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From courts to classrooms, fans relish another comeback win

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By Michael Levenson

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Bob Trayers, a 75-year-old retired firefighter, had just gotten out of the ocean at Wollaston Beach in Quincy when he heard the news from Tony Gannetta, a trash collector sunning himself in the next beach chair.

It was the decision all of New England had been waiting for and, boy, was it big: Tom Brady had won. The four-game suspension had been nullified. And an entire region had been vindicated.

“I’m tickled pink,” Trayers said, leaping up and pumping his fist in triumph. “There’s going to be a lot of beer sold in the barrooms this afternoon — a lot of celebrating.”

While football fans in other parts of the country may have thrown up their hands in disgust, Patriots fans, who never once doubted their hero’s story, celebrated US District Judge Richard E. Berman’s ruling on Thursday as a restoration of the rightful order in the NFL.

Any blot on the Patriots’ shield had been wiped clean by the court, fans said, and Tom Terrific had staged another thrilling comeback. To hear Patriots fans tell it, the outcome was never in doubt.



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This is a big victory for Tom Brady and his legacy.

Jonathan Kraft rejoices in judge's decision

Tom Brady's father proud of his son's victory

“For the rest of the league and the haters, it’s proven that he has integrity and did nothing wrong,” said Gigi Viscusi, a 55-year-old lifelong Patriots fans from Attleboro, who was outside the pro shop at Gillette Stadium, hours before the team’s preseason game against the New York Giants.

“Everybody hates the winners, and we are winners.”

Gloating “I-told-you-so’s” spread from Roxbury to Rehoboth and beyond. Politicians and bus drivers, retirees and fifth-graders: all celebrated Brady’s legal victory as if it were their own.

“I was just up at the Muffin House, and everybody was clapping,” said Kellie Cassidy, a fitness instructor and bartender, who was wearing a Patriots tank top and pushing her 1-year-old niece, Charlotte, in a stroller down leafy Village Street in Medway, less than 10 miles from Foxborough. “It’s great news!”

Even in Middlesex Superior Court, there was an oddly celebratory moment when the news reached Judge Joshua I. Wall, as he prepared to hear from an inmate, Patrick Allain, on charges of driving with a suspended license.

“You hear about Brady?” Wall exclaimed. “He won his case!”

Allain, who was in handcuffs, smiled.

“Yeah,” he said. “I heard!”

Outside the court, fans said they couldn’t believe Deflategate had hung over New England for nearly eight months, forcing them to bone up on the Ideal Gas Law, Brady’s cellphone, and the NFL’s collective bargaining agreement.

“The whole thing was really petty,” said Rob Adams, a 34-year-old fan and sports talk radio listener from East Boston, who was walking through Downtown Crossing, a Patriots cap perched on his head. “It never should have gotten to this point.”

Even with Brady’s victory, Adams noted that the team still lost a first-round pick in the 2016 draft and a fourth-round pick in 2017, and must pay a \$1 million fine because of the Deflategate allegations. In that sense, “It’s a win and a loss,” he said. “Hopefully, this will motivate them even

more and they can get that fifth ring this year.”

Hardly anyone dwelled on the substance of Berman's decision. The ruling did not, in fact, decide whether Brady was aware of an alleged scheme to deflate footballs before New England's AFC championship win over the Indianapolis Colts in January.

Instead, Berman found the star quarterback had been subjected to a fundamentally unfair disciplinary process administered by the NFL and its commissioner, Roger Goodell, who quickly announced that the league will appeal the decision.

Gannetta, the trash collector on Wollaston Beach, said he was not surprised the judge had rebuked Goodell, whose case was not based on facts, he said, but was “all politics, all ego.”

“It was a bag job,” said Gannetta, 53, who boasted that he had been a Patriots fan since the team's dismal seasons in the late 1960s and early '70s. “All this over air in a football? Can't they come up with something better?”

Governor Charlie Baker weighed in with his own politically safe response.

“I've thought for a while now that this situation was not being fairly dealt with, and I'm glad that Judge Berman felt that way, as well,” said Baker, whose views on the issue were not exactly a secret after he wore a “Free Brady” T-shirt during an Ice Bucket Challenge outside the State House last month.

Baker, known for delving deeply into policy minutiae, said he had felt the case against Brady was weak after reading an [American Enterprise Institute report](#) that accused the NFL of using an “unorthodox statistical procedure” to measure the changing air pressure in the Patriots' footballs.

“It was pretty compelling,” Baker said.

Mayor Martin J. Walsh was in his car when he got an alert about the decision on his cellphone.

“I'm happy for Tom Brady,” said the mayor, a Patriots season ticket holder. “He has expressed his innocence the whole time. There didn't seem like there was lot of evidence there for him to be suspended for four games. And now we can get back to football.”

Of course, not everyone saw reason to cheer.

The battle, pitting a wealthy celebrity quarterback against another wealthy titan of sport, really won't affect people's lives, said James Antoine, a 38-year-old Dorchester resident who was waiting for a bus at Dudley Station in Roxbury.

"Let the billionaires fight the millionaires," he said.

The vindication of Brady, the Patriots, and all of New England really was the talk of the town — and the classroom even.

Christiana Paulin, an eighth-grader at Bourne Middle School, had a story to tell her mother, Christine, when she got home from school.

The principal came on the intercom, Christiana told her mom.

"You'll never believe what happened," Christine recalled her daughter saying. "They said, 'So sorry for the interruption, we have extremely important news. Tom Brady will be playing for the rest of the season.'"

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