

Friday, February 1, 2008

# Kyle Brady reaches Super heights on and off the field

By Jennifer Toland TELEGRAM & GAZETTE STAFF  
jtoland@telegram.com



Patriots tight end Kyle Brady talks on his cellphone during Media Day for Super Bowl XLII on Tuesday.

(ASSOCIATED

[Enlarge photo](#) PRESS PHOTOS)



Among the current Patriots, only Junior Seau, Troy Brown and Rodney Harrison have had longer NFL careers than Kyle Brady (13 years).

---

**SCOTTSDALE, Ariz.**— It's hard to imagine 6-foot-6, 280-pound Kyle Brady being intimidated by anything, but his introductory flight-school lesson left him a little shaky.

"I'm holding onto this yoke and it felt like I was holding the plane up all by myself," the Patriots' massive tight end said. "I was kind of terrified."

The terror soon turned to delight, and in 2004 Brady earned his pilot's license. Since signing with the Patriots last spring, he keeps his single-engine, four-seat Cirrus at the Mansfield Municipal Airport, located not far from Foxboro.

"It's a fun airplane and it's very safe," Brady said. "It's the only airplane in general aviation with a parachute for the entire plane. Not one you put on and jump out — it's actually a parachute that will bring the entire plane down on its wheels."

The plane travels up to 200 mph.

Brady, in his 13th NFL season, is preparing for his first Super Bowl, but he thoroughly enjoyed talking a little non-football this week, too. Flying has become a serious and satisfying hobby.

Brady's interest in aircraft goes back to his childhood. His father, John, was a big military and Civil War buff. Family vacations often would include visits to battlefields like Gettysburg, Antietam and Manassas. His boyhood bedroom at the Bradys' central Pennsylvania home was decorated with model airplanes.

"I had the British Spitfire, P51 Mustang, German Messerschmitt," Brady said. "My dad gave me the credit, but he was actually the one doing all the work building them and painting them."

The 36-year-old Brady, a Penn State graduate and two-time All-Big Ten selection while playing for Joe Paterno, was a first-round draft pick of the Jets in 1995 and played his first four NFL seasons in New York. He signed with the Jaguars in 1999.

It was in Jacksonville that he decided to learn to fly. On his way to and from the stadium each day, he passed a small airport.

"I'd sit at the stop light and see these planes taking off and landing," Brady said, "and think, 'You know, that looks like it would be a neat challenge, something fun to try, and a chance to see the world from a different perspective.' I went in, took the discovery flight, and after a while, I started to enjoy it."

It took Brady four months, or most of an offseason, to earn his pilot's license. He has gone on to obtain multiple ratings.

"It's work," Brady said. "It's book work and being in the plane, learning all the rules and

regulations, the weather. It's a challenge, but it's fun. Guys who do what we do enjoy a challenge in the offseason."

Brady has covered much of New England in his plane. He and offensive lineman Stephen Neal took a trip to Vermont during peak foliage season. The bright oranges, yellows and reds in the Stratton Mountain area were amazing from their vantage point, Brady said. He also has toured New Hampshire, the Maine coastline, the Berkshires, and Newport, R.I.

Brady's wife, Kristi, who gave birth to the couple's second child during the season, was hesitant to go up at first, Brady said, but now she loves it.

When he was playing in Jacksonville, they'd often escape to North Carolina or the west coast of Florida for little getaways.

There is a thrill involved in being up in the clouds.

"It's not that sudden adrenaline rush you get scoring a touchdown," Brady said, "but it is satisfying when you work hard to achieve something, like getting your pilot's license. You feel a sense of satisfaction and also a change of lifestyle occurs when you're able to take off and go 500 miles away for a weekend. It adds a new dimension to your life."

Brady missed the final two games of the regular season with a foot injury, but showed his well-known blocking skills in the Patriots' AFC Championship win over the Chargers, and helped the Patriots have a great day running the ball.

Brady had nine receptions for 70 yards and two touchdowns during the season, but was used mainly as a blocker. He provided several key blocks that helped spring Sammy Morris for 117 yards against the Bengals early in the year.

Brady has had one of the longest NFL careers among the current Patriots. Only Junior Seau (18 years), Troy Brown (15) and Rodney Harrison (14) have been around longer.

"My goal was to play for 10 years," Brady said. "I wanted to get all I could out of my skills and abilities. I put that out there as a goal.

"Every offseason, I'd wait a month and assess whether I felt physically and mentally ready to come back and get the energy necessary to do it again, and here I am three more years after 10. It's a year-by-year approach."

Brady joins veterans like Randy Moss getting their first crack at a Super Bowl ring when the Patriots face the Giants on Sunday.

"It's a tremendous thrill," he said. "I feel fortunate and blessed