

TOM BRADY: Not bothered by the precautionary knee brace he now wears. JIM ROGASH/GETTY IMAGES

Brady poised to make triumphant return

Elements of 2007-08's record-setting season are in place to ensure success

By KARL YU
Epoch Times Staff

He has Super Bowl rings, MVP awards, and has been selected to the Pro Bowl four times—just to name a few of his achievements. But believe it or not, Tom Brady has a lot to prove this season.

Last season, in the Patriots' season opener against the Kansas City Chiefs, Brady suffered a torn MCL and ACL in his left knee early in the game and was lost for the season.

Matt Cassel filled in admirably in Brady's absence, leading New England to a credible 11-5 record, but the team still missed the postseason.

Cassel was dealt to the Kansas Chiefs during the off-season meaning that the Patriots' brass is pinning their hopes once again on No. 12.

Two seasons ago, Brady and his New England Patriots made history going 16-0 in the regular season. Brady did his part completing 398 of 578 passes for 4,806 yards with 50 TD passes, and only eight interceptions.

The Pats would eventually lose the perfect season in Super Bowl XLII to the New York Giants but were picked by many to make another trip to the Super Bowl at the outset of last season. But that hit a snag with the injury to Brady.

Brady's road to recovery has been a long one, rife with many reports

of setbacks, more surgeries, infections, and even a false report about the end of his career.

Still, the Michigan Wolverine alumnus has looked good at practice and has been a full participant at training camp, taking all the snaps.

In New England's first exhibition game on Aug. 13, Brady went 10-15 for 100 yards, 2 TDs, and 1 INT in a 27-25 victory over the Philadelphia Eagles.

At the post game press conference, Brady said that he felt fine physically and didn't feel any effects, not even from a brace on his repaired knee.

"You put [the brace] on and after that you don't notice it," he said.

"It's just precautionary at this point. I don't think about it much."

Brady saw limited action and went 4-8 for 57 yards in the team's second preseason game, a 7-6 loss to the Cincinnati Bengals last Thursday. While his numbers weren't stellar he did take a hit from Bengals linebacker Keith Rivers and got up with no problem. In fact, Brady was a little relieved to get hit in the game.

"Before the game, you always have this anxiousness, nervousness about the game. Then, once you take a hit, usually, it goes away... part of playing quarterback is taking those hits and getting up," Brady said at a press conference on Tuesday.

LOTS OF HELP

Coming back after major knee surgery can be hard and even if Brady doesn't fully return to his pre-injury form, the ingredients are still there for a very good season.

Randy Moss, who caught a career-high 23 TDs with Brady as QB in 2007, still managed 1,008 receiving yards and 11 TDs last season. He is one of the premier deep threats in the league and will help Brady put up good numbers again.

Fellow wide-out Wes Welker caught 111 balls last year and provides Brady with a good possession receiver.

The team also bolstered the ground game in the off-season, adding former Jacksonville Jaguars running back Fred Taylor to a backfield which already had Laurence Maroney. The running game can be a QB's best friend and the Taylor addition enables New England to grind it out, if that's what it takes.

The offensive line also features many of the same hogs as the 2007 team, including C Dan Koppen, LT Matt Light, and LG Logan Mankins. So Brady will be lining up behind a familiar O-line, particularly on his blindside.

With two more games to work off the rust and many of the same weapons as on that famed 2007 team, Brady seems intent on putting the injury behind him.

"Moving forward, you've just got to try to work as hard as you can to get back to your normal self and I really feel like I am," Brady said.

Love 'em or hate 'em, you gotta respect 'em

New York Yankees inspire mixed reactions but legendary achievements can't be overlooked

By KRISTEN MERIWETHER
Epoch Times Staff

There is no in middle ground when it comes to the New York Yankees. Regardless of how you feel, love them or hate them, you have to respect them.

As a Texas Rangers fan growing up, I was a Yankee-hater. They eliminated my Rangers in 1996, 1998, and 1999—the only years the franchise ever went to the playoffs.

In those years, the Yankees went on to win their 23rd, 24th, and 25th World Series. The Rangers have yet to win one.

I recently watched the 2001 movie "61*" which told the story of the 1961 home run race between Roger Maris and Mickey Mantle as they tried to break Babe Ruth's single season home run record.

Roger Maris went on to break Ruth's record on the last day of the season, smashing his 61st home run deep to right field off of Boston hurler Tracy Stallard.

That 1961 Yankees team consisted of three future Hall of Famers—Yogi Berra, Mickey Mantle, and Whitey Ford. That team also had eight All-Stars and won their 19th World Series.

It made me think. Am I "drinking the Hateraid" for valid reasons?

So I sat down and took a long, hard look at the Yankees organization, and a little bit of its history. I think it's worth acknowledging.

DOMINATION

The New York Yankees have dominated a major professional sport like no one else has. They have played in 39 World Series and won 26 times. The next most dominant team is the St. Louis Cardinals and they have "only" won 10 World Series.

The Bronx Bombers have played in at least one World Series in every decade since the 1920s. The 1980s was the only decade that they did not win the World Series.

Their best decade was the 1950s with six championships. In that 10-year span, they appeared in eight World Series. And the two they lost were lost in seven games. With Mickey Mantle, Yogi Berra, Billy Martin, Phil Rizzuto, and Whitey Ford, the Yankees were pretty much unstoppable.

The only other team to come close to that kind of domination in the four major North American sports is the NHL's Montreal Canadiens, who

have played in 35 Stanley Cup Finals and won 24 times.

Oddly enough, the 1950s proved to be the best years for the Canadiens, as they went to the finals every season except for the 1949-50 season. They also brought home five Stanley Cups in a row in that decade.

THE GREATS

Some of the greatest baseball players of all-time have donned the pinstripes.

Babe Ruth started it all for the Yankees. Before his acquisition, the Yankees had not even made it to the postseason. In 15 seasons, he led the Yanks to their first four World Series championships.

Hall of Famers Lou Gehrig, Joe DiMaggio, Phil Rizzuto, Yogi Berra, Whitey Ford, Mickey Mantle, and Reggie Jackson all brought championships to the Yankees.

While Billy Martin, Roger Maris, and Don Mattingly are not currently in the Hall of Fame, they are still considered Yankee greats.

Derek Jeter, Jorge Posada, and Mariano Rivera have spent the last 15 seasons with the Yankees and when they retire, they too will be considered Yankee greats.

This year, the Yankees started off slowly, most notably losing their first eight games to the rival Red Sox. After the All-Star break however, they have been on fire, losing only once to the Red Sox in seven games, and currently post the best record in baseball.

MONEYBALL

A championship is expected every year. The dry spell (no World Series title since 2000) hasn't gone unnoticed by owner George Steinbrenner. After not making the playoffs last season, Mr. Steinbrenner went on an off-season spending spree, picking up pitching aces CC Sabathia (\$161 million over seven years) and A.J. Burnett (\$82.5 million over five years). He also added slugging first baseman Mark Teixeira (\$180 million over eight years).

Yankee-haters say that the Yanks attempt to buy World Series championships.

But baseball does not have a salary cap. They have a luxury tax, and as long as Mr. Steinbrenner is willing to put up the money, the Yankees are not breaking any rules.

With success comes more money, and 26 championships have brought higher merchandise sales, put more people in the more expensive seats, and generated plenty of endorsement and partnership deals.

How else is Mr. Steinbrenner supposed to invest his money? You can't blame an owner for doing whatever he can to make his team better.

In the end, I will probably never root for the Yankees (unless of course they winning helps my Rangers in some way). But after looking into their history and understanding what the franchise has accomplished, I can't help but admire what they have achieved.

I will don my Red Sox hat whenever they face the Yankees, but I will refrain from the "Yankees Suck" chants. A team that has won 26 world championships definitely does not suck. They know how to win. I wish my team could do that. Artistic helmets in World Cup spotlight.



MAKARAPA: A fans of the Kaizer Chiefs sports some interesting headgear. ALEXANDER JOE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Artistic helmets in World Cup spotlight

GERMISTON, South Africa (Reuters)—The most eye-catching sight in the stands at next year's soccer World Cup will be thousands of jiving fans wearing elaborate headgear invented by a former cleaner in his township shack.

While the incessant blare of "vuvuzela" trumpets stirred controversy during the Confederations Cup in June—a dress rehearsal for next year's tournament—it was the extraordinary helmets worn by the fans that grabbed the eye.

The helmets, known as makarapas, are bound to stand out again in the globe's most watched event, giving unexpected fame to a humble invention.

Makarapas are made from the hard plastic hats worn by construction workers and range from simple painted designs to intricate stand-up cut-outs of players, teams or animals, often paired with giant mock spectacles.

The makarapa was invented by Alfred Baloyi, 51, an unschooled municipal bus cleaner from northern Limpopo province, who still lives in a dark

concrete shack in a township near Johannesburg.

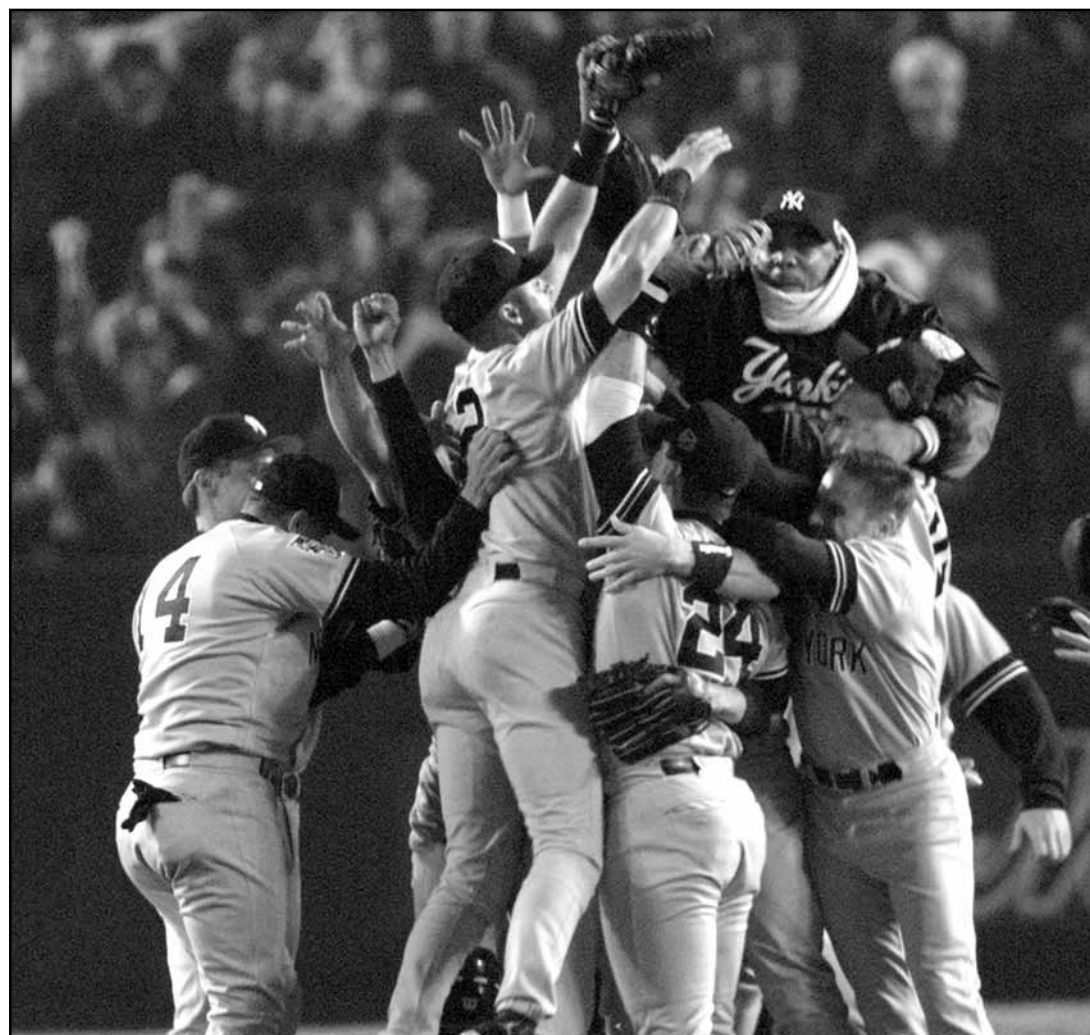
Baloyi, a fanatical supporter of the leading South African team Kaizer Chiefs, says the makarapa was born when he saw a fellow fan hit on the head by a bottle thrown from the stands in 1979 and a construction worker friend gave him a helmet for protection at future matches.

Soon Baloyi, a talented natural artist, painted his helmet in the black and yellow of the Kaizer Chiefs and then started taking orders, working in a cramped workshop at his home.

"First I was just painting them. Then as days went by I used to add horns, like goats' horns, and then I decided to start cutting and putting players on the helmets," he told Reuters.

"I am not from school, I am not educated. It is just a gift from God." The shack reeks of paint and Baloyi's workshop is packed with fantastical designs.

Baloyi himself shows off his own huge headgear including giant nose and mouth with outside teeth and a plastic guitar with music blaring from a car radio tape player tucked inside.



SUCCESS: The Yankees have done this more than any other team in baseball—winning the World Series. STAN HONDA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

TENNIS RANKINGS

Women		Men	
Name	Points	Name	Points
1. (1) Dina Safina (Russia)	9,810	1. (1) Roger Federer (Switzerland)	12,040
2. (2) Serena Williams (U.S.)	8,907	2. (2) Andy Murray (Britain)	9,610
3. (3) Venus Williams (U.S.)	6,865	3. (3) Rafael Nadal (Spain)	9,025
4. (5) Elena Dementieva (Russia)	6,835	4. (4) Novak Djokovic (Serbia)	7,660
5. (4) Jelena Jankovic (Serbia)	6,620	5. (5) Andy Roddick (U.S.)	5,720
6. (6) Svetlana Kuznetsova (Russia)	5,960	6. (6) Juan Martin del Potro (Argentina)	5,325
7. (7) Vera Zvonareva (Russia)	5,300	7. (7) Jo-Wilfried Tsonga (France)	3,920
8. (9) Victoria Azarenka (Belarus)	4,612	8. (8) Nikolay Davydenko (Russia)	3,655
9. (8) Caroline Wozniacki (Denmark)	4,400	9. (9) Gilles Simon (France)	3,410
10. (10) Flavia Pennetta (Italy)	3,420	10. (10) Fernando Verdasco (Spain)	3,015
11. (11) Ana Ivanovic (Serbia)	3,270	11. (12) Fernando Gonzalez (Chile)	2,825
12. (13) Agnieszka Radwanska (Poland)	3,180	12. (11) Robin Soderling (Sweden)	2,665
13. (12) Nadia Petrova (Russia)	3,120	13. (13) Gael Monfis (France)	2,475
14. (14) Marion Bartoli (France)	3,005	14. (14) David Nalbandian (Argentina)	2,375
15. (17) Samantha Stosur (Australia)	2,706	15. (16) Tommy Robredo (Spain)	2,165
16. (15) Dominika Cibulkova (Slovakia)	2,585	16. (17) Radek Stepanek (Czech Republic)	2,000
17. (18) Virginie Razzano (France)	2,301	17. (15) Marin Cilic (Croatia)	1,985
18. (16) Amelie Mauresmo (France)	2,262	18. (18) Tomas Berdych (Czech Republic)	1,945
19. (19) Li Na (China)	2,132	19. (19) David Ferrer (Spain)	1,890
20. (20) Patty Schnyder (Switzerland)	2,117	20. (20) Stanislas Wawrinka (Switzerland)	1,845

Rankings as of August 24, previous rankings in parentheses