

# Rested Patriots to take on sputtering Cowboys

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Quarterback Tom Brady has turned it up a notch since the reversal of his four-game NFL suspension, throwing nine touchdowns without an interception to lead the New England Patriots to three straight victories.

NFL

Fresh off the team's bye, the three-time Super Bowl MVP looks to keep steam-rolling ahead when the Patriots visit the sputtering Dallas Cowboys on Sunday (4:25 p.m., CBS-TV).

**Keys to the game:** Coverage breakdowns in New Orleans cost the Cowboys in Week 4, and the Patriots come off the bye week with a Swiss-army knife offense, adaptable to attack those same weaknesses. Covering RB Dion Lewis and WR Julian Edelman are problematic for a drop zone defense, but secondary to handling TE Rob Gronkowski. Cowboys coach Jason Garrett said this week he'll use multiple defenders, but WLB Sean Lee and rookie DB Byron Jones could draw the short straw.

The Cowboys are brass knuckles in a gunfight without quarterback Tony Romo and receiver Dez Bryant,

who'll be on the sideline tending broken bones while Dallas executes a rudimentary offense reliant on the running game to provide its big plays. Chunk passing plays aren't possible unless shell-shocked backup QB Brandon Weeden takes more risks. He's not pushing the ball downfield and if the Cowboys fall behind early, this is likely the week Garrett tests out Matt Cassel. The offensive line is stout and dominant but against eight- and nine-man fronts, snappy throws outside to beat man coverage are Weeden's best lifeline.

**Matchup to watch:** Patriots RB LeGarrette Blount vs. Cowboys LB Rolando McClain: Suspended to start the season, stamina might be an issue for McClain and Blount, who had three rushing touchdowns Week 3 before the bye week. McClain was hurt throughout the preseason and suspended for four games to start the regular season, but in 2014 was a big factor in the Cowboys' base defense.

**Player spotlight:** Cowboys DE Greg Hardy: Hardy is on the field for the first time in 14 months in a regular-season game because of domestic violence charges. He'll move from left end to right end in the Cowboys' defense in hopes



DERRICK E. HINGLE | USA TODAY  
Dallas Cowboys quarterback Brandon Weeden (left) is pressured by New Orleans Saints cornerback Damian Swann (27) during the second half at the Mercedes-Benz Superdome on Sunday. The Saints won 26-20 in overtime.

of finding a pressure point.

**Fast facts:** The Cowboys have one total rush of at least 10 yards in the second half this season. ... Patriots QB Tom

Brady is one of two quarterbacks in NFL history with 1,100 yards, nine TDs and no INTs in the first three games of a season (Peyton Manning,

2013). ... New England has won each of the last four meetings, but is making its first visit to AT&T Stadium. ... Dallas LB Sean Lee returned to practice

on Thursday after clearing concussion protocol. ... The Patriots have scored a touchdown on 14 of their 34 offensive drives this season.

## Coaches

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our guys have bought in and they've put in the work," he said of preseason workouts.

Shortly after their arrival on campus last month, UMaine coaches began putting the basketball players through their paces.

Jon Lynch handles the men's squad, representing UMaine's sports performance staff. The women's team is for the first time under the direction of Malory Benard, a member of the women's basketball staff who handles sports performance and other administrative duties.

Benard, who was hired this summer, conducted a week of testing for the women covering power, power capacity and conditioning to establish a baseline of their individual abilities.

"[We were] really focusing on movement and mechanics, teaching them how to move efficiently and properly and how that translates on the court," said Benard, who recorded many of the sessions and provided the players with clips to show points of emphasis.

Lynch, who is new to the sports performance staff this year, made neurology (base of stability), conditioning and strength priorities with the men's team.

"If an athlete has a great motor pattern that's going to

work their joints and muscles efficiently, that's what we care the most about because that's the kind of training that's going to keep guys on the court and out of the training room," Lynch said.

The sports performance coaches work closely with the basketball coaches to achieve the kinds of results they would like to see from the athletes through their preseason and continuing strength and conditioning work.

Benard's relationship with head women's basketball coach Richard Barron benefits from the fact they already work together and share the same office space.

"She's got more expertise in that [sports performance] area than I do, so a lot of it's trusting her and communicating," Barron said. "She's part of the staff, so as we plan things out, she's part of that process."

Lynch sat down with Walsh early on to find out what was important to the staff in terms of preparing the athletes.

"He let me know what his philosophy was," Lynch said. "I need to deliver the same message he's delivering."

While Lynch balances his time between men's basketball, baseball, softball and the track and field athletes, Benard works exclusively with women's basketball.

"She's working with all 16 and knows them pretty intimately, is with them every day, so is able to tailor what

they're doing to their needs and understands by watching our practices what the demands are," Barron said.

Heise said having a full-time performance coach has been a welcome and beneficial development.

"She takes the time to go through each exercise, explain every single step," she said. "I feel like I got so much out of those last four weeks of preseason just learning new stuff. I think it's been really helpful."

For Lynch, training methods for the men's basketball team are tied directly to the on-court approach implemented by Walsh and his staff — a desire to play a high-intensity, fast-paced style.

"Conditioning is a big point of emphasis, always has been, for me as a coach in our programs for our style of play," Walsh said.

Lynch has been helping the players build their stamina by maximizing their cardiac output.

"We want to be able to run harder, run faster and play at a faster speed than our opponents," Lynch said. "The conditioning base is huge."

The coaches also attempt to tailor exercises or drills to individuals to address specific issues affecting their performance. The athletes also are counseled on maintaining proper nutrition.

However, both Benard and Lynch pointed to the importance of providing the

athletes with sufficient rest periods as part of their training regimen.

Workouts in the gym, on the track and in the Latti Fitness Center are staggered so they complement each other but don't overtax the players.

"It's a lot of monitoring stress versus recovery, so we want to make sure that there's a balance," Benard said. "As a coach, it all comes down to getting to know your team."

The strength, speed and conditioning component that begins during preseason at UMaine is intended to be an extension of the basketball experience, one that generates an added element of camaraderie and purpose as the athletes prepare for their season and later work through it.

"There are certain things that we can quantify, measure and test, but I think it's just as important that the players are confident in what they're doing," Barron said.

Benard and Lynch strive to help the basketball players get stronger, quicker and more efficient, all while helping them avoid injuries. Their overriding goal is the same as that of the players and coaches.

"If we're not winning games, then I'm probably wasting time," Lynch said. "We're building connections with athletes, keeping them healthy while they're here, but what we care about is winning, so that's our No. 1 goal."

## Football

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points and 404 yards a game, but leads the CAA with a plus-8 turnover ratio. The Great Danes have caused six fumbles and made eight interceptions.

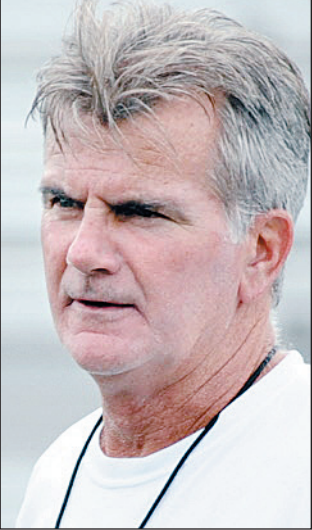
Catalysts include linebacker Julian Cox (43 tackles) and cornerback Rayshan Clark (33 tackles, 2 INTs.).

UAlbany has managed 19 ppg on offense, but has been unspectacular while generating only 294 ypg. Elliot Croskey has picked up 77 yards per game on the ground, while quarterback D.J. Crook has thrown for 817 yards and six TDs with three interceptions.

Zee Roberson (25 rec., 210 yds., 1 TD) and Brad Harris (18-276-1) are among the top receiving threats.

UMaine has been forgiving on defense, allowing 393 yards and almost 32 points per game. End Trevor Bates of Westbrook (25 tackles) and linebacker Randy Samuels (24) have been among the leaders for the Bears.

**Husson Eagles (2-1) at Anna Maria AMCATS (0-4), 2 p.m., AMCAT Field, Paxton, Massachusetts:**



jack Cosgrove

Husson goes after its third consecutive win after a rousing 40-7 Eastern Collegiate Athletic Conference victory over Castleton State last week.

Coach Gabby Price's Eagles (1-0 ECFC) have been potent on offense (36 ppg) and stingy on defense (16 ppg, 192 ypg).

Anna Maria (0-1 ECFC) has put up only 16.3 points and 289 yards per outing, but has good run-pass balance.

**Saturday's other games, 1 p.m.:** Bowdoin (0-2) at Tufts (2-0), Colby (0-2) at Wesleyan (1-1), Bates (0-2) at Williams (1-1).

## Patriots

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year as he had in 16 last season, said he likes the ways he's been used.

"It's been a learning process for me," Sheard said. "I kind of like it. I'm embracing it and I feel good about it."

It's been a learning process,

because although Sheard played as both a 4-3 defensive end and 3-4 outside linebacker in Cleveland, there weren't as many nuances.

In Cleveland, his main job was to get to the quarterback and he usually matched up with an offensive tackle. But to have a 6-foot-2, 254-pounder lining up on a guard or dropping back into coverage, while not foreign

concepts to Sheard, required a quick study.

"That's something you didn't really get to see him do in Cleveland," Belichick said. "He pretty much always played one spot, left end, pretty much the same technique most of his career. So seeing him do different things and being able to adapt to them and as you said create depth and versa-

tility for us has been a big plus for him and for us. It's been good."

For a player like Sheard who loves to watch film and dissect his own performance, the feeling's mutual.

"Everywhere you go you've got to learn," he said. "You've just got to be able to stay on top of it and staying on top of your plays and it will be easy."

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