

Three big questionable rulings by referee Boger's crew in NE loss

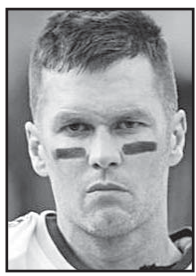
Patriots go from very back luck to very bad look

WASHINGTON, Dec 10, (AP): One day, things aren't looking good at all for the New England Patriots. The next, the defending champs are grappling with a very bad look.

A day after officiating blunders and another poor passing performance by Tom Brady were the biggest takeaways from New England's first home loss in two years, the Patriots acknowledged that a video crew working for the team filmed the Cincinnati sideline during the Bengals' game at Cleveland.

Cincinnati play New England this weekend.

Yes, another camera-spying flap from the team that brought the term "Spygate" into the NFL lexicon in 2007 when the Patriots were caught



Brady

Crucial calls made in the final

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minute of the Dolphins-Jets game and the 49ers-Saints showdown in a wild Week 14 were overshadowed by the Patriots' mushrooming problems.

In a statement posted on Twitter and the team website, the Patriots said a three-person crew for a web series titled "Do Your Job" "inappropriately filmed the field from the press box" as part of a feature on the scouting department. The filming took place "without specific knowledge of league rules," the statement said.

The Patriots said the Browns, the home team, granted the crew credentials but in an "unintended oversight," the team failed to inform the Bengals or the NFL and when confronted, the crew "immediately turned over all footage to the league and cooperated fully," the team said.

Spygate, as The AP's Jimmy Golen wrote, helped fuel a widespread distrust of the team that reverberated a decade later when the Patriots were accused of illegally deflating footballs used in the 2015 AFC championship game. Brady was suspended four games, and the team was fined \$1 million and docked another first-round draft pick.

A few years after Spygate, Josh McDaniels, who was head coach in Denver between stints as Brady's offensive play caller, was fired in the aftermath of a video scandal in which Steve Scarnecchia, the son of longtime Patriots offensive line coach Dante Scarnecchia and who followed McDaniels to Denver, illegally filmed the 49ers' practice ahead of a 2010 game against the Broncos in London.

Asked about the latest vexing videotape reports during his radio show on Monday, Belichick told WEEI the video crew was completely separate from the football staff: "We have absolutely nothing to do with anything that they produce or direct or shoot. I have never seen any of their tapes or anything else. This is something that we 100% have zero involvement with."

It hardly seems necessary for the Patriots (10-3) to need special intel on the signals of the Bengals (1-12). Then again, the Patriots' past rap sheet means football fans outside New England don't give them the benefit of the doubt.

On Sunday, the Patriots didn't get the calls that seemingly always went their way at Gillette Stadium.

There were three big questionable rulings by referee Jerome Boger's crew in New England's 23-16 loss to Kansas City:

1. Travis Kelce's fumble in the

Eagles grab share of NFC East lead



Philadelphia Eagles' Jay Ajayi (28) is tackled by New York Giants' Dalvin Tomlinson (94), Janoris Jenkins (20), Corey Ballentine (25) and Michael Thomas (31) during the first half of an NFL football game against the New York Giants on Dec 9 in Philadelphia. (AP)

waning seconds of the third quarter. Hit by Devin McCourty, the Chiefs tight end fumbles the football and Stephon Gilmore recovers with plenty of room to run toward the end zone. The play is blown dead, however, and Kelce ruled down by contact. Belichick uses his final challenge and the call is overturned. New England get the ball at their 43.

2. The Patriots quickly drive to the Kansas City 15 and N'Keal Harry is ruled out of bounds at the 3 after an apparent touchdown catch from Brady with 13:22 remaining in the game. TV replays show Harry stayed inbounds on what should have been ruled a score. Belichick is out of challenges after losing one in which he asked for a better spot and offensive pass interference on a play earlier in the game but lost on both counts.

Three plays later, New England settled for a field goal to get to 23-16. "I thought it was a touchdown," Harry said. "I'm pretty sure everyone else saw it was a touchdown."

Nope. Boger told a pool reporter after the game that the covering official on the Harry play was blocked out by defenders.

"The downfield official who was on the goal line and looking back toward the field of play had that he stepped out at the 3-yard line," Boger said. "So, they got together and conferred on that. The final ruling was that he was out of bounds at the 3-yard line."

Because all scoring plays are reviewed, a ruling of touchdown would have ultimately gotten the

call right, but Boger said he wasn't inclined to overrule his crew mates to get to the fail-safe automatic review.

"Those two officials who are covering it, they look at it in real time," Boger said. "This case was unique in that the guy who would have ruled touchdown had him short. So maybe if the ruling official on the goal line had a touchdown, we could have gotten into that, but he thought that that guy stepped out of bounds. The goal line wasn't in the play."

3. Officials missed a defensive pass interference by cornerback Kendall Fuller on a deep pass to Phillip Dorsett with 3½ minutes remaining that would have spotted the ball at the Kansas City 6. The non-call brought up fourth-and-6 at the Kansas City 29 and Brady scrambled for 17 yards for a first down.

But on fourth-and-3 from the Kansas City 5-yard line, Bashaud Breeland expertly defended Brady's pass to Julian Edelman in the end zone and knocked it away.

Game over. Brady's 169 yards passing were his second-fewest this season, and the Patriots' 21-game home winning streak, tied for longest in franchise history, was also finished.

Boger only addressed Harry's TD-that-wasn't after the game, not Kelce's fumble, the uncalled pass interference or Donte Hightower's late shove that sent Patrick Mahomes tumbling into the team's coolers that drew no flag.

Eli Manning struggles in Giants loss

PHILADELPHIA, Dec 10, (AP): Carson Wentz relied on a bunch of guys off the practice squad and his go-to guy Zach Ertz to rally the Philadelphia Eagles.

After Eli Manning led the New York Giants to a 14-point lead, Wentz brought the injury-depleted Eagles back and tossed a 2-yard touchdown pass to Ertz in overtime to give Philadelphia a 23-17 win on Monday night.

The Eagles (6-7) snapped a three-game losing streak and moved into a tie with Dallas (6-7) for first place in the NFC East. Philadelphia takes the division title if it wins its final three games. The Eagles meet the Cowboys in Week 16.

"Guys stepped up and made plays," Wentz said. "We had guys moving around and I had no choice but to trust these guys." The Eagles were down to one healthy wide receiver by the end of the game and were using inexperienced guys and players out of position. Ertz, a Pro Bowl tight end, had to line up at wide receiver.

"We understood as a team that we had to find a way," Ertz said.

Manning, the two-time Super Bowl MVP, threw a pair of TD passes to Darius Slayton in his first game since Week 2. Filling in for injured rookie

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Daniel Jones, Manning was 15 of 30 for 203 yards. But he couldn't prevent New York (2-11) from losing its ninth straight game, tying a franchise record set in 1976, when the team opened 0-9.

"I've played a lot of football games," Manning said. "I know the offense and know what I'm supposed to do. I made some good throws and didn't make some plays that I needed to." Wentz threw for 325 yards and a pair of TDs, including a 5-yard toss to Ertz to tie it at 17 with 1:53 left.

Already missing three starters on offense, the Eagles lost wide receiver Alshon Jeffery and right tackle Lane Johnson in the first half and were booted off the field trailing 17-3 at halftime.

They went three-and-out on five straight possessions before Boston Scott caught a 10-yard pass on third-and-5 in the third quarter. Scott then ran 4 yards to the 2 on third-and-3 and scored on the next play to cut it to 17-10.

Scott, one of the former practice squad players, provided a big spark. He had 59 yards rushing and 69 yards receiving. "Just do my job. You never know when your opportunity might come," Scott said. Wentz drove Philadelphia to the Giants 29 with just under 10 minutes left but Greg Ward dropped what should've been a 29-yard TD pass on third-and-11. Jake Elliott then missed a 47-yard field goal wide left.

But the defense held and Wentz drove the Eagles 85 yards and connected with Ertz to tie it.

The Eagles won the toss in overtime and went 75 yards. Ertz had nine catches

NFL Standings

WASHINGTON, Dec 10, (RTS): Standings from the NFL on Monday.

American Football Conference						National Football Conference							
W	L	T	PF	PA	PCT	W	L	T	PF	PA	PCT		
NE Pats	10	3	0	338	168	.769	Dallas	6	7	0	334	267	.462
Buffalo	9	4	0	274	212	.692	Eagles	6	7	0	297	301	.462
NY Jets	5	8	0	226	301	.385	Washington	3	10	0	188	310	.231
Miami	3	10	0	221	399	.231	NY Giants	2	11	0	247	362	.154
AFC North						NFC North							
W	L	T	PF	PA	PCT	W	L	T	PF	PA	PCT		
Baltimore	11	2	0	430	236	.846	GB Pacs	10	3	0	309	270	.769
Pittsburgh	8	5	0	259	242	.615	Vikings	9	4	0	339	249	.692
Cleveland	6	7	0	273	291	.462	Chicago	7	6	0	243	232	.538
Cincinnati	1	12	0	198	325	.077	Detroit	3	9	1	287	335	.269
AFC South						NFC South							
W	L	T	PF	PA	PCT	W	L	T	PF	PA	PCT		
Houston	8	5	0	317	309	.615	Saints	10	3	0	344	296	.769
Tennessee	8	5	0	318	255	.615	TB Buc	6	7	0	378	381	.462
Indianapolis	6	7	0	296	295	.462	Carolina	5	8	0	300	360	.385
Jacksonville	4	9	0	230	337	.308	Atlanta	4	9	0	300	343	.308
AFC West						NFC West							
W	L	T	PF	PA	PCT	W	L	T	PF	PA	PCT		
KC Chiefs	9	4	0	371	281	.692	SF 49ers	11	2	0	397	229	.846
Oakland	6	7	0	258	366	.462	Seattle	10	3	0	341	321	.769
Denver	5	8	0	236	261	.385	LA Rams	8	5	0	311	262	.615
LA Chargers	5	8	0	289	251	.385	Arizona	3	9	1	272	374	.269

Amazon secures top CL rights for Germany

BERLIN, Dec 10, (RTS): Amazon.com has secured the rights to broadcast top European soccer Champions League matches for the 2021/22 season in Germany, the US company said on Tuesday.

Amazon said it would be broadcasting Champions League matches on Tuesday evenings from 2021. "We're excited to bring UEFA Champions League football to our customers in Germany," Alex Green, managing director at Amazon's Prime Video Sport Europe division, said in a statement.

Amazon's move into broadcasting top sports events is seen as a way to boost its Prime subscription service rather than a bid to become a pay-TV operator, although its entry into the market is shaking up the multi-billion dollar battle for sports rights.

The company has had the audio rights for the German Bundesliga since 2017 and has just started showing the English Premier League after it won the rights to 20 matches a season including early December midweek games and Christmas games.

Amazon Prime membership costs 69 euros (\$76.05) a year in Germany, its second largest market outside the United States.

Champions League rights in Germany are currently held by Comcast's Sky, which charges 39.99 euros a month for its sport package. Amazon has also bought rights for tennis and the US National Football League (NFL) to bolster its offering, along with entertainment content such as motoring show "The Grand Tour" and drama "The Man In The High Castle".

for 91 yards.

Manning connected with Slayton for a 35-yard TD on a third-and-13 to give the Giants a 7-0 lead on the first play of the second quarter. Ronald Darby missed a tackle that would've stopped Slayton short of a first down.

Manning hit Slayton for a 55-yard TD on third-and-8 with 27 seconds left in the first half to give the Giants a 17-3 lead. "I thought he battled. He did a lot of good things," Giants coach Pat Shurmur said of Manning.

Down 7-0, the Eagles got going when Wentz connected with Ertz on consecutive passes of 24 and 30 yards. Wentz then hit Ward for a 9-yard TD that was negated by a holding call on Brandon Brooks. The Eagles settled for Elliott's 34-yard field goal.

Aldrick Rosas hit a 34-yarder to make it 10-3.

Manning, who turns 39 next month,

is a free agent after the season. It's uncertain when Jones will return, so it's possible Manning could make at least one more start at home.

The Eagles had lost 19 straight games when trailing by 14 or more points in the second half before rallying against the Giants. They previously overcame a 20-6 deficit in a 30-27 win over Indianapolis in Week 2 of the 2014 season.

TE Evan Engram (foot) and CB Corey Ballentine (concussion) were among the key players inactive.

Eagles: Jeffery (foot) and Johnson (ankle) didn't return after exiting in the second quarter. ... Regular starters DE Derek Barnett (ankle), WR Nelson Agholor (knee), RB Jordan Howard (shoulder) and LB Kamu Grugier-Hill (concussion) were inactive.

Giants host Miami (3-10) next Sunday. Eagles play at Washington (3-10) next Sunday.



In this file photo, Houston Texans quarterback Deshaun Watson (4) dives past New England Patriots outside linebacker Elandon Roberts (52) to score a touchdown during the second half of an NFL football game on Dec 1 in Houston. (AP)