

Boston Sunday Globe



OLD FOE, NEW ERA

The 'Everyman' coach, Vrabel is just that in real life: a guy with his buddies

By Adam Himmelsbach
GLOBE STAFF

Patriots coach Mike Vrabel counts Tom Brady among his friends, owns three Super Bowl rings as a player, and on Sunday will try to win his first as a coach. The 6-foot-4-inch former linebacker is one of the biggest celebrities in this region, literally and figuratively, but he does not really operate as one.

He is most comfortable at home in Nashville where he still lives, hanging with a

motley crew that includes a funeral director, an owner of an artificial turf company, and a medical device salesman.

They golf and ski. They inhale beer and sausage. They trade barbs as if they were in middle school, sometimes forgetting that they are not.

"I think what he likes about us is we're normal guys who wouldn't think of him any different if he was an insurance salesman," said Kent McMillin, the turf company owner.

One key element to this magical Patriots sea-

son has been Vrabel's ability, in his first year as coach, to connect with players and staffers. But developing meaningful relationships is at his core, and no group better illustrates that than this unlikely and inseparable bunch.

"We make a good little group," Vrabel said.

Brent Keally, the device salesman, said others believe that hobnobbing with an NFL coach must be glamorous. He struggles to keep a straight face when responding.

PATRIOTS, Page C12

The tops

In the 21st century, the Patriots have been our region's best local sports franchise, writes Dan Shaughnessy.

The season

New England built a Super Bowl run a day at a time. Here are 10 moments that defined the Patriots' season.

Globe Magazine.

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY ASHLEY BORG/GLOBE STAFF; DANIELLE PARHIZKARAN/GLOBE STAFF; ASSOCIATED PRESS; ADOBE STOCK

Blue cities a handy scapegoat for Trump

By Tal Kopan
GLOBE STAFF

WASHINGTON — Within days of taking office for the first time in January 2017, President Trump signed an executive order to cut off federal funding for so-called sanctuary cities. Nine years later, he's still trying.

"I have directed that starting immediately, there will be no more pay-

ments to sanctuary cities because they are really just sanctuaries for criminals," Trump said in a speech to world and economic leaders in Davos, Switzerland, last month.

It's a fight that began as a feature of his 2016 campaign, becoming synonymous with his immigration agenda. Yet, he's been largely rebuffed by the courts each time he's attempted to

punish Democratic cities and states, causing them to dig in harder in the face of his ire. Just Thursday, six of the largest cities in Greater Boston announced fresh measures to ban federal immigration enforcement on city property and protect peaceful protesters.

Undeterred, Trump last month again pledged to cut off federal funds

SANCTUARY CITIES, Page A10

'Every time he gets blocked, he gets to say, "Look at the Democrats and how insane they are."

DAVID BIER
Cato Institute

Rent control comes for Beacon Hill

Ballot effort may force legislators to seek a deal

By Andrew Brinker
GLOBE STAFF

One sweltering day last summer, more than 100 tenants, advocates, and local officials crowded onto the Grand Staircase in the Massachusetts State House and told stories about the worst of this state's housing crisis.

They talked about elderly tenants evicted from their longtime homes, single mothers living in their cars, and rent increases of more than \$1,000. Their chants echoed off the tall ceilings.

"We need rent control," the crowd shouted. "And we need it now!"

Lawmakers ignored them. Aides scurried by with barely a glance. It was an apt metaphor for how Beacon Hill has treated calls for rent control for years.

Lawmakers may not be able to ignore them much longer.

A ballot question that would enact the nation's strictest rent control policy across all of Massachusetts is heading toward voters in November. Early polling suggests a majority of voters favor rent control, and advocates believe they finally have something they haven't had in

RENT CONTROL, Page A13

Cutting the cost of tying the knot

By Bryan Hecht
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Floral centerpieces for your wedding guests now start around \$250 per table. A four-tier buttercream cake can run you about \$2,600 — more if you want a smooth fondant finish instead. Salmon with a champagne toast for 100 people? That'll be nearly \$3,000 (\$4,500 if you want the good stuff).

A wedding has always been one of the most expensive days of a couple's lives, but inflation, tariffs, and other affordability concerns are putting the luxe trappings of matrimony out of reach for many in Massachusetts. And the prices — which are outpacing those in the rest of the economy — are reaching a breaking point.

Many soon-to-be-wed are trying to shrink costs for their big day: culling guest lists, embracing DIY, and even eloping rather than hosting an expensive gathering. Planners

WEDDINGS, Page A13



ANDREW BURKE-STEVENSON FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

As an option for her wedding, Nadia Crowley bought this dress from Facebook Marketplace for \$20.

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