

Destiny: The 12th Man

Destiny. Some people believe in it, others think it's like visiting a psychic. But in sports sometimes, destiny plays a big role in how things turn out. Just ask Calvin Schiraldi and Bill Buckner about the 1986 Mets' destiny or the Devils about Mark Messier and the 1994 Rangers' destiny or the Yankees about Curt Schilling and the 2004 Red Sox's destiny. That said, I think the 2007 Giants completed one of the truly historic runs in Super Bowl history and, yes,



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right between the eyes

destiny (as well as health) was on their side. Here are a few differences from a seemingly cursed 2006 season that show you why:

'06 — Head coach Tom Coughlin was generally considered a pain in the ass by the players.

'07 — Coughlin became a different guy and started taking care of his players, helping to change the dynamic in the locker room.

'06 — On a windy, rainy night in the Meadowlands, the Giants attempt a 53-yard field goal that Bears returner Devin Hester returned 106 yards for a touchdown. I was there that night, the air was sucked out of the building and slowly began to be sucked out of the Giants' season.

'07 — Giants versus the Bears with Hester playing wide receiver. Hester, streaking down the middle of the field with no Giants defender within 5 yards, does his best Johnny Lam Jones impression and drops the ball. If he catches it, game over and the Giants' season has a different complexion.

'06 — Mathias Kiwanuka has Titans QB Vince Young wrapped up for a game-ending sack. He thinks he hears a whistle, does not want a roughing-the-passer penalty and releases Young, who proceeds to scramble for a first down, later leading to the winning touchdown. We all know where the Giants' season went from there.

'07 — If I told you I have this Hollywood script and in it this fourth receiver playing for the Giants in the Super Bowl comes into the game with under two minutes remaining and makes this miraculous catch with one hand and the ball pinned against his helmet with a defender draped all over him, you would tell me I'm freakin' nuts and that Disney would love the script — well, you all know what happened.

'06 - Amongst others, Michael Strahan, Amani Toomer and Justin Tuck were all on IR the entire second half of the season.

'07 — Last I checked all three were rather instrumental in the Super Bowl run.

Just some revisionist history for all you fans who



tend to believe all the nonsense you hear from the mainstream media.

Amazingly, the New York baseball teams are showing signs of life, but there is still a ways to go, and in the Mets' case it will all boil down to when the rubber hits the road in September. Will Delgado, Beltran, Wright and Reyes deliver when it is needed most (by the way, Reyes is clearly not missing the Rickey Henderson mentoring), will the role players continue to come up big, and will Billy Wagner get the job done closing critical games? This is a "now" team and with the National League overall, especially the NL East, being weak, this division is ripe for the taking. The Mets should be thankful that their terrible start did not hurt them too badly.

As for the Yankees, I still believe it will be difficult for them to make the playoffs, as I do not see the Rays going away and, of course, the Sox will be there. I don't understand why every year it takes Robinson Cano three months to start playing to his capabilities. The Yankees are always a now team, but I think it's fair to say, unlike years past, there is a component that points to the future. The Yanks will have major personnel decisions to make over

Tom Coughlin's demeanor was just one of the many significant differences between the Giants of 2006 and the Super Bowl champions of 2007.

the next two years as Giambi, Farnsworth, Abreu, Mussina, Pavano (yes, he is "earning" \$13 million this year), Pettitte and Damon all come off the books. Obviously, several of these guys still have some game left, but the Yankees can get younger and more athletic. Let's just hope ol' Hank doesn't turn this into the mid-'80s free agent spending spree that created that era's malaise. The great teams of the '90s were created via the farm system and very astute trades (see Paul O'Neill).

Hey, look at it this way: If the Mets and Yanks fall short, there's always the '08-09 Knicks to look forward to.

Before all you Mets fans go nuts over Jerry Manuel, let's see what happens over the long haul. Don't forget 1990 when they fired Davey Johnson, went on a tear with Buddy Harelson at the helm and inevitably did not make the playoffs.