

Patriot Act III: Dynasty

By PAUL NEWBERRY
AP Sports Writer

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (AP) — The whole thing must have seemed routine to the New England Patriots: confetti fluttering across the field, fireworks brightening the night sky, a carefully choreographed championship trophy presentation.

Downright ordinary, right?

Hardly. The Patriots became a full-fledged dynasty with their third Super Bowl victory in four years, beating the Philadelphia Eagles 24-21 Sunday night.

New England claimed a spot alongside the Green Bay Packers of the 1960s, the Pittsburgh Steelers of the '70s, the San Francisco 49ers of the '80s, the Dallas Cowboys of the '90s.

A team for the decade.

A team for the ages.

"We're champions now. That's it," safety Rodney Harrison said. "I don't know about dynasty."

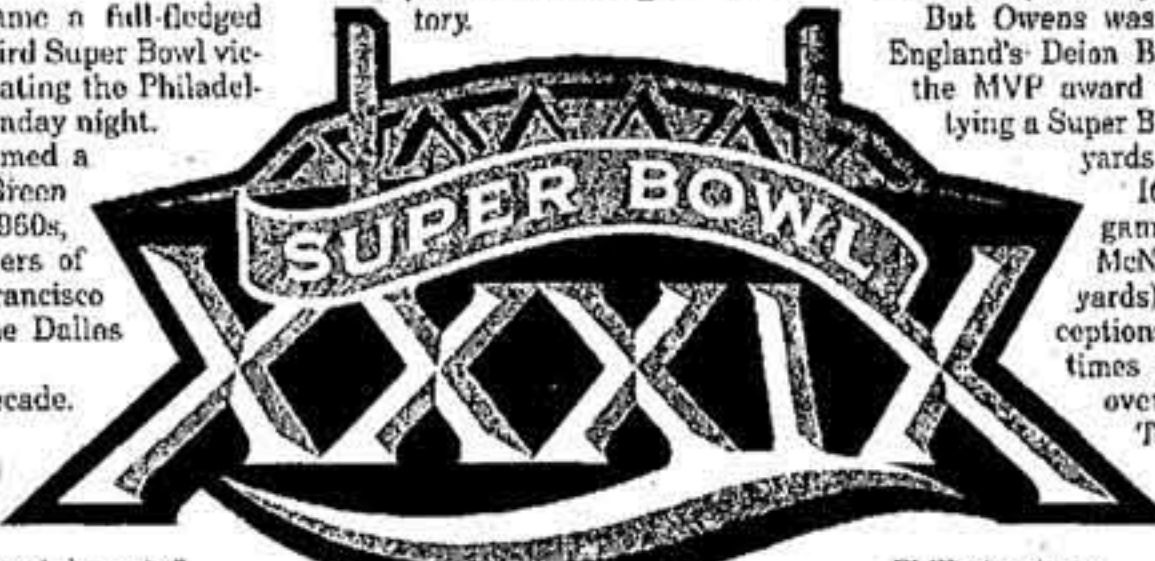
Trust us, Rodney, this group fits the definition in every respect. New England becomes just the seventh franchise to claim back-to-back titles. The Cowboys are the only other team to win the championship three times over a four-year period.

Typically, the Patriots didn't leave themselves much room. All three of their Super Bowls have been decided by three points — the previous two on last-second field goals by Adam Vinatieri. By comparison, only two of the first 35 Super Bowls were within field goal range at the end.

But what they lack in style, the Patriots more than make up with their steely determination to do whatever it takes to

win. When the Eagles jumped to a 7-0 lead, New England responded with a touchdown of its own late in the first half.

When Philadelphia tied the game at 14 late in the third quarter, the Patriots marched right down the field for Corey Dillon's 2-yard touchdown. And, in a fitting bit of synergy, Vinatieri booted a 22-yard field goal with 8:40 remaining that provided the margin of victory.



The Eagles got a huge lift from Terrell Owens, who defied his doctor to play in his first Super Bowl. Just 6½ weeks after surgery, T.O. had nine catches for 122 yards. Not bad for a guy who was playing with two screws and a metal plate in his right ankle.

"He's amazing, to be able to come out there and do what he did," Harrison said. "You could tell he was still hurting a little bit, but he played tremendous."

But Owens was outshined by New England's Deion Branch, who claimed the MVP award with 11 catches — tying a Super Bowl record — for 133 yards.

It wasn't a flawless game by any means. McNabb (30-of-51 for 397 yards) threw three interceptions, was sacked four times and had a fumble overturned by replay.

Tom Brady botched a handoff with Kevin Faulk, leading to a fumble deep in

Philly territory.

For the most part, though, the Patriots followed a familiar routine — run the ball (28 carries, 112 yards), limit mistakes in the passing game (Brady was 23-of-33 for 236 yards, with no interceptions) and rely heavily on their defense (the Eagles managed just 45 yards on the ground).

The loss extended Philly's excruciating championship drought. The city's last football title came in 1960. The last title of any kind came 22 years ago, when the '76ers won the NBA championship.

"I was proud of the effort," coach Andy Reid said. "But we came up just short — too many turnovers — and against such a tough football team you can't do that."



New England Patriots' Ted Bruschi celebrates after intercepting a fourth quarter pass intended for Philadelphia Eagles' L.J. Smith during Super Bowl XXXIX in Jacksonville, Fla., Sunday.

Now, it's time to start sorting out the historical significance of another Patriots' Super Bowl title. They have won nine straight postseason games, equaling Vince Lombardi's Green Bay teams. And coach Bill Belichick improved his playoff record to 10-1, one-upping the great Lombardi.

"As I give you the Lombardi Trophy, I suspect that coach Lombardi would have a deep admiration for how your team played today," NFL commissioner Paul Tagliabue told Belichick after the game.

The Patriots had a bumpy road to their latest championship, and in many ways the Super Bowl mirrored those struggles. But, as always, New England found a way to persevere.

Maybe it's their versatility. For the second year in a row, linebacker Mike Vrabel caught a touchdown pass. He's got five receptions in his career — all TDs.

Even though the Eagles made it to the Super Bowl for the first time since 1981 — after three straight conference championship flops — their sparkling season ended in disappointment before a sea of mostly green jerseys in the crowd of 78,125.

"We were too sleepy to win," Owens said. "It was great to get back, but we made too many mistakes. We could have won and that hurts."

Brady didn't stand out like he did while winning the MVP award at his first two Super Bowls, but he threw two TD passes. Branch stepped in to fill the void, making off with a new car and an additional piece of hardware.

"It doesn't matter who gets what," Branch said.

McNabb looked ordinary, even skittish at times. Maybe it was the four sacks, the persistent pressure and the lack of help from the running game. He threw three touchdown passes, but also made some crucial blunders.

In a precursor of what was to come,

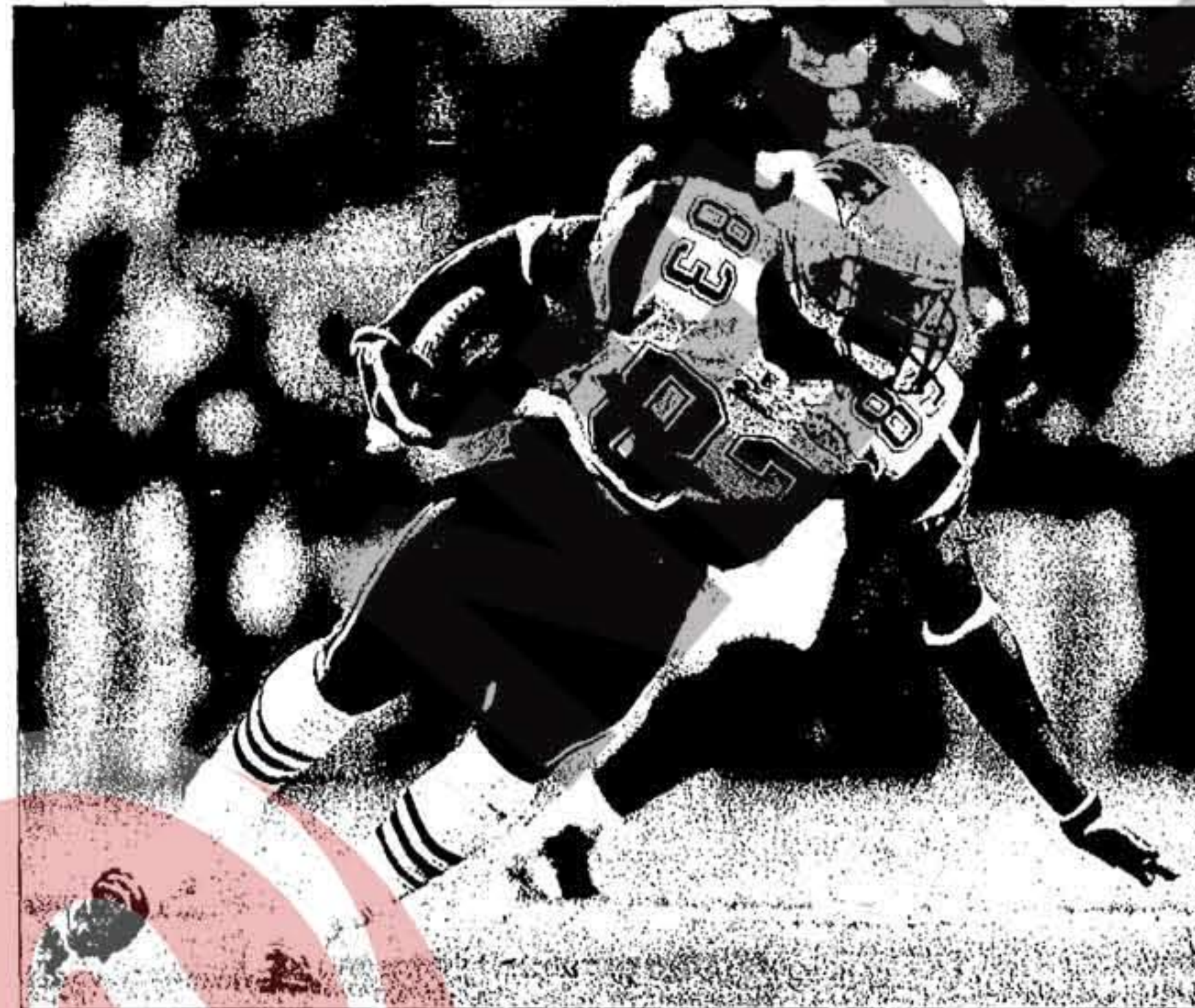
McNabb caught a break when a first-quarter interception in the end zone was nullified by a defensive penalty. But he wasted the second chance, throwing another errant pass that Harrison picked off near the goal line.

After Harrison's second interception in the waning seconds, Belichick sought out offensive coordinator Charlie Weis and defensive coordinator Romeo Crennel. Both are leaving for head coaching jobs: Weis at Notre Dame, Crennel with the Cleveland Browns.

"He grabbed me and Romeo at the end of the game and said, 'Hey, it's over,'" Weis said.

What a ride it's been.
One for the ages.

Super Bowl Stats	
New England	24
Philadelphia	21
Second Quarter	
Ph — 5th 6 pass from McNabb (Jones kick), 9:55	
NE — 6th 4 pass from Brady (Vinatieri kick), 1:10	
Third Quarter	
NE — 7th 2 pass from Brady (Vinatieri kick), 11:04	
Ph — Westbrook 10 pass from McNabb (Jones kick), 3:35	
Fourth Quarter	
NE — 11th 2 run (Madden kick), 13:44	
NE — FG Vinatieri 22, 8:40	
Ph — G Lewis 30 pass from McNabb (Mars kick), 1:48	
A — 78,125	
First downs	21
Total Yards	353
Run-Yards	174-45
Passing	219
Punt Returns	4-20
Kick Returns	4-63
Interceptions	3-5
Comp-Att	23-33-0
Sacks-Yards Lost	2-17
Fumbles	7-5-1
Fumbles-Lost	1-1
Penalties-Yards	7-47
Time of Possession	31:27
INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS	
RUSHING—New England: Oton 18-75, Faulk 8-38, Pass 1-0, Brady 1-0 (run) 1; Philadelphia: Westbrook 15-44, Lewis 1-1, McNabb 1-0	
PASSING—New England: Brady 23-33-0-236; Philadelphia: McNabb 30-51-0-397	
RECEIVING—New England: Branch 11-153, Oton 3-31, Gvera 3-19, Faulk 2-27, Westbrook 2-17, Graham 1-7, Vinatieri 1-2; Philadelphia: Owens 9-122, Westbrook 7-48, Frisoni 4-82, G Lewis 4-53, Smith 4-27, Mitchell 1-11, Pary 1-2	
MISSO FIELD GOALS—None	



New England Patriots' wide receiver Deion Branch, selected most valuable player of Super Bowl XXXIX, is seen in action during the first half of the Patriots' 24-21 win over the Philadelphia Eagles on Sunday at Alltel Stadium in Jacksonville, Fla.

Marino, Young will shine together in Canton

By BARRY WILNER
AP Football Writer

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (AP) — Dan Marino and Steve Young made it a great day for quarterbacks when both were elected to the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Marino, the most prolific passer in NFL history, and Young, whose accuracy and speed made him one of football's most versatile QBs, were joined Saturday by Benny Friedman, an early-era quarterback, and Fritz Pollard.

Each received at least 80 percent of the votes from the panel of sports writers and broadcasters.

Friedman and Pollard were nominated by the senior committee and chosen by the full panel.

Induction ceremonies will be Aug. 7 in Canton, Ohio.

"It's an incredible honor," Marino said. "It's humbling to think of growing up wanting to be a professional football player."

"Let's overrun Canton with Dolphins fans. I invite you all to

Canton and to have some fun."

When Marino left the Miami Dolphins after the 1999 season, he had NFL bests of 4,967 completions, 8,358 passes, 61,361 yards and 420 touchdowns. His record of 48 TD passes in a season was recently broken by Peyton Manning.

Although he never won a Super Bowl, Marino was the 1984 league MVP, made three All-Pro teams and nine Pro Bowls.

When Marino retired, he owned 21 NFL marks, including most seasons with 3,000 yards or more passing (13); most yards passing in one season (6,084 in '84, the only year he won a conference championship); and most games with 300 yards or more passing (63).

Young, the first modern-era left-handed quarterback elected, won the 1995 Super Bowl with the San Francisco 49ers and was the league's most valuable player in 1992 and '94. A clever runner



Former Miami Dolphins' quarterback Dan Marino, right, congratulates former San Francisco 49ers' quarterback Steve Young after the two were elected into the NFL Pro Football Hall of Fame in Jacksonville, Fla., Saturday.

with a strong arm and great field vision, Young made seven Pro Bowls and was a three-time All-Pro. He held the highest passer rating in league history (96.8) when he retired in '99. He also set the highest single-season rating of 112.8, which Manning also broke this season.

"Not many Hall of Famers come out of Greenwich, Conn.," Young said with a chuckle. "I took a unique road, starting with being left-handed. I had a college coach, LaVell Edwards, who took a chance on a wild, crazy left-handed running quarterback from Connecticut."

Pollard not only was the first black head coach in the NFL, in 1921, but a superb player, too. A running back, he led the Akron Pros to the fledgling league's 1920 championship with an undefeated record.

He later organized the Chicago Brown Bombers, an independent team of black players that barnstormed the country from

1927-33.

Friedman played for four teams from 1927-34 and was one of the early NFL's great quarterbacks. A contemporary of Red Grange, he also was a strong draw at the box office.

Giants owner Tim Mara purchased the Detroit Wolverines, for whom Friedman played in 1928, not only to get him in New York's lineup but to fill the stands.

"We both appreciate and honor the people who played in another era," Young said, speaking for Marino, as well.

"You're talking about having a passion for the game. We're here on the backs of so many other players."

"This is important Fritz Pollard and what he meant for the game. There's a foundation there we are able to join arms with."

Michael Irvin and Harry Carson, the other two finalists, did not get the required votes for induction.