

Personnel Review: AFC East by Tony Villiotti

The effectiveness of a team's personnel decisions is ultimately judged by that team's its won-lost record. There is more than one way to build a winning team, though, and **DRAFTMETRICS** believes that exploring the "how" for a team's success or lack thereof can be quite interesting.

There are two basic aspects of building a winning team - - hanging onto your good players and bringing in new talent. Everything beyond that is a matter of degree. If a team does not have many good players, there is a heavy emphasis on bringing in replacements. If a team has a solid core of players it can be very selective in adding talent.

Free agency and the salary cap make player retention a difficult issue. Players move from team to team to maximize their earnings or seek opportunities for more playing time. In some cases a team is forced to cut a player they would otherwise keep in order to stay under the salary cap. These factors make player retention a real balancing act as a team must continually weigh its options in order to maintain the proper investment level at each playing position.

A team has several options available to it when acquiring talent. It can seek help in the draft while maneuvering to move up or down to get the players it wants at a reasonable price. It can venture into the free agent market where they usually have to pay top dollar to land top of the line talent. It can make trades, usually surrendering draft choices for a player. Finally, it can "dumpster dive" and try to find bargains in released players, Canadian Football League players, undrafted free agents or on the waiver wire.

This is the first in a series of eight articles in which **DRAFTMETRICS** will review, by Division, the personnel moves of NFL teams over the past five seasons (2006-2010). In this review, **DRAFTMETRICS** will address the following for each team in the AFC East:

- How it got its starters
- The stability of its starting lineup
- Quarterbacks

The Source of Starters

NFL starters from 2006 through 2010 fall into one of several categories:

- They were on the roster in 2005 and continued with the team for part or all of the study period
- They were drafted from 2006-2010
- They were signed as veteran free agents from 2006-2010
- They were acquired via trade from 2006-2010
- They were obtained in another manner (waivers, undrafted free agents,etc.) from 2006-2010

During the 2006 through 2010 seasons, starts across all teams were distributed as follows:

- 43% of all starts were made by players on the same team's roster in 2005;
- 26% of all starts were made by players drafted by that team from 2006 through 2010;
- 31% of all starts were made by players signed as free agents, acquired via trade or any other source from 2006 through 2010.

DRAFTMETRICS will comment on each team's player acquisition activities as well as provide some comparative metrics. It should be recognized that it is impossible for a team to have favorable metrics for each activity. A team that retained a lot of its starters from the 2005 roster, for example, does not have as many starting spots to fill through the draft or free agency and will have fewer starters from those activities than a team with a poor starting point.

Stability of the Starting Lineup

Continuity is an important element in a team's success. Football is a team game and developing a cohesive unit from a collection of individual talents is a critical success factor. While a team is always striving to improve by replacing weaker links with stronger players, keeping the unit relatively intact is also important. Sometimes injuries interfere with this process and sometimes the continuing effort to find better talent results in a "revolving door" for certain positions in the starting lineup.

In addition to a **DRAFTMETRICS** commentary on this subject, a few metrics have been developed to aid in the analysis. The first is a "Stability Index" that is calculated for each team. The basis for the stability index is determining the number of games that are started by players who started for that same team in the previous season. The percentage of that number of games divided by 352 (16 games with 22 starters) is the stability index.

It is worth noting that for all NFL teams combined, the average number of starts by players who also started at least one game for that team in the prior year was 252.7, which is about 72% of all games started. The Steelers had the highest average with 296.2 games and the Lions at 187.8 games were the lowest.

Another metric used to measure continuity was to determine the number of players who started at least 13 games in each of the seasons. On average, NFL teams have 75 such players (or 15 per year). The highest was the Cowboys with 89 and the lowest was the Lions with 57. The intent of this metric is to determine how "settled" a team is at its starting positions. This can be affected by both injury and trying to find the right player.

Quarterbacks

It has been repeated ad nauseam that the NFL is a “Quarterback-Driven League”. There is no questioning the importance of this position so **DRAFTMETRICS** will comment on the success of each team in this area and list the QB starters during the study period for each team.

Before starting on the team analysis for the AFC East, here is each NFL team’s won-lost record for the 2006-2010 seasons.

Patriots	63-17	Giants	48-32	Cardinals	37-43	Dolphins	32-48
Colts	61-19	Packers	48-32	Panthers	37-43	Redskins	32-48
Chargers	55-25	Bears	47-33	Texans	37-43	Bills	31-49
Steelers	51-29	Titans	45-35	Broncos	36-44	Chiefs	29-51
Ravens	50-30	Falcons	44-36	49ers	35-45	Browns	28-52
Saints	49-31	Jets	43-37	Bucs	35-45	Raiders	24-56
Eagles	48-31-1	Vikings	42-38	Seahawks	35-45	Rams	21-59
Cowboys	48-32	Jaguars	39-41	Bengals	33-46-1	Lions	18-62

The next division that will be analyzed is the AFC North and that article will be posted on the website within the next week.

BUFFALO BILLS

Won-Lost Record

2006	7-9	2008	7-9	2010	4-12
2007	7-9	2009	6-10	All Years	31-49 Rank:28

Bills Metrics

Metric	Bills	NFL Average	Rank
Percentage of Games Started By:			
Players on 2005 Roster	31%	43%	27
Players Drafted from 2006 thru 2010	33%	26%	5
Players signed as free agents or acquired in trades	36%	31%	10
Stability Index	66.5%	71.8%	25
Number of Players who started 13 games or more in a season	74	75	20

Players Starting 32 Games or More

From 2005 Roster		Players Drafted: 2006-2010			Other Players Signed: 2005-2010			
Lee Evans	76	Trent Edwards	2007-92	32 -W	Derrick Dockery	FA	2007	32 - W
Chris Kelsay	78	Keith Ellison	2006-178	39	Melvin Fowler	FA	2006	37 - FA
Terrence McGee	56	Andy Levitre	2009-51	32	Robert Royal	FA	2006	37- W
Jason Peters	44 - T	Marshawn Lynch	2007-12	37 -T	Marcus Stroud	T	2008	45
Aaron Schobel	53 - R	Paul Posluszny	2007-34	45	Larry Triplett	FA	2006	32 - T
		Donte Whitmer	2006-8	66	Langston Walker	FA	2007	32 -W
		Kyle Williams	2006-134	73				

Bold indicates a player was not on the team at the end of the 2010 season with the letter designation indicating how they left the team

T= Traded; R = Retired; W= Waived; FA= Lost in Free Agency; F= Released

Quick Take

The Bills still start a lot of guys nobody else seems to want. As indicated by their record, player acquisition has not been a strength and they continue to have problems attracting and keeping their good talent.

Players from 2005 Roster

Coming off a 5-11 record, the Bills didn't have a great group to begin with and didn't do a particularly good job of hanging onto the players who could have helped. DB Nate Clements, OL Bennie Anderson, LB London Fletcher, OL Mike Gandy and DB Lawyer Milloy were all lost and went on to be starters elsewhere. Only four players from their 2005 roster were starters in 2010. **DRAFTMETRICS** has to give the Bills a negative grade in this area.

The Draft

The Bills had the 5th highest number of games started by players drafted from 2006 through 2010, but it's hard to give them a great score. They were fairly aggressive in moving up to take players they liked early in the draft - - moved up to #26 to take John McCargo in 2006 (oops!!), to # 34 to take Paul

Posluszny in 2007 and to #51 to take Andy Levitre in 2009. It's hard to forget about two major first round flops in two years in McCargo and Aaron Maybin. 2006 1st round DB Donte Whitner moved into the starting lineup as a rookie and was a solid choice. RB Marshawn Lynch, 1st rounder in 2007) got off to a great start and then fizzled and was traded. 2008 1st round DB Leodis McKelvin moved into the starting lineup last year and is still in the iffy stage. 2009 1st round OL Eric Wood (obtained in a trade for OT Jason Peter) looks promising and it's too soon tell about 2010 1st round RB C J Spiller. 5th rounder Kyle Williams from 2006 started more games in 2006-2010 than any other draft choice.

Free Agent Signings

The Bills have not been particularly active in the free agent market and other than their one-year fling with Terrell Owens have confined their signings to lower level guys who come in, start two seasons or less, usually less, and then move on.

Trades

The Bills have traded away RB Willis McGahee (for two 3^{rds} and a 7th), LB Takeo Spikes (packaged with Kelly Holcomb for Darius Walker and a 7th), OT Jason Peter (for a 1st and a 4th), RB Marshawn Lynch (for a 4th) and QB Kelly Holcomb and really haven't received a whole lot in return. Their major trade acquisition was DL Marcus Stroud, who was acquired using some of the draft choices acquired in trades.

Stability

Stability has been an issue with the Bills and they rank 25th in the Stability Index. This is a reflection of their failure to develop a strong core of players. 46 different players started at least one game for the Bills in 2009 and 50 players started in 2010, including 10 offensive linemen. Despite the increase in the number of starters, 2010 was actually somewhat better than 2009 as 15 players started at least 13 games but this is still an issue.

Quarterbacks

Three different QBs have started almost all the games for the Bills over the past five seasons with very limited success. A first round draft choice was invested in JP Losman in 2004, but he ultimately flopped. Trent Edward, a 3rd rounder in 2007, was next, and showed flashes but was not the guy. Ryan Fitzpatrick, a free agent pickup from the Bengals, is the current starter. He has shown enough to make Bills fans hopeful, but the jury is still out on him. Bills QB play has ranked near the bottom of the league.

Quarterback Starts

Player	How Acquired (Selection #)	Year Acquired	Number of Starts
Trent Edwards	D – 92	2007	32
JP Losman	D – 22	2004	25
Ryan Fitzpatrick	FA	2009	21
Brian Brohm	FA	2009	2

MIAMI DOLPHINS

Won-Lost Record

2006	6-10	2008	11-5	2010	7-9
2007	1-15	2009	7-9	All Years	32-48 Rank: 25

Dolphins Metrics

Metric	Dolphins	NFL Average	Rank
Percentage of Games Started By:			
Players on 2005 Roster	33%	43%	24
Players Drafted from 2006 thru 2010	22%	26%	28
Players signed as free agents or acquired in trades	45%	31%	3
Stability Index	64.1%	71.8%	28
Number of Players who started 13 games or more in a season	76	75	16

Players Starting 32 Games or More

From 2005 Roster		Players Drafted: 2006-2010			Other Players Signed: 2005-2010			
Yeremiah Bell	59	Ted Ginn Jr	2007-9	35 - T	Will Allen	FA	2006	53
Ronnie Brown	57	Kendall Langford	2008-66	43	Anthony Fasano	T	2008	44
Vernon Carey	76	Jake Long	2008-1	48	Andre Goodman	FA	2006	34 - FA
Channing Crowder	61	Samson Satele	2007-60	32 - T	Renaldo Hill	FA	2006	38 - FA
Rex Hadnot	32 - FA				Joey Porter	FA	2007	45 - F
Vonnie Holliday	43 - W				L J Shelton	FA	2006	32 - F
Jason Taylor	47 - FA				Randy Starks	FA	2008	36

Bold indicates a player was not on the team at the end of the 2010 season with the letter designation indicating how they left the team
 T= Traded; R = Retired; W= Waived; FA= Lost in Free Agency; F= Released

Quick Take

The Dolphins have relied mainly on trades and free agent signings as a source of talent. They have had what seems like a relatively large number of early round flops that have impeded their progress.

Players from 2005 Roster

The Dolphins were coming off a winning season in 2005, but rank 24th in the league in starts from players who were on their 2005 roster. Only five players (Yeremiah Bell, Ronnie Brown, Vernon Carey, Channing Crowder and Ricky Williams) from the 2005 roster started games in 2010, and three of those are not on the 2011 roster. The Dolphins released their starting 2005 QB (journeyman Gus Frerotte) and lost half their starting defensive backfield to free agency before the 2006 season and other 2005 starters either got old or moved on shortly thereafter.

The Draft

Despite all the openings created by the departure of players from the 2005 roster, the Dolphins had the fifth lowest number of starts from players drafted between 2006 and 2010. The Dolphins got virtually no help from the 2006 draft. 2007 brought Ted Ginn and Samson Satele, both of whom were subsequently

traded, and Paul Soliai, who started most of 2010. While Ginn was disappointing he did see time as a starter and Satele started every game of his first two seasons. The 2008 draft was solid as Jake Long became an immediate fixture and 2nd rounder Chad Henne and 3rd rounder Kendall Langford have been a starters. 2nd rounder Phillip Merling has largely been a bust. 2009 brought Vontae Davis, Sean Smith and Chris Clemons (all DBs) who have been starters but two more early round busts in Pat White and Patrick Turner. Early returns on the 2010 draft are promising. Rate this area as subpar but improving.

Free Agent Signings

The Dolphins have been somewhat active in the free agent market, with the most significant signings including Will Allen, Renaldo Hill, Chad Pennington, Joey Porter, Randy Starks and Cameron Wake (from the CFL). A number of other free agents spent a year or two with the Dolphins before moving on.

DRAFTMETRIC rates the Dolphins as being fair in this area.

Trades

The Dolphins were extremely active in the trade market. Several of them (trades for Daunte Culpepper, Joey Harrington, Trent Green and Tyler Thigpen) were attempts to land a QB without expending a draft choice. The Dolphins expended a 2nd rounder and three 5th rounders in these trades.

There were a number of other trades, with the results being a mixed bag in their success. The Dolphins traded Wes Welker to the Patriots for a 2nd and a 7th, with the 2nd used to take Samson Satele. Satele started for his first two seasons and then was dumped in an exchange of 4th round picks with the Dolphins also receiving a 7th. Jason Taylor was traded to the Redskins for a 2nd and a 6th, with the 2nd used to take Pat White. Enough said about that. Ted Ginn was sent to the 49ers for a 5th round choice, a rather skimpy return for a former 1st rounder. On the positive side, the Dolphins traded Chris Chambers for a 2nd rounder that ended up being Chad Henne. They also acquired two players who saw starting action (Akin Ayodele and Anthony Fasano) for a 4th round pick. The jury is still out on their trade for Brandon Marshall, where they surrendered two 2nd rounders. Again, just a fair rating for the Dolphins in the trade market.

Stability

The Dolphins had the 5th lowest stability index in the league. It is interesting that their two least stable years were 2007 (when they went from a 6-10 record in 2006 to a 1-15 record in 2007) and 2008 (when they went from 1-15 to 11-5). In 2007, only 12 players started 13 games or more and such players as Kevin Carter, Zach Thomas, Randy McMichael, Damion McIntosh and Joey Harrington were gone from the 2006 teams. Key injuries to most of their defensive secondary plus RB Ronnie Brown also contributed to the lack of stability, as did the failure to establish an effective quarterback. The low level of stability in 2008 was due to an influx of talent from the 2008 draft (rookies Jake Long and Kendall Langford), a trade with the Cowboys for Fasano and Ayodele and the signing of such free agents as Chad Pennington, Justin Smiley, Jason Ferguson and Ike Ndukwe. In their 2008 winning season, they had 19 players who started 13 or more games, indicating they avoided serious injuries and that, although there was a significant amount of turnover from the prior season, things were pretty stable during the season.

Quarterbacks

Eight different QBs started for the Dolphins between 2006 and 2010. Chad Henne has started 27 games in the last two seasons but he has not yet finally established himself as the long-term solution, as evidenced by the trade talks between the Dolphins and Broncos earlier in 2011. The Dolphins have traded for five QBs but in all cases were trying to make an acquisition on the cheap. Henne has potential but this continues to be an issue for Miami

Quarterback Starts

Player	How Acquired (Selection #)	Year Acquired	Number of Starts
Chad Henne	D-57	2008	27
Chad Pennington	FA	2008	20
Joey Harrington	T	2006	11
Cleo Lemon	T	2005	8
Trent Green	T	2007	5
John Beck	D-40	2007	4
Daunte Culpepper	T	2006	4
Tyler Thigpen	T	2009	1

NEW YORK JETS

Won-Lost Record

2006	10-6	2008	9-7	2010	11-5
2007	4-12	2009	9-7	All Years	43-37 Rank: 14

Jets Metrics

Metric	Jets	NFL Average	Rank
Percentage of Games Started By:			
Players on 2005 Roster	40%	43%	19
Players Drafted from 2006 thru 2010	26%	26%	18
Players signed as free agents or acquired in trades	34%	31%	13
Stability Index	70.1%	71.8%	21
Number of Players who started 13 games or more in a season	82	75	5

Players Starting 32 Games or More

From 2005 Roster		Players Drafted: 2006-2010			Other Players Signed: 2005-2010			
Chris Baker	42 - F	D. Ferguson	2006-4	80	Anthony Clement	FA	2006	32 - F
Eric Barton	47 - FA	David Harris	2007-47	52	Alan Faneca	FA	2008	32 - W
Laveranues Coles	42 - FA	Dustin Keller	2008-30	32	Thomas Jones	T	2007	44 - W
Jerricho Cotchery	64	Nick Mangold	2006-29	80	Calvin Pace	FA	2008	39
Shaun Ellis	78	Darrelle Reavis	2007-14	61	Bart Scott	FA	2009	32
Brandon Moore	80				Damien Woody	FA	2008	45
Kerry Rhodes	62 - T							
Bryan Thomas	71							

Bold indicates a player was not on the team at the end of the 2010 season with the letter designation indicating how they left the team
T= Traded; R = Retired; W= Waived; FA= Lost in Free Agency; F= Released

Quick Take

The Jets have done a really solid job of building a contending team and have used a variety of means to acquire talent. They are not afraid to get rid of starters (e.g., Alan Faneca and Thomas Jones) and try to upgrade through internal or external sources.

Players from 2005 Roster

The Jets were coming off a disappointing 4-12 season in 2005 with Chad Pennington injured for most of the season and Brooks Bollinger getting most of the starts. The Jets were in the middle of the pack as far players from the 2005 roster starting subsequent games, but only Jerricho Cotchery, Shaun Ellis, Brandon Moore, Siane Pouha and Bryan Thomas lasted until 2010. Several key players from 2005 were lost after that season with John Abraham being traded, Curtis Martin lost to free agency and Ty Law and Kevin Mawae being released. They did get contributions from a number of players who left before 2010, though, as Chris Baker, Eric Barton, Laveranues Coles and Kerry Rhodes all played significant roles while with the Jets.

The Draft

The Jets have been aggressive in moving up to take the players they want, having moved up to take Kellen Clemens, Darrelle Revis, David Harris, Dustin Keller, Mark Sanchez and Shonn Greene. They also were able to add an extra 1st rounder by trading John Abraham and ending up with Nick Mangold. The only certifiable early round flop was Vernon Gholston, now departed, who the Jets took with the first 6th pick in the 2008 draft. Otherwise, the Jets have focused more on quality than quantity in the draft by using the trade-ups and have been very successful at it.

Free Agent Signings

The Jets have not gone overboard on free agent signings, but have made some good ones. The most significant were Alan Faneca, Jim Leonhard, Calvin Pace, Tony Richardson, Bart Scott and Damien Woody. Faneca was released after the 2009 season but all have played well for the Jets. They have been smart with their signings and get a good grade.

Trades

Most of the Jets trades have been the previously mentioned trade-ups. The Jets did acquire Thomas Jones as part of a trade-down deal, Kris Jenkins for a 3rd and a 5th (though injuries ruined what would have been a good trade), Braylon Edwards for a 3rd, a 5th and two minor players, Antonio Cromartie for a 2nd and rented Brett Favre for a year in exchange for a 3rd. They also got a bargain in obtaining Santonio Holmes for a 5th round selection. The Jets have also traded away a few players with John Abraham shipped out for what turned out to be Nick Mangold; Jonathan Vilma traded for what was essentially a 5th round choice and Kerry Rhodes traded for a 4th and 7th. The Jets get lots of credit for their trade-ups and did a good job with other trades in filling immediate needs. High grades here.

Stability

The Jets did not have a great stability rating (ranking 21st) but this was largely due to their steady infusion of new talent into their organization. With the exception of Curtis Martin, most of the players who left the Jets were the results of an action by the Jets. Their stability rating was pretty level from year to year which support a steady infusion. **DRAFTMETRICS** thought it was interesting to look at the details.

- 2006
 - Chad Pennington returns from injury; Kimo von Oelhoffen and Bryan Thomas replace John Abraham and James Reed; Adrian Jones, Kevin Mawae, Scott Gragg and Jonathan Goodwin are replaced by Nick Mangold, D'Brickashaw Ferguson and AnthonyClement ; Curtis Martin and Jerald Sowell are replaced by a consortium of RBs; Chris Baker replaces Doug Jolley; Andre Dyson replaces Ty Law
- 2007
 - Darrelle Revis replaces Andre Dyson; Adrien Clarke replaces Pete Kendall; David Harris replaces an injured Jonathan Vilma; Kenyon Coleman replaces Kimo von Oelhoffen; Thomas Jones replaces the consortium of RBs.

- 2008
 - Calvin Pace replaces Victor Hobson; Alan Faneca replaces Adrien Clarke; Damien Woody replaces Anthony Clement; Brett Favre replaces Chad Pennington; Dwight Lowery replaces David Barrett; Kris Jenkins replaces Dewayne Robertson.
- 2009
 - Jim Leonhard replaces Abram Elam; Sione Pouha replaces Kenyon Coleman; Bart Scott replaces Eric Barton; Mark Sanchez replaces Brett Favre; Dustin Keller replaces Chris Baker; Braylon Edwards replaces Laveranues Coles; Marques Douglas replaces Kris Jenkins
- 2010
 - Antonio Cromartie replaced Dwight Lowery; Brodney Pool replaced Rhodes; Mike Devito replaced Marques Douglas; Matt Slausen replaced Alan Faneca; LaDainian Tomlinson replaced Thomas Jones; Santonio Holmes replaced Jericho Cotchery.

Quarterbacking

The Jets moved from an injury plagued Chad Pennington to a one-year rental in Brett Favre to what looks to be a long-term answer in Mark Sanchez.

Quarterback Starts

Player	How Acquired (Selection #)	Year Acquired	Number of Starts
Mark Sanchez	D- 5	2009	31
Chad Pennington	D- 18	2000	24
Bret Favre	T	2008	16
Kellen Clemens	D-49	2006	9

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS

Won-Lost Record

2006	12-4	2008	11-5	2010	14-2
2007	16-0	2009	10-6	All Years	63-17 Rank: 1st

Patriots Metrics

Metric	Patriots	NFL Average	Rank
Percentage of Games Started By:			
Players on 2005 Roster	58%	43%	6
Players Drafted from 2006 thru 2010	16%	26%	31
Players signed as free agents or acquired in trades	26%	31%	22
Stability Index	74.3%	71.8%	14
Number of Players who started 13 games or more in a season	65	75	31

Players Starting 32 Games or More

From 2005 Roster		Players Drafted: 2006-2010			Other Players Signed: 2005-2010			
Tom Brady	65	Jerod Mayo	2008 – 10	44	Randy Moss	T	2007	51 - T
Tedy Bruschi	42 – R	Brandon Meriweather	2007- 24	40	Adalius Thomas	FA	2007	35 - R
Ellis Hobbs	41 – T				Wes Welker	T	2007	52
Nick Kaczur	51							
Dan Kppen	79							
Matt Light	75							
Logan Mankins	73							
Stephen Neal	50							
James Sanders	48							
Richard Seymour	38 - T							
Mike Vrabel	45 - T							
Ty Warren	56							
Ben Watson	37 - FA							
Vince Wilfork	74							

Bold indicates a player was not on the team at the end of the 2010 season with the letter designation indicating how they left the team

T= Traded; R = Retired; W= Waived; FA= Lost in Free Agency; F= Released

Quick Take

The Patriots aren't afraid to make bold personnel moves. Their willingness to trade veterans and trade down on draft day allows them to accumulate draft choices and gives them a margin for error that no other team has. High grades, especially for the willingness to be aggressive.

Players from 2005 Roster

The Patriots rank 6th in the percentage of starts by players who were on the 2005 roster. Nine players from that roster started games in 2010, including four of their starting offensive linemen. The others were Tom Brady, Kevin Faulk, James Sanders, Vince Wilfork and Mike Wright. A 10th (Deion Branch) left the team in a trade and then came back. The Patriots traded a handful of those veterans on the roster (Ellis Hobbs, Richard Seymour, Mike Vrabel), lost a few to free agency (Willie McGinest, David Givens,

Asante Samuel, Ben Watson, Eugene Wilson) and others (Tedy Bruschi, Roosevelt Colvin, Corey Dillon, Nick Kaczur) left football during the 2006-2010 time period. In short, the Patriots were pretty much able to hang on to the players they wanted and dealt off other good players to help ensure the future. High marks for retaining key players.

The Draft

The Patriots ranked next to last (ahead of only the Cowboys) in number of games started by draft choices made in 2006-2010. Most of the talent they have acquired through the draft is on the defensive side of the ball (Brandon Meriweather, now gone, Jerald Mayo, Patrick Chung, Brandon Spikes, Devin McCourty). Laurence Maroney was pretty much a first round bust and other choices (Chad Jackson, Terrence Wheatley, Shawn Crable, Ron Brace) have underperformed, at least to this point. The Patriots have employed a strategy of trading down in the draft and trading veterans to accumulate draft choices. The Patriots have had only fair results give the number of choices they had, but have accumulated enough choices that they have a margin for error. For example, the Patriots had a total of seven 2nd round choices in the 2009 and 2010 drafts.

Free Agent Signings

The Patriots have pretty much stayed away from high priced free agents (although they did sign Ocho Cinco and Haynesworth in 2011) with only Adalius Thomas falling into that category. Thomas looked like a great signing but has disappointed. The Patriots have done okay with undrafted free agents and “transient free agents” as well. Kyle Arrington found his way into the starting lineup in 2010 after being signed to the practice squad in 2009 after being waived by the Bucs. Dan Connolly is another player who came in on the practice squad after being released by the Jaguars and moved into the starting lineup. BenJarvis Green Ellis and Gary Guyton were signed by the Patriots as undrafted free agents and went on to start.

Trades

The Patriots have been very opportunistic in the trade market and have not been afraid to take on problem players. Their best trades have been at the wide receiver position where they acquired Randy Moss for a 4th rounder (and subsequently traded him away for a 3rd) and Wes Welker for a 2nd and a 7th. They also traded away Deion Branch for a 1st round choice (used to take Brandon Meriweather) and then re-acquired him for a 7th round pick. As mentioned earlier they have also traded away a number of veterans to stockpile draft choices. These trades include Matt Cassel and Mike Vrabel for a 2nd rounder, and Richard Seymour for a 1st rounder. They have also actively traded draft choices to move both up, down and horizontally (e.g., a 2009 pick for a 2010 pick).

Looking at their trade-ups and trade-downs is enough to make one’s head spin. Suffice it to say that they do a lot of it.

Stability

The Patriots are in about the middle of the pack as far as stability goes. The Patriots have not been afraid to let veterans go and have been creative in finding ways to improve their lineup. Their worst year for stability was 2010, largely due to injuries. Leigh Bodden, Brandon McGowan, Ty Warren and Nick Kaczur all lost the entire year due to injury and were replaced by Devin McCourty, Kyle Arrington, Gerard Warren and Sebastian Vollmer. In addition, Randy Moss and Adalius Thomas were cut loose, creating starting opportunities for Brandon Tate and Brandon Spikes. There were also major changes at TE with Alge Crumpler, Rob Gronkowski and Aaron Hernandez combining for 27 starts in 2010 versus none in 2009. Finally, Rob Ninkovich, Jermaine Cunningham and BenJarvis Green-Ellis worked their way into the starting lineup.

The other interesting point on stability is the Patriots had the second lowest number of players who started 13 or more games, behind only the Lions. In 2009 and 2010 there were only 21 players who reached that milestone. While injuries probably account for most of that, there is also the element of the Patriots using varying personnel groupings as part of their game strategy. For example, three different tight ends started a total of 27 games in 2010.

Quarterbacks

There are no starting QB issues with the Patriots as Tom Brady is firmly entrenched as one of the game's best. The only issue with the Patriots is whether they have an adequate backup if Brady goes down. Ryan Mallett was drafted early in the 2011 draft, presumably to be groomed as Brady's successor.

Quarterback Starts

Player	How Acquired (Selection #)	Year Acquired	Number of Starts
Tom Brady	D – 199	2000	65
Matt Cassell	D – 230	2005	15