# Wilker's Weekly:

## Patriots Super Bowl Overview

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After a hard fought 14-3 regular season and three playoff wins, the New England Patriots faced off against the Seattle Seahawks in the Super Bowl on Sunday. While homers like me were holding out for a spectacular Drake Maye performance, what we saw was far from that. The Patriots were unable to score until the fourth quarter, and across the 10 drives prior to their first touchdown; they totaled just 78 yards, punting eight times and fumbling once. Five of those drives were three and outs. They turned the ball over three times in total, one of which was a pick-six.

The offensive line was a major culprit of the team's downfall. Will Campbell allowed 14 pressures, the most of any single player in the NFL in a game this season. Jared Wilson looked lost as well, with both rookies struggling immensely against Seattle's excellent defensive line. The backfield wasn't much of a supplement to the passing game, either. Rhamondre Stevenson and TreVeyon Henderson combined for 42 yards, and while New England was behind the entire game, the delta was just nine entering the fourth quarter. They easily could have continued to run the ball if it was bearing fruit for them. The pair had a combined 13 carries for 3.2 yards a pop.

The receiver group was as disappointing as they have been all playoffs. Stefon Diggs caught three balls for 37 yards in the biggest game of his career, while Kayshon Boutte had one catch. Mack Hollins stepped up as a deep threat, but his efforts were too little too late. Pop Douglas had an okay day underneath, with five catches for 45 yards. It was as clear as ever that the bunch-of-WR3s gimmick New England has run over the past few years isn't an effective one. Hunter Henry and Austin Hooper had minimal contributions.

Defensively, the unit continued to show exactly why they're one of the league's best. Despite the Patriots offense having just 78 yards in the first three quarters, the defense continued to contain the Sam Darnold-led unit to just nine points in that time frame. They allowed only one touchdown, a pass to A.J. Barner. Across the playoffs, they allowed just two touchdowns.

While the unit struggled against the run more than usual in the game, there's no way to give them anything more than the utmost respect and praise. Christian Gonzalez's Super Bowl performance was one for the ages, as he didn't allow a single catch in man coverage against the Offensive Player of the Year, Jaxon Smith-Njigba.

The offense throughout the playoffs was disappointing. Maye averaged three fewer completions and 51 fewer passing yards per game, while seeing a drop in completion rate of 13.7% compared to the regular season. Henderson's 40 carries totaled 66 yards; Diggs averaged 27.5 yards per game, and Hunter Henry wasn't much better at 30.5 yards per game. There needs to be major improvements made to bolster the offense going into 2026 if the team wants a chance to repeat their feat of making it to the Super Bowl.

As disappointing as it is that New England was unable to pull off the improbable, the team is well ahead of schedule. Going into the offseason, they rank 10th in effective cap space with 12 selections in the upcoming draft, all while having a superstar quarterback on a rookie contract. While 2025 wasn't the year New England could claim their seventh Lombardi Trophy, they've put themselves in an excellent position going into the offseason.




**Quarterback Drake Maye of the New England Patriots looks at the Seattle Seahawks' celebration following their win in Super Bowl LX, located at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara. The Seahawks beat the Patriots by a score of 29-13.** PHOTO COURTESY OF @ADAMRICHINSPHOTO ON INSTAGRAM.

# Lombardi Lineup:

## Why are "G-League Dropouts" playing college basketball?

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After a controversial few weeks with "G-League dropout" chants becoming commonplace in opposing student sections, Alabama center Charles Bediako has officially been ruled ineligible to continue playing in the NCAA as of Monday.

The 23-year-old played for the Crimson Tide from 2021 to 2023 before declaring early for the NBA draft. After going undrafted, he signed a two-way contract with the San Antonio Spurs and played with their G League affiliate. His professional stint was short-lived, however, after a torn meniscus led to his release.

For most players, that would have marked the unfortunate end to their playing careers, but Bediako's story took a different, more complicated turn.

The groundwork for Bediako's attempted return to college hoops was laid in December 2025, when former 31st overall pick James Nnaji signed with Baylor University. He was granted four years of eligibility since he never actually signed an NBA contract. Nnaji instead played overseas, primarily with FC Barcelona, before joining Baylor this year.

This decision was controversial by itself, with many believing it goes against the spirit of amateurism. However, Nnaji technically didn't violate the NCAA's bylaws that prohibits entering the draft after enrollment, since had not already attended any college.

Unlike Nnaji, Bediako had already played two seasons of college basketball and signed an NBA contract. His situation was in clear violation of NCAA's definition of an amateur, yet he pursued the issue further.

After the NCAA denied his eligibility request, Bediako filed suit in a Tuscaloosa court, arguing that he was being unfairly treated compared to international players. Large NIL deals suddenly skyrocketed after his time in college, and he believed he was unfairly missing out on significant money because he left and could not return.

A judge granted him a temporary restraining order that allowed him to play for Alabama as the case was sorted out. His return immediately ignited outrage across the sport.

"The rule is pretty clear but it's very frustrating when somebody can go to court and get a decision and turn the whole thing on its head," said NCAA President Charlie Baker at the time.

Fast forward to today, and that temporary window was closed. Bediako's case was denied, ending his short-lived return to college basketball. Baker publicly supported this decision, stating, "Common sense won a round today."

While Alabama is taking the majority of the criticism, professional players returning to college are becoming more and more common.

Santa Clara guard Thierry Darlan, for example, is a similar case to Nnaji. He played for the G League Ignite instead of attending college and spent time playing for the 76ers' G League affiliate. Cases like this seem to be the true gray area: players who never attended college, trying to make the jump after briefly playing professionally.

And then there are players following in Bediako's footsteps, such as former UCLA and Charlotte Hornets guard Amari Bailey, who has played 10 games in the NBA. Bailey has been visiting multiple Division 1 programs, claiming that he is working towards receiving eligibility for next season.

The NCAA has already stated that they will not allow Bailey to return to college since he has signed an NBA contract. This means that much like Bediako, his appeal will need to go through the courts. However, after Bediako's ultimate failure to stay in the NCAA, his denial may become the precedent for similar cases going forward.

The broader question remains, when will the line be drawn? As players receive more compensation and the difference between amateur and professional erodes, there needs to be a firm decision on when players, if at all, can return to college. While ultimately unsuccessful , Bediako's story shows that the courts can override the NCAA's bylaws, opening the door for similar cases to continue appearing as those who fail in the G League seek NIL contracts in college.

Allowing players who have signed NBA contracts could lead to significant changes in recruiting and roster construction going forward. These older players could be taking away spots that would be going to up-and-coming talents entering college the traditional way. If this were the case, we may see more players skip college and test the NBA waters first, then return if that fails. At this point, we aren't far away from a world where college basketball becomes more like a secondary G League rather than a celebration of amateurism.

Right now, though, the NCAA has already drawn a line, and the courts upheld it this time. Whether that continues to be the case in the coming years remains to be seen, but right now, college basketball fans can breathe a sigh of relief.




**James Nnaji looks at the court during a game for the Charlotte Hornets. Nnaji currently plays for the Baylor Bears men's basketball team; however faced controversy for the time he spent in the NBA before the NCAA.** PHOTO COURTESY OF @THEOPENCOURT ON INSTAGRAM.