



# NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS PRESS RELEASE

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## TOP-SEEDED PATRIOTS HOST TITANS IN DIVISIONAL PLAYOFF

### MEDIA SCHEDULE

#### Monday, Jan. 5

11:45 – 12:15 Coach Belichick Press Availability  
in Media Workroom

#### Tuesday, Jan. 6

10:45 – 11:15 Coach Belichick Press Availability  
in Media Workroom

11:15 – 11:55 Open Locker Room

12:45 – 1:05 Access to Practice (Photographers  
and camera operators only)

#### Tennessee Conference Calls—

12:45 Titans Player TBA

1:00 Head Coach Jeff Fisher

#### Wednesday, Jan. 7

10:45 – 11:15 Coach Belichick Press Availability  
in Media Workroom

11:15 – 11:55 Open Locker Room

12:45 – 1:05 Access to Practice (Photographers  
and camera operators only)

#### Thursday, Jan. 8

10:30 – 11:00 Coach Belichick Press Availability  
in Media Workroom

11:00 – 11:35 Open Locker Room

12:00 – 12:15 Access to Practice (Photographers  
and camera operators only)

#### Friday, Jan. 9

Team Walkthrough – No Media Availability

#### Saturday, Jan. 10

8:15 AFC Divisional Playoff Game  
Patriots vs. Tennessee Titans

### 2003 NFL STANDINGS

Teams	W	L	T	Pct.	PF	PA
<b>New England</b> .....	<b>14</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>.875</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>238</b>
Kansas City .....	13	3	0	.813	484	332
Indianapolis .....	12	4	0	.750	447	336
Philadelphia .....	12	4	0	.750	374	287
St. Louis .....	12	4	0	.750	447	328
Tennessee .....	12	4	0	.750	435	324
Carolina .....	11	5	0	.688	325	304
Baltimore .....	10	6	0	.625	391	281
Dallas .....	10	6	0	.625	289	260
Denver .....	10	6	0	.625	381	301
Green Bay .....	10	6	0	.625	442	307
Miami .....	10	6	0	.625	311	261
Seattle .....	10	6	0	.625	404	327
Minnesota .....	9	7	0	.563	416	353
Cincinnati .....	8	8	0	.500	346	384
New Orleans .....	8	8	0	.500	340	326
Chicago .....	7	9	0	.438	283	346



### AFC DIVISIONAL PLAYOFF GAME

#### NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS (14-2) vs. TENNESSEE TITANS (13-4)

Saturday, Jan. 10, 2004 ★ Gillette Stadium (68,436) ★ 8:15 p.m.

The top-seeded New England Patriots will host the sixth home playoff game in club history when they welcome the fifth-seeded Tennessee Titans to Foxborough on Saturday night. In their first playoff game at Gillette Stadium, the Patriots will see a familiar foe in the Titans, who last paid a visit to New England on Oct. 5, 2003. In that game, the Patriots prevailed in a 38-30 shootout, the first win in a franchise-record 12-game winning streak to end the 2003 regular season with an NFL-leading 14-2 record.

The Patriots will participate in their first playoff game since their victory in Super Bowl XXXVI, and have compiled a 6-3 record in the playoffs since 1996. While the Patriots are coming off of a first-round bye, the Titans are fresh off of a 20-17 win at Baltimore in the Wild Card Round that punched their ticket to Foxborough. Like the Patriots, the Titans have enjoyed recent postseason prosperity, having won the AFC Championship in 1999 and reached the conference championship last season. With a berth in this year's AFC Championship at stake, the Patriots will face their toughest challenge to date.

**TELEVISION:** This week's game will be televised by CBS. The game can be seen locally on WBZ-TV Channel 4 in Boston. **Greg Gumbel** will handle the play-by-play duties and **Phil Simms** will provide analysis. **Armen Keteyian** will provide reports from the sidelines throughout the game.

**RADIO:** WBCN 104.1 FM is the flagship station for the Patriots Rock Radio Network. Play-by-play broadcaster **Gil Santos** is in his 27th season as the voice of the Patriots and calls the action along with Patriots Hall of Famer **Gino Cappelletti**. In 2003, Santos and Cappelletti celebrate their 20th season as a broadcast tandem.

**NATIONAL RADIO:** This week's game will be broadcast nationally by CBS Radio. **Brad Sham** will call the play-by-play, and he will be joined in the booth by analyst **Kellen Winslow**. **John Dockery** will report from the sidelines.

### HOME COOKING

The Patriots finished 8-0 at Gillette Stadium this season, recording the first undefeated home season in team history. New England is 17-3 in its last 20 home games. The Patriots are 4-1 at home in the playoffs.

### RECORD STREAK

The Patriots ended the 2003 regular season with a 12-game winning streak to finish the season at 14-2. The streak is tied for the third longest season-ending winning streak in NFL history. Every other NFL team to end a season with 12 or more consecutive wins has advanced to play for the league championship. Only three teams in league history have ended a season with more consecutive wins than the Patriots, and only one team has done so in the last 30 years (Denver, 1998). The first 11 wins in the Patriots' streak were all by 14 points or fewer, making them the first team in league history to win so many games by such a narrow margin.

### MOST CONSECUTIVE WINS, SINGLE SEASON

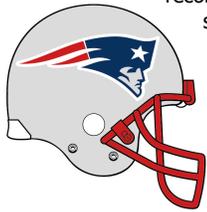
Wins	Team, Year	Playoff Result
14	Miami, 1972	Won Super Bowl VII
13	Chicago, 1934	Lost in NFL Championship Game
	Denver, 1998	Won Super Bowl XXXIII
<b>12</b>	<b>New England, 2003</b>	
	Minnesota, 1969	Lost Super Bowl IV
	Chicago, 1985	Won Super Bowl XX



# THIS WEEK: PATRIOTS VS. TITANS

## SERIES HISTORY

The New England Patriots and Tennessee Titans will play for the second time in the playoffs and for the 37th time overall. The teams last tangled on Oct. 5 at Gillette Stadium, with the Patriots winning a 38-30 shootout. The series between the teams dates back to the days of the Boston Patriots and Houston Oilers of the American Football League. The Patriots have an overall lead in the all-time series, holding a 19-16-1 advantage. The teams played twice each year from 1960-1969 in the AFL, and have played 15 times since the AFL-NFL merger in 1970. In those 15 post-merger games, the Patriots have a 9-6 record. The Patriots have had significant recent success against the Titans in Foxborough, coming out on the winning end six of the last seven times the Titans have traveled to New England. The other time the teams met in the playoffs, the Oilers spoiled the Patriots' first home playoff game in club history with a 31-14 win in the 1978 Divisional Round.



### PATRIOTS 19, HOUSTON/TENNESSEE 16 (1 tie)

1960-Houston 24, at Boston 10	-14	BU Field
at Houston 37, Boston 21	-16	Jeppesen Stadium
1961-at Boston 31, Houston 31	tie	BU Field
at Houston 27, Boston 15	-12	Jeppesen Stadium
1962-at Boston 34, Houston 21	+13	BU Field
at Houston 21, Boston 17	-4	Jeppesen Stadium
1963-at Boston 45, Houston 3	+42	Fenway Park
Boston 46, at Houston 28	+18	Jeppesen Stadium
1964-at Boston 25, Houston 24	+1	Fenway Park
Boston 34, at Houston 17	+17	Jeppesen Stadium
1965-at Houston 31, Boston 10	-21	Rice Stadium
at Boston 42, Houston 14	+28	Fenway Park
1966-at Boston 27, Houston 21	+6	Fenway Park
Boston 38, at Houston 14	+24	Rice Stadium
1967-at Boston 18, Houston 7	+11	Fenway Park
at Houston 27, Boston 6	-21	Rice Stadium
1968-Houston 16, at Boston 0	-16	Fenway Park
at Houston 45, Boston 17	-28	Houston Astrodome
1969-at Boston 24, Houston 0	+24	B.C. Alumni Stadium
at Houston 27, Boston 23	-4	Houston Astrodome
1971-at NE 28, Houston 20	+8	Schaefer Stadium
1973-NE 32, at Houston 0	+32	Houston Astrodome
1975-Houston 7, at NE 0	-7	Schaefer Stadium
1978-Houston 26, at NE 23	-3	Schaefer Stadium
*Houston 31, at NE 14	-17	Schaefer Stadium
1980-at Houston 38, NE 34	-4	Houston Astrodome
1981-at NE 38, Houston 10	+28	Schaefer Stadium
1982-at NE 29, Houston 21	+8	Schaefer Stadium
1987-NE 21, at Houston 7	+14	Houston Astrodome
1988-at Houston 31, NE 6	-25	Houston Astrodome
1989-at NE 23, Houston 13	+10	Foxboro Stadium
1991-at NE 24, Houston 20	+4	Foxboro Stadium
1993-Houston 28, at NE 14	-14	Foxboro Stadium
1998-at NE 27, Tennessee 16	+11	Foxboro Stadium
2002-at Tennessee 24, NE 7	-17	The Coliseum
2003-at NE 38, Tennessee 30	+8	Gillette Stadium

\*AFC Divisional Playoff

## SERIES TRENDS

Overall Record in Series	19 wins, 16 losses, 1 tie
Record in Postseason	0 wins, 1 loss
Total Points	Patriots 841, Titans/Oilers 757
Record in New England	14 wins, 6 losses, 1 tie
Record in Houston	5 wins, 9 losses
Record in Tennessee	0 wins, 1 loss

## TALE OF THE TAPE

2003 Regular Season	New England	Tennessee
Record	14-2	12-4
Divisional Standings	1st	2nd
Total Yards Gained	5,039	5,501
Total Offense (Rank)	314.9 (17)	343.8 (8)
Rush Offense	100.4 (27)	101.4 (26)
Pass Offense	214.5 (9)	242.4 (5)
Points Per Game	21.8	27.2
Total Yards Allowed	4,666	4,901
Total Defense	291.6 (7)	306.3 (12)
Rush Defense	89.6 (4)	80.9 (1)
Pass Defense	202.0 (15)	225.4 (30)
Points Allowed/Game	14.9	20.3
Possession Avg.	30:50	32:52
Sacks Allowed/Yards Lost	32/219	25/153
Sacks Made/Yards	41/253	38/223
Interceptions By	29	21
Penalties Against/Yards	111/998	110/887
Punts/Avg.	88/37.1	71/43.9
Takeaway/Giveaway Ratio	+17	+13

## SERIES SUPERLATIVES

Below is a list of the top individual performances in the series between the Patriots and Oilers/Titans.

### Rushing:

Patriots: Tony Collins, 32-161 – 5.0 avg. – 0 td (11/28/82)  
Titans: Hoyle Granger, 25-139 – 5.7 avg. – 0 td (12/14/69)

### Passing

Patriots: Steve Grogan, 39-25-374-3 tds – 2 ints (11/10/80)  
Titans: Jackey Lee, 41-27-457-2 tds – 2 ints (12/18/77)

### Receiving:

Patriots: Art Graham, 8-167 – 1 td (11/6/64)  
Titans: Charles Hennigan, 13-232 – 1 td (10/13/61)

## SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY

The Patriots have an all-time record of 63-41-1 (.605) against the teams that make up the AFC South. It is the only division in the NFL where the Patriots own a winning record against all of the teams they have played. New England owns winning marks against Tennessee (19-16-1), Indianapolis (39-24), Houston (1-0) and Jacksonville (4-1). In 2003, the Patriots were a perfect 4-0 against the AFC South, beating Tennessee on Oct. 5 (38-30), Houston on Nov. 23 (23-20 ot), Indianapolis on Nov. 30 (38-34) and Jacksonville on Dec. 14 (27-13).

## HOME SWEET HOME

The Patriots will host their sixth home playoff game in club history this week against the Titans. It will be their second home playoff game against the Titans franchise. The two teams squared off in New England's first home playoff game on Dec. 31, 1978, when the Titans were known as the Houston Oilers. Since that game, a 31-14 Houston win, the Patriots have won four consecutive home playoff contests. This week's game will mark New England's fifth home playoff game since the 1996 season. Including this week's game, five of the franchise's six home playoff games have taken place since Robert Kraft purchased the team 10 years ago.

## PATRIOTS AT HOME IN THE PLAYOFFS (4-1)

Date	Round	Opponent	W/L	Score
01/19/02	AFC Divisional	Oakland	W	16-13 ot
12/28/97	AFC Wild Card	Miami	W	17-3
01/12/97	AFC Championship	Jacksonville	W	20-6
01/05/97	AFC Divisional	Pittsburgh	W	28-3
12/31/78	AFC Divisional	Houston	L	14-31



# THIS WEEK: PATRIOTS VS. TITANS

## CONNECTIONS

- Patriots Head Coach **Bill Belichick** was born on April 16, 1952, in Nashville, Tenn.
- When he was Head Coach of the Cleveland Browns, Belichick hired **Jim Schwartz** in the scouting department. Currently, Schwartz is the Defensive Coordinator for the Tennessee Titans.
- Patriots outside linebackers coach **Rob Ryan** coached at Tennessee State for five years: running backs, 1989-91; linebackers, 1992; defensive line, 1993.
- Patriots quarterback **Tom Brady** ran for his first career touchdown as he called his own number on an audible and got the Patriots on the scoreboard with a 10-yard quarterback sneak up the middle at Tennessee. (12/16/02)
- Patriots quarterback **Rohan Davey** completed his first professional pass, a three-yard strike to **Daniel Graham**, on the final play of the game against Tennessee. (12/16/02)
- Patriots running back **Kevin Faulk** was selected by the Patriots in the second round of the 1999 NFL draft (46th overall). The pick was acquired in a trade with the Tennessee Titans in exchange for the Patriots second-round pick (52nd overall-John Thornton) and fourth-round pick (117th overall-Donald Mitchell).
- Patriots defensive end **Anthony Pleasant** played his collegiate career at Tennessee State.
- While playing for the Buffalo Bills, Patriots running back **Antowain Smith** carried the load in the Wild Card contest against the Titans with 79 yards on 14 carries and two touchdowns, despite playing with a turf toe injury. In the game he picked up his first two touchdowns in postseason play on runs of four and one yards, becoming just the fourth Bill to score multiple touchdowns in a postseason game. (1/8/00)
- Titans head coach **Jeff Fisher** was on Chicago's injured reserve list in 1985 and was assisting Assistant Coach Buddy Ryan as an "unofficial" coach when the Bears beat the Patriots in Super Bowl XX.
- Titans wide receivers coach **Steve Walters** began his NFL coaching career with the Patriots in 1992, serving as defensive backs coach for three seasons. After coaching with the Patriots, Walters spent one season coaching at the University of Alabama and 11 seasons coaching for the New Orleans Saints, before returning for two seasons (1997-98) as a wide receivers coach for New England.
- Patriots tackle **Tom Ashworth** and tight end **Daniel Graham** were two years ahead of Titans running back **Chris Brown** at Colorado. Patriots tight end **Christian Fauria** and linebacker **Ted Johnson** also played at Colorado.
- Patriots linebacker **Mike Vrabel** played one year behind Titans running back **Eddie George** at Ohio State. Titans' rookie safety **Donnie Nickey** also played his collegiate career at OSU.
- Titans tackle **Brad Hopkins** and running back **Robert Holcombe** were separated by five years at their alma mater, Illinois. Holcombe and Patriots rookie cornerback **Eugene Wilson** were also separated by five years at Illinois.

## PASSING PERFORMANCES

Tom Brady and Steve McNair will be squaring off for the third time in their careers, with Brady and the Patriots holding a 2-1 edge. McNair's Titans took a 24-7 decision from Brady's Patriots in Week 15 of 2002, but Brady's Patriots got revenge with a 38-30 win this season. McNair has run for four touchdowns in his last two games against the Patriots, with two scores in each of his past two games against the Patriots. Passing statistics for the two quarterbacks are listed below.

### Tom Brady vs. Tennessee Titans (1-1)

Date	A	C	Yd	%	TD	I	Rating	W/L	Score
12/16/02	29	14	134	.483	0	1	47.2	L	7-24
10/05/03	31	17	219	.548	1	0	88.0	W	38-30
<b>Totals</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>.516</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>68.2</b>	<b>1-1</b>	

### Steve McNair vs. New England (1-2)

Date	A	C	Yd	%	TD	I	Rating	W/L	Score
09/20/98	38	28	202	.737	1	2	72.5	L	16-27
12/16/02	24	11	136	.458	0	1	46.5	W	24-7
10/05/03	45	23	360	.511	0	1	68.8	L	30-38
<b>Totals</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>698</b>	<b>.579</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>65.1</b>	<b>1-2</b>	

## PATRIOTS – TITANS QUICK HITS

- The Patriots have defeated the Titans six out of the last seven times they have met in Foxborough.
- Titans Head Coach Jeff Fisher is 1-2 against the Patriots.
- Patriots Head Coach Bill Belichick is 5-7 against the Titans/Oilers (4-6 as head coach of the Cleveland Browns).
- Troy Brown is the only current Patriot to play for New England against the Houston Oilers (10/17/93).
- The Houston Oilers dealt the Patriots their only home playoff loss in team history, coming away with a 31-14 win in an AFC Divisional game at Schaefer Stadium (12/31/78).
- The Patriots and Titans will play for the third time in a 13-month span, a rarity among non-division opponents. New England traveled to Tennessee on Dec. 16, 2002, dropping a 24-7 decision at The Coliseum. The Titans traveled to Foxborough on Oct. 5, 2003.
- The Titans are tied with the Denver Broncos as the Patriots' most familiar recent non-division foe. New England has played each team in each of the past two regular seasons.
- This week's game will be the Patriots' 12th playoff game against an old American Football League franchise. New England is 6-5 in their previous 11 games against AFL teams.
- The Patriots own an all-time mark of 4-4 in the Divisional Playoff round.
- The Titans are 4-5 all-time in the Divisional Playoff Round.

## PATRIOTS MEDIA WEBSITE

<http://media.patriots.com>

In 2003, the Patriots launched a media-only website to further assist local and national media in covering the team. The site is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and contains all of the Patriots' up-to-date press releases, statistics, transcripts and much more. Media members can also submit credential requests and make other inquiries through the site. All of New England's media materials from the past two seasons are available in the site's archives.



Visit <http://media.patriots.com> to register for access.



# OCTOBER 5, 2003: PATRIOTS 38, TITANS

## PATRIOTS 38, TITANS 30

October 5, 2003 ★ Gillette Stadium (Att: 68,436)

	1	2	3	4	Final
Tennessee Titans	6	7	3	14	— 30
New England Patriots	7	0	14	17	— 38

The Patriots scored 31 second-half points and rode their running game to a 38-30 win in a shootout against the Tennessee Titans. New England ran for 161 yards and three rushing touchdowns, including two by Michael Cloud, who was playing in his first game as a Patriot. Tom Brady and Troy Brown connected for a 58-yard scoring strike in the first quarter to get the ball rolling for the New England offense. On the defensive side of the ball, New England held Tennessee running back Eddie George to just 2.3 yards per carry and Ty Law returned a timely interception 65 yards for a touchdown in the fourth quarter to seal the win. The teams jostled back and forth for most of the game, with Tennessee taking a 27-24 lead with 4:40 left in the game. But New England scored touchdowns on a 15-yard run by Cloud and on Law's interception to take the win.

## CARRYING THE LOAD

Patriots rushers averaged 6.0 yards per carry against the Titans, rushing for 161 yards on 27 carries, including two one-yard touchdown runs. It was New England's most productive rushing output since it averaged 6.5 yards per carry (130 yards on 20 carries) against the New York Jets on Dec. 27, 1998.

## TOUCHDOWN TY

Ty Law picked off a Steve McNair pass and returned it 65 yards for a touchdown in the fourth quarter. It was the longest interception return of Law's career and his sixth career interception return for a touchdown. Law is the Patriots' all-time leader in interceptions returned for touchdowns. Tedy Bruschi ranks second on the list with four returns for touchdowns. The pick was the 30th of Law's career and moved him into sole possession of second place on the club's all-time interception list.

## BOMBS AWAY

Tom Brady and Troy Brown connected for a 58-yard touchdown bomb in the first quarter to give the Patriots a 7-6 lead. The completion was the third longest of the season for Brady and it was his second longest completion of the season to Brown (82-yard TD at Miami, 10/19/03). At the time, it was the longest passing play for the Patriots since David Patten threw a 60-yard touchdown bomb to Brown at Indianapolis (10/21/01). It was Brown's first touchdown catch of the 2003 season and his 21st career scoring grab.

## BRIGHT START FOR CLOUD

Running back Michael Cloud made his Patriots debut a memorable one by running for 73 yards on seven carries, including a pair of fourth-quarter touchdowns that put the Patriots in the lead. Cloud began with a 1-yard touchdown in the third quarter to put the Patriots ahead, 21-16. Cloud also tore off a 42-yard run early in the fourth quarter, the longest scamper of his career and the longest for the Patriots since Kevin Faulk broke off a 45-yard run at Buffalo (11/03/02). Cloud capped off his afternoon with his second touchdown of the day, a 15-yard run that put the Patriots ahead, 31-27. Cloud became the first Patriot to score a touchdown in his debut with the team since Deion Branch and Christian Fauria both scored touchdowns in the 2002 season opener against Pittsburgh. The touchdowns were the fifth and sixth rushing touchdowns of Cloud's career and his first since he ran in a 4-yard score for Kansas City at Denver (12/15/02).

## QUICK HITS

- Anthony Pleasant dropped Steve McNair for a 12-yard loss with a sack in the first quarter. It was the 58th sack of Pleasant's career and his first tackle of the season. The 12-yard loss was the greatest loss of yardage on a Patriots sack in 12 games, dating back to when Willie McGinest and Ted Johnson teamed up to tackle Buffalo's Drew Bledsoe for a 14-yard loss on Nov. 3, 2002.
- Steve McNair threw for 360 yards in the losing effort. The Patriots improved to 15-2 since 1996 when an opposing quarterback throws for 300 yards or more. McNair was the first quarterback to pass for more than 300 yards against the Patriots since Drew Bledsoe (328) on Dec. 8, 2002.
- The Patriots put up 161 yards rushing against a Tennessee defense which ranked third in the NFL and had given up just 63.3 yards rushing per game entering the game.
- The 161 yards rushing were the most since the Patriots racked up 163 at the New York Jets in a 44-7 win on Sept. 15, 2002.
- Michael Cloud's two rushing touchdowns were the most for the Patriots since Antowain Smith ran for two against Cleveland at Foxboro Stadium on Dec. 9, 2001.
- Tom Brady completed passes of more than 10 yards to six different receivers.

## EARLY RETURNS LOOK PROMISING

Rookie Bethel Johnson tore off two long kickoff returns, including a 71-yard return to the Tennessee 30-yard line that set up Michael Cloud's go-ahead touchdown in the fourth quarter. The return was the second of five kickoff returns of 50 yards or more for Johnson in 2003, including a 92-yard return for a touchdown against Indianapolis (11/30/03). At the time, it was the longest kick return for the Patriots since Kevin Faulk returned a kickoff 87 yards for a touchdown against the New York Jets on Dec. 22, 2002. Johnson also returned a kickoff 50 yards to the Tennessee 43-yard line as the Patriots took possession after Tennessee's game-opening field goal.

## ADAM VINATIERI

Adam Vinatieri uncharacteristically missed a 34-yard field goal (wide left) in the first quarter, then pushed a 39-yard try wide right in the second quarter before rebounding by hitting a 48-yarder to put the Patriots ahead 24-19 in the fourth quarter. The first miss broke Vinatieri's string of 33 straight successful field goals of 40 yards or less. The last time the Patriots kicker had missed a field goal of 40 yards or less was on Dec. 9, 2001, when he missed a 39-yarder against Cleveland at Foxboro Stadium. Vinatieri's second miss was his third in a row after nailing his first five tries of the season. Vinatieri missed just three field goals (27-30, 90.0 percent) in 2002. It was the third time in his career Vinatieri has missed three in a row and the first time since he missed three over a two-game span from Oct. 3-10, 1999.

## GROUND GAME SUCCESS

The Patriots were successful in the running game on both sides of the ball against the Titans. Patriots running back Antowain Smith had his most productive game of the season to date, running 16 times for 80 yards and a touchdown. Smith scored his first touchdown of the season on a 1-yard run in the third quarter, giving the Patriots a 14-13 lead. Michael Cloud ran for two touchdowns in his first game in a New England uniform. Heading into the game, the Titans ranked third in the NFL in run defense, allowing just 63.3 yards per game. On the defensive side of the ball, the Patriots had success against the Tennessee running game, allowing the Titans just 2.6 yards per carry.



# LAST GAME: PATRIOTS 31, BILLS 0

## PATRIOTS 31, BILLS 0

December 27, 2003 ★ Gillette Stadium (Att: 68,436)

	1	2	3	4	Final
<b>Buffalo Bills</b>	0	0	0	0	— 0
<b>New England Patriots</b>	14	14	0	3	— 31

New England capped off the most successful regular-season in franchise history with its franchise-record third shutout of the season, a 31-0 blanking of the Buffalo Bills at Gillette Stadium. The Patriots jumped out to a 21-0 lead by the first minute of the second quarter and never looked back, securing the top seed in the AFC. Patriots signal caller Tom Brady tied his career high with four touchdown passes, all coming in the first half. The New England defense was stellar once again, never allowing the Bills offense to find a rhythm. By halftime, Brady had thrown touchdown passes to four different receivers, with David Givens' sixth touchdown grab of the campaign capping off a 28-0 lead with 3:55 left before halftime. New England's defense forced four Buffalo turnovers on the afternoon, snaring a pair of interceptions and recovering two Bills fumbles. Backup linebacker Larry Izzo sealed the shutout with an interception in the end zone with 13 seconds left in the game.

## TURNING OVER WINS

The Patriots forced the Bills to turn the ball over four times, giving New England 41 takeaways this season. It's the greatest number of takeaways for the Patriots since 1987 (42). Mike Vrabel notched a first-quarter interception, then Tedy Bruschi sacked Drew Bledsoe and forced him to fumble in the fourth quarter and recovered the loose ball. Matt Chatham then recovered a Travis Henry fumble on the Patriots' 10-yard line to stop a deep Buffalo drive in the fourth quarter, before Larry Izzo notched his first career pick in the end zone to snuff out Buffalo's final scoring attempt. New England's first two turnovers led to points, with Vrabel's interception leading to a Tom Brady-to-Bethel Johnson touchdown that made the score 14-0. Bruschi's forced fumble led to an Adam Vinatieri field goal that made the score 31-0.

## PICK PARTY

The Patriots intercepted two passes, finishing the season with 29 interceptions, ranking second on the team's all-time list. The 2003 Patriots tied the 1963 team with 29 picks, two behind the franchise record set in 1964. Mike Vrabel ended Buffalo's first possession of the game with his second interception of the season, setting up New England's second touchdown to make the score 14-0. Larry Izzo then ended the game with a pick in the end zone to preserve New England's third shutout of the season. New England recorded at least one interception in each of its eight home games this season and recorded at least one pick in 15 of their 16 regular-season games. The Patriots have an NFL-leading 29 interceptions, the most for a Patriots team since they had 31 in 1964.

### Most interceptions in franchise history

31: 1964; **29: 2003**; 29: 1963; 25: 1962, 1960; 24: 1998, 1980, 1974.

## RECEIVING ACCOLADES

Four different Patriots receivers caught touchdowns in the first half. Daniel Graham grabbed his fourth touchdown of the season on a 1-yard grab in the back of the end zone to make the score 7-0. Bethel Johnson continued the charge with a 9-yard touchdown grab for the second touchdown of his career, making the score 14-0 in the first quarter. Troy Brown grabbed his fourth touchdown of the season and the 24th score of his career to make the score 21-0 with 14:15 left in the second quarter. David Givens made the score 28-0 on his team-leading sixth touchdown of the year with 4:01 left before halftime.

## QUICK STRIKE

The Patriots scored a touchdown on their opening possession of the game for the third consecutive week. New England took the opening kickoff and marched 62 yards on nine plays, culminating in a 1-yard touchdown pass from Tom Brady to Daniel Graham to give the Patriots a 7-0 lead. New England also scored a touchdown on its first possession last week against the New York Jets and two weeks ago against Jacksonville. Prior to the Jacksonville game on Dec. 14, the Patriots had not scored on their opening drive since Nov. 24, 2002, against Minnesota at Gillette Stadium.

## STARTING STRONG

The Patriots scored 14 points in the first quarter. It was the most first-quarter points for New England since it scored 17 first-quarter points the last time Buffalo visited Gillette Stadium, on Dec. 8, 2002. The Patriots shut the Bills out in the first quarter, marking the seventh time this season the Patriots have shut out their opponent in the opening stanza.

## TOMMY TOUCHDOWNS

Tom Brady threw for three touchdowns in the first 15:45 of the game and four touchdowns in the first half. It is the most productive start to a game in Brady's career, netting a 21-0 lead by the opening minute of the second quarter. Brady threw his fourth touchdown of the afternoon to David Givens with 3:55 left before halftime to set a season-high and tie his career high with four touchdowns. It is the third time in his career Brady has thrown for four touchdowns and the first time since Sept. 22, 2002, against Kansas City. It is the 11th time in Brady's career that he has thrown for three or more touchdowns, and the Patriots are 11-0 in those games.

## RECORD SUCCESS

### The Patriots are...

- 25-4 in games played after Nov. 1 since 2001
- 14-3 in their last 17 games against the AFC East
- 23-2 since the beginning of 2001 when maintaining a positive turnover ratio
- 77-51 in the regular season since 1996, the fourth-best record in the NFL
- 17-3 in their last 20 home games

### New England has...

- Won 27 consecutive games when leading after three quarters.
- Won 22 consecutive games when leading at halftime.
- Won nine consecutive home games.

## HOME FIELD DEFENSE

The Patriots defense did not allow the Bills to score, marking their third shutout of the season. It is the first time in team history the Patriots have recorded three shutouts in a season. The Patriots had two shutouts in both 1982 and 1983. In their last six home games, the Patriots defense has allowed a total of 22 points at home, an average of 3.7 points per game. Included in the six-game span is a pair of 12-0 shutouts against Dallas (11/16) and Miami (12/07). The Patriots did not allow a touchdown in a span of four consecutive home games from Oct. 12 through Dec. 7, becoming the first team to accomplish that feat since the 1938 New York Giants.

### Home Field Defense

Date	Team	Pts allowed
10/12	NYG	6
10/26	CLE	3
11/16	DAL	0
12/07	MIA	0
12/14	JAX	13
12/27	BUF	0
<b>Six-Game Total</b>		<b>22</b>