

## Training Camp Central: Wheatley still battling

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By [Danny Picard](#)  
CSNNE.com

FOXBORO -- Terrence Wheatley entered his third NFL training camp feeling more comfortable than his first two training camps with the Patriots.

So thinking about the possibility of not making the final roster isn't something he gets too worked up about.

"That is a situation that's not going to change, so me thinking about it day and night isn't going to change it," Wheatley said on Wednesday. "So I'm just out here playing hard and at the end of the day, it's not my call."

Indeed, it's not. But it's up to him to earn that roster spot. And with the addition of first-round pick Devin McCourty, his battle is that much tougher.

With the first preseason game of the year on Thursday night, Wheatley still doesn't know where he stands.

"It's still early to tell, man," said Wheatley. "I'm just focusing on, really, day-to-day stuff. Just working on technique, and really just trying to relax and have fun. Camp is kind of a grind, but you've got to go out there and, you know, it is a game at the end of the day, so I'm just really focusing on the little things, and whatever happens, happens."

With the Saints in town, every Patriots player had an opportunity to show where they're at against the defending Super Bowl practice sessions are just that -- practice -- but still, picking off the reigning Super Bowl MVP makes a statement that you're roster spot over to someone else.

During the 11-on-11 situational scrimmage on Tuesday afternoon that saw Saints quarterback Drew Brees dominating the Pa Wheatley made the best defensive play of the day, taking advantage of a coverage that allowed him to read the QB, and picl

"[Playing against Brees] makes my life a little more difficult," said Wheatley with a laugh. "But I don't even really think about really about being more worried about yourself than the [other] team. That's really all I've been thinking about. It was nice t in practice, so it really don't count yet."

That's true. It's doesn't count on the stat sheet. But it does count in making his final impression with the Patriots' coaching st

"It definitely builds confidence," said Wheatley. "The more plays you make, the more relaxed you feel. And the more relaxed

Relaxed or not, Wheatley tried to make another impression on Wednesday's morning joint practice. This time, on special tear making the final roster, is just as important as reading the quarterback.

"The more stuff you can do, the better chance you have of making the team," said Wheatley. "So whatever they want me to

Wheatley got into several scrums with New Orleans special teamers on Wednesday. Afterwards, he shrugged it off like it was show off his passion.

"Well, you know, that's special teams," said Wheatley. "I mean, special teams gets a little bit physical from time to time. I thi up on your teammates, so when it's time to hit somebody else, you kind of get a little too amped up. I think it will be good fr and let out some aggression maybe.

"You don't really go out of your way, but if the opportunity presents itself to be a little physical or to get some aggression ou you're going to do that. It's nothing against anybody out here, it's just part of the game."

So is fighting for a spot on the team, something Wheatley plans on doing the rest of training camp.

## Secondary concerns

### This oral exam a pass-fail test

By Ian R. Rapoport | Thursday, August 12, 2010 | <http://www.bostonherald.com> | N.E. Patriots

FOXBORO - To the players in the meeting room, the difference is obvious. While watching film, while learning a new scheme, there are simply more voices.

Whatever the members of the **Patriots** [team stats] secondary would yell to each other on the field, they're telling each other inside the walls of Gillette Stadium. It's all geared toward communicating far more freely than they did in 2009.

"Whatever the coverage call is, we say it," cornerback Terrence Wheatley said. "The more you talk, the better. Even if you say something wrong, it's better than saying nothing at all."

Too often last year, miscommunication caused fatal lapses. And never was it more obvious than in the Nov. 30 beatdown by the Saints, one that featured Drew Brees' perfect passer rating.

With New Orleans in town this week for three joint practices and tonight's preseason opener, it presented a perfect opportunity to refocus on having every player read from the same page of the playbook.

Coach **Bill Belichick**, who is spending more time in the defensive rooms thanks to the lack of a listed defensive coordinator, is delivering the message loudly.

"All Coach Belichick talks about is having us focus on talking with each other, having awareness on the football field and making plays," co-captain and linebacker Jerod Mayo said. "I think we're doing a pretty good job so far, but we still have a long way to go."

Mayo wasn't reading any more into tonight than was necessary, shrugging off talk of playing for pride after last year's 38-17 debacle. Simply put, he wants the mistakes made to no longer be an issue. In 2009, the Pats gave up 42 plays of more than 20 yards and five plays of more than 40 yards.

"But that (Saints) game in particular, we didn't communicate a lot," Wheatley said. "From time to time, you can tell we're not communicating. So, this camp in particular, we're making sure everyone is on the same page. Even if it doesn't pertain to us, it's better that we all know the ins and outs of the defense."

Perhaps the most egregious gaffe of 2009 came in allowing Saints receiver Devery Henderson to run free for a 75-yard touchdown. Then-defensive coordinator Dean Pees said it was a blown call.

"It wasn't exactly a call that was a new call," Pees said then. "(A player) froze and it happened."

Pees stepped down when the season ended, and moved on to become the Ravens linebackers coach. Under new secondary coach Corwin Brown and Belichick's watchful eye, the hope is that such issues are behind them.

The one-on-one drills helped this week, as did the team periods that forced the Pats to match up physically with the Saints. But players' minds were tested, too. That was part of the incentive for the workouts, given that few teams present as many multiple sets as New Orleans.

"It forced us to do a lot of things we didn't do well and a lot of things we did pretty well, it forced us to get them better," safety Brandon Meriweather said. "With all the things they do on offense and how good of a team they are, it got us to judge ourselves."

Much of the onus for communication is on Meriweather this year, especially if second-year safety Patrick Chung wins the opposite starting job over veterans Brandon McGowan and **James Sanders** [stats].

"I find myself working good with everybody," Meriweather said. "We still got some little bumps to get over, but it's coming together. I think we're still learning each other."

Asked if it is coming together yet, Meriweather responded: "I don't know. We haven't tested the waters."

They will tonight.

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Photo by Ted Fitzgerald



## New England Patriots

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# Patriots journal: Wheatley stands out for second straight day

01:00 AM EDT on Thursday, August 12, 2010

By **ROBERT LEE**  
Journal Sports Writer

FOXBORO — [Terrence Wheatley](#) will be the first to tell you that he's feeling more comfortable at this year's training camp than he did in his previous two with the Pats, who drafted him in the second round, 62nd overall, in 2008.

But that doesn't mean he can sit back and take it easy. The Patriots drafted cornerback Devin McCourty in the first round (27th overall) this year, and McCourty is trying to move ahead of Wheatley on New England's depth chart.

Wheatley is doing everything he can to prevent that from happening.

"For me personally I'm just focusing on working on all of the small things and taking it day-by-day," Wheatley said. "Ultimately [Patriots coach Bill Belichick] is the guy who makes the [roster] decision so I really can't worry about that. The only thing I can worry about is going into the film room and just really playing my best."

Wheatley played in six of his first eight games his rookie season and got his first start against Indianapolis on Nov. 2, 2008. He suffered a wrist injury in that game, which ended his season.

Last year he was active for the first five games and played all of them in a reserve role, finishing with just two tackles. Now he's fighting for his NFL career.

"Whatever happens, happens with my situation," said Wheatley. "I mean, I'm not going to sit there and dwell on it. I'm not going to make any excuses. I'm just going to go out there and play and have fun, and whatever happens, happens."

Wheatley had the defensive play of the day on Tuesday when he picked off Saints Pro Bowl quarterback Drew Brees, who had previously been picking apart New England's defense.

"[Playing against Brees] makes my life a little more difficult, but I don't even really think about stuff like that," said Wheatley. "I mean, training camp's really about being more worried about yourself than the [other] team. That's really all I've been thinking about. It was nice to get a pick yesterday, but again, that's in practice, so it really don't count yet."

It doesn't count as far as season stats, but it does count when it comes to impressing the coaching staff when you're fighting for a job. It also builds confidence, Wheatley said.

"The more plays you make, the more relaxed you feel. And the more relaxed you feel, the better you play," said Wheatley.

On Wednesday, Wheatley stood out on special teams, especially blocking the gunner on New England's punt return team. On one play, he got into a scrum with a Saints player. That drew a lot of cheers from the crowd.

"Well, you know, that's special teams," said Wheatley. "I mean, special teams get a little bit physical from time to time. I think it's just, again, you're tired of beating up on your teammates, so when it's time to hit somebody else, you kind of get a little too amped up. I think it will be good for us to get a game underneath our belt, and let out some aggression maybe."

“You don’t really go out of your way, but if the opportunity presents itself to be a little physical or to get some aggression out, or to show that you can be physical, you’re going to do that. It’s nothing against anybody out here, it’s just part of the game.”

As far as playing special teams, Wheatley said it will give him a better chance to make the team.

“The more stuff you can do, the better chance you have of making the team, so whatever they want me to do, that’s what I’m going to do,” Wheatley said.

### **Kudos for Cunningham**

The Patriots will hold a public ceremony outside The Hall at Patriot Place prior to Thursday’s game versus the Saints to induct Sam “Bam” Cunningham into the team’s hall of fame.

Cunningham, who played with the Pats for nine seasons, from 1973-1982, is the franchise’s all-time leading rusher with 5,543 yards on 1,385 carries and ranks second with 43 touchdowns.

When asked what the induction means to him, Cunningham said: “For me, it means, that the work we put in many years ago was appreciated. I came 3,000 miles away from California to play back here. I didn’t know what it was going to be like or how it was going to turn out. And I got the opportunity to hook up with a bunch of great players, a bunch of great coaches, and we did as well as we could do for what we had for as long as we could.

“For the fans to appreciate that and remember 30-something years down the line and bless me and my family with this honor, it means an awful lot. It really does. It’s special.”

Belichick said of Cunningham: “He was a big ball carrier, a hard guy to tackle, a very good runner, a good blocker, caught the ball well, very good in short-yardage and goal line. He just had an outstanding career professionally after his great career in college.

“Congratulations to him and certainly our team has a lot of respect for what he’s done for this franchise in his career.”

### **Brady deal ‘cooking’**

Patriots owner Robert Kraft has chosen to remain silent about the contract negotiations between the team and quarterback [Tom Brady](#).

When asked as he was walking off the field about the contract, Kraft said: “We’re cooking.”

### **Murrell bounces back**

Torry Holt, [Gary Guyton](#), [Leigh Bodden](#), [Matthew Slater](#) and Terrence Johnson attended practice in shorts and T-shirts while [Nick Kaczur](#) and [Ty Warren](#) were not present.

Linebacker Marques Murrell, who had to be carted off the field on Tuesday, was back at practice Wednesday and he said afterwards that he just got overheated.

### **Scrimmage snapshots**

The Patriots and Saints had a “jog-through” practice. When the two teams got together for 11-on-11 scrimmages, Brady drove the Pats down the field once before handing over the quarterbacking duties to [Brian Hoyer](#) and Zac Robinson.

Saints backup quarterback Patrick Ramsey took most of the snaps for the Saints, as Brees sat out most of the 11-on-11 scrimmages.

On the Saints opening drive, [Jerod Mayo](#) broke up a pass intended for tight end Tory Humphrey in the end zone, ending the drive.

Brady then marched the Patriot offense down the field and capped off the drive with a 10-yard TD pass to running back [Kevin Faulk](#), who beat safety Pierson Prioleau on his route.

During goal line work, Aaron Hernandez slipped by his defender, linebacker Jonathan Casillas, and hauled a five-yard touchdown pass thrown by Brady.

After a Brady incomplection, he scrambled to buy some extra time and found [Wes Welker](#) in the back of the end zone but it wasn't clear if Welker got both feet in bounds. The crowd and the Patriots certainly thought so, but the Saints said it was incomplete. The referee did not make a call.

Saints running back Lynell Hamilton injured his right knee on a rushing play midway through practice and had to be helped off of the field.

### **Stapleton released**

Less than 48 hours after signing reserve guard Darnell Stapleton, the Patriots released him Wednesday.

They made the move to make room for running back Thomas Clayton, who they released when they signed Stapleton. Clayton led the NFL in rushing during the preseason in 2007 and finished fourth in preseason rushing yards in 2008.

Clayton is hoping to beat out [BenJarvus Green-Ellis](#) for the Pats' final running back slot. He spent the 2009 season on injured reserve.