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New York

Rhode Island

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The **ROAD** to *Perfection*
and GIVING UP ON PERFECTION

Jersey



LAWRENCE THOMAS

Massachusetts



Part I

The Road to Perfection

by Lawrence Thomas

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When was the last time you left your feet in excitement?

Something touched you so deeply, your eyes welled up with joy? You were so motivated that suddenly, all of your dreams seemed within reach?

When was the last time you were inspired?

The Road to Perfection

February 3rd, 2008

8:35 am - Super Bowl Sunday.

“Citizenship?”

“Canadian.”

“Where are you headed?”

“Boston.”

“Purpose of this trip?”

“I am going down to watch the Super Bowl.”

“Are you meeting anyone there?”

“No, just going by myself.”

The look on the border crossing guard’s face bore a familiar resemblance to the look my wife gave me, when I first brought up the idea of making this trip the previous afternoon. At 35 though, I had long since become accustomed to being looked at like I was nuts.

As I look over at the frozen river under the North Grand Island Bridge, I dream of a much warmer Arizona sun. I envision a well rested Tom Brady and Randy Moss taking the field. No wind, no rain, no snow getting in the way of perfection. I picture a very active pass game and the excitement in the eyes of those New England Patriots players having just made history. Of the fans back in Boston going crazy and pouring onto the awaiting downtown streets.

A smile suddenly covers my face. In just a little over 9 hours, I will be watching history being made among a city full of passionate Patriots fans.

Lawrence Thomas

When New England went 16-0 and achieved regular season perfection, so many emotions ran through me. I jumped out of my seat, tears gathered in my eyes, and suddenly I was inspired to grab a pen and paper, and write about what this season has meant to me. How that victory was so much more than records broken, than winning, than forever.

I was alone when it happened. Sitting nervously on the edge of the couch. Heart racing as if the fate of that moment was in my hands.

The house was quiet. My little girl already counting Patriot wins in her sleep. 1, 2, 3 ... 15. My wife, upstairs secretly checking the score between commercial breaks of one of her nighttime soaps.

Giants up to the challenge. Patriots down 21-16 at the half. Still trailing 28-16 early in the third. Pats close in on the lead. 28-23 Giants at the end of the third. Many NFL records broken by New England. Patriots back on top. Pats up the lead to 10 late in the fourth quarter. Giants pull within three with just over a minute left. On side kick is no good. Patriots win.

And so my story began.

9:21am – Just getting on the I-90 east.

I grew up watching Canadian football as a child. You might say our family is a little fanatical when it comes to our hometown team. “Tiger’s, eat ‘em raw.”

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Football has always been a family tradition for the Pattison's. When we were much younger, my uncle Ed bought an old school bus, gutted it, furnished it, painted it black and gold, and for many home games for years to follow, The Pattison's and strangers that we would pick up on the side of the road, travelled these steel city streets in style.

Not that we needed a big painted bus to draw attention to our already crazed family, but with a stocked fridge and dressed for a circus, we made the trip downtown with our heads hanging out the windows, cheering, singing, and having the time of our lives.

This was our family.

The bus is gone, our goofy knitted hats make a cameo appearance every so often, and we have toned down on the crazy, but football is still, and always will be, one of the ties that bind us. On Balsam Avenue in our city's north end, is a little stadium with a seating capacity of 29,600; our reunion venue.

Growing up north of the border I had a hockey stick in my hand 7 days a week; September to September. When it came to seeing a sporting event live though, the open air amongst the Ivor Wynne Stadium stands, gazing over the press boxes at the tree lined Hamilton escarpment, was my venue of choice. For me, summer and fall in steel town were represented by three-down football, big balls (and an even bigger field), and Oskee wee wee chants.

Unlike the New England Patriots, it has been a long time since the fans in my hometown of Hamilton, Ontario, have had anything to cheer about. The 2007 Miami Dolphins were more or less a mirror image of

what our city was subjected to this season, and the better part of the past few years.

For the longest time, I never really had a favourite NFL team. I enjoyed watching players like Riggins and Theismann, Craig, Rice, and Montana, but I didn't have a particular team that I followed.

As I reached into my teens, I started broadening my sports mind, and took a liking to baseball. Of course we had the Blue Jays a little under an hour down the highway in Toronto, but seeing as though I was already a big Boston fan when it came to hockey, I thought it might be fitting to follow another Beantown team.

My love of the Bruins was inherited through my father, and now I was a Red Sox supporter. It just seemed natural, that if I was to pick a favourite NFL franchise to cheer for instead of just following the one that was doing good that season, that the Patriots would be my American football team of choice.

I was still a CFL devotee first, so for the most part my NFL viewing was limited to those rare occasions when the Patriots were televised. Living so close to Buffalo, more often than not, those games were against the Bills.

There wasn't a lot to cheer for in the early years that I adopted the Pats as my team. In fact, it wasn't until Drew Bledsoe was drafted in 1993, when I truly became a fan of the Patriots, or the NFL in general.

Bledsoe gave New England fans a lot to cheer for. He was definitely my favourite player, so when he was hurt in the second game of the 2001-2002 season and Brady took his place, I spent the rest of that year anticipating Bledsoe's return.

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Although Brady had proven to be a good quarterback, I was hoping Drew would get the nod in Super Bowl XXXVI. It would be Brady that led them to victory that year though. It was also, sadly, the end of Bledsoe's career as a Patriot.

It was very easy to become a fan of #12. A 6th round draft choice, Brady was now a Super Bowl champion in his first season, and quickly leading the Patriots into greatness.

As Tom Brady and the Pats went on to win two more Super Bowls, the number of Patriots games broadcast in southern Ontario had vastly increased. It is definitely easier being a fan when you can see your team in action, rather than watching the scores on the ticker across the bottom of your screen.

11:58am – 58 miles from Albany.

This was my third trip down the I-90 to the east coast. I had been to Boston once before, although it was nothing more than a quick drive by a sold out Fenway Park (the Yankees were in town), a few too many wrong turns, and eventually making it back to Springfield, Massachusetts for the night.

I was on my way to see my cousin that summer, when I suddenly had this yearning for an adventure. I turned east instead of west on the I-90 around Buffalo, and made an overnight detour to Boston before making the 8 hour return trip to my intended New York State destination, along the Southern Tier expressway.

I had finally realized a childhood dream. I had made it to Boston. Sort of.

My second trip to the Atlantic was another crazy adventure, although this time it involved one of my best friends, and a last minute search on EBay for tickets to game 3 of the 2001 Stanley Cup Finals. I wasn't about to miss one last opportunity to see Ray Bourque play.

Maybe one day I'll actually plan a trip east, more than a few days in advance.

10:06 – Clifton Springs. A quick stretch of the legs. Picked up a copy of the official Super Bowl XLII magazine.

Whether you are a fan of football or sports in general, when the Patriots wrote their own page in the record books, becoming the first team in NFL history to complete a perfect 16-0 season, it definitely ranked up there with some of the most memorable moments in sport. Not just because they were unbeaten, not just because of all the records broken that evening by the Patriots, but because of everything it takes to achieve such a remarkable feat, when every team steps up to get in the way of your destiny, and much of the country is cheering for the opponent.

The moment New England won that December night, I knew there was much more to this story than the team and individual accomplishments that the Patriots had achieved. So much more than perfection.

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3:05pm - Saturday Feb 2nd 2008. The day before Super Bowl.

Having children certainly changes your outlook on life. It's exciting watching them learn about the world around them. How the smallest thing excites them. How easily they are amused. Their needs are minimal, their lives are simple.

The biggest thing I have learned in the brief 17 months that I have been a father, is that school starts all over again for us. Yes, the lessons our children are being schooled in for the most part, are those same morals and values that our parents, and more importantly society, once taught us, but the great thing about this way around, is that at 35, I know where those lessons come into play later in life. How so many of them are tools that can be the difference of a life of accomplishment, of worth, or feeling as though your dreams have passed you by.

Curled up on the sofa, my little girl is winding down for her afternoon nap. I turn on some cartoons while she coats her tummy with some warm milk. She's holding her favourite blanket tightly into the small of her neck, and snuggled into my side.

We have watched this show together a few times but suddenly, the theme of every single episode reaches out to me. The message is teamwork. That it doesn't matter if you are big or strong, it's working

Lawrence Thomas

together that gets the job done. So simple, yet such an unbelievably important message.

It was shortly after I tucked my daughter into her bed, that I talked to my wife about going to Boston. About being a part of history. About writing the end of this story in the city that was seemingly hours from their team writing a page in the history books.

Even though the concept of teamwork is embedded in us at a very early age, some people go through their entire lives missing the importance of this message.

Every aspect of our lives in some way shape or form, comes down to teamwork. In school, in play, in sport, in business, and especially in family.

You either get it and succeed, or go it alone. You may still have success, but what good is victory, when you don't have anyone to celebrate your achievements with?

12:41pm - I just passed the split for Boston/New York. An uncontrollable smile suddenly came over me at the thought of heading to Boston again.

1:43pm - I am on the Mass Turnpike. I have pulled into a service station in Lee, Massachusetts, to fill up. Both my belly, and the van. Next stop, Boston.

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4:51 – Checked into my hotel, had a shower, and called my family to let them know I arrived okay. Dad answered. I would love to do this trip with him some day to see the Bruins.

5:30 pm - I'm at the Fours in Boston on Canal Street, surrounded by Beantown sports paraphernalia. It's a Boston sports fans dream. Celtics, Bruins, Pats, Bosox. Walls of baseball bats, balls, photos, signed memorabilia, and various other items of sporting equipment. Some of it very old.

As I find a place to lean up against in the standing room only bar, I notice a Tom Brady interview on every single television.

I start chatting up the guy standing next to me, Johan. He is from South Africa, but he lived in Boston for 12 years before re-locating to central United States.

His business associate, Phil, had grown up across from the New Jersey shores, and knows this New York/Boston rivalry very well. Phil was a quiet New York Giants fan that night.

Every interview of a Patriots player, exemplifies what a great leader New England coach Bill Belichick is. Every single one of his players believes in the team, and has bought into Belichick's philosophy. Those guys are selling it every time they are in front of a camera, and with the same humbleness of their coach.

Every once in awhile during the game, the cameras focused on Peyton Manning watching his little brother, Eli, out on that field living his dream. There was something about a Manning being in this game, that already

had me a little nervous about the outcome. Seeing Eli's big brother cheering him on, gave me this feeling deep down in my heart, that history might have a different ending in mind.

There were little signs throughout the game that had Johan and I concerned about the fate of the Patriots perfect run, but when Brady finally hooked up with Randy Moss in the final minutes, something suddenly felt right again.

On the way to Boston, I had thought that this game couldn't be complete without the two record breakers hooking up, but there it was; that magic that we had come accustomed to all year.

The excitement of that moment however, would be short lived.

You could almost tell as Eli took hold of that ball in the dying minutes of Super Bowl XLII, that it wouldn't be Brady's two minute drive that people would be talking about in the morning.

I have always been an optimist, so even after Manning hooked up with Plaxico Burress to put New York back on top with seconds to go, I still had faith that Brady had a few more tricks up his sweat band.

I think everyone in the bar had forgotten how to breathe, until Brady threw one last ball, until it was inevitable. The dream was over.

That small Boston bar cleared out like a fire drill, as those final seconds ticked off the score clock at University of Phoenix Stadium.

That moment didn't feel real as I stood there, practically alone in the restaurant, wondering where everyone had gone. Was I dreaming? Did the season really just end this way?

The Road to Perfection

Post Super Bowl Blog Post

Speechless. There really isn't any other word to describe the way I feel.

I am in downtown Boston. It's 10:34pm and I have never heard such silence in an area so populated with bars.

When I first decided to make the trip to Boston, I imagined a boisterous bar filled with crazy Pats fans. I pictured a foolish downtown filled with celebration and complete and utter chaos as overzealous New England fans poured into these city streets.

Instead, I am sitting in my hotel room listening to every sports caster talk about how this is the biggest upset in sports history.

So, what is there to write about? The Pats did not make good on their anticipated perfection. A team so close to achieving the 'ever' status, left sitting with their heads in their hands as the Giants celebrated their Super Bowl victory.

So what does this mean? Obviously the Patriots themselves are disappointed, the fans are shaking their heads, and this long distance traveler is lost for words. This certainly isn't the story I had dreamed of covering as I started down the Mass Turnpike early this afternoon.

When the dust settles, in a day, a week, or maybe even months from now, I am sure everyone, especially fans of these New England Patriots, will remember this season forever.

Personally, I have never enjoyed following football as much as I have this season. Never watched as many games, or been so eager to catch

every video replay and read every article, as the story of the Patriots 2007 season played out.

I won't pretend that I am not disappointed and almost in mourning at this moment, but in the end, it just wasn't meant to be.

It's 11:03pm. Time to turn off must not see TV, and close my eyes.

8:51am - Monday Feb 4th, 2008 / The Morning After Blog Post

The skies are dark above Boston this morning. There are sections of blue around its perimeter that might symbolize hope on the horizon; the pain slowly subsiding as the days pass, and fans are able to reflect on just how special this season has been. The sun will slowly push back those dark clouds, it will shine bright once again on this great city, so that they can see more clearly, how truly lucky they are to enjoy this kind of sports success.

The news is on in the background. The city, understandably, is still in shock. I just brewed some coffee, and now I gaze out my hotel window overlooking Merrimac Street, reflecting on not only what this trip has meant to me, but what football has symbolized over the past 22 weeks.

Perhaps I wouldn't have been compelled to write about this season, had the Patriots gone 14-2. Maybe New England had to lose last night, for us to truly see the real story behind this season because now, perfection meant nothing. Maybe, just maybe, it never did.

11:39am - Just finished my coffee. All packed and ready to head to lunch. Planning a trip to Foxboro. A little detour before I head home.

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12:15pm - Finishing up lunch at Boston Beer Works. Had the Charlsetown Burger and sour cream and chive fries. The fries were amazing.

I didn't bring anything to write on so I scribbled down some notes on a napkin from my table. I covered all 8 folds.

2:30pm - Arriving in Foxboro. The stadium is impressive. Talk about the middle of nowhere. The drive down was overcast including, and fittingly, a dark cloud over Gillette Stadium.

I only expected to drive by, take some pictures, and get back on the highway, however I noticed that there was a Pro Shop so I pulled up a little closer to the stadium to have a look. When I noticed it was open, I decided to go in and browse around.

I picked up a few souvenirs for the family and on my way to the check-out counter, I was met by a Channel 9 television crew looking to interview me.

“How are you feeling after last night’s loss,” the interviewer asked? We talked for a few minutes about my thoughts on being seconds from perfection. They asked me if I thought the game had been jinxed, but in the end, I just re-iterated my thoughts on what a great year it was to be a Patriots fan.

As I was checking out my items, I noticed the guys at the counter were watching highlights of last night’s game.

“Aren’t you guys getting tired of watching that,” I asked?

Lawrence Thomas

“It really sucks”, was all one cashier had to say.

On my way to the car, I noticed quite a few fans making their way to the pro shop, many of them wearing their Patriots jerseys.

I attached my new Patriots window decal to my rear windshield, took one last look at Gillette Stadium, and finally, headed for home.

It was a quiet drive west. The return trip rarely carries the same element of excitement as the anticipation of arriving at adventures destination. Countless hours on the road isn't a factor on the To part of the journey, when your thoughts are consumed by the excitement of the open road ahead and the stories that they will tell, versus the back to the every day of the From. New places and faces to imagine, rather than concentrating on cramped legs, trying to stay awake, or life's responsibilities that patiently await your return.

6:25pm – Pattersonville, NY. Just filled up on petro and a grabbed a large coffee to keep me going. It's a dark night. No moon. No stars. The roads are steady, quiet, and mesmerizing.

8:05 - Just passed Syracuse. I forgot how nice it is to have some time to yourself once in awhile, to reflect on life; alone with your thoughts. Water tower says Van Buren.

9:02pm - 'Buffalo. An All-American City.' I have never been so happy to see a Buffalo sign since my dad took me to see the Bruins at the old Odd as a kid.

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As I made the final turn onto my street late that night, I spotted a city bus with some of our local star players airbrushed onto the side of it. After all those Patriots photos, videos, and stories, I was looking forward to cheering on my hometown team in the coming months – the CFL Tiger-Cats.

* * *

Little did I realize after mission 16W's was completed, that the road to perfection would eventually lead me down the I-90 into downtown Boston.

There is so much about the game we as fans love, more than if our team wins.

If you love football for what it teaches our children, for what it gives back to its underlying communities, for the simple thrill of the sport itself, then the Giants victory and the many stories almost lost in the perfection shuffle, are why you love this game.

We watch football because sometimes, the unthinkable happens. Because perfection has only been achieved once, and maybe that it has not happened again, is why this game is so exciting.

If you look at the schedule for the '72 Dolphins, it closely resembles what the Patriots accomplished during the 2007-2008 season; minus that final victory Miami was able to attain. There were close games for the 1971-1972 Dolphins, there were blowouts (unfortunately one being a 52-0 romp of the Pats), and their playoff run, including their triumph in

Super Bowl VII versus Washington, were all close. Miami's season could just have easily gone either way.

Perfection, ever, were 35 seconds away for the Patriots. I look at all the post Super Bowl periodicals I accumulated from Boston area newspaper clippings, to that February's issue of Sports Illustrated.

All those cover photos were not the ones I had been dreaming of putting on display. It was hard to look at them at first, but I eventually turned the page and read the stories within. Stories like the one of David Tyree and how when his mother died, his teammates, especially Amani Toomer, helped him through the rough times, and how Toomer became a mentor for Tyree.

They were the stories that made those players real, and not just a stat. They weren't about number of receptions, touchdowns, or the number of sacks or tackles.

There were now two sides to that Super Bowl story. One may have been overlooked had the Patriots held onto the lead during those final seconds. It was a well deserved win from a team that had fought so hard all season, and had overcome many obstacles to achieve that final victory; including 4 road playoff wins.

It wasn't how the Patriots wanted their amazing year to end. I know I couldn't read any more about how it was *the biggest upset in NFL history* any longer. I had to put it to bed, and reflect on the enjoyment I had felt watching football that season.

I knew, somewhat, how those players felt. I have played sports all of my life. Not at the professional level, but if you have a competitive spirit, you want to win. Winning is a great feeling. There is no denying that fact,

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but didn't our parents, teachers, and childhood coaches, once tell us that "It doesn't matter if you win or lose. It is how you play the game that counts." "Have fun," they always reiterated.

I realize we are talking about professional sports here. People are drafted, traded, and paid 6, 7, and even 8 digits to help their team win, but you can't lose site of the simple childhood fundamentals that were driven deep into our little psyches. If you aren't having fun out on that field each and every game, losing will be that much harder to swallow.

It hurts to lose. Some losses may even haunt you, but life is what it is. In the end, some of those guys on the other side of the field are your friends, former teammates, or maybe even guys you have looked up to at some point in your life.

In the end, someone's dream has come true and for what that moment means to them, I know I can not begrudge anyone as they savour in their triumph. We all have dreams and seeing others realize theirs, is what keeps that hope alive inside of us, that if we work hard enough, if we want it bad enough, if we let ourselves believe that we not only deserve it but can attain it, we can be inspired by other's accomplishments, to continue to reach for our own dreams.

When we look at how players, coaches, and teams stand comparison with past and present greats, we often measure their greatness by some sort of defining moment. We analyze their every move and showcase their life, minimize them or define them by one play; by one split second in time.

Lawrence Thomas

The definition of a great player for me, is who they are in their hearts. How they are seen as a friend by their teammates, or on their involvement in the community. Is he or she a true role model for our children?

When I look locally at our hometown team and the story behind guys like running back DeAndra' Cobb, or south of the border at Baltimore Ravens offensive tackle, Michael Oher, to me, great players are people that inspire. Whether it's greatness in talent, greatness in spirit, or whether it's both.

We all look down that road to perfection. Whether we strive for the perfect season, to be perfect parents, paint the perfect picture, or write the perfect story or song. You may go undefeated, you may be great parents, your artwork may be studied by students for centuries, or you may tell a story or compose a song that truly moves people; touches deep into their soul.

Perfect in my eyes however is looking back, and knowing that you gave your whole heart to doing the best you could. That you gave it everything you had inside of you. That the outcome, in the end, isn't really what is extraordinary. It is the road that you look back upon, as you gaze out that rear view window, arms folded under your chin, resting your upper body against the back seat, looking out the rear windshield and with complete satisfaction and a smile on your face, thinking quietly to yourself, "Wow! What a ride."

To me, perfection is in the affection you put into whatever it is you do.

We will all make mistakes along our paths to perfection, and someone will find a reason to criticize some aspect of your accomplishments. The

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key is to define our own futures; define our perfection, before others define it for us.

As the cameras turned to Peyton Manning jumping for joy after the Giants seemingly unlikely Super Bowl XLII victory, seeing the excitement over his little brothers success, I gave way to selfishness to realize the beauty of that moment. Brothers. Family.

Although I felt it somewhere inside the moment the Giants beat the Green Bay Packers to move onto face the Patriots in the finals, there it was; The story that was meant to be that Super Bowl Sunday.

Later, following the game as camera crews captured moments amongst the Giants locker room, I was touched deeper by my favourite story of that day.

“I love you man. Very much,” Peyton expressed in that southern Louisiana accent, as the two shared a brotherly embrace. Peyton looked so proud of his little brother, as Eli looked up to the older Manning.

Part II

Giving Up On Perfection

Two seasons ago, the New England Patriots became the first team in NFL history, to go 16-0 on their season; only the second team since the 1972 Miami Dolphins (back when the season was only 14 games), to have a perfect regular season record.

Late into the 2009 contest, it was looking like two teams just might equal that feat, creating two chances that one of them might be able to accomplish what the Patriots were not able to; go 19-0 and complete perfection as those same '72 Dolphins had done, with a Super Bowl title to show for it.

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I will be honest in saying, that I hoped neither team would realize that dream so soon after New England had achieved the seemingly impossible.

As the season progressed and that record came close to being matched, I began to hope that if someone was going to equal what the Patriots had done, that at least the New Orleans Saints would be the team to join the xx and o club.

A great rivalry had developed over the past decade between New England and the other team that was threatening perfection, the Indianapolis Colts, including the one between the two teams star quarterbacks; Tom Brady and Peyton Manning. It was for this reason, that I didn't want to see our rivals join the Ranks of the Dolphins and Patriots.

I had already hoped that the 2009 season would see the Saints bring some glory to a city that had been dealt a series of bad hands over recent years. The team and the city deserved it.

Unfortunately, the Saints were the first to have that perfect streak broken in a heartbreaker versus the Dallas Cowboys late in the season, which left Indy. It looked inevitable.

When you look back to 2007, and how opponents like the Baltimore Ravens beat themselves with inexperienced penalties, luck was also a factor in New England's 16-0 season. The Patriots had the added pressure of every team wanting to break their streak but for many teams, the pressure of stopping perfection seemed an equally daunting task.

After spending the last half of the 2009 season hoping Indianapolis would lose, when the Colts sat their starters in the second half of the game versus the New York Jets and walked away from perfection, I was

suddenly disappointed. Had they won the Super Bowl without the pressure of perfection hanging over them, Indy coach Jim Caldwell would have looked like a hero. Even if Indianapolis had accomplished perfection and still lost the Super Bowl though, the team, or at least their fans who probably detest the Pats as much as Manning and company, would have if nothing more, felt good about being part of history.

But we'll never know.

It's hard to imagine that the Colts would have lost, because New Orleans wouldn't have just been trying to win a Super Bowl, they would have also been one more team looking to stand in the way of perfection. The Patriots had proved how hard that can be both physically and psychologically, and really, could New Orleans have played spoiler as the Giants had done?

You can't turn back the clocks, but when I look back at Super Bowl XLII, it isn't the Patriots losing that final game that I remember most. Its 16-0, 18-0, then it's 35 seconds from 19-0. The memories are not of almost. They are of forever.

Had the Patriots lost a regular season game during the '07 season and the Super Bowl, it would have been nothing more than a pretty good year.

As for the Colts, that is now how this season will be remembered. Pretty good, but could it have been great? Could it have enshrined the 2009 Indianapolis Colts in forever; over-shadowing what their rival Patriots had done only two seasons prior?

We'll never know.

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For the Saints, I don't think perfection was important to them. Obviously it wasn't important to the Colts either, but New Orleans was in need, and deserving of, the celebration of a Super Bowl title most of all.

The magical city finally had something to celebrate.

Rivalries are a healthy part of sport, and I believe Indianapolis and New England are one of the best there is. For that reason alone, I would think perfection was important to the Colts.

I am not trying to take away from the Saints accomplishments this year and their well deserved world title. I truly believe that was the story that was meant to be, and one so many of us wanted to see come to fruition.

Perhaps the outcome would have been the same in the end, even had the Colts tried for perfection? I do not pretend to know the first thing about coaching an NFL team, but what I do know is that I was taught to never give up on my dreams. Maybe it wasn't the rookie coaches dream, but what about the players? Was it theirs and if so, did they have a say on giving up on that dream?

We all make mistakes in life, but I know all too well from experience, that regret is not the result of failure. It is a consequence of giving up. You will look back forever on what if, but you will one day find comfort in the defeat of giving it your all.

Lawrence Thomas

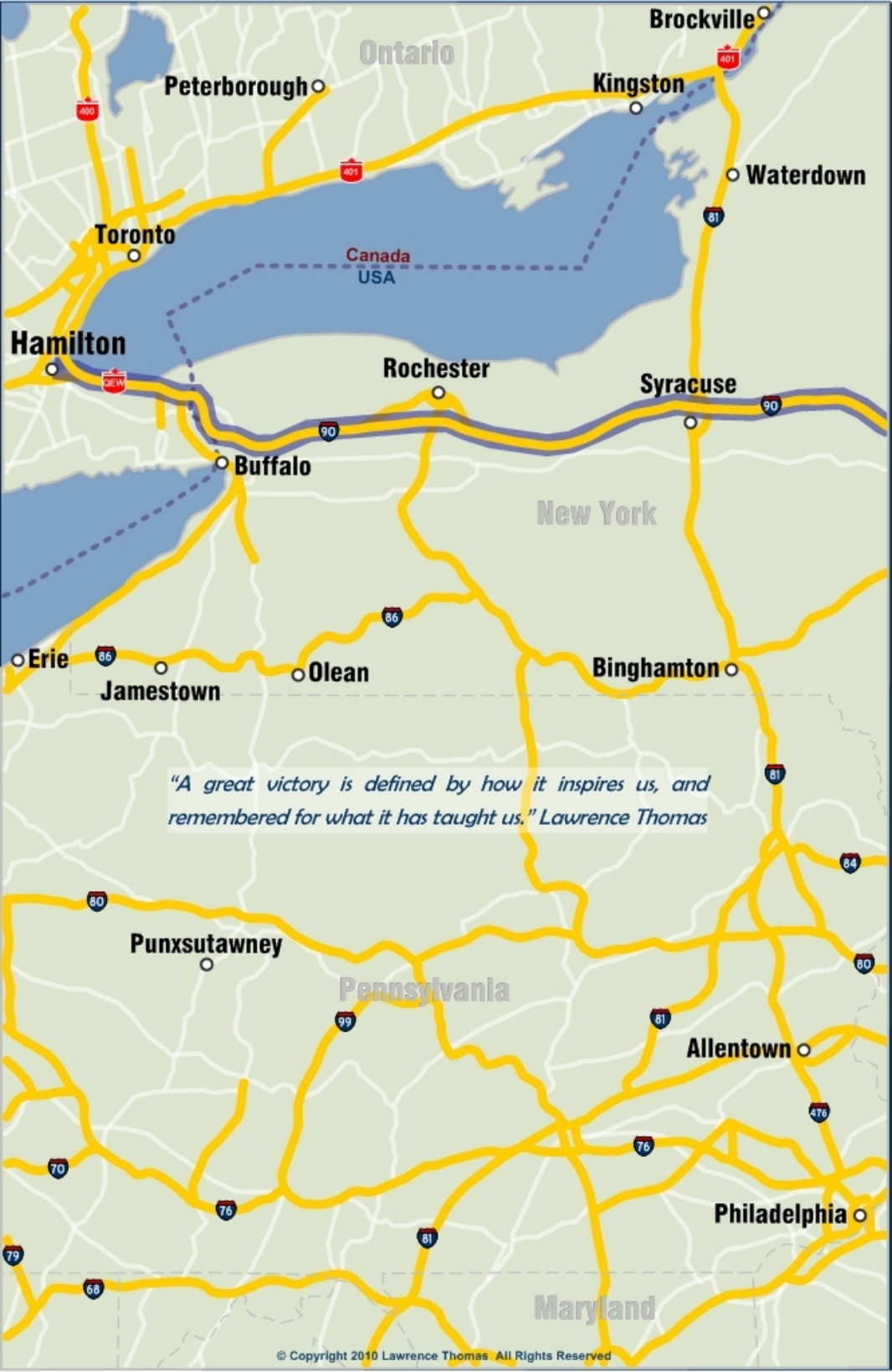
“A great victory is defined by how it inspires us, and remembered for what it has taught us.” ~ Lawrence Thomas

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You can also check out my football blog, [A Beautiful Night for Football](#),
for more football related stories.

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