

Wilker's Weekly:

Ranking the New England Patriots' biggest needs this offseason

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Tier 1: Pressing need for a starter Wide Receiver, Edge Defender, Guard/Center

The Patriots put significant resources towards fixing each of these positions in the short-term last offseason, but it's now time to make long-term investments. Stefon Diggs and Mack Hollins raised the floor of the receiver room, but the ceiling remains limited. Whether through a trade for a star like A.J. Brown or George Pickens, or via the No. 31 pick in the draft, New England needs to acquire a legitimate star to pair with Drake Maye.

Beyond receiver, the Patriots ranked twenty second in the league in sacks this season, and the edge is far and away the worst position on the defense. Harold Landry missed four of the eight games after the bye, and he had only one sack during that time. K'Lavon Chaisson is an impending free agent, and Anfernee Jennings has been mentioned as a potential cap casualty. That leaves 2025 rookies Elijah Ponder and Bradyn Swinson. New England should have Trey Hendrickson in their crosshairs.

While it won't cost as much as the previous two positions, adding a premium left guard should be a priority. I'd expect Will Campbell to remain at left tackle after Mike Vrabel's comments, and Jared Wilson to slide to center unless outright replaced. Elgton Jenkins is my top candidate for the role, but Joel Bitonio has also been mentioned.

Tier 2: Significant need for starter or depth Offensive Tackle, Linebacker, Tight End, Fullback, Safety

While three have moved to guard in the pros, Vrabel has selected a collegiate tackle in the first three rounds in each of his last six drafts. Whether it's to be the long-term replacement for 35-year-old Morgan Moses or be insurance for Campbell, tackle will likely be a position New England looks to add via the draft. Leo Chenal is a player I'm fond of should they look to upgrade at linebacker, but Troy Andersen could be another more under-the-radar addition.

The Patriots deployed 13 personnel (2 TE and a FB) more than any team in the league last season, so expect them to target an upgrade over Austin Hooper, who dropped to 16 catches in 2025 after having 45 the year prior. In a similar ilk, the Patriots could certainly upgrade Jack Westover, who had one catch for eight yards between the regular season and playoffs.

The return of Jaylinn Hawkins would help satisfy the need at safety, but regardless, the team should look to add depth. When Craig Woodson went down with a head injury against the Texans in the divisional round, Dell Pettus was the next man up. While not a terrible option, he isn't all that experienced and should operate primarily as a special teamer.

Tier 3: Depth or developmental addition Cornerback, Running Back

Carlton Davis's playoff run inspired confidence, but depth is still necessary. Alex Austin (RFA), Charles Woods and Marcellas Dial, who's set to return from an ACL tear, will compete for the CB4 role this offseason. They'll need to add depth, whether through a veteran or a quality draft pick. Bringing back Jonathan Jones, who has the flexibility to play on the outside and in the slot, could be a sound idea. Mock drafts have suggested the Patriots look to draft South Carolina's Brandon Cisse or Tennessee's Colton Hood in the first round to eventually replace Carlton Davis.

Rhamondre Stevenson's emergence after the bye has re-inspired confidence in him, but TreVeyon Henderson's playoff struggles add a layer of uncertainty. Antonio Gibson will likely be released, given how expensive he is as a third back. Terrell Jennings and Lan Larison are set to return from IR, while Elijah Mitchell, who nearly had 1,000 yards in 2021, was signed to a futures contract. The Patriots may already have their RB3 for the upcoming season, but investing in a couple bucks or a late round draft pick could be wise.

Tier 4: Potential long-term need/minimal investment required Kicker, Punter, Defensive Tackle, Quarterback

Kicker and punter weren't necessarily an issue last year, but adding low level competition to hopefully help push Andy Borregales and Bryce Baringer over the top wouldn't be unreasonable. Defensive tackle is a trickier one. The staff has done a lot with less, and the financial investments made in Milton Williams and Christian Barmore over the past few years are a major reason for the success of the others. Cory Durden, Khyiris Tonga and even UDFA Eric Gregory have found their niches. With Josh Dobbs under contract next season, the Patriots don't have any pressing need for a back-up and Tommy DeVito (RFA) is one of the best QB3s in the league. Should Cutlets return, bringing in anything other than a camp arm doesn't seem necessary.



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