

READ & REACT

BY MICHAEL PARENTE

Security blanket

Two weeks into the season, and Julian Edelman has reaffirmed his status as Tom Brady's No. 1 target. A year after leading the team with a career high 1,056 receiving yards and six touchdowns, Edelman is off to a monster start in 2014 with 12 catches through two games on 15 targets with 176 yards and a touchdown.

In Sunday's 30-7 win at Minnesota, Edelman caught six of the seven passes thrown in his direction and picked up 59 of his 81 yards during one scoring drive in the second quarter, including a nine-yard touchdown catch from Brady on a perfectly-executed touch pass. Edelman had his way with second-year cornerback Xavier Rhodes — a poor matchup for Minnesota's defense — and for the second time in as many games, also chipped in as a ball-carrier, rushing for a first down in the opening quarter on an 11-yard sweep.

Edelman led the team in targets this week after sharing the load with tight end Rob Gronkowski and wide receiver Kenbrell Thompson in Week 1, but with Gronkowski's snaps reduced Sunday and Thompson sidelined as a healthy scratch with Aaron Dobson back on the field, Edelman was the focal point in Week 2.

Attention to detail

The offense produced most of its points off turnovers Sunday, which once



COACH'S CORNER

"That was a real good team win for us today. Really proud of the team. We got great contributions from all three areas. Thought our special teams did a real good job. Offensively, we had a more balanced attack than we had last week, which is what we needed. Defensively, we had a lot of turnovers plus the blocked kick, so that's a good formula. Obviously a lot of things we still need to work on. We're a long way from being where we need to be, but we certainly made progress this week."

again overshadowed the fact the Patriots struggled with penalties for the second consecutive week. After committing nine penalties for 100 yards in Week 1, New England set a new low Sunday, committing 15 penalties for 163 yards, a record for

most penalties in a game under head coach Bill Belichick, since he began coaching 14 years ago.

The ugliest sequence occurred in the third quarter when left tackle Nate Solder committed three penalties on back-to-back snaps, including a play in which he committed both a holding penalty and a block in the back, the latter which was declined. Left guard Marcus Cannon got flagged for holding in the second drive, wiping out a 10-yard run by Stevan Ridley. A holding penalty on Dobson later in the quarter negated a big first-down catch by Danny Amendola, but Edelman picked up the slack with a first-down catch on the next snap moments before catching his only touchdown pass of the game.

Running back roulette

The snaps for running backs continue to vary and it appears that might be the case for most of the season. Shane Vereen was one of the focal points offensively in Week 1, playing on 61 snaps in the loss to Miami while Ridley was only on the field 21 times. This week, Ridley shouldered the load, rushing 25 times for 101 yards and a touchdown while Vereen played mostly in garbage time, rushing six times for 40 yards and catching only one pass. More importantly, Ridley protected the ball and didn't fumble, a problem he's had his entire career which came back into focus during the preseason when he fumbled in a game against Carolina.

Vereen wasn't as big a part of the passing game this week with fullback James Develin getting in on the action with a pair of catches, in addition to Dobson being back in the lineup, not to mention the fact the Patriots did their best work on a short field Sunday, taking advantage of turnovers in lieu of executing many long scoring drives. The Patriots only had one drive longer than 50 yards.

Numbers don't lie

Thanks to the defense forcing four turnovers, the Patriots started three of their

RISING STOCK

Julian Edelman

The wide receiver made six catches for 81 yards and a touchdown. He also returned four punts for 66 yards.

Chandler Jones

The defensive end recorded two sacks, and blocked a field goal that he returned 58 yards for a touchdown.

Stevan Ridley

The running back carried the ball 25 times for 101 yards and a TD.

FALLING STOCK

Nate Solder

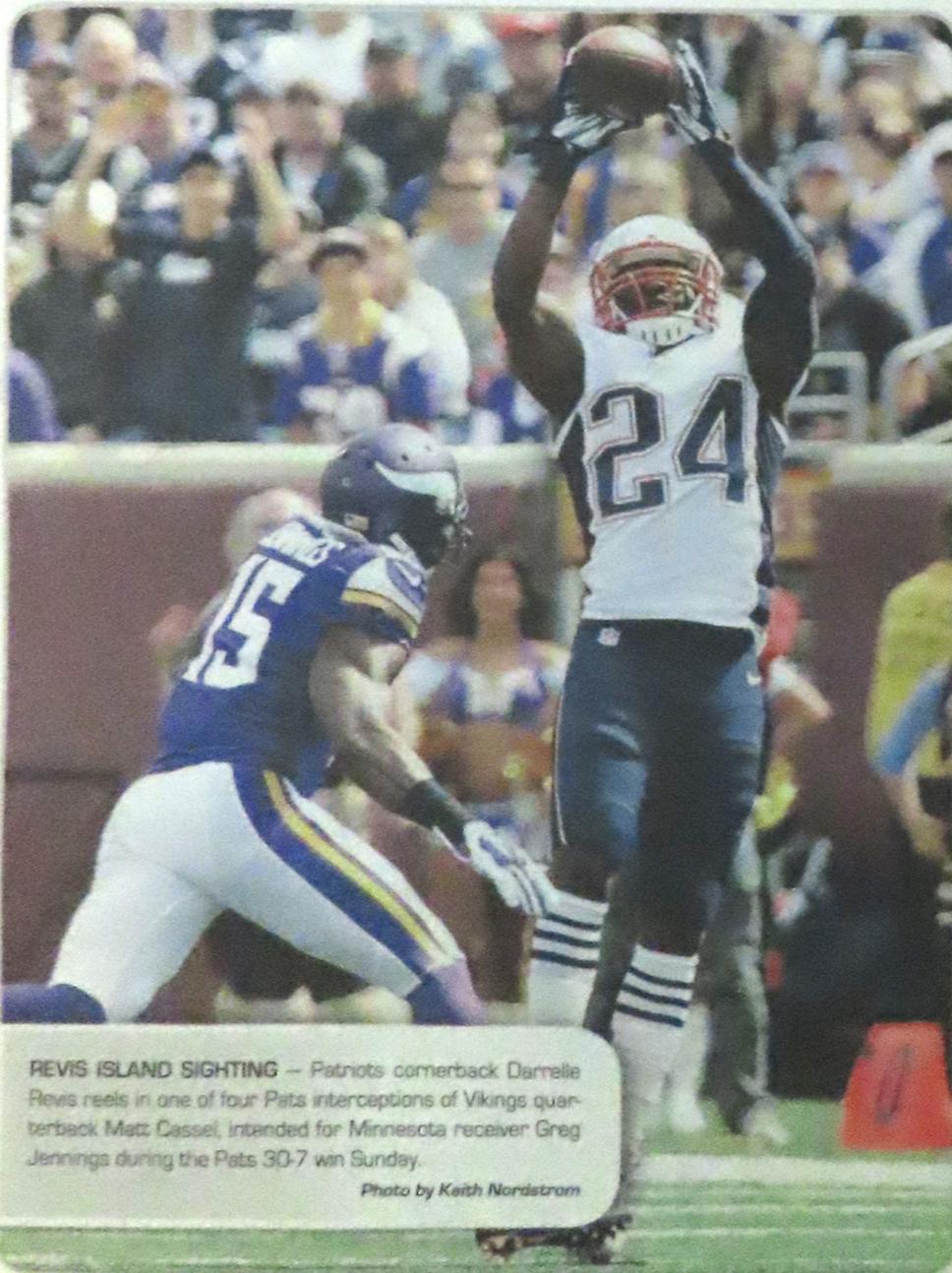
The offensive tackle was called for three penalties in two plays.

Danny Amendola

The wide receiver was a non-factor in the victory. He had no catches and was targeted just once.

Tim Wright

Like Amendola, Wright was targeted once and had no catches. He wasn't a factor from his tight end position.



REVIS ISLAND SIGHTING — Patriots cornerback Darrelle Revis reels in one of four Pats interceptions of Vikings quarterback Matt Cassel, intended for Minnesota receiver Greg Jennings during the Pats 30-7 win Sunday.

Photo by Keith Nordstrom

drives in Minnesota territory, including one at the goal line, and another at mid-field. Their 30 points Sunday were the result of just 292 total yards of offense.

The offense is still a work in progress. After a big first half, which included a special teams touchdown following a blocked field goal by Chandler Jones, the Patriots punted on four of their first six drives in the second half, sandwiched around a pair of field goals and turned the ball over on downs on their final drive of the game in an attempt to run out the clock. The aforementioned penalties — 15 total — were a factor since eight were committed by the offense.

"I think we have a lot of work to do," an unusually somber Brady said afterward, "but it was good to win. Hopefully, we can be better going forward. We have to start producing when we get [the ball] and start taking better advantage of our field position."

"I'm happy we won. I just wish we could play like we're capable of."

Line dancing

The Patriots didn't make any wholesale changes along their offensive line this week after getting dominated by Miami's front four in Week 1, but the use of Cameron Fleming as an eligible receiver/blocking tight end led to much better pass protection and more opportunities in the running game.

The 22-year-old rookie tackle didn't get much playing time against the Dol-