

Slow and Steady

By Jesse Almeida 9/8/24

When will the New England Patriots turn things around? How will fans know that this franchise is headed into the right direction? These are the main questions that Patriots fans have been wondering. Last year the Patriots went 4-13 last season as the team just broke down as the season went on. It was the worst of the worst seasons that you could have in the NFL. This was caused by some injuries but mostly due to horrible play from the players, bad coaching, and bad roster construction. After a very underwhelming season last year, there were major changes needed to revamp this franchise.

The biggest one was Bill Belichick being relieved of his duties. This was the 4th year post Tom Brady era, and this was the 3rd time in the 4 years that the Patriots were under .500 and out of the playoffs. Along with those seasons, Bill was one of the biggest reasons as to why young players like Mac Jones took regressions. Many questionable decision making when it came to roster construction and picking his coaching staff around him. Belichick was never able to surround Mac Jones with an offensive line to protect him, and never gave him a big threat at the wideout position. After McDaniels took the head coaching job with Vegas, Belichick went out and hired Matt Patricia to be the offensive coordinator, and Joe Judge to be the QB coach when both of those coaches are more known to be defensive coaches. It never made sense, and that started the downfall of Mac. With all of this playing into factor, the time was up for Bill Belichick. Robert Kraft and Bill Belichick parted ways.

With Belichick now out of the picture, it cleared the way for the Patriots to restart and rebuild the team from top to bottom. The Patriots received the number 3rd overall pick in the NFL draft due to their horrific season in 2024. With another regression of Mac Jones and an upcoming draft with a talented QB class, the Patriots first move was trading Mac Jones to the Jacksonville Jaguars. The former 15th overall pick had a phenomenal 1st season with the Patriots leading them to a 10-7 record and a playoff spot. But after that it was all downhill since then. Following an 8-9 finish in 2022, and a 4-13 finish in 2023, it was time to trade Mac and make room for the next franchise quarterback.

Free agency went underway and the Pats had the most cap space available. Fans expected the Patriots to maintain their defensive players who hit free agency, and to be in on the top offensive linemen and wide receivers available. But it was a very underwhelming free agency for the Patriots. They maintained most of their main defensive players in Dugger, Uche, Peppers,

and Jennings. The Patriots missed out on Calvin Ridley, but retained Kendrick Bourne, and added KJ Osborn to their wideout depth. The Patriots let Ezekiel Elliot go and signed Antonio Gibson as their back up running back, and to mentor the new QB New England brought back Jacoby Brissett on a 1 year deal. There were no major additions to this team and the Patriots decided to use the draft to fill in the needs to this roster.

The Patriots had the number 3 overall pick in the draft, and now without a quarterback, the writing was on the wall that they were taking a QB with that pick. With the 3rd overall pick in the NFL Draft, the New England Patriots selected QB Drake Maye from North Carolina. Last season Maye had 24 touchdowns on 9 interceptions. He threw for over 3,600 yards, and had a completion percentage of 63.3 percent. However in 2022, Maye had a stellar season where he threw 38 touchdowns on 7 interceptions. Drake threw for just over 4,300 yards and completed 66 percent of his passes that season. With the Patriots second round pick, they went with wide receiver Ja'lynn Polk from Washington. Polk was one of Michael Penix Jr's top targets and had a great 2023 season. Polk had 9 touchdowns on 69 receptions. Ja'lynn had nearly 1,200 yards and averaged 16.8 yards a receptions. Polk has the potential to be a solid number 2 option at the wideout position and will be one of their key wideouts in 2024. In round 3 and 4 New England boosted their O-Line depth as they drafted OT Caedan Wallace from Penn State, and right guard Layden Robinson from Texas A&M.

With how bad last season was, and the moves that were made this offseason, the expectations are not for this team to make a playoff spot. The Patriots are currently in a rebuilding process and it will take time until they are a playoff competitor again. Drake Maye will be on the sidelines getting learning experience from Jacoby Brissett, and Brissett will serve as a bridge year quarterback. The expectations should be for some growth. Despite whether the Patriots win or lose in these games, fans want to see moments that could lead the Patriots back in the right direction in the future. As for this season's record, the Patriots at the best case scenario will be 7-10, but another 4-13 record is the probable finish for this year's team. However, with that being there will be some key moments that shows growth in this team that the players can build off of for next season, and the future.