

SPORTS & RECREATION

Patriots' Danny Amendola addresses fans in Bangor



GABOR DEGRE | BDN

New England Patriots wide receiver Danny Amendola (right) answers a question as Dale Duff reacts Wednesday evening at the Gracie Theatre at Husson University in Bangor.

BY LARRY MAHONEY
BDN STAFF

BANGOR — New England Patriots wide receiver Danny Amendola is hoping to be ready for opening day after undergoing minor surgeries on his knee and ankle during the offseason.

"I'm going to be ready for whatever they have me do. I feel good, I'm working out right now, I'm running fast. I feel fresh. Hopefully, I'll be ready. We'll see," said Amendola Wednesday night at the Gracie Theatre on the Husson University campus.

During a nearly two hour question-and-answer period in front of several hundred fans at the Gracie Theatre, he told the fans that until he won the Super Bowl with the Patriots two years ago, the only thing he had won was ping-pong championships in his garage.

Wednesday's event was hosted by Townsquare Media as part of a Championship Kickoff Drive Party by one of its radio stations, Sports Radio 92.9 The Ticket of Bangor.

Amendola, who grew up in Woodlands, Texas, although his parents are from Boston, took a sizeable pay cut during the offseason that could cost him \$4.4 million. He signed a two-year, \$8.1 million contract rather than test free agency, but he can make just \$1.6 million this year.

"I have a lot of roots here, and I've been in situations where playing meaningful football at the end of the season wasn't there. Playing meaningful games at the end of the season is something I really value. That's why I'm here," said Amendola, who had his best season with the Patriots last year when he grabbed 65 passes for 648 yards and three touchdowns.

He also returned 23 punts for 276 yards and was second in the league in yards per punt return (12).

After winning the Super Bowl, the Patriots got back to the AFC Championship game this past season only to lose to eventual Super Bowl champ, the Denver Broncos, in Denver 20-18.

Amendola is optimistic about the upcoming season. The Patriots have added several new players such as tight end Martellus Bennett from Chicago and wide receiver Chris Hogan from Buffalo, New York.

"We've got a lot of good guys coming, a lot of new faces, and we also have a lot of good old faces," Amendola

said. "I'm excited about it."

He played with Bennett in Dallas and called him a "great player" and the most "creative person I know."

Bennett recently wrote a children's book.

"Returning punts is my favorite part of the game," said Amendola in response to an audience question about one of the most dangerous jobs in football.

Amendola said the fact the Patriots have won four Super Bowls since 2001 and played in six altogether is a credit to owner Bob Kraft, head coach Bill Belichick and quarterback Tom Brady.

"They are just about the best at what they do," he said.

He said Kraft is a hands-on owner who frequently talks to the players in the locker room, something most owners avoid.

Brady, who will turn 39 on Aug. 3, is a fierce competitor, he said.

"I think he can play eight more years," said Amendola. "He's the coolest guy. He's the hardest worker. He's electric. He makes everybody around him better."

Amendola wears the No. 80 to honor his idol, former undersized New York Jets wide receiver Wayne Chrebet.

"That was the only poster I had on my wall growing up," said Amendola, who met Chrebet recently. The two have become friends.

The Super Bowl victory will always remain a highlight for Amendola. He caught a touchdown pass that pulled the Patriots within 24-21 in the fourth quarter, and New England went on to win 28-24.

"I'll never forget it. I was too tired to spike the ball," said Amendola.

Amendola credits his parents for his success. His father is a high school football coach and his mother is a teacher.

"My dad always told me to do what is right and treat people with respect," said the 30-year-old Amendola.

He also exhibited his sense-of-humor on several occasions.

Fellow wide receiver Julian Edelman threw a touchdown pass to him during a game against the Baltimore Ravens and cracked up the locker room the next day.

"Tom Brady usually comes into the meeting the next day with a bag of ice on his shoulder. Julian came in with ice covering his entire arm," grinned Amendola who considers Edelman a close friend.

Leave the shore behind and fish from a kayak

BY BEN MAGEE
SPECIAL TO THE WEEKLY

While Mainers are known to love fishing, not everyone has access to a motorboat. Not to worry, there are other means to gaining your next big catch!

Have you ever considered using a kayak?

It's become one of my go-to ways to enjoy my favorite pastime.

A kayak is an affordable way to get on the water. There are kayaks that are made specifically for fish-

ing, and while they are nice, they can be expensive.

An entry level kayak can work well, and you can always add on extras, such as fishing rod holders, paddle clip, paddle leash, fish finder, etc. There are always used ones for sale, and with the right timing, you could get a new one on sale.

The kayak I use is a Future Beach Trophy 126, which comes with rod holders and a few extras. The non-Trophy version (Fusion 10 model) can be bought for less and is es-

entially the same kayak without the front hatch and rod holders. I am impressed with these stable kayaks and have landed many fish in them. They are made by our neighbors up north in Canada.

With a clever set up and a little simple customizing, you can make a respectable fishing boat that will be enjoyable to use. They are also handy to have when accessing remote waters that have no available boat launches. For you fly fishers out

there, it is possible to cast from these. It takes some practice but it can be done!

I made a video on YouTube that shows how I set up my kayak for different types of fishing. I've been fishing out of a kayak for a few years and in my video I share a few tips I have learned along the way.

Ben Magee is a fishing and outdoor enthusiast from Levant. Read more of Magee's work and see his video on how to set your kayak up for a fishing trip at bmagee.bangordailynews.com.

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