

Giants win Super Bowl rematch over Patriots

Manning leads New York on late drive to claim championship

INDIANAPOLIS – The Giants did it again.

There was no perfect season on the line this time, but the New York Giants still ended the New England Patriots' season in heartbreak for the second time in as many Super Bowl meetings, winning Super Bowl XLVI, 21-17, for the fourth NFL championship in franchise history. A spectacular 38-yard Eli Manning-to-Mario Manningham sideline pass with three and a half minutes to play set New York on its way to the game-winning score. A short time later, the Patriots' defense let running back Ahmad Bradshaw score the game-winning touchdown with their eyes on giving Tom Brady as much time as possible to lead the team to a miracle finish.

That finish never came. A last-gasp end zone heave for Aaron Hernandez bounced around and then fell to the Navy-painted turf, setting the Giants sprinting toward one another in celebration and a hail of confetti swirling into the air at Lucas Oil Stadium. "All of the people really did a tremendous job," Giants coach Tom Coughlin said in a postgame interview on television. "We had a couple penalties that I thought took points off the board. We got into halftime and I said, 'We can play better than this.' They agreed.

Brady completed 27 of 41 passes for 276 yards and two touchdowns. Tight end Rob Gronkowski, who injured his left ankle in the AFC Championship game and was the Patriots' biggest question mark heading into the Super Bowl, only had two receptions for 26 yards. "We fought to the end, I'm very proud of that," Brady said. "We just came up a little short."

Manning hit 30 of 40 passes for 296 yards and a touchdown. "We've got a great bunch of guys, they never quit. I'm proud of our team," Manning said. "Stayed positive. I knew offensively we were moving the ball, just not getting touchdowns. I knew eventually they'd get us a turnover and then they did." Manning was able to claim his second title and second Super Bowl most valuable player award in the house that his older brother, Peyton, built as the quarterback of the Indianapolis Colts. But last night belonged to Eli, coach Tom Coughlin and a Giants team that began training camp with one motto: finish. New York pulled off six must-win games – its final two games of the regular season, which got them into the playoffs as the NFC East champion and the number-four seed in the conference – plus four postseason games to do just what they set out to do when camp kicked off in late July. It was the Patriots' seventh appearance in the Super Bowl. They are 3-4 in NFL title games, including a 17-14 loss to the Giants in Super Bowl XLII.

After allowing Bradshaw to score, Brady got the ball at his own 20-yard line with 57 seconds to play, and the Patriots had one timeout. His intended receivers – Deion Branch and Hernandez – had their hands on his first two passes but couldn't pull them in, and Brady was sacked on third down. He linked up with Branch for a 19-yard gain on fourth down, keeping hope alive. An 11-yard completion to Hernandez followed, then a spike to kill the clock. Brady and Branch missed on a pass on third down, and then came the Hail Mary to Hernandez.

Things got off to a less than auspicious start for New England, at least offensively: after three straight tackles for loss, including two Eli Manning sacks, to force the Giants to punt, Tom Brady found his unit pinned just six yards from the goal line. On their first snap, with Nate Solder on the field as an extra blocker, Brady was pressured through

the middle and launched the ball down the center of the field. No one – not any Patriots and not any Giants – was close to being on the receiving end of the throw. Flag. Intentional grounding. Safety. 2-0 Giants. It was the sixth safety in Super Bowl history, and the first time since Super Bowl IX that the game's opening points came on a safety.

The Giants got the ball back and upped their lead, with one error by the New England defense inside the red zone helping their cause: Victor Cruz was stripped on a 4-yard reception by Sterling Moore and Brandon Spikes pounced on the loose ball. But a 12 men on the field flag negated the turnover and gave New York a fresh set of downs 11 yards from the end zone. On second down, Manning zipped the ball in to Cruz for the touchdown and a 9-0 advantage for the Giants 12 minutes into the game. At that point, the Giants had run 20 offensive plays to just one for the Patriots.

Unlike some weeks toward the end of the regular season, when New England dug itself sizable holes before successfully climbing out, the nine-point hole was as deep as it would get. On the team's second possession, Brady found the reliable Branch for a 15-yard gain on third-and-4, which was followed by a 19-yard catch-and-run by Wes Welker. The Patriots got inside the red zone, but on third down, defensive end Jason Pierre-Paul got the first of his two batted balls in the first half, and they had to settle for a 29-yard field goal from Stephen Gostkowski to cut it to 9-3.

The Giants punted on their third and fourth drives, though New England went three-and-out on their possession in between. Steve Weatherford's second punt of the night was a gem, bouncing at the 4-yard line and then flying out of bounds. No matter for Brady, who engineered a scorning drive even though he was forced back even further when left guard Logan Mankins was called for a false start on the first play. But then gains of five and three yards by Welker and BenJarvus Green-Ellis got them out of danger, and then Brady hit Rob Gronkowski for a 20-yard gain. The tight end was backpedaling as he made his catch and was taken down by two Giants. But he got up and showed no ill effects of his ankle sprain suffered against the Ravens two weeks earlier. Another penalty on the offensive line, this a hold by Brian Waters, took a nice pickup on a screen to Danny Woodhead off the board. Brady relied on Woodhead and Hernandez during the drive, and it Woodhead finished it with a four-yard touchdown reception. Brady had good time on the scoring pass, moved to his right and then back to his left before he found a pretty open Woodhead to give New England a 10-9 lead heading into halftime. By virtue of deferring after winning the coin toss to start the game, the Pats increased their lead from one point to eight quickly in the opening minutes of the third quarter.

Receiver Chad Ochocinco, who was one of four Patriots with 10 or more years in the NFL who were playing in the Super Bowl for the first time, got his moment on the first pass of the half, when he and Branch were the only receivers on the field and Brady found him on the left sideline for a 21-yard gain. A long run from Green-Ellis put them well into Giants' territory, and Green-Ellis picked up four yards on third-and-1 a few plays later, giving the Pats first down from the 20. On second-and-short, the Patriots' quarterback found Hernandez, who took the ball in for the end zone and celebrated with his now-routine "make it rain" gesture. The Giants posted field goals on their next two drives while New England was unable to score, pulling to within two points. ■

Super Bowl 2012: Giants beat Patriots 21-17 in a heartstopping repeat of 2008 title game

INDIANAPOLIS — There was no perfect season on the line this time, but the New York Giants did it again to [Tom Brady](#), [Bill Belichick](#) and the [New England Patriots](#). Quarterback [Eli Manning](#) engineered the big drive in crunch time when the Giants needed it and New York [beat the Patriots, 21-17](#), on Sunday night at Lucas Oil Stadium in another down-to-the-wire Super Bowl between these rivals. A season that began with Manning declaring himself an elite quarterback ended with him backing up that proclamation with his second Super Bowl most valuable player performance. “I just know we’re world champions tonight,” Manning said, “and that’s what I’m most proud of.” After crafting six fourth-quarter, game-winning drives during the regular season, five of them to cap fourth-quarter comebacks, Manning pulled off that feat again in another nerve-rattling [Super Bowl](#). The Giants, trailing by two points, drove 88 yards to the winning touchdown on a six-yard run by [tailback Ahmad Bradshaw](#) with 57 seconds left. It was one of the oddest game-winning touchdowns in Super Bowl history. The Patriots, trying to preserve their final timeout and precious seconds on the clock for their offense, allowed Bradshaw to score. Bradshaw, realizing that, attempted to stop just shy of the goal line but tumbled into the end zone. “We didn’t talk about it” before the play, Bradshaw said. “Eli was handing me the ball and telling me not to score. I tried to tap myself down, declare myself down, but my momentum carried me into the end zone. It was a strange play.” Said Manning: “It’s a mistake by me. I had a feeling they might do that. I should have told him [before the play] not to score.”

The strategy didn’t work. The Giants failed on a two-point conversion attempt and the Patriots took over at their 20-yard line for a last-gasp drive. Brady kept them alive with a fourth-and-16 completion, and New England reached its 49-yard line. But Brady’s desperation heave into the distant end zone as time expired was tipped and fell incomplete beyond the outstretched hands of Patriots tight end Rob Gronkowski. “We just came up a little bit short,” Brady said. “I think we had a couple of missed opportunities out there. Every guy in the locker room wishes he could have done a little bit more.” Belichick acknowledged instructing his defense to let the Giants score, saying he didn’t want the clock to wind down for a short-range Giants field goal that almost certainly would have been successful. His players backed their coach. “Bill has always put us in the best position to succeed,” Patriots safety James Ihedigbo said. “No matter what, we trust him. He wanted to put the ball in Tom’s hands. That’s the decision he made and we support him.” Brady said: “I like it. . . . We had a chance to win there at the end. We just didn’t do it.”

The Giants became the first team to win a Super Bowl after going 9-7 in the regular season. They won six straight games, four of them in the postseason, after their record dropped to 7-7. “We’ve won so many games like this,”

Giants Coach [Tom Coughlin](#) said. Manning had a touchdown pass and completed 30 of 40 passes for 296 yards. He didn't throw an interception as he secured his second Super Bowl triumph over the Patriots in tandem with Coughlin. Manning also was the MVP four years ago when the Giants denied the Patriots what would have been the first 19-0 season in NFL history. "This isn't about one person," Manning said. "This about a team coming together, getting this win. I'm just proud of our guys, proud of the team and how we fought all year." The Giants jumped to an early 9-0 lead on a safety, courtesy of an intentional-grounding penalty on Brady in the end zone, and a touchdown pass from Manning to wide receiver [Victor Cruz](#). But the Patriots scored 17 straight points as Brady threw touchdown passes to running back Danny Woodhead and tight end Aaron Hernandez, at one point completing 16 straight passes, to break the mark of 13 set by Hall of Fame quarterback Joe Montana.

Brady threw an interception as he went 27 for 41 for 276 yards. He was denied in his bid to match the record of four Super Bowl victories for a quarterback by Montana, his boyhood hero, and Terry Bradshaw. Belichick failed in his attempt to tie Chuck Noll for the most Super Bowl triumphs by a coach with four. After two [Lawrence Tynes](#) field goals, the Patriots led 17-15 entering the fourth quarter. But Brady threw his lone interception to Giants linebacker Chase Blackburn, who outleaped an injured Gronkowski for the ball, and it was Manning who made the necessary plays down the stretch. Gronkowski had only two catches for the Patriots as he played on an injured ankle. On another critical play with time running down and Patriots looking to pad their lead, the usually sure-handed Wes Welker, who led the NFL in receptions this year, could not come up with a difficult pass from Brady. "It hurts to get that close and fall short," Patriots guard Logan Mankins said.

The Giants dominated in the early going, running 19 of the game's first 20 plays. Manning completed his first nine passes, the best start to a game in Super Bowl history. Brady gave the Giants the lead when he released a throw from his own end zone just before being hit by defensive end Justin Tuck, and was called for intentional grounding when the pass landed on the turf deep down the middle of the field with no receiver nearby. The Giants took the resulting free kick by the Patriots and drove to the game's first touchdown on Manning's two-yard pass to Cruz. The Patriots finally started moving on offense but had to settle for a 29-yard field goal by kicker Stephen Gostkowski. The New England defense toughened in the second quarter and Brady found his rhythm, completing his final 11 first-half passes. He was 10 for 10 as the Patriots went 96 yards, matching the longest drive in Super Bowl history, en route to a touchdown eight seconds before halftime on Brady's four-yard pass to Woodhead. Brady was 5 for 5 on the Patriots' opening second-half drive. His 16th straight completion was a 12-yard touchdown strike to Hernandez. The Giants replied with a pair of field goals by Tynes later in the third quarter.