



# AGAINST THE CLOCK

The demise of past dynasties suggests time isn't on Belichick and Brady's side... but would you doubt them?

by Dave D'Onofrio

**T**he convenience of the comparison dates nearly three decades now, to that January afternoon in 1982 when Tom Brady squeezed between his parents in their seats at Candlestick Park, and cried when his hero made a memory that football still remembers by a simple phrase some 28 years later. A boy of not even four and a half, he was there when Dwight Clark made “The Catch,” winning the NFC Championship Game on a desperate connection from Joe Montana, the superstar who Brady came to idolize growing up a 49ers fan, and to whom Brady’s own career in quarterbacking has been most often paralleled.

Both were overlooked through the early rounds of the NFL Draft, but each took over a team that had lost at least ten games the previous year and won a Super Bowl in his first full season as a starter. Both proved capable of the gaudy numbers that get rewarded with Pro Bowl trips, but each built his reputation based more on winning than on wowing. Both were always efficient, effective, and reliable in their execution, but each had a calming coolness that made him even better with the game on the line.

But if the Patriots are to keep winning at the rate New England’s fans have come to expect over the last decade—and these days that means

championships—Brady will need to continue the comparison one step further. To a level of lucrative longevity that no other has managed to match.

With his titles coming in Super Bowls XVI, XIX, XXIII, and XXIV, Montana stands as the only quarterback of the Super Bowl Era to be crowned again at least seven seasons after first hoisting football’s holy grail. In a span of nine seasons he won four rings, including three in an eight-year stretch with Bill Walsh on the San Francisco sidelines that also set a record in terms of title span for a coach and quarterback combination.

And that’s where history becomes concerning for the Patriots. When