

Daily

# Sports

## Hey Dave: What's next in Barcelona's history?

by David Sandoval

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If you read my previous column about Ansu Fati, you might remember comments I made about other young prospects being sold off without being given a chance in the senior team. I also discussed the club in its limbo stage of history because of its board. Well, fans of the Catalonian club no longer have to worry about that, because on Oct. 27, the parasite that is Josep Maria Bartomeu announced his resignation from the club. The rest of the Board of Directors also resigned.

When this news broke, Culers had nearly the same level of rejoice as Americans when they found out SEAL Team Six killed Osama bin Laden. Okay, maybe not to that extreme, but you should get the sense of how great this news was for fans.

This was a long time coming. Hell, Bartomeu even admitted that after the 8-2 defeat to Bayern Munich in the Champions League quarterfinal, the easiest thing to do was to resign then and there. But instead, he wanted to wait. The initial plan was to wait until the middle of November for a fan's vote of confidence; which, let's be real here: No sane fan would vote for him to stay. Instead, he decided to take action and leave a club he greatly destroyed during his six-year tenure. Following his resignation, many wondered what chapter in Barcelona's 120-year history would unfold next. Quite frankly,



Barcelona's Lionel Messi gestures after missing a chance during the Spanish La Liga soccer match between Alaves and Barcelona. The match ended in a 1-1 draw. PHOTO BY ALVARO BARRENTOS, AP

I see nothing but great hope for the future of the club.

Like I said, Bartomeu left behind a historic club in a completely different position than when he joined the Blaugrana in 2014, from embarrassing Champions League campaigns three years in a row to extremely questionable transfers both in and out of the club and the massive decline in the club's La Masia, where many of Barcelona's players in the past came from.

So, what should fans expect in the near future? Obviously the appointment of a new president, but there are two major candidates that could be appointed: Joan Laporta, former club president, and Victor Font, who seems to be heavily favored for the position. While Laporta brought Barcelona a golden era and had

La Masia boom under him, I strongly believe Font will do the same, but go even further, in a good way. Font is behind the 'Si al futur' project, where he and other club members will seek to bring the club back to its glory days. Font also wants to bring back Pep Guardiola, who was one of, if not the most, successful coaches in Barcelona's history.

But one question still remains: Will Messi still push for a transfer out of the club? After making clear public statements that he hated Bartomeu and the rest of the board, I think the chances of him staying gradually increased. I say this because how the outcome of this season, in both domestic and European competitions, could influence his decision. Given the club currently sit in 12th in La Liga, no one can truly be sure.

## Column: The Death of the Dynasty

by Dyland Haviland

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We all knew it was coming eventually. One day the Patriots' stranglehold on the NFL would have to come to an end, but no one could have predicted this. Going all the way back to the 2019 wild card round when Tom Brady took the field once again late in a close game, something Patriots fans had come to chalk up to nearly a guaranteed win, ended in a disastrous pick six to seal Tom Brady's exit from New England. Fast forward to Sunday night, with Cam Newton and the Patriots taking the field with a chance to win in Buffalo and keep their playoff hopes alive, only for Superman himself to fumble the game away on one of his trademark QB scrambles. The fans won't admit it, so I will do it for you. It's done, the greatest dynasty in sports is dead. So how did we get here?

### Plugging the Holes

Ever since the GOAT himself stepped onto the field for his first NFL snaps in 2001, the Patriots had complete dominance over the league. Six Super Bowl titles and nine appearances will earn you that recognition, and for 20 years, nobody doubted the Patriots. However, signs of cracks were always prevalent.

Bill Belichick gets deserved credit as the greatest coach of all time, but his track record



New England Patriots head coach Bill Belichick leaves the field after an NFL football game against the San Francisco 49ers, Sunday, Oct. 25, 2020, in Foxborough, Massachusetts. PHOTO BY CHARLES KRUPA, AP

as a general manager leaves much to be desired. Sure he made some huge moves, like the Randy Moss trade and drafting Rob Gronkowski, but for every good move he also delivers some questionable ones. In the 2020 draft, one that experts had predicted to be possibly the best wide receiver class in the history of football, Bill drafted no receivers, instead opting for relatively

unknown linebacker Kyle Dugger and some below average tight ends that have a combined one reception for eight yards and a fumble in 2020. You might be saying to yourself, "Dylan, that's one draft, plenty of good GM's have had a bad draft."

See PATRIOTS, p. 11

### WHAT TO KEEP AN EYE ON THIS WEEK



49ers

vs.

Packers

### Teams we're paying attention to



### Athletes we're paying attention to

A.J. Dillon

### INSTAGRAM OF THE DAY



@uconn  
Are you headed to the polls on #ElectionDay?

### TWEETS OF THE DAY



#### Swish Cultures

@swishcultures\_

Jalen Adams (@ja4hunnid) is going off in his first year in France. The Former Pelicans and UConn standout is averaging 22 points 3.4 assists 52 FG% 40 3FG% @Wasserman

#### Phill

@MeekPhill\_

Steve Cohen

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by Ashton Stansel

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anyone expected and put up a good performance against a team that they had no business even being close to. The fact that they lost in the end isn't a surprise, since most people viewed DAMWON as massive favorites and just taking a game is a good performance by Suning, especially considering the last several finals had been 3-0.

It is also important to note that, in this year of the coronavirus, this was a tournament that went off seemingly without a hitch. The finals even had fans; many less fans than in previous years, of course, but six months ago it seemed unlikely that Worlds would happen at all. Simply having the event felt like a win, but having a finals that is already set to become iconic in the fabric of the best series in history makes the pain of the rest of the year in this sport sting a little less. Riot Games deserves praise for their handling of Worlds this year.

The Grand Finals were a series that set both of these teams up for the future. DAMWON is also a relatively young lineup, with an average age just under 21, and they could potentially use this victory as the start of a legacy the League of Legends community hasn't seen since the days of T1's dominance. At the same time, performing this far ahead of expectations for Suning is a promising sign for their future. This is a team with two players under twenty in Huanfeng and Angel and Suning, perhaps most importantly, has all of their players signed through next year at least. Suning will probably be back with the same roster in a few months and they could absolutely dominate the LPL and face DAMWON again at the international events in 2021.

After two years of relatively poor play from Korean teams internationally, this was the first time a Korean team had made the finals since 2017. It was a refreshing change to be reminded of just how good a dominant Korean team can be at this game. It was especially refreshing on the heels of DAMWON's defeat at the hands of G2 in 2019, and as T1 missed Worlds after a disappointing summer.

Canyon, DAMWON's jungler, claimed MVP for the finals on the back of his impressive performance on Graves and Nidalee, ignoring his one very questionable Evelyn game in Game 2. Despite this, no one on DAMWON Gaming had a bad day, which is perhaps the biggest reason that even in the closest moments it felt like their series to lose. Suning, as good as they are, needed DAMWON to make more mistakes than they made.

This kind of loss is unfortunately the type of defeat that might haunt the young Suning roster. It shouldn't; they made it two rounds further than



# The Patriots are finally, finally on the way down

PATRIOTS, cont. from p. 12

To that I say you are right, so let's look at every draft since 2016 and see what Bill has managed to find. In 2016, the Patriots selected cornerback Cyrus Jones, guard Joe Thuney and quarterback Jacoby Brissett with their first three picks in the draft. Jones played 31 games in the NFL before becoming a free agent in 2019, and is still out there as we speak. Thuney is the best selection from this draft and continues to be a valuable asset on the Patriots offensive line, and Brissett played two games for the Patriots before being traded to the Indianapolis Colts, only to be replaced by the bones of Philip

Rivers. So far we have two misses and one hit. With their first three picks in 2017, they selected defensive end Derek Rivers, tackle Antonio Garcia and defensive end Deatrich Wise Jr. Rivers has played 11 total games in the NFL and has yet to see the field this season, Garcia has never played a snap and Wise has turned out to be a good defensive end, but not a game breaker by any means. For fairness' sake, the tally stands at four busts, two hits. In 2018, their first three picks were tackle Isiah Wynn, running back Sony Michel and cornerback Duke Dawson. Wynn has been injured most of his career, including missing his entire rookie year and half of 2019, and is only now making his first consistent starts on the offensive line. Michel gave the Pats a terrific rookie season but has contributed little since, and Dawson has played 20 games and been a nonfactor on defense. Tally stands at six busts, three hits. 2019 was the year of wide receiver N'Keal

Harry, with cornerback Joejuan Williams and defensive end Chase Winovich following behind. Harry has been a massive disappointment in his early career, Williams is invisible on the field and Winovich has been a good end for the Patriots in his young career. I'm going to leave out the 2020 draft, as we have not seen enough from the picks to determine their worth, but the complete lack of a receiver selection in this draft is puzzling to say the least. The final tally: eight busts, four hits. Clearly not a great track record.

Add to

that the complete failure to draft on the offensive side, and we get the team we see now. With no new weapons, and an aging Julian Edelman, it is no wonder that Brady wanted out as he moved to Tampa Bay.

## Brady Bridge is Falling Down

Bill's bad drafting helped push the Patriots to their current struggles, but as we saw for 20 years, Brady can cover any hole. So it was a massive surprise when we saw the offense struggle last year with Brady at the helm. In wins Brady was upset with the offense's lackluster performance, and in losses he was despondent. The national media took victory laps claiming he was washed up, while local media pointed to a lack of weapons for him to throw to. Yet the Patriots were only one win off of a first round bye, and would have gotten it if not for a loss in Miami in the last game of the year. As if things couldn't get any worse, the Pats met the Titans in the wildcard game, this

and the offense again struggled as Brady threw a season ending interception to former teammate Logan Ryan, ending his career in New England on a pick six. That offseason, Brady left for Tampa Bay to join Mike Evans and Chris Godwin, and since then the Buccaneers have picked up Antonio Brown, Gronk and Leonard Fournette. While his exit from New England seemed improbable, in retrospect it was inevitable. A combination of bad drafting, lack

weekend). We all knew Brady's presence was important, but very few people knew he was the literal life or death of this offense. The decision to play around with Tom and let him walk looks worse and worse by the minute, as Brady leads the 5-2 Tampa Bay Buccaneers to Super Bowl contention, while looking like a possible league MVP.

## How to Rebuild a Dynasty

After starting 2-1, the Patriots have lost four straight games and are the only

bona fide number one receiving option, either through the draft or from a blockbuster trade at the deadline or during the off season. Finally, they need to be sellers at the deadline. Shipping off older players and high salary guys needs to be a priority for a team desperately looking to get back into contention sooner rather than later. Some might argue that defense needs to be one of those three priorities, but I'm not as concerned about the defense as most are. They are missing almost their entire linebacking core thanks to opt outs and injuries, which is likely to change next season as we hopefully (please let it finally end) move past the COVID-19 pandemic that has plagued us for the better part of 2020. On top of this, Bill has a much easier time finding quality defensive players in the draft than offensive weapons, even in later rounds or undrafted altogether. For these reasons I feel that the way back to success is through picking a reliable quarterback in the draft, finding a young or proven number one receiver that can lead your team for years to come and finally being sellers at the deadline and moving on from players who are not part of your short and long-term future.

The Patriots have a lot of work ahead of them if they want to return back to the glory of the Brady era, as Belichick and Robert Kraft fight through a history of bad drafting, poor trading and the loss of the greatest quarterback of all time. However, New England does have a road map of how to get back to the top, they've done it before back in 2001, and with the same guys at the helm, who's to say they can't do it again? If there is anything I learned over 20 years of winning, it's that you should never bet against Bill Belichick and the New England Patriots.

# Goff's clunker in Miami might show limits of Rams' ambitions

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Jared Goff started the regular season on a roll. As the Los Angeles Rams hit the midway point of the regular season, their franchise quarterback has fallen into a rut.

The Rams (5-3) began their bye week sifting through their stack of mistakes from a 28-17 loss at Miami in which Goff's 355 yards passing meant much less than his two interceptions and two costly fumbles.

Over the past three games, Goff has completed just 58.3% of his passes with five touchdowns, three interceptions and a 78.3 quarterback rating. In LA's first five games, Goff completed 71.7% of his throws for eight TDs, three interceptions and a 108.8 QB rating.

Although Goff's inability to stay consistent is a reflection of the Rams' overall offensive flaws and coach Sean McVay's misadventures as a play caller, Goff realizes a large part of the Rams' success rests on his rangy shoulders.

If Los Angeles intends to be more than a fringe NFC playoff contender this season, Goff likely must step up to a level he has reached only intermittently in his career.

"Not even close to good enough on my part, and throughout the whole game," Goff said. "Just need to be better. Got to be better. I will be."

The Rams are hitting their bye week at the midway point of a season featuring several solid wins and potential, but also ample reason to doubt Los Angeles' credentials as a Super Bowl contender. Goff's play reflects most of those concerns.

Goff committed his four turnovers all in the first half in Miami, matching his career high for an entire game. The Rams trailed 28-7 after that wave of mistakes, yet still had plenty of time to catch up.

They couldn't, managing 10



Los Angeles Rams quarterback Jared Goff (16) looks to pass during the first half of an NFL football game against the Miami Dolphins, Sunday, Nov. 1, 2020, in Miami Gardens, Florida. PHOTO BY WILFREDO LEE, AP

points from 307 yards of offense after that. The Rams had 92 offensive snaps — the franchise's most since 2005 — and outgained the Dolphins by 32 yards, but trailed by double digits for the final 38 minutes.

Goff wasn't to blame for everything, of course. His offensive line, so good earlier this year, made errors both in pass protection and in the running game. A handful of drops — including a crucial, blatant mistake by tight end Gerald Everett late — impeded the Rams' late rally.

Goff and the Rams repeatedly failed to execute on big plays that should have got them back in the game, allowing Miami to win fairly comfortably despite getting shut out by Los Angeles' defense in the second half.

"Our defense played really well and gave us all the opportunities we needed," Goff said. "It starts with me, and I've got to be a whole lot better."

**WHAT'S WORKING**  
The defense looks great. Coordinator Brandon Staley's unit has held four of its last five op-

ponents under 300 yards and two under 150 after limiting the Dolphins to 145. The defense also hasn't allowed a second-half touchdown in five consecutive games. It's clear which side of the ball isn't doing its share lately.

## WHAT NEEDS HELP

Goff's performances are often a reflection of McVay's effectiveness as a play caller, and the Rams' offensive mastermind was off. McVay threw the ball 61 times against one of the NFL's best pass defenses, re-

peatedly hesitating to trust his solid ground game against the Dolphins' less-impressive run defense. Sure, the Rams fell behind and needed to catch up — but 32 of those 61 passes were thrown before halftime. "I have to do a much better job for our team," McVay said.

## STOCK UP

Safety Taylor Rapp is playing his way back into prominence. After getting hurt in training camp and losing his job to rookie Jordan Fuller, Rapp has capitalized on Fuller's injury absence. After a key interception last week against Chicago, Rapp's strong game in Miami included a forced fumble in the second quarter.

## STOCK DOWN

New special teams coordinator John Bonamego's units gave up an 88-yard TD punt return. New kicker Kai Forbath made his extra points and a 23-yard field goal, but he also had a comically bad miss on a late 48-yard attempt that would have trimmed the Rams' deficit to one score. Not a confidence-inspiring performance.

## INJURED

CB Jalen Ramsey fell ill Sunday morning and didn't play. McVay didn't provide details, citing privacy concerns, but said Ramsey was allowed to return home on the team plane. ... RB Darrell Henderson got off to a strong start, but couldn't finish the game due to a thigh injury.

## KEY NUMBER

21 — The number of Goff's passes intended for receiver Cooper Kupp, who caught 11 for 110 yards. That's the most targets for any NFL player since 2015.

## NEXT STEPS

The bye week won't be relaxing for the Rams with tougher matchups awaiting. They host powerhouse Seattle on Nov. 15, followed by a fifth trip to the East Coast this season to face Tampa Bay.

## Throwback Photo of the Day | Under the lights



In this file photo, the UConn Women's Soccer loses to East Carolina University in Dillon Stadium. UConn put forward 15 shots, but were unable to find the back of the net. PHOTO BY KEVIN LINDSTROM, PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS



# BALANCING THE BUBBLE BUDGET

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Sports are an awe-inspiring spectacle, an escape for millions, a ticket out of poverty for a talented handful and one of the most lucrative industries on earth. The NBA product in particular has become increasingly profitable, with the average net worth of an NBA team surpassing \$2 billion for the first time in 2020. This statistic is up a staggering 14% from last year, the most significant increase of all major American sports. The low barrier of entry to play the sport in conjunction with the personal connection the game offers between star players and fans has captured global interest. As NBA basketball begins to sweep across the globe as a primary export of U.S. culture, NBA owners and executives have begun looking to capitalize further on surges in popularity rates through market expansion. However, will the handling of the coronavirus pandemic and a strained economic relationship between the NBA and China be poised to hinder this robust growth?

The NBA's revenue dropped 10% to \$8.3 billion for the 2019-20 season, including tangible losses from the pandemic and China's abrupt cancellation of NBA media coverage. China backed out due to Houston Rockets general manager Daryl Morey making pro-Hong Kong comments via Twitter. As the season concludes with the crowning of champions Los Angeles Lakers, it is time to assess the discernable financial damage in the present and project any potential future economic downturn for the league. This analysis is critical in dictating the strategic moves of NBA executive personnel and those of the players during off-season free agency.

The costs of the pandemic in regards to the NBA can be broken down into three parts: higher fixed operating costs due to the pandemic, an abundance of opportunity costs and several potential long-term variable costs.

The NBA stated that the cost to run the human resources nightmare of the NBA bubble was over \$190 million upfront. This investment had to be made with the knowledge there would be no fan attendance, with fans making up 40% of the league's annual revenue through ticket purchases and concession spending, in order to satisfy the league's billion-dollar television contract.

Additionally, viewership ratings were among the worst in league history due to the league's competition with the NFL as a result of the prior hiatus and much of the league's biggest markets, such as New York, Chicago and San Francisco, being out of the playoff picture. The 2020 season finals which featured a LeBron James-led Lakers team only received approximately seven million viewers this year, a 50% drop from last year's finals and the lowest in NBA history since the statistic started being tracked in 1974.

Lastly, the financial burden of the pandemic has been projected to traverse into the 2020-21 NBA season. League sources have already predicted the salary cap to decline anywhere from \$3-12 million, which would affect the pockets of NBA owners paying the luxury tax, the roster possibilities of teams and free agency options for players going forward. The league is pushing for the return of NBA basketball on Dec. 22, 2020, to salvage a portion of television revenue from a potentially 72-game regular season and playoffs. However, even if the league was able to circumvent the backlash for such a short player offseason, it would still lose an estimated \$4 billion due to the lack of in-person ticket sales, concessions and decreased merchandise selling opportunities.

Moreover, the NBA's increased reliance on television media revenue as a result of the pandemic has made strained relations with China all the more costly for the league. The Chinese government ceased all media relations with the NBA, terminating agreements to publicize teams, players and sell any league memorabilia, which is estimated to cost the NBA \$4.8 billion per year, indefinitely. This figure also includes the loss of a \$1.5 billion media negotiation which entailed exclusive rights to stream NBA content all over China.

The NBA now has to find a way to compensate for the loss of half a billion Chinese viewers to NBA games, the 300 million active enthusiasts that play recreationally and regularly purchase NBA merchandise and the opportunity to use China's international sphere of influence to advance the league's brand. China's NBA market dwarfs that of the United States and the league has not even scratched the surface of the market's full consumer potential.

To the average fan, losses of a few hundred million dollars sound like chump change to a billion-dollar enterprise like the NBA. Many may even dismiss the long term implications of the pandemic and the loss of the Chinese basketball market. While the NBA will remain more than solvent, what does this mean for the people that work for the NBA that are not millionaires? The trickle-down economic effect of the league losing revenue affects owners, managers, players, team staff, arena workers, members of the media and more. Many of these staff workers do not have deep pockets like players and executives and rely on their salaries for basic necessities. With all the large sums of money being lost, the financial burden is still most severe on the common man. The NBA is a positive economic stimulus in many parts of the United States that don't have the benefit of being centers of commerce and industry. Small-market teams that depend on winning games and capturing fan attention through basketball rather than the spectacle of show business and the glamour of historic arenas are hurt disproportionately from the unfortunate happenings of 2020. While the league, the nation and the world at large recover from the pandemic, I hope people can appreciate the tremendous leadership and discipline of the NBA and its players to provide a binding haven of relief for people through basketball despite all odds.

# 7th Heaven: Unbeaten Steelers keep winning without 'A' game

PITTSBURGH (AP) — Eric Ebron is tired of the critics who keep trying to nitpick the NFL's last unbeaten team.

"A lot of people say, 'You all beat the Ravens, you all really are legit,'" the Pittsburgh Steelers ever-talkative tight end said after his team rallied past Baltimore on Sunday to improve to 7-0 for the second time in franchise history.

"I'm like, 'But, we went 6-0. How are we not a legit unit?'" he added. "So, now that we beat the Ravens, more people understand that we're legit, and we're coming with our A-game every single time."

That's the thing, save for a blowout against Cleveland last month, Pittsburgh has been more decent than dominant. Yet they matched the 1978 team's mark for the best start ever on a day they were out-gained by 236 yards, were frequently pushed around in the trenches on both sides of the ball and spent the first half on the receiving end of the kind of physical beating they typically dole out.

Coach Mike Tomlin repeatedly chastised his club for mis-cues while at the same time praising its perseverance.

"I am proud of these guys," Tomlin said. "I am proud of the fight. I am proud of how they supported one another. But it is important that we don't lie to ourselves. We did not function well in a lot of ways."

Yet in the end, it didn't matter, not with the defense making up for in splash what it lacked in sturdiness. Pittsburgh forced Baltimore quarterback Lamar Jackson into a career-high four turnovers while getting contributions



Pittsburgh Steelers linebacker Robert Spillane, left, celebrates with free safety Minkah Fitzpatrick after scoring an interception of a pass from Baltimore Ravens quarterback Lamar Jackson, not visible, during the first half of an NFL football game, Sunday, Nov. 1, 2020, in Baltimore. PHOTO BY NICK WASS, AP

from players that were nowhere near the top of the depth chart in early September.

Inside linebacker Rob Spillane began his second career start with a pick-6 on Jackson on the game's first series. Rookie outside linebacker Alex Highsmith — who played as a defensive end in college at Charlotte — stepped in front of a pass by Jackson on Baltimore's first possession of the second half to set up a touch-

down reception by Ebron, the spark that helped Pittsburgh claw out of a 10-point deficit.

When veteran defensive lineman Tyson Alualu exited early with an injury, second-year player Isaiah Buggs overcame some early wobbles to record five tackles, one less than he had in his previous 14 appearances combined.

It's why quarterback Ben Roethlisberger took offense when asked what the impact

of players not normally called on to make plays starts making plays.

"I would say, 'Says who?'" Roethlisberger said. "Who says they're not supposed to make big plays? We expect big things from everybody. ... It's fun to see everyone contribute. That's what makes this team special. Everyone does it. Everyone helps each other out."

The Steelers have needed to rely on that depth repeat-

edly and are now entering a user-friendly stretch of their schedule. After three straight games against teams that were a combined 14-2 at kickoff, Pittsburgh's next three opponents — Dallas, Cincinnati and Jacksonville — are 5-1-1 before Baltimore visits Heinz Field on Thanksgiving night.

The chance of stubbing their toe is always there, but if the Steelers have proven one thing over the last two months, it's that they can stumble without falling.

"To be able to walk out of a building on the road, with a win, gives us a lot of momentum," linebacker T.J. Watt said. "But like I said, there is going to be a lot on the film for us to learn from for this game."

## WHAT'S WORKING

The Steelers largely abandoned the run following an anemic first half and opted to spread the Baltimore defense out by using five receivers and allowing Roethlisberger to draw it up as he went along. The results were quick passes that moved the chains combined with the occasional rainbow down the field that frequently drew flags. The Ravens were called for pass interference three times, including a 20-yard infraction on Marlon Humphrey in the fourth quarter that set up the winning touchdown.

## WHAT'S NOT

Regardless of the outcome, giving up 265 yards rushing is a concern. The Ravens are the best rushing team in the league for a reason, but more pressing for the Steelers than the production is the way Baltimore consistently blocked so effectively.

## Winless Jets on verge of making dubious franchise history

NEW YORK (AP) — The winless New York Jets are on the verge of making franchise history.

And they want nothing to do with it.

After a 35-9 beatdown in Kansas City, the Jets will look to avoid the first 0-9 start in team history. And they'll have to do it next Monday night against the AFC East-rival New England Patriots in front of a prime-time TV audience.

"We've just got to win one," quarterback Sam Darnold said Monday. "If we win one, who knows?"

Well, this week, it would prevent this year's squad from holding the dubious distinction of being the only team in Jets history to lose its first nine games. Under Rich Kotite in 1996, New York opened 0-8 before getting its only victory of a 1-15 season.

That is generally regarded as the worst year in team history. But this bunch might give that one a run.

"Guys are still hungry to get a win," safety Marcus Maye insisted.

That's despite so much uncertainty surrounding the team in what quickly became a lost year.

Gase has been on the hot seat all season, with the heat as high as it possibly can get — but he remains in charge, for now.

Injuries have been a constant factor, and even Darnold is uncertain to play against the Patriots while his banged-up right shoulder is evaluated this week. There's optimism there, but the inept offense has yet to see all three of its starting wide receivers — Jamison Crowder, Breshad Perriman and Denzel Mims — on the field together.

General manager Joe Douglas has also been making moves with a clear eye on the future. He has cut running back Le'Veon Bell and traded linebackers Avery Williamson and Jordan Willis, and nose tackle Steve McLendon in the last few weeks. Douglas might not be done dealing before the NFL's trade deadline Tuesday.



New York Jets head coach Adam Gase watches play against the Kansas City Chiefs in the first half of an NFL football game on Sunday, Nov. 1, 2020, in Kansas City, Missouri. PHOTO BY CHARLIE RIEDEL, AP

All of that, plus the piling losses, might take a toll on most locker rooms. But Gase says that's one thing — and perhaps the only thing — that has remained positive throughout this tough first half of the season.

"I think our guys are absolutely focused on winning one game, period," Gase said. "Whoever we're playing, they are focused on winning that game."

## WHAT'S WORKING

Douglas' phone. The GM has been busy the past few weeks, making deals and tweaking the roster with an eye on the future.

With the departures of Williamson, McLendon, Willis and Bell, Douglas has shown that he's collecting as many picks as he can to completely rebuild the roster for the future. That doesn't necessarily mean the current Jets are writing off this year.

"I never look at waving a white flag," Gase said. "That's not in my DNA. This is our pro-

fession. When things like this happen, guys aren't ever going to be shocked by this. We're in a profession of we've got to win games. When we don't, things change and younger guys get opportunities to play."

## WHAT NEEDS HELP

Second-half adjustments. For the second straight game, Gase handed over the offensive play calling to coordinator Dowell Loggains and the Jets got off to a solid start moving the ball. But, things went south in the second half — again. A week after gaining only 4 yards in the second half against Buffalo, the Jets had just 63 over the final two quarters at Kansas City.

## STOCK UP

Quinnen Williams. The defensive lineman has been solid in his second season after a ho-hum rookie year. Teams have inquired about the 2019 first-rounder, but Gase said the Jets had no interest in dealing him. Williams, who's dealing with a hamstring injury, leads the

Jets with three sacks and has been a consistent playmaker. He had two tackles for loss against the Chiefs.

"He's at the very top of our league for an interior guy in the run and pressures and hits and tackles for losses, and he's only going to continue to get better," defensive coordinator Gregg Williams said. "I believe that."

## STOCK DOWN

Chris Herndon. It was already a dismal season for the third-year tight end, but it was made even worse Sunday when he caught his only pass of the day for a 3-yard gain — and then fumbled it away. Herndon went from being regarded as one of the key weapons on offense to barely contributing. He has just 14 receptions for 101 yards.

## INJURED

Darnold was going to have an MRI and get a second medical opinion on his right shoulder as a precaution. Both Darnold and Gase sounded optimistic about the quarterback's chanc-

es of playing next Monday night. ... Perriman remains in the concussion protocol, while Crowder's injured right groin will be monitored throughout the week. ... C Connor McGovern (knee) and K Sam Ficken (right groin) could miss practice time.

## KEY NUMBER

2 for 12 — That's what the Jets did on third downs at Kansas City, continuing a season-long struggle in those situations. New York ranks last in the league in third-down efficiency and it's a big reason for their overall ineptitude on offense.

## NEXT STEPS

If there's a chance for a victory any time soon, it could be Monday night. In what has been a lopsided rivalry in recent years, the Jets could have a chance to steal one against a struggling Patriots team that has lost four in a row for the first time since 2002. It's either win or cement a place in the franchise record books.