

New England Patriots Preview and 2010 NFL Predictions



by Matt
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Can you feel it? Are you getting excited yet? It's that time of the year again. The time almost all of us wait for every year; the 2010 NFL Season! That means a new season for the New England Patriots, and like every other season in the past 10 years, we have something to look forward to. How fortunate we are to have an organization that values winning and usually makes the right moves in the off-season to make sure that that happens.

I'll jump right into my preview for the 2010 New England Patriots with the bad news. I know, I know... Debbie Downer over

here starting out with the negatives. But the truth is there are some things to worry about. The most obvious concern for the upcoming season is the uncertainty of the defense. Early in the preseason the team lost defensive lineman Ty Warren, who was the anchor of the defensive line last year. For all intents and purposes, Warren has been replaced on the line by Mike Wright. This is the same Mike Wright who's been battling injuries his whole career and has never been able to reach his full potential.

Moving on to the linebacker corps, the Patriots have Tully Banta-Cain and Derrick Burgess on the outside and Jerod Mayo and Gary Guyton on the inside, protecting the middle of the field. This is one part of the defense that does not concern me...talk about speed in the middle of the field!

My next concern with the defense is the secondary. Hard hitting? Yes, but will they provide great coverage? I'm not so sure. Currently the Patriots secondary looks like this: Leigh Bodden and Darius Butler at cornerback, with Brandon Meriweather and Brandon McGowan at strong and free safety, respectively. I just don't see this group becoming a lockdown secondary. I think New England can hit with the best of them, but the question is whether or not they will be able to contain the big plays. We will have to take a wait-and-see approach with the Patriots defense, because with this many questions, I truly believe we sit right in the middle of the pack as far as NFL defenses go.

The most overlooked issue for the 2010 Patriots is their schedule. In a word, it's brutal. Let's take a quick look:

The first four weeks will give the Pats a tough start, with a talented, division-winning team in the Cincinnati Bengals coming to Foxboro for the home opener. The next week doesn't get any easier, with a game at the New Meadowlands, against the hard-hitting Jets. In week 4 they play the Miami Dolphins, a very talented team that will likely fly under the radar this year and possibly snag the division or a wild card

spot.

The next seven weeks will see the Patriots schedule become even more difficult. In week 5, the Patriots play a Baltimore Ravens team that constantly gives them fits, and in week 6 they play one of the most talented teams in the NFL, the San Diego Chargers. Week 7 brings the Brett Favre and the Vikings to New England. In week 10, the Pats head to Pittsburgh, where they will likely encounter hostile and very awful playing conditions. Week 11 brings the annual showdown with Peyton Manning and the Colts, with this year's meeting taking place at Gillette.

Weeks 12-17 will also present many challenges to 2010 version of the New England. However, we have something that no other teams have: three-time Super Bowl Champion, Super Bowl MVP and regular season MVP, Tom Brady. Two years removed from his devastating knee injury, Mr. Brady comes back this season healthy and ready to go. He is armed with many weapons, including Wes Welker in the slot, Randy Moss flying down the sideline and a rejuvenated Laurence Maroney/Sammy Morris tandem in the backfield. This team could easily end up as one of the top offensive teams of all time (falling short of their 2007 campaign, which was truly epic). With one of the deepest running attacks in the league, and a suddenly deep tight end corps (remember the names Hernandez and Gronkowski, one of those two will emerge as the tight end of the future), the Patriots will look to a sound running game to set up the play action bombs to Randy Moss and quick slants to Wes Welker (crossing the fingers for a healthy season).

In closing, the Pats will contend in a very challenging AFC East division, arguably the toughest and most underrated in the NFL this year. So where do I think they'll finish? You're going to have to read below for my 2010-2011 NFL Predictions (feel free to leave your comments, feedback and complaints):

American Football Conference

East Division

Philadelphia Eagles	9	7																		
New York Giants	8	8																		
West Division																				
	W	L																		
Y San Francisco 49ers	11	5																		
Seattle Seahawks	8	8																		
Arizona Cardinals	6	10																		
St. Louis Rams	3	13																		
North Division																				
	W	L																		
Z Green Bay Packers	12	4																		
X Minnesota Vikings	10	6																		
Chicago Bears	7	9																		
Detroit Lions	6	10																		
South Division																				
	W	L																		
Y New Orleans Saints	11	5																		
Atlanta Falcons	9	7																		
Carolina Panthers	7	9																		
Tampa Bay Buccaneers	4	12																		

X – Clinched Playoff Spot, Y – Clinched Division, Z – Clinched Conference

AFC Playoff Bracket

▪ *Note: Teams will be re-seeded after each round.*

	Wild Card Weekend		Divisional Weekend		AFC Championship
1	Ravens				

Philadelphia	1	1	0	.500	1-0-0	0-1-0	0-0-0	0-0-0	37	49	-12	Lost 1
Washington	1	1	0	.500	1-1-0	0-0-0	0-0-0	0-0-0	45	40	+5	Lost 1
NY Giants	1	1	0	.500	0-1-0	1-0-0	0-0-0	0-0-0	48	40	+8	Lost 1
NFC NORTH	W	L	T	PCT	HOME	ROAD	DIV	CONF	PF	PA	DIFF	STRK
Green Bay	1	1	0	.500	0-1-0	1-0-0	0-0-0	1-0-0	51	51	0	Won 1
Minnesota	1	1	0	.500	0-0-0	1-1-0	0-0-0	1-1-0	38	22	+16	Lost 1
Detroit	1	1	0	.500	0-0-0	1-1-0	0-0-0	0-0-0	32	43	-11	Won 1
Chicago	0	2	0	.000	0-1-0	0-1-0	0-0-0	0-0-0	27	57	-30	Lost 2
NFC SOUTH	W	L	T	PCT	HOME	ROAD	DIV	CONF	PF	PA	DIFF	STRK
Tampa Bay	1	1	0	.500	1-0-0	0-1-0	0-0-0	0-0-0	27	23	+4	Won 1
New Orleans	1	1	0	.500	1-0-0	0-1-0	0-0-0	0-0-0	62	47	+15	Won 1
Atlanta	1	1	0	.500	1-1-0	0-0-0	0-0-0	0-0-0	30	38	-8	Lost 1
Carolina	0	2	0	.000	0-1-0	0-1-0	0-0-0	0-0-0	15	26	-11	Lost 2
NFC WEST	W	L	T	PCT	HOME	ROAD	DIV	CONF	PF	PA	DIFF	STRK
San Francisco	2	0	0	1.000	1-0-0	1-0-0	0-0-0	1-0-0	52	27	+25	Won 2
St. Louis	1	1	0	.500	0-1-0	1-0-0	0-0-0	0-1-0	26	45	-19	Won 1
Arizona	1	1	0	.500	1-0-0	0-1-0	0-0-0	0-0-0	29	40	-11	Lost 1
Seattle	1	1	0	.500	1-1-0	0-0-0	0-0-0	0-1-0	44	45	-1	Lost 1

American Football Conference												
AFC EAST	W	L	T	PCT	HOME	ROAD	DIV	CONF	PF	PA	DIFF	STRK
Miami	2	0	0	1.000	1-0-0	1-0-0	0-0-0	1-0-0	37	33	+4	Won 2
New England	2	0	0	1.000	1-0-0	1-0-0	0-0-0	0-0-0	55	34	+21	Won 2
Buffalo	1	1	0	.500	1-0-0	0-1-0	0-0-0	1-0-0	51	63	-12	Won 1
NY Jets	1	1	0	.500	0-1-0	1-0-0	0-0-0	0-0-0	25	34	-9	Won 1
AFC NORTH	W	L	T	PCT	HOME	ROAD	DIV	CONF	PF	PA	DIFF	STRK
Baltimore	2	0	0	1.000	1-0-0	1-0-0	0-0-0	0-0-0	40	15	+25	Won 2
Pittsburgh	2	0	0	1.000	1-0-0	1-0-0	0-0-0	0-0-0	47	24	+23	Won 2
Cincinnati	2	1	0	.667	2-1-0	0-0-0	0-0-0	1-0-0	62	49	+13	Won 2
Cleveland	1	1	0	.500	0-1-0	1-0-0	0-0-0	0-0-0	44	43	+1	Lost 1
AFC SOUTH	W	L	T	PCT	HOME	ROAD	DIV	CONF	PF	PA	DIFF	STRK
Tennessee	1	1	0	.500	1-0-0	0-1-0	0-0-0	0-0-0	42	30	+12	Won 1
Jacksonville	0	2	0	.000	0-1-0	0-1-0	0-0-0	0-1-0	53	55	-2	Lost 2
Houston	0	2	0	.000	0-0-0	0-2-0	0-0-0	0-0-0	36	57	-21	Lost 2
Indianapolis	0	2	0	.000	0-1-0	0-1-0	0-0-0	0-1-0	38	71	-33	Lost 2
AFC WEST	W	L	T	PCT	HOME	ROAD	DIV	CONF	PF	PA	DIFF	STRK
Oakland	2	0	0	1.000	0-0-0	2-0-0	0-0-0	0-0-0	49	26	+23	Won 2
San Diego	1	1	0	.500	1-1-0	0-0-0	0-0-0	0-0-0	39	26	+13	Lost 1

Kansas City	0	2	0	.000	0-0-0	0-2-0	0-0-0	0-0-0	23	40	-17	Lost 2
Denver	0	2	0	.000	0-1-0	0-1-0	0-0-0	0-1-0	44	58	-14	Lost 2

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