

# COORDINATING SEPARATES

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*Josh Boyer (right) didn't connect with the players and he was too deferential to Bill Belichick.*

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it came to influencing the game plan.

Belichick has said he will take a larger role on defense this year and has not named a defensive coordinator to replace Pees (there is not a named coordinator on offense either), meaning that could continue for coaches on that side of the ball.

Being a small ship without a sure captain in '09 may also have contributed to the secondary's at times head-shaking behavior.

While they undoubtedly appeared to be a close-knit group, working out and getting treatment together as well as spending time together outside of the facilities, they also overcelebrated the smallest on-field achievements.

And in at least one case, they made what should have been a closed-door moment a more public one.

After New England's November win over the Jets, in a media-filled locker room, McGowan reportedly shouted at offensive tackle Mark LeVoi: "Hey, what the (expletive) is wrong with you, LeVoi?" Butler chimed in as well.

LeVoi had leveled New York corner Donald Strickland with a block, and apparently McGowan thought it was too violent and would mark New England's defensive backs as targets for other opposing teams.

The tackle couldn't understand why McGowan was so upset. But even if there was legitimate cause for concern on McGowan's part, there was a better time to address it than in a postgame locker room crowded with cameras and microphones.

Maybe it was the lack of an older veteran like Harrison to keep that kind

of thing from happening, but maybe it was a free-for-all attitude that came from having a coach like Boyer who did not exert himself confidently.

When Belichick began his coaching career, he was younger than many of the players he was mentoring and lacked the big college playing pedigree most of them had. But he knew he had to speak and act with authority in order to gain their respect, which Boyer has clearly struggled with.

So the marriage of depth and talent with a firm coach in Brown may be just the thing the New England secondary needs to excel. ■

*Shalise Manza Young is entering her fifth season covering the Patriots, her first for the Boston Globe after over 15 years with the Providence Journal. A New England native, she lives outside Boston with her husband, two children and one very resilient fish.*