Brady teaming up on the unsuspecting teams in the NFL, it is not a fair game.

## **AFC Championship Playoffs January 19, 2014**

**New England Patriots 16; Denver Broncos 26**

*Sports Authority Field at Mile High Stadium*

This Conference Championship Game began at 3:00 PM on January 19, 2014 at Sports Authority Field at Mile High Stadium in Denver Colorado. The weather was 63 °F, sunny There was a packed house of 77,110 at this Denver home game. After a 12-4 regular season record, the New England Patriots were overpowered by the Denver Broncos in this game L (16-26).

The Patriots had been doing so well since Belichick and Brady had combined to become the torment of the rest of the NFL, this year was the first since 2006, in which the Patriots regular season record caused them to play on the road in the playoffs. Incidentally, this was also the last time they faced Peyton Manning when he was with the Indianapolis Colts.

### **2014 Bill Belichick #14**

The 2014 New England Patriots football team competed in their fifty-fifth season of professional football and their forty-fifth season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Coach Bill Belichick in his fifteenth of eighteen seasons (so-far).

Robert Kraft was the Patriot's owner. The Patriots record was 12-4 for the third year in a row and the team grabbed the #1 seed for the 2nd year in a row along with a first round playoff bye for the fifth year in a row.

The bye for five years in a row, was the first such occurrence for any team since the league switched to a 12-team playoff format in 1990. They finished fourth overall in the NFL in scoring (468 points) and eighth in points allowed (313), and first in point differential (with an average margin of victory of 9.7 points).

This was a year of firsts and bests. They finished first in the AFC East Division, and they naturally qualified for the playoffs. They first won their sixth straight AFC Divisional Title in the playoffs against the Colts W (35-31), and then in the AFC Championship, they pounded the Indianapolis Colts W (45-7), and this time, the Patriots were invited to the big dance, The Super Bowl, with the rings, and the sweet cigars. In Super Bowl XLIX, the Patriots won a hard-fought battle against former Pats coach Pete Carroll's Seattle Seahawks, W (28-24) This great win gave New England their fourth championship in franchise history.

In the season opener at Miami on September 7, 2014, the Dolphins defeated the Patriots L (20-33) at Sun Life Stadium. At Minnesota on Sept 14, the Patriots squashed the Vikings W (30-7) at TCF Bank Stadium. In the home opener on Sept 21, the New England Patriots defeated the Oakland Raiders W (16-9) in Gillette Stadium. Then, on Sept 29 at Kansas City, the Chiefs slammed the Patriots L (14-41) at Arrowhead Stadium.

On Oct 5, at home, New England pounded Cincinnati W (43-17) in Gillette Stadium. At Buffalo on Oct 12, the Patriots beat the Bills W (37-22) at Ralph Wilson Stadium. On Oct 16, at home, the Patriots beat the New York Jets W (27-25) in Gillette Stadium. On Oct 26, at home, the Patriots overpowered the Chicago Bears W (51-23) in Gillette Stadium. Then on Nov 2 at home, New England thumped Denver W (43-21) in Gillette Stadium. On Nov 9, week 10, the team drew a bye.

At Indianapolis on Nov 16, the Patriots whipped the Colts W (42–20) in Lucas Oil Stadium. On Nov 23, at home, the Patriots whooped the Detroit Lions W (34–9) in Gillette Stadium. At Green Bay on Nov 30, the Packers beat the Patriots L 21–26 in (Lambeau Field). On Dec 7 at San Diego, New England defeated the Chargers W (23–14) at Qualcomm Stadium.

On Dec 14, at home, the Patriots scorched the Miami Dolphins W (41–13) in Gillette Stadium. At New York, in a one-point match, on Dec 21, the Pats nosed out the Jets W (17–16) in MetLife Stadium. In the final game of a successful season, the Patriots ended with a loss at home on Dec 28 against the Buffalo Bills L (9–17) in Gillette Stadium.

## **The Divisional Playoffs January 10, 2015** **New England Patriots 35; Baltimore Ravens 31**

*At Gillette Stadium, Foxborough, Massachusetts*

This divisional playoff game began at 4:35 PM on January 10, 2015 at Gillette Stadium, Foxborough, Massachusetts. The weather was 20 °F, clear, windy, and cold. There was a packed house of 68,756 at this Patriots home game. After a 12-4 regular season record, the Patriots squeaked by the Ravens in this game W (35-21).

## **AFC Championship Playoffs January 19, 2015** **New England Patriots 45; Denver Broncos 7**

*at Gillette Stadium, Foxborough, Massachusetts*

This Conference Championship Game began at 6:50 PM on January 18, 2015 at Gillette Stadium, Foxborough Massachusetts. The weather was 51 °F, rain. There was a packed house of 68,756 at this Patriot home game. After a 12-4 regular season record, and the victory in the Division Playoffs, the New England Patriots soundly defeated the Indianapolis Colts in this game W (45-7).



## Super Bowl XLIX February 1, 2015

	1	2	3	4	Total
<b>Patriots</b>	0	14	0	14	<b>28</b>
<b>Seahawks</b>	0	14	10	0	<b>24</b>

The Super Bowl XLIX kickoff was at 6:30 EST February 5, 2012. The weather was 66 degrees and the retractable roof was open. Led by starter Tom Brady, the Bill Belichick-led NE Patriots overcame the Seattle Seahawks in a tight match 28-24 at University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale Arizona. before a packed house of 70,288. After a 12-4 regular season record, the Patriots played a great match with the New York Giants, winning the contest W (28-24) in a comeback effort.

The Patriots faced the defending-Super Bowl champion Seattle Seahawks in Super Bowl XLIX (49) 49. For the second year in a row the Seahawks boasted the #1 ranked defense (1st against the pass, 3rd against the run). This was the Patriots' first Super Bowl appearance since 2011, when they lost to the NY Giants. This was the stadium where the 18-0 Patriots lost to the Giants in Super Bowl XLII.

It was Sunday, Feb. 1, 2015 and the New England Patriots did exactly what many, especially Pats fans, thought they would. Check the betting lines. They defeated the Seattle Seahawks to win Super Bowl 49 at University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale, Arizona by a final score of 28-24.

Tom Brady was spectacular going 37/50 for 328 yards, 4 TDs, and 2 INTs. He won the MVP award. The Seahawks were in the game but they started slow, surged in the second and third quarter, and then faded in the fourth when they needed their best. The best defense in the league failed to hold a 10 point lead. Still, Seattle was ready to take the lead in the final 30 seconds when Offensive Coordinator

Darrell Bevell called an inside slant from the one yard line on 2nd and Goal. Russell Wilson threw an interception. That was the game.

## **2015 Bill Belichick #14**

The 2015 New England Patriots football team competed in their fifty-sixth season of professional football and their forty-sixth season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Coach Bill Belichick in his sixteenth of eighteen seasons (so-far). Robert Kraft was the Patriot's owner. The Patriots record was 12-4 for the fourth year in a row and the team grabbed the #2 seed along with a first round playoff bye for the fifth year in a row. They entered the season as the defending Super Bowl Champions.

This year looked like it might be another 16-0 season. However, after going 10-0 to begin the season, the Patriots' first loss of the season came against the Denver Broncos in overtime in Week 12 (counting the bye week). The loss seemed to have an effect on the team's production after this. The Patriots would go on to lose four of their last six games, ultimately finishing the regular season with a 12-4 record for the fourth straight year.

In Week 14, the Patriots clinched their seventh straight AFC East division title. By way of this, they tied the 1979 Los Angeles Rams for most consecutive division titles. As the second seeded team in the AFC, they did secure a first-round bye for the playoffs and home-field advantage for their first playoff game.

In the divisional round of the playoffs, the Patriots beat the Kansas City Chiefs 27-20 to advance to the AFC Championship for the fifth straight year. However, they fell on the road to the eventual Super Bowl 50 champion Denver Broncos by just two points, 20-18.

### **Games of the 2015 Season**

In the season and home opener on September 10, the Patriots defeated the Pittsburgh Steelers W (28-21) in Gillette Stadium. At Buffalo on Sept 20, the Patriots beat the Bills W (40-32) in Ralph Wilson Stadium. At home on Sept 27, the Patriots pummeled the Jacksonville Jaguars W (51-17) in Gillette Stadium. In week 4, there

was a bye. In week 5, on Oct 11 at Dallas, the Patriots shipped the Cowboys W (30–6) at AT&T Stadium.

On Oct 18 at Indianapolis, New England defeated the Colts W (34–27) in Lucas Oil Stadium. On Oct 25 at home, the Patriots beat the New York Jets W (30–23) in Gillette Stadium. At home again on Oct 29, the Patriots thumped the Miami Dolphins W (36–7) in Gillette Stadium. Then, at home on Nov 8, the Patriots whipped the Washington Redskins W (27–10) in Gillette Stadium.

At New York, on Nov 15, the Patriots beat the Giants in a one-point match W (27–26) at MetLife Stadium. At home on Nov 23, the Patriots defeated the Buffalo Bills W (20–13) in Gillette Stadium. On Nov 29 at Denver, the Broncos beat the Patriots in OT L (24–30) in the Sports Authority Field at Mile High Stadium. On Dec 6, at home, the Philadelphia Eagles beat the Patriots L (28–35) in Gillette Stadium.

On Dec 13 at Houston, the Patriots broke their two-game losing streak and beat the Texans W (27–6) at NRG Stadium. On Dec 20, at home, New England beat Tennessee W (33–16) in Gillette Stadium. On Dec 27 at New York, the Jets beat the Pats in OT, L (20–26) in MetLife Stadium Recap. To wrap up the season at Miami on Jan 3, the Dolphins got the win on the Patriots L 10–20 in Sun Life Stadium. The next 2015-2016 Patriots game would be in the Divisional Playoffs.

## **The Divisional Playoffs January 16, 2016** **New England Patriots 27; Kansas City Chiefs 20**

*At Gillette Stadium, Foxborough, Massachusetts*

This divisional playoff game began at 4:35 PM on January 16, 2016 at Gillette Stadium, Foxborough, Massachusetts. The weather was 38 °F, partly cloudy. There was a reasonably packed house of 66,829 at this Patriots home game. After a 12-4 regular season record, the Patriots squeaked by the Chiefs in this game W (27-20).

## AFC Championship Playoffs January 24, 2016

### New England Patriots 18; Denver Broncos 20

*at Gillette Stadium, Foxborough, Massachusetts*

This Conference Championship Game began at 3:05 PM on January 24, 2016 at Sports Authority Field at Mile High Stadium in Denver, Colorado. The weather was 46 °F, mostly sunny. There was a packed house of 77,112 at this Broncos home game. After a 12-4 regular season record, and the victory in the Division Playoffs, the New England Patriots were defeated by the Denver Broncos in this game W (20-18). The Broncos advanced to the Super Bowl and became the Super Bowl Champions.

#### **2016 Bill Belichick #14**

The 2016 New England Patriots football team competed in their fifty-seventh season of professional football and their forty-seventh season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Coach Bill Belichick in his seventeenth of eighteen seasons (so-far). Robert Kraft was the Patriot's owner. The Patriots record was 14-2, gaining two-more wins than in 2015. They earned the #1 seed along with a first round playoff bye for the sixth year in a row. They also gained home field advantage through the playoffs. The Patriots were not defending Super Bowl Champions when the 2016 season began but they were when it was over.

There was a lot happening in the 2016 season. The New England Patriots are a winning machine. They became the first team that originated from the American Football League to reach 500 franchise wins—regular season and playoffs. It happened in Week 12 with the win over the New York Jets.

In Week 15, the Patriots clinched their eighth straight AFC East division title, and in doing so surpassed the 1979 Los Angeles Rams for the most consecutive division titles. They were not finished.

In Week 17, the last win of the season over the Miami Dolphins, gave the Patriots home field advantage throughout the entire AFC playoffs and they ended the regular season with a league-best record

of 14–2. As the Patriots had learned well in prior years, the home field advantage no longer offers an advantage when a team loses. So, they kept winning.

With their win over the Houston Texans in the Divisional Round, the Patriots advanced to the AFC Championship Game for the sixth consecutive year, surpassing the 1977 Oakland Raiders for most consecutive appearances in conference championship games.

After their win over the Pittsburgh Steelers in the AFC Championship Game, the Patriots became the first organization to clinch a ninth Super Bowl berth. They surpassed the Pittsburgh Steelers, Dallas Cowboys, and Denver Broncos who are all tied at 8. IMHO, the Patriots with Bill Belichick and Tom Brady are amazing.

Furthermore, Bill Belichick broke the record for a head coach by coaching his seventh Super Bowl, breaking a tie with Don Shula. You may recall the “Deflategate” which cost Patriots starting quarterback Tom Brady a suspension for the first four games of the season due to his alleged role in the “Deflategate” scandal.

Under backup quarterbacks Jimmy Garoppolo and Jacoby Brissett, the team managed a nice 3–1 record during Brady's suspension. During the season, Bill Belichick moved into fourth place on the list for most wins as a head coach, and Tom Brady set the record for most wins by a starting quarterback (208 following the 2016-2017 Super Bowl win).

This year, the Patriots were 8–0 on the road, matching a feat they first accomplished in the 2007 season. They became the seventh NFL team to accomplish this feat.

The Patriots also set a record for the most pass attempts by a team without an interception to start a season, and, collectively, Garoppolo, Brissett, and Brady combined to set a single season record for fewest interceptions thrown by a team, with just 2. Considering three cooks in the mix, that is especially good.

Tom Brady also set the record for the best touchdown–interception ratio in a single season, with 28 touchdowns and 2 interceptions (a

14:1 ratio), breaking Nick Foles' mark of 27 touchdowns to 2 interceptions (13.5:1), set in 2013 while he was with the Philadelphia Eagles.

Meanwhile, the defense led the league for fewest points allowed (250) for the first time since the 2003 season. The Patriots were not only ready; they came through.

In Super Bowl LI, the team rallied from a 28–3 deficit – with 2:12 left in the third quarter – to win in overtime, with a score of 34–28. Many of us stared at the TV in wonderment after it appeared that Atlanta had the game sewed up. This was the franchise's fifth Super Bowl title.

Super Bowl LI was the first Super Bowl that was decided in overtime and it was the first time the winner erased a deficit higher than ten points. I am still in awe of a guy who first sat out four games and then was solely responsible for their Super Bowl game victory.

This would also be a record fifth Super Bowl victory for the Brady–Belichick quarterback-head coach combo. For Tom Brady, this would be his fifth. With the Super Bowl win, he broke his tie with hall of fame quarterbacks Joe Montana and Terry Bradshaw who both have four Super Bowl wins each. Additionally, head coach Bill Belichick's fifth Super Bowl in 2016-2017 meant that he surpassed Hall of Fame coach Chuck Noll from Pittsburgh, for most wins in the Super Bowl by a head coach. Congratulations, Mr. Belichick. You are outstanding the old-fashioned way. You earn it! Please continue.

### Games of the 2016 Season

In the season opener on September 11, 2016 at Arizona, the Patriots defeated the Cardinals W (23–21) in the University of Phoenix Stadium. Then, the following week in the home opener on Sept 18, New England defeated Miami W (31–24) in Gillette Stadium. At home again on Sept 22, the Patriots skunked the Houston Texans W (27–0) in Gillette Stadium. Then, on Oct 2, the Patriots lost their first game of the season after 3 straight wins L (0-16) against the Buffalo Bills at home in Gillette Stadium.

On Oct 9 at Cleveland, the Patriots whooped the Browns W (33–13) at FirstEnergy Stadium. Then at home on Oct 16 New England defeated Cincinnati W (35–17) in Gillette Stadium. On Oct 23 at Pittsburgh, the Patriots beat the Steelers W (27–16) at Heinz Field. In the Conference playoffs these two teams would again battle it out. On October 30 at Buffalo, the Patriots beat the Bills W (41–25) at New Era Field bringing the record to 7–1. On Nov 6, in week 9, the Patriots drew a bye.

On Nov 13 at home, the Seattle Seahawks beat the New England Patriots L (24–31) in Gillette Stadium. At San Francisco on Nov 20, the Patriots beat the 49ers W (30–17) in Levi's Stadium. At New York, on Nov 27, the Pats beat the Jets W (22–17) in MetLife Stadium. At home on Dec 4, the Patriots defeated the Los Angeles Rams W (26–10) in Gillette Stadium.

On Dec 12, at home, the Patriots defeated the Baltimore Ravens W (30–23) in Gillette Stadium. At Denver, on Dec 18, the Patriots beat the Broncos W (16–3) in Sports Authority Field at Mile High Stadium in Denver Colorado. At home, on Dec 24, New England pasted the New York Jets W (41–3) in Gillette Stadium. In the season finale on Jan 1 at Miami, the Patriots squashed the Dolphins W (35–14) in Hard Rock Stadium.

## **The Divisional Playoffs January 14, 2017**

### **New England Patriots 34 ; Houston Texans 16**

*At Gillette Stadium, Foxborough, Massachusetts*

This divisional playoff game began at 8:15 PM on January 14, 2017 at Gillette Stadium, Foxborough, Massachusetts. The weather was 28 °F, cloudy. There was a reasonably packed house of 66,829 at this Patriots home game. After a 14-2 regular season record, the Patriots solidly defeated the Texans in this game W (34-16).

## **AFC Championship Playoffs January 24, 2016**

### **New England Patriots 36; Pittsburgh Steelers 17**

*at Gillette Stadium, Foxborough, Massachusetts*

This Conference Championship Game began at 6:40 PM on January 24, 2016 at Sports Authority Field at Mile High Stadium in Denver, Colorado. The weather was 41 °F, cloudy. There was a packed house of 66,829,112 at this Patriots home game. After a 14-2 regular season record, and the victory in the Division Playoffs, the New England Patriots defeated the Pittsburgh Steelers in this game W (36-17). The Patriots advanced to the Super Bowl and became the Super Bowl Champions.

## Super Bowl LI February 5, 2017

	1	2	3	4	OT	Totals
<b>Patriots</b>	0	3	6	19	6	34
<b>Falcons</b>	0	21	7	0	0	28

**Any Patriot fan who was alive in February 2017, saw the greatest comeback game of all time.**

The Super Bowl XLIX kickoff was at 6:30 EST February 5, 2017. The weather did not matter as the game was played with the retractable roof closed. Led by starter Tom Brady, the Bill Belichick-led NE Patriots overcame the Atlanta Falcons in a tight match 34-28 at NRG Stadium in Houston Texas. before a packed house of 70,807. After a 14-2 regular season record, having won the Division and Conference, the Patriots played one of the greatest comeback matches in NFL history with the Atlanta Falcons, winning the contest W (34-28), gaining their fifth Super Bowl Conquest as a franchise.

***Super Bowl LI: New England Patriots 34, Atlanta Falcons 28 (OT)***

Despite the Falcons taking a 28–3 lead midway through the third quarter, the Patriots scored 25 unanswered points to tie the game at 28 with less than a minute left in regulation and take the game to the first overtime period in Super Bowl history. On the first possession



of overtime, Patriots running back James White punched in the game-winning score to give his team a 34–28 comeback victory.

Each time the Patriots have been in a Super Bowl, I looked for the excellent Boston Globe’s coverage of the game. I enjoyed researching the Boston Papers to get the scoop the way it actually happened in 2017. This fine write-up from the Boston Globe at the time it was written gave New England fans enough of the Super Bowl that they felt they were there. Nice job Jim McBride. He titled his article:

## **In a Comeback for the Ages, Patriots Beat Falcons in Heart-Pounding Super Bowl.**

By Jim McBride GLOBE STAFF  
FEBRUARY 6, 2017

HOUSTON — Case closed.

Tom Brady cemented his legacy as the greatest quarterback in history Sunday night and he did it in the most dramatic fashion.

The Patriots quarterback earned his fifth Super Bowl title and collected his fourth Super Bowl MVP as the Patriots staged the most incredible and improbable comeback in history of America’s game, beating the Falcons, 34-28, in overtime at NRG Stadium.

Erasing a 25-point second-half deficit, the Patriots scored 31 unanswered points against a Falcons team that played the fourth quarter as though they were waiting to be fitted for their rings rather than finishing their business on the field.

James White’s 2-yard run in OT — the first in Super Bowl history — was the difference as the Patriots pulled off their second stunning Super Bowl victory in three seasons.

“This is unequivocally the sweetest,” said team owner Robert Kraft after that long-awaited, awkward moment when

commissioner Roger Goodell handed him the Vince Lombardi Trophy.

Brady was astoundingly brilliant in the second half, and put on a fourth-quarter performance that was incredible, even by his lofty standards.

For the record, Brady finished 43 of 62 for 466 yards and a pair of touchdowns. He hit White and Danny Amendola with fourth-quarter TD passes and they each converted 2-point conversions on the other's TD to tie the score at 28-28.

The Patriots won the toss in overtime and Brady carved up the gassed Falcons, driving 75 yards, capped by White's run.

"Yeah, they're all sweet," said Brady, when asked if this was the best, considering the Deflategate saga of the past two seasons.

"They're all different and this was just an incredible team and I'm just happy to be a part of it. It's just a great group of coaches and teammates and we overcame a lot of different things and it's all worth it."

It is the fifth Super Bowl title for the Patriots, who are now tied with the 49ers and Cowboys for the second most in NFL history (the Steelers have six).

All of New England's titles have come under the stewardship of the Kraft family, Bill Belichick, and, of course, Brady,

For two weeks, Belichick extolled the virtues of the Falcons' speed to anyone who would listen. Sunday night the 70,807 on hand and millions across the world found out just what the New England coach was talking about.

Atlanta blitzed the Patriots with 21 straight points, displaying tremendous speed and feverish quickness that left the favorites defenseless and helpless.

It felt over. Well, almost over.

The Falcons gave a preview of things to come on their first offensive play from scrimmage when Devonta Freeman gashed them for 37 yards.

The Patriots were able to put the clamps on the Falcons for the rest of the opening 15 minutes. Problem was, Brady and the offense couldn't sustain any momentum.

The one drive the Patriots showed life came at the end of the quarter, when a pair of passes to Julian Edelman — the second one for 27 yards on the first play of the second quarter — gave them a first down at the Atlanta 33. LeGarrette Blount, however, fumbled on the next play and the Falcons took advantage.

Matt Ryan led a surgical five-play, 71-yard drive that ended with Freeman's 5-yard zip around left end. He went in untouched. Ryan, the former Boston College star, hit Julio Jones for 19 and 29 yards before Freeman went the final 29 yards on three carries.

It marked the first time the Patriots had trailed in a game since Week 11 against the Jets.

After another three-and-out by the Patriots, the Falcons set up shop at their 38 after a 38-yard punt from Ryan Allen.

Ryan, looking every bit the league MVP that he had been voted the prior Saturday night, went back to shredding the Patriots defense. He hit Taylor Gabriel for 24 yards and Jones for a toe-tapping 18-yarder. Two plays later, Ryan dropped a beautiful 19-yard pass into tight end Austin Hooper's hands in the end zone to double the lead to 14-0.

The Patriots appeared poised to finally stop the hemorrhaging on the ensuing possession but again a turnover proved to be a killer.

After methodically marching from their 25 to the Atlanta 23 — aided by three defensive holding penalties — it appeared New England could still make a game of it.

That's when Robert Alford stepped in. Literally.

The cornerback cut in front a Brady pass intended for Danny Amendola and was off to the races for an 82-yard Pick-6 — with only a helpless and airborne Brady in his way.

It was a waste of an 11-play drive for New England.

The Patriots did mount an 11-play, 52-yard drive on their next possession, but it stalled when Martellus Bennett was called for holding, negating a White catch and run that would have put the ball inside the Atlanta 5.

Though Stephen Gostkowski would finally put the Patriots on the board with a 41-yard field goal, it was without a doubt the hollowest 3 points of the 2016 season.

Ryan was superb over the first 30 minutes, hitting on 7 of 8 passes for 115 yards. Brady was 16 of 26 for 184 yards and took two sacks. It was Brady's first multiple-sack game since Week 8 against Buffalo.

"We were down, some had some doubts [at halftime], we're only human," said Patriots defensive end Chris Long. "But we had enough guys pulling us along. Duron Harmon walked in and said, 'This is going to be the best comeback of all time.' And we completely believed that. And it was."

Nate Solder was a little blunter:

"I felt like I played like total poop," he said.

After trading three-and-outs to start the second half, the Falcons extended their lead to 28-3 when Ryan hit Tevin Coleman with a 6-yard swing pass touchdown. Gabriel was the star of the drive, hauling in catches of 17 and 35 yards.

Brady, who set a Super Bowl record with his 43 completions, rallied the Patriots when he got the ball back, driving 75 yards in 13 plays, capped by a 5-yard strike to White. Gostkowski doinked the extra point off the right upright and it was 28-9.

Gostkowski drilled a 33-yard field goal to pull the Patriots closer at 28-12 on the team's first possession of the fourth quarter, and two plays later, Dont'a Hightower got the ball back when he strip-sacked Ryan to hand the Patriots the ball at the Atlanta 25.

"Biggest play of the game," said Long.

Brady fired a 6-yard TD pass to Amendola and White scored on a 1-yard run to make it 28-20.

The tying drive — Edelman's incredible 23-yard catch the key — went 91 yards, matching New England's longest drive of the season. White finished it with a 1-yard run and Amendola caught the 2-point conversion. It was 28-28.

Ryan got the ball back and for the first time all night, he looked frazzled and overwhelmed, woefully misfiring on a third-down pass.

Once the Patriots won the OT coin toss, it was over.



White scores winning TD in OT. First time Super Bowl ever decided in OT

Writer Jim McBride of the Boston Globe can be reached at [james.mcbride@globe.com](mailto:james.mcbride@globe.com). Follow him on Twitter @globejimmcbride. Thank Jim McBride for a great write-up that

stirs up the emotion of the game and helps Patriot fans enjoy it over and over.

## **2017 Bill Belichick #14**

The 2017 New England Patriots football team competed in their fifty-eighth season of professional football and their forty-eighth season in the National Football League (NFL). The Patriots were led by Coach Bill Belichick in his eighteenth of eighteen seasons (so far). Robert Kraft was the happy defending Super Bowl Patriot's owner. The Patriots record was 13-3, gaining one less win than in 2016.

They earned the #1 AFC seed along with a first round playoff bye for the seventh year in a row. They also gained home field advantage through the playoffs. The Patriots were the defending Super Bowl Champions when the 2017 season began but, after a great season with fifteen total wins, they were not the champs when the season was over.

The defending Super Bowl champion New England Patriots entered the season feeling pretty invincible, having had a great 2016 season winning the Cigar, the rings, and all the marbles. They almost matched their excellent 14-2 showing with a fine 13-3 record in 2017. It was a Week 14 loss to Miami that set them back. Nonetheless, the Patriots again won the AFC Title. This was their 9th consecutive AFC East title, and it was their 15th of the last 17 seasons with Tom Belichick.

When they got their win over the Buffalo Bills in week 16, the Patriots had achieved their 8th consecutive 12-or-more win season stretching all the way from 2010, an NFL record. Their Week 17 victory over the New York Jets clinched their top seed in the AFC for the second straight year, thus, as noted, giving the Patriots home-field advantage throughout the entire AFC playoffs for the second year in a row. There was nothing at all for the Patriots to complain about, and nobody was complaining.

The Pats defeated the Titans in the Divisional Round 35-14, and they topped the Jacksonville Jaguars in the AFC Championship

Game 24–20, grabbing their second consecutive AFC title. The game was their seventh consecutive AFC Championship appearance, adding onto their record from the previous year.

The win also made Tom Brady the oldest quarterback (40 years, 163 days) to win a playoff game, surpassing Brett Favre for the record. It looks to many like Brady is getting younger. He sure is enjoying football as is his compadre, Bill Belichick.

On top of all the other good things happening for the Patriots, this was also the second time they advanced to the Super Bowl two consecutive seasons since 2004. They faced the Philadelphia Eagles in a rematch of Super Bowl XXXIX. This game—SB LII, also made the Patriots the only team in NFL history to appear in ten Super Bowls, and it gave the Patriots a chance to repeat as Super Bowl Champions for the second time in franchise history, and for the first time since 2004. In addition, they had the chance to tie the Pittsburgh Steelers for the record of most Super Bowl wins by a team in NFL history with 6.

Unfortunately, the win did not happen. Pointing to one cause, we would have to say it was because of a late strip-sack of Brady by Brandon Graham and a failed Hail Mary pass. The Eagles were playing at the top of their game with a substitute QB who had once been an Eagles star. This rebuilt team was molded to win by a young coach, Doug Pederson, who got the job done. The Eagles thus defeated the Patriots in Super Bowl LII by 41–33, ending their chance at a sixth Super Bowl title and resulting in their first Super Bowl loss since 2011.

The loss was devastating to the Patriots as it prevented New England from repeating their three-in-four Super Bowl run that they managed from 2001–2004. Also, with the loss, the Patriots tied the NFL record for most Super Bowl losses with five. Considering that the Patriots also have five big wins, that is not a bad record. The Patriots will be back in tact in 2018. I would expect a Belichick/Brady combo to be right up there ready to bring home all the marbles again. Don't you think?

In the home and season opener on September 7, Andy Reid's revitalized Kansas City Chiefs spoiled the party for New England by claiming a L (27–42) victory in Gillette Stadium. On Sept 17 at New Orleans, the Saints took it on the chin W (36–20) at the renamed Mercedes-Benz Superdome. At home again on Sept 24, the Patriots squeezed out a win in a tight game against the Houston Texans W (36–33) in Gillette Stadium. On Oct 1 at home the Carolina Panthers edged out the Patriots L (30–33) in Gillette Stadium.

At Tampa Bay, on Oct 5, the Patriots got by the Buccaneers W (19–14) in Raymond James Stadium. Then, on Oct 15 at New York, the Patriots grabbed the win v the Jets W (24–17) in MetLife Stadium. At home on Oct 22, the Patriots again beat the Atlanta Falcons W 23–7, but in a more convincing fashion than in Super Bowl LI—in Gillette Stadium. At home on Oct 29, New England defeated Los Angeles W (21–13) in Gillette Stadium. On Nov 4, NE gained a bye week.

At Denver, on Nov 12, the Patriots thumped the Broncos W (41–16) in the Sports Authority Field at Mile High Stadium. At Oakland on Nov 19, the Patriots whooped the Raiders W (33–8) in Estadio Azteca (Mexico City). At home, on Nov 26 Miami took it on the chin from New England W (35–17) in Gillette Stadium. At Buffalo on December 3, the Patriots smashed the Bills W (23–3) in New Era Field.

At Miami on Dec 11, the Dolphins beat the Patriots L (20–27) in Hard Rock Stadium. At Pittsburgh, on December 17, in a close game, the Patriots beat the Steelers W (27–24) in Heinz Field. On Dec 24, at home, the Patriots hammered the Buffalo Bills W (37–16) in Gillette Stadium. At home, on Dec 31 in the final game of the season, the Patriots slammed the New York Jets W (26–6) in Gillette Stadium, giving New England a first place 13-3 record for the season. The Patriots did not have to compete in the Wild Card and so they had a rest week before the Divisional Championship playoffs began.

## **The Divisional Playoffs January 13, 2018**

**New England Patriots 35; Tennessee Titans 14**

*At Gillette Stadium, Foxborough, Massachusetts*



This divisional playoff game began at 8:15 PM on January 13, 2018 at Gillette Stadium, Foxborough, Massachusetts. The weather was 24 °F, clear & cold. There was a reasonably packed house of 65,878 at this Patriots home game. After a 13-3 regular season record, the Patriots solidly defeated the Titans in this playoff game W (35-14).

## AFC Championship Playoffs January 21, 2018

### New England Patriots 24; Jacksonville Jaguars 20

*at Gillette Stadium, Foxborough, Massachusetts*

This Conference Championship Game began at 3:05 PM on January 21, 2016 at Gillette Stadium, Foxborough, Massachusetts. The weather was 48 °F, clear & cool. There was a packed house of 65,878 at this Patriots home game. After a 13-3 regular season record, and the victory in the Division Playoffs, the New England Patriots defeated the Jacksonville Jaguars in this game W (24-20). The Patriots advanced to the Super Bowl and lost the Super Bowl Championship to the Philadelphia Eagles in a tight match.

## Super Bowl LII February 4, 2018

	1	2	3	4	Totals
<b>Eagles</b>	9	13	7	12	<b>41</b>
<b>Patriots</b>	3	9	14	7	<b>33</b>

*At U.S. Bank Stadium, Minneapolis, Minnesota*

The Super Bowl LII kickoff was at 6:30 EST February 4, 2018. The weather did not matter as the game was played indoors with the retractable roof closed. Led by starter Tom Brady, the Bill Belichick-led NE Patriots had the Eagles on the ropes at times but lost at the end of the game L (33-41) to the Philadelphia Eagles in a tight match 33-41 at US Bank Stadium, Minneapolis, Minnesota before a packed house of 67,212. After a 13-2 regular season record, having won the Division and the Conference championships, the Patriots played

tough but could not come back despite a valiant Hail Mary attempt. The Eagles won their first Super Bowl Contest ever this year.

I enjoyed researching the Boston Papers to get the scoop the way it actually happened in 2018. This fine write-up from the Boston Globe at the time it was written gave New England fans enough of the Super Bowl that they felt they were there. Nice job Rachel G. Bowers. She titled her article:

## **Eagles stun Patriots in a Super Bowl LII thriller**

Picture on next page by *JIM DAVIS/GLOBE STAFF*

By Rachel G. Bowers GLOBE STAFF FEBRUARY 04, 2018

It was an offensive battle that set the record for most combined yards in an NFL playoff game — over 1,000 — as Tom Brady and Bill Belichick came up short of winning their sixth Lombardi Trophy.

“It’s disappointing, but proud of the way we competed,” Belichick said.

“We just came up a little bit short tonight. Tough way to end a lot of really good things that have happened this season. But that’s what this game is about.”

“Today we had our opportunities. Never really got control of the game. Never really played on our terms. Just didn’t make enough plays when needed to,” Brady said.

“The Eagles played a better game today, they deserved to win. That’s why they’re the champs.”

For the Eagles, it is their first Super Bowl win and first NFL championship since 1906 — and it came with backup quarterback Nick Foles—playing the game of his life, earning him MVP honors.

“I have the best players in the world,” Eagles coach Doug Pederson said. “This is a resilient group.”

Foles, playing in place of the injured Carson Wentz, completed 28 of 43 passes for 373 yards, three touchdowns, and an interception.

“I felt calm, we have such a great group of guys, such a great coaching staff, we felt confident going in,” Foles said.

The play of the contest came at a time when Brady seemed poised to put together another game-winning drive. Trailing, 38-33, with just more than 2 minutes remaining, Brady and his offense took the field with 75 yards and the Philadelphia defense standing between them and a come-from-behind victory.

On the second play of the possession, defensive end Brandon Graham recorded the only sack of the game — and it was a strip-sack of Brady recovered by rookie Derek Barnett. The Eagles turned that into a field goal and an eight-point lead.

“Just kept going,” Graham said on the field after. “We said we needed a play. We got one more opportunity; we were going to give it everything we got and I just so happened to get there. I’m just thankful because we got a team that’s resilient. We going to stick around for a long time. We world champs, baby, and it feels so good.

“I’m just happy because we are world champs and we worked our butt off and everybody that doubted us, we world champs, baby, that’s all I got to say.”

“They made one good play at the right time,” Brady said.

The Eagles’ go-ahead touchdown with 2:21 remaining came on an 11-yard pass from Foles to tight end Zach Ertz that officials reviewed before ultimately upholding the call on the field.

“If they had overturned that [touchdown], I don’t know what would have happened to the city of Philadelphia,” said Ertz, who finished with seven catches for 67 yards and the touchdown.

## Coin toss

The Eagles called tails and the coin came up heads. The Patriots chose to defer to the second half. Philadelphia will receive the opening kickoff.

### 1st quarter: Patriots 3, Eagles 3

The team that scores first in the Super Bowl is 34-17.

New England answered Philadelphia's opening possession with a 67-yard drive of its own, but it ended in much the same fashion: A field goal. Stephen Gostkowski made a 26-yarder to tie it up. Quarterback Tom Brady and the offense utilized their up-tempo attack and even caught the Eagles with too many men on the field. The Patriots covered the 67 yards in nine plays, two of which went for more than 15 yards. Brady targeted tight end Rob Gronkowski on third and goal from the 8-yard line, but cornerback Jalen Mills broke up the pass.

Running back James White and receiver Chris Hogan were the primary weapons on the possession with White getting three touches for 21 yards and Hogan getting two touches for 32 yards. Rowe was in coverage on both of the drive's third-down conversions. Of note: Rowe started over cornerback Malcolm Butler, who arrived late to Minneapolis as he was dealing with an illness.

### 1st quarter: Eagles 9, Patriots 3

It did not take long for Philadelphia to regain the lead. In fact, just three plays.

Quarterback Nick Foles found Alshon Jeffery for a 34-yard touchdown, but kicker Jake Elliott missed the extra point wide right.

Cornerback Eric Rowe was in coverage on Jeffery.

The drive opened with Foles and Nelson Agholor connecting for 7 yards. Then LeGarrette Blount's 36-yard run set up the touchdown.

So far, the Eagles have gained 149 yards, which is the fifth most ever in the Super Bowl. The 1994 49ers (193 yards) hold the record.

## 2nd quarter: Eagles 9, Patriots 3

Stephen Gostkowski's 26-yard field goal attempt hit the left upright and was no good. It would have capped a 74-yard drive and trimmed the Philadelphia lead.

On third and 2 from the 9-yard line, the Patriots ran a jet sweep to Brandin Cooks to the right end. But Cooks tried to hurdle safety Rodney McLeod, who corralled Cooks in the air and brought him to the ground for just a 1-yard gain.

Gostkowski, in his 12th season, has missed three other field goals in his postseason career: a 53-yarder against the Titans in this season's divisional round, a 44-yarder against the Ravens in the 2010 wild card, and a 35-yarder against the Jaguars in the 2007 divisional round. The Patriots went 2-1 in those contests.

2nd quarter: Eagles 15, Patriots 3

LeGarrette Blount scampered 21 yards for a touchdown to cap a six-play, 65-yard drive and extend the Eagles' lead. Philadelphia attempted a two-point conversion, but Nick Foles and Alshon Jeffrey could not connect.

Three of the Eagles' six plays on the drive went for 19 or more yards: A 19-yard completion to Zach Ertz, a 22-yard completion to Jeffrey, and Blount's touchdown run. For the game, Philadelphia has notched eight plays of 15-plus yards, four plays of 20-plus yards, and two of 30-plus yards.

Blount so far has 58 rushing yards, a Super Bowl career-high, and the Eagles have 73 yards on the ground. The Eagles rushed for

100-plus yards 13 times in the regular season and went 12-1 in those games. They went 3-2 when held below 100 yards rushing. Cooks ruled out

Patriots receiver Brandin Cooks was ruled out with a head injury after absorbing a big hit from Eagles safety Malcolm Jenkins early in the second quarter. Cooks, who has one catch for 23 yards, was slow to get up but walked off the field under his own power and went straight to the locker room.

## **2nd quarter: Eagles 15, Patriots 6**

Stephen Gostkowski made a 45-yard field goal to cap a five-play, 48-yard drive by the Patriots.

The drive opened with a 46-yard catch-and-run by Rex Burkhead, but the Patriots could not sustain the momentum. Quarterback Tom Brady missed on two of his subsequent three pass attempts. So far, Brady is 9-of-16 passing for 191 yards, the most of his career in a first half of a Super Bowl and the 10th most in Super Bowl history.

## **2nd quarter: Eagles 15, Patriots 12**

Running back James White got loose for a 26-yard touchdown run, capping a seven-play, 90-yard drive and capitalizing on Duron Harmon's interception.

Stephen Gostkowski's extra point was wide left, his second miscue of the game.

White's touchdown was set up by a beautiful 43-yard throw from Tom Brady to Chris Hogan, their second-longest connection of the season.

## The game's first turnover

Patriots safety Duron Harmon came up with a bobbled Nick Foles pass intended for Alson Jeffrey. The Patriots took over at their own 10-yard line

On first and 10 at the New England 43-yard line, Foles targeted Jeffrey inside the 5-yard line. But Jeffrey, who was covered on the play by his college roommate, Stephon Gilmore, could not come up with it and essentially batted it into Harmon's hands.

2nd quarter: Eagles 22, Patriots 12

Coach Doug Pederson and the Eagles gambled on fourth and goal from the 1-yard line and won.

On a trick play, running Corey Clement took a direct snap, handed off to tight end Trey Burton, who then tossed a 1-yard touchdown pass to Nick Foles. It came with just 34 seconds left in the second quarter. It was the sixth time in Super Bowl history that a team scored a touchdown when going for it on fourth down, and first since Emmitt Smith in Super Bowl XXVIII.

The touchdown capped a seven-play, 70-yard drive that included a 55-yard catch-and-run by Clement on third down.

## 3rd quarter: Eagles 22, Patriots 19

When in an offensive rut, go to Rob Gronkowski.

The Patriots opened the second half with an eight-play, 75-yard drive that ended on a 5-yard touchdown throw from Tom Brady to the big All-Pro tight end.

After making just one catch for 9 yards on five targets in the first half, Gronkowski was targeted five times on the drive, reeling in four catches for 68 yards and the touchdown.

Brady now has 344 passing yards, the eighth most in Super Bowl history. The record he set last year — 466 yards — is within reach.

Patriots safety Patrick Chung was injured on the possession but returned on the next defensive series.

### **3rd quarter: Eagles 29, Patriots 19**

Quarterback Nick Foles threw a 22-yard pass to running back Corey Clement in double coverage to make it a two-score game. Clement's catch was reviewed by officials, who ruled the call on the field stands.

The touchdown capped an 11-play, 85-yard drive.

### **3rd quarter: Eagles 29, Patriots 26**

Quarterback Tom Brady found receiver Chris Hogan for a 26-yard touchdown to again trim Philadelphia's lead. The touchdown finished off a seven-play, 75-yard drive.

Brady now has 404 yards passing and has connected with seven different receivers. For Hogan, who now has five catches for 125 yards, this is his first 100-yard game in the playoffs.

4th quarter: Eagles 32, Patriots 26

Jake Elliott connected on a 42-yard field goal to extend the Eagles' lead.

Elliott's attempt came after Marquis Flowers dropped Nelson Agholor for an 8-yard loss on third and 3.

The Eagles and Patriots have combined for more than 1,000 yards of offense, breaking the record for most yards in a Super Bowl. For Brady and Gronkowski, it was the 12th time they have connected for a touchdown in the postseason, tying Joe Montana and Jerry Rice for most by a quarterback/receiver.





This field goal capped an eight-play, 51-yard drive.

## 4th quarter: Patriots 33, Eagles 32

New England has its first lead in Super Bowl LII. It came on a 4-yard touchdown pass from Tom Brady to Rob Gronkowski, their second touchdown connection of the game.

It was a 10-play, 75-yard drive for the Patriots, who have found the end zone on all three of their second-half possessions.

## 4th quarter: Eagles 38, Patriots 33

Tight end Zach Ertz scored on an 11-yard touchdown pass from Nick Foles for the Eagles to retake the lead with just more than 2 minutes left in the game. Philadelphia's two-point attempt failed. Patriots safety Patrick Chung has been ruled out with a head injury.

## 4th quarter: Eagles 38, Patriots 33

The first sack of Super Bowl LII came at an inopportune time for New England.

Defensive end Brandon Graham came up with a strip-sack of Tom Brady with 2:21 left in the game. Rookie Derek Barnett recovered the fumble.

## **4th quarter: Eagles 41, Patriots 33**

With 2:16 to play. When the Patriots had the ball, Brandon Graham drew cheers from Eagles fans as he sacked Tom Brady, who fumbled the ball. The ball was recovered by Eagles' Derek Barnett at the Patriots 31-yard line.

Philadelphia would then increase its lead after Elliott's 46-yard field goal, making the game score 41–33.

With seconds left, the Patriots were able to move the ball down to midfield. With just under 10 seconds remaining, Tom Brady gave it his best shot with a huge Hail Mary pass that would have sent the game into OT with a touchdown plus 2. However, the Eagles swarmed Gronkowski and the human blanket in the end zone caused a pass with a chance, to fall incomplete. This sealed the game and prompted a lot of happy sounds from Eagles and Eagles fans in the stadium and across the world. It was a heartbreaking experience for the Patriots who had come so close.

The 5-time Super Bowl champions were defeated by a score of 41–33. Nick Foles, a story unto himself this fall as *The Little Engine That Could*, was named Super Bowl MVP after the game. With this win, the Eagles finally won their first Super Bowl, and their first NFL title since 1960. The Patriots put up the good fight all year long.

## **And, then?**

With Bill Belichick as the coach taking on Doug Pederson every year in a Super Bowl re-match, the games ought to be really good and nobody knows who will win. One thing is for sure. It is the Patriots turn in 2018. Go Patrs!

Thank you all for taking the time to enjoy this book about the best coaches on the best historical team in pro football today!



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