

The Greatest Coach of All Time

By Jesse Almeida 1/22/24

In every decision that is made for a franchise, there is normally a plan behind what the team wants to accomplish by a certain time frame. There are three possibilities of how those plans go down. Those plans either don't meet expectations, deliver on the expectations, or exceed the expectations. When it comes to Bill Belichick he didn't just exceed expectations. He surpassed the exceeded expectations mark. Bill Belichick had a big role in something that you rarely see in sports. A dynasty. Bill Belichick helped turn this franchise around. From being a poverty franchise that was almost relocated, to becoming one of the NFL's winningest franchises in the span of 2 decades.

Before Bill was in New England, there were ups and downs at Foxboro Stadium. You could never predict how the Patriots would do before the season began. There was even uncertainty of where the Patriots would play next. Rumors were going around that the Patriots were looking to relocate because Foxboro Stadium was not bringing in enough profit due to the stadium's condition and the ups and downs of the team. It was confirmed in November of 1998 that the Patriots were moving to Hartford, Connecticut. But the deal ultimately fell through because of differences in the new stadium details. Kraft then made the commitment to not only stay in Foxboro, but made the commitment to bring a winning culture to this team. On January 27th, 2000, Robert Kraft hired Bill Belichick as the 14th head coach of the New England Patriots. Belichick was a defensive minded coach that would bring some help to the Patriots defense.

This was not Belichick's first time on the Patriots coaching staff. He was an assistant along with the head coach of the Patriots defensive backs in 1996. The goal of bringing Bill Belichick was to get New England its first championship. The first year did not go as planned as the Patriots went 5-11 and finished last in the division. The Patriots were the 17th best defensive team in the league that year, and were ranked 25th in offense. The Patriots on offense had 4581 yards, scored 276 points with 27 touchdowns, however averaged 4.4 yards a play, and had 25 turnovers on the season. On defense, the Patriots allowed 5353 yards, allowed 338 points, gave up 35 touchdowns, and forced 23 turnovers. In that offseason, the Patriots made many improvements on the offensive side and the defensive end including the signing of running back Antowain Smith, and left outside linebacker Mike Vrabel. In the 2001 season, Drew Bledsoe would go down in week 2 and Bill decided to give a rookie quarterback by the name of Tom

Brady a chance. Brady's performance was greater than expected leading the Patriots to an 11-5 record and a playoff berth with a bye to the Divisional Round. The Patriots would play the Oakland Raiders and this was the famous tuck rule game. The Patriots would go on and win this game 16-13. The next game, Drew Bledsoe got injured again and was out for the remainder of the season. Even though Bledsoe went down. The Patriots would go on and win the AFC Championship 24-17 against the Steelers. In the Super Bowl, it was tied 17-17 in the final minutes. Brady drove the Patriots down to field goal range and Adam Vinitari nailed the game winning field goal to give the Patriots their first ever Super Bowl.

After the rookie Brady led the Patriots to their first ever Super Bowl, he saw something special in him. So Belichick decided that Tom Brady was the new face of the franchise. That meant what was next for Drew Bledsoe? On April 22, 2002, the New England Patriots traded Bledsoe at the 2002 draft to the Buffalo Bills for a 2003 first round pick. It is never easy moving on from one of the better quarterbacks in the league, but this turned out to be the second best decision the franchise has ever made. The best decision was drafting Tom Brady in 2000. This decision started a dynasty. With huge potential in Tom Brady and a mastermind of a coach in Bill Belichick, the New England Patriots were going to be a problem for the league for years to come. The Patriots would win back to back Super Bowl in 2003, and 2004. Following those two Super Bowls, the Patriots would go to 6 more Super Bowls and win 3 of them. One of them was off a game winning interception that Malcolm Butler caught where Bill Belichick had the defense practicing that exact play in practice prior to the Super Bowl. The other notable game was the greatest comeback in NFL history. Down 28-3 and ended up coming back to win 34-28 in overtime. Along with that comeback, it was the first ever Super Bowl game that went to overtime.

There are many memories that you can look back and remember Bill's 24 year journey with the New England Patriots. His half cut hoodies he always wore on the sidelines, his postgame press conference answers especially saying "We're onto (their next opponent)", the parades that followed after every Super Bowl Championship, and the history that he made here in New England. 24 years which resulted in going to 9 Super Bowl's winning 6 of them, 9x AFC Champion, 17 Division Titles which is the most by a head coach in NFL history, 19 playoff appearances which is tied for the most with Don Shula, 31 Playoff wins which is the most by an NFL head coach, 302 regular season wins which is 3rd most in NFL history, and 333 total

victories which is second to Shula. Bill's resume speaks for itself. He was a big part of not only changing the culture of the Patriots, but changing the culture of the region of New England. Bill Belichick at his best had the ability to make every player on the New England Patriots better. He would have them in the right situations, and maximized their potentials to the fullest. Players wanted to come and play in New England because of Brady, and Belichick. When Bill Belichick's career comes to an end, he will be remembered for the Patriots dynasty, his mastermind on the football field, and finally he will be remembered as the greatest coach of all time. Thank you Bill Belichick for an unremarkable 24 years here in New England.