

How the Patriots won the Super Bowl (again)

Bill Belichick used carefully designed blitz packages to shut down the Rams
by Jack Soble

For many, Super Bowl LIII was a complete dud. Zero touchdowns were scored until New England Patriots running back Sony Michel found pay dirt in the fourth quarter. His team ended up beating the LA Rams by a score of 13-3.

However, what may have seemed like an offensive disaster for the Rams was actually an exhibition in defensive scheming and execution for the Patriots, led by legendary head coach Bill Belichick.

A perfect example of this is when cornerback Stephon Gilmore intercepted Rams QB Jared Goff deep in Patriots territory and late in the fourth quarter, all but putting the game away. I took a look at how Belichick forced Goff into a massive mistake.

Even before the snap on this fateful play, the Rams were in big trouble. New England displayed

a very common defensive tactic: showing a blitz from one side and bringing one from the other.



The image above is how the Patriots lined up, and the red arrows show where the Rams thought that the Patriots' attackers (safety Devin McCourty, 32, and linebacker Kyle Van Noy, 53) were coming from.

To counter this standard six-man rush, the Rams used this protection scheme:



It's a gap scheme on the offense's left and a man scheme on its right. The center, left guard, and left tackle take whoever shows up in the gap to their left, and the right guard, right tackle and running back Todd Gurley are locked onto an individual rusher, shown by the red lines above.

This, however, is exactly what New England wanted LA to think

and do. Instead of sending Van Noy, they actually drop him into coverage and bring safety Duron Harmon (21), overloading the offense's right. Because the protection scheme anticipated a different pressure than they got, nobody could possibly account for Harmon, as shown below with the red arrows.



The result: a completely free lane for Harmon and thus a free shot at Goff.



Now, Goff is in deep trouble. He cannot take time to find a down field receiver, so instead he has to go to his hot read, or designated receiver to hit in case a free blitz comes in.

This is where a key fact that Belichick was counting on comes into play: Jared Goff is terrible when pressured. He is arguably elite when he has time and space to throw, but

he can't function with defenders in his face. What happened next was the norm, not the exception. And the Patriots knew it.

It is reasonable to suspect that his hot read was Josh Reynolds (circled in red, right), who was the only receiver running a quick route for an easy throw.

The Patriots' secondary was in cover zero, which means each non-rusher is in man coverage with no deep safety help, and were giving a large amount of space between themselves and their men so they wouldn't give up a big play.

Because of this, Reynolds was wide open for an easy five-yard completion - or even more if he was able to get past his defender.

In contrast to what he should have done, Goff inexplicably never even looked in Reynolds's direction. He instead tried to throw a go route to Brandin Cooks, and due to All-Pro CB Stephon Gilmore (24) playing off coverage, Cooks never had a prayer, and Gilmore easily picked it off.

It's easy to say "Goff just screwed up." And to be fair, he did. But the mistakes he made were ones that New England knew he would



make, and if they could manage to force him into making them enough, they would win the game.

This is much easier said than done against prodigy 33-year-old head coach Sean McVay and the Rams. If it were easy, they wouldn't be in the Super Bowl. That's what makes it so impressive that the Patriots - like our Chicago Bears before them, but with far inferior defensive talent - completely cracked the code.

And this is why I thoroughly enjoyed Super Bowl LIII. It may not have been the offensive extravaganza that many anticipated; rather it was a fascinating defensive chess match. Belichick flustered Goff and coached circles around McVay as he led New England to their sixth Lombardi trophy.

All images via NFL Game Pass

Hall of Honor opens at New Trier

Eight honored for contributions to NT athletics
by Marne Sullivan

On Feb. 1, the Athletic Department inducted its first class into the Hall of Honor. Between the boys and girls basketball game against Glenbrook South, the eight honorees were announced in front of the crowd and each received their own plaque and watch.

The Hall of Honor display is finished and will be updated next year and then biennially. In the corridor outside of G108 at the Winnetka Campus, the Hall of Honor is located down the hallway. The backdrop represents historic locations on both campuses including the pool, Gates Gymnasium and stadium at Northfield.

The pictures represent participants of all sports and athletic activity at New Trier.

Lee Kennicke, one of the inductees, commented about the display, "It looks wonderful, I've been gone for 17 years and the building looks very different."

The Hall of Honor committee consists of Athletic Director and Chairman, Augie Fontanetta, Assistant Athletic Director, James Burnside, Athletic Coordinator, Paul Moretta, as well as a minimum of six coaches representing both gender sports. The selected head coaches will serve a two-year term on the committee. They may continue to be on the committee after the term or someone else can fulfill their role.

"There are minimum requirements to be considered as a Head Coach, Assistant Coach, Administrator, or At-Large candidate. We look at years of service, contributions to their sport, as well as New Trier Athletics," Fontanetta stated.

He added that head coaches need 10 years of NT experience for induction, and assistant coaches need at least 20.

Fontanetta said, "All candidates must exemplify the NT athletic department mission statement and serve as a positive role model



Lee Kennicke prepares to enter the Hall in front of cheering fans | Twitter

throughout their careers." To be nominated, the individual has to be retired for at least three years.

Applications can be found online and anyone can nominate someone as a community member. The committee will then go through the applications.

Fontanetta did not forget to mention, "Anybody nominated, selected or not selected, they stay on file for three years. Some people were nominated, but not selected. So next year, we will go through theirs again, so their files don't have to be resubmitted." On Feb. 1, the athletic department had a reception and a staff dinner to welcome this year's inductees.

Kennicke, has been an important figure for New Trier Athletics. She was a Head Coach for Badminton, Girls Swimming and Diving, and Girls Track and Field. She also served as an Assistant Athletic Director and an Assistant Coach for volleyball. Kennicke also started New Trier's Student Athlete Leadership Team (S.A.L.T)

Kennicke said, "I was here for a very long time, I worked here for thirty years. I was fortunate enough to be there during the beginning of women's athletics."

Kennicke won the first-ever IHSA Girls Volleyball Championship while being the team's assistant coach. While she was the head coach for badminton, she won three state titles and was an IHSA State Tournament manager as well.

This award is not limited to former New Trier employees, but

also, for community members who have made a great impact on athletics. Lee Getschow was also selected and is the founder of New Trier's booster club.

Those may have mistakenly thought the Hall of Honor as the Hall of Fame.

According to Fontanetta, the title, "Hall of Honor is more appropriate because we honor those who really committed their lives, career, and students to NT." He believes the Hall of Fame is more related to professional sports and college athletics.

The Hall of Honor only includes adults, because that the athletic department recognizes student-athletes in other ways. Recently, next to the Hall of Honor, the athletic department has implemented an all-conference and all-state board. Any student-athlete who places with an IHSA medal gets their picture in the display case.

Fontanetta revealed that they will have another display in G109 and G110 hallway with former state champions. They will each have a name plaque with the year and the event that they won. Team trophies are another way of recognizing state champions.

"The Athletic Department felt it was a good time," said Fontanetta, "to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments and contributions of those who have dedicated their careers to help develop student-athletes at NT."

Sports over the holidays?

Athletes debate the pros and cons of events during break
by Lily Vance

Participating in high school athletics is a big commitment-including regularly scheduled practices and long competitions. Some students who are involved in sports are even expected to attend practices during school-mandated vacations.

These sports, especially varsity athletics, consist of hours of practices daily and long tournaments throughout the weekends.

For some athletes, practices and competitions over designated holidays can be frustrating. For others, these breaks are seen as more time for the team to continue preparing for games and tournaments.

Junior Emma Weaver of the Girls Soccer team argues that practices during breaks are important. She says her team may have long practices during break, but the training is beneficial. According to Weaver, the team needs to "stay in shape in order to perform at our best."

The girls soccer team is not in season during winter break, but they are strongly encouraged to participate in lifting. As for spring break, they continue practices since it is the middle of their season.

Weaver explained that the scheduled practices allow to team prosper. Lifting helps the team become stronger and help prevent injuries during the season. The training also helps the team feel more confident and prepared for upcoming games.

"Practices and lifts are essential especially when we get into playoffs," she said.

Senior Ford Baker, one of the captains of the Boys Track and Field team, agrees with this idea. He explained how the track and cross country teams have optional practices during school breaks since training plans are necessary for success.

Athletes in town are encouraged to train with the team during breaks, and those who are out of town are expected to perform their work on

their own. "At first, some people don't understand it. However, as you get older, people begin to realize its importance."

Baker said that breaks can interrupt their training and cause major issues. He believes that practices are necessary to get everyone back in shape, so the team doesn't go backwards in training. He understands how sometimes "it can be annoying to wake up and run, but it can also be fun to explore a new place."

Junior Cat Flood, on the Girls Varsity Volleyball team, said sports' demanding practices affect her personal time with her friends and family. She has practices three times a week and long tournaments on the weekend, starting early morning and ending late afternoons.

Flood argues that practices over break are not necessarily important, and should not be mandatory for the people who are gone. She said she "barely gets to spend any time with my family over the weekends because I am either doing homework, playing volleyball, resting or with my friends."

Flood said she is used to this schedule now. "As an athlete you grow up and realize that practice time is important."

Some teams continue their rigorous schedules throughout the majority of spring break. These prearranged practices can interfere with personal plans including vacation time with friends or family. Sophomore Ryan Kaestle, a New Trier baseball player, explained how the team is travelling during spring break, "it's fun to go on a trip with the team but I'd rather have spring break."

While some may believe that scheduled practices or games during break is unnecessary, while others say it is essential to a team's success during their season.

For many athletes, sports create memories and strong bonds throughout high school. It's this sentiment that keeps Weaver coming back. "I can't speak for my teammates," she said, "but I do know that we cherish the time we have together, whether its during break or not."