New York Giants turn to John Harbaugh to restore identity

By ANTHONY ANGELILLO
Copy Editor

For a franchise that sells history as much as it sells tickets, the New York Giants made a rare move this month. The organization did not chase the next hot assistant or ask fans to buy patience for another restart, but rather hired a coach with a Super Bowl ring, a long resume and a reputation for "winning."

The Giants named former Baltimore Ravens head coach John Harbaugh as head coach, introducing him at the team facility in East Rutherford, N. J., on Jan. 20. Team President John Mara said Harbaugh stood out for "conviction and vision" during a search led by general manager Joe Schoen.

Since former head coach Tom Coughlin left after the 2015 season, the Giants have cycled through names like Ben McAdoo, Pat Shurmur, Joe Judge and Brian Daboll, who was fired on Nov. 10, after a 2-8 start. Mike Kafka took over as interim head coach, never producing a coach who stayed longer than three seasons or lived up to the success Coughlin had.

The coaching carousel produced one playoff win against the Minnesota Vikings in 2022, but led to a complete descent, with a combined record of 55-109-1; the only team worse was the New York Jets at 49-116, which no proud franchise wants to be part of.

That slide is why the Harbaugh hire is a culture decision, not just a football decision. Giants fans still measure the team against the Big Blue Wrecking Crew era that legendary head coach Bill Parcells helped shape in the 1980s, as well as the two Super Bowl runs under Coughlin.

Those seasons carried a clear identity through physical defense and clean situational football.

The last decade rarely matched that picture, leaving the fan base fed up with the failures of the once-respected franchise.

On Jan. 5, the Giants confirmed that Joe Schoen would return as General Manager for 2026, while emphasizing "continuity and stability" in the front office. Schoen then became the public face of the coaching search, describing leadership, accountability and quarterback development as top priorities.

That decision did not quiet fan frustration. Schoen faced criticism for several major roster decisions over the last few seasons and has received more second chances than a kid being sent to the timeout corner.

The Ravens would then fire Harbaugh on Jan. 6, after the team missed the playoffs in Week 18 due to a missed 44-yard field goal on the final play. Ravens owner Steve Bisciotti cited an internal evaluation of the season and the organization's overall direction.

The timing stunned fans in part because Baltimore extended Harbaugh to a three-year contract extension that put him under contract through the 2028 season back in March.

Harbaugh's exit also came with a stack of recent warning signs.

In eight seasons with Jackson at quarterback, Harbaugh won only three playoff games, never advancing past the AFC Championship Game. That record became a major part of the criticism in Baltimore, especially in recent years when the Ravens were considered to have a Super Bowl-caliber roster.

Harbaugh teams have blown 46 fourth-quarter leads since 2008, tied for the second-most in that span.

However, besides the glaring concerns, the Giants did not wait, as they agreed to a five-year contract with Harbaugh on Jan. 17. The deal is worth about $100 million in total value, a figure that suggests the Giants wanted a proven coach at the helm, not a short-term plan with an inexperienced coordinator.

The resume speaks for itself, which is why the hiring could either be the best or worst in Giants history.

Harbaugh coached 18 seasons in Baltimore, won 180 regular-season games, reached the playoffs 12 times, won six division titles, reached four AFC Championship Games and then won Super Bowl XLVII.

Those numbers give him instant credibility in a building that has been chasing a lasting identity since Coughlin left.

Once the firing became official, the market moved fast. ESPN reported that Harbaugh's agent received calls from seven teams in the first 45 minutes after the decision, including at least one team that still had a coach at the time.

When the Giants introduced Harbaugh, he leaned into the full brand name, calling the team the New York Football Giants. He also framed the job as daily work, not a slogan, with a message the Giants later highlighted in a team recap: football as a verb, "all the time, every day."

The Giants also sold Harbaugh as a culture fit, not only a trophy fit. In announcing the hire, Tisch described Harbaugh's teams as disciplined, resilient and prepared.

Schoen pointed to staff building, player development and accountability as the core of the plan.

The job also seems attractive in 2026 due to roster reasons, mainly rookie quarterback Jaxson Dart.

The Giants have not had consistent quarterback stability in years. Dart gave the franchise a new lane. In Baltimore, Harbaugh lived through quarterback eras that demanded adaptation.

He started with quarterback Joe Flacco, then built around Lamar Jackson, a player who, when healthy, can be the greatest player on the field.

Quarterback development matters more than ever because the best version of Dart will need to become balanced through designed runs that punish defenses, along with a passing game that still works when opponents force him to win from the pocket.

For the Giants to make the playoffs in the seasons ahead, the checklist starts in the trenches.

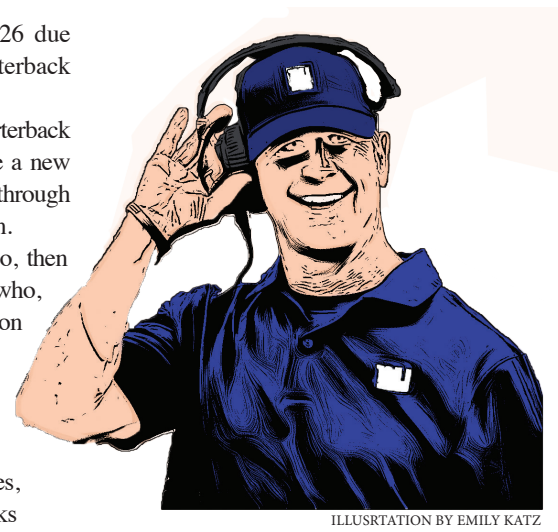
A young quarterback cannot develop on broken plays, and a coaching staff cannot install an identity if the offensive line collapses in the same spots every week.

Schoen pointed to a "young nucleus of talent" while defending the decision to keep the front office intact, with players like rookie edge rusher Abdul Carter part of the long-term vision.

That is the optimistic view that I am holding onto for dear life.

The job ahead for Harbaugh will not be easy, as New York can be punishing if you aren't prepared. Harbaugh needs to prove that his end in Baltimore was a season-specific crash, not a trend that follows him across state lines.

If the Giants can assemble a coaching staff capable of developing a modern offense around Dart and establish a culture that keeps the team from falling apart as the schedule grows tougher, the Big Blue Wrecking Crew will evolve into the franchise I know and love and return to the national standard for greatness.



ILLUSRTATION BY EMILY KATZ

'Final Destination': The evolution of death

By NICOLE GEMMATI
Staff Writer

While the new millennium brought forth panic, it also brought forth the first film of an iconic movie series… that also brought panic. Released in the year 2000, "Final Destination" spawned a multi-movie franchise and a cult-like following.

The franchise is also responsible for impacting a generation into developing niche fears, such as driving behind log trucks and using tanning beds.

Beginning with a catastrophic opening, each "Final Destination" movie follows a protagonist who appears to meet an untimely death. But because the movie can't go on without them, their death is revealed to be a vision. After taking it upon themselves to save others, Death takes it upon itself to ensure their fate is sealed, killing off the survivors one by one.

The first seen protagonist is Alex Browning (Devon Sawa), a high school student who sees himself and his classmates perish in a plane crash on their way to France. After getting himself and six others off the plane, the group witnesses Alex's vision become reality. While some are relieved to have avoided disaster, others are unsettled by Alex, especially when he realizes that Death, portrayed as a supernatural villain, is coming for them. Though they fend off Death for as long as possible, the only survivor to appear in the next movie is Alex's girlfriend, Clear Rivers (Ali Larter).



ILLUSTRATION BY KATERINA PARIZKOVA

As the franchise continued, the opening disasters became more outlandish. While a plane crash is conceivable, rollercoaster derailments and high-rise collapses occur far less frequently. This shift is likely due to advancements in technological effects. The deaths evolve as well, becoming less realistic and more shocking. Tod's (Chad Donella) death in the first film, though a Rube Goldberg-style accident, needed to remain believable for Death to disguise it as suicide. In the later movies however, Death strives more for shock factor rather than believability. While this is a testament to its fearfactor, it also reveals a degree of laziness, as Death forgets to cover its tracks like it had in the past.

While the movies do get more elaborate, the sequel directly feeds off of its predeccesor. Each character is affected by the deaths in the original movie, surviving longer because of them. Death eventually circles back to claim their lives, crossing their names off its list. The second movie is also notorious for introducing loopholes to the system. While one can skip a death, the survivors learn how to outrun it indefinitely by bringing a new life into the death loop.

Aside from this direct sequel, multiple references to the original movie appear throughout others in the franchise. For example, the number 180 serves as a sign of incoming doom, being present at both the plane crash in the first movie and the car pileup in the second. Characters are also connected to one another even if they never meet. The bus driver who runs over Terry Chaney (Amanda Detmer) in the first movie becomes the protagonist of the novel "Final Destination: Death of the Senses," attempting to avoid Death himself after witnessing a premonition of his own. This extension to the franchise leans into Death's trail as well, as the lives of those who cause the deaths are also ruined.

One of these references ties into a theory in the second movie. After learning that new life stops the death loop, they attempt to hold out the life of a pregnant survivor. However, the most recent movie in the franchise — "Final Destination: Bloodlines" — denounces this, with Death coming to claim the lives of the descendants of those who were never meant to survive an accident in the 1960s.

The original concept for "Final Destination: Bloodlines" follows a similar premise, with Death targeting a group of EMTs who each saved a life that was never meant to be saved. Both iterations open up the franchise to more potential spinoffs. Some fans have suggested that a TV show would work, with each episode following a survivor of the Sky View collapse, and their eventual descendants. This opportunity also opens up further worldbuilding, with the series taking place in the past.

This pattern can also foreshadow the future visionaries as well. Fans have noted that multiple characters experience injuries to their fingers in the movie, starting with Iris (Brec Bassinger) in "Bloodlines," the first protagonist chronologically. While some of the characters whose fingers are affected aren't visionaries — such as Kevin Fischer (Ryan Merriman) in the third film — they are still affected by the visions and close to the protagonists themselves, and many theorize that they are descendants from past survivors. Their deaths in their respective movies is simply Death coming back to finish up their list. This proved to be correct in "Final Destination 5."

With "Final Destination: Bloodlines" revealing that Death's plans have been thwarted before, it opens up to the fact that there have been visionaries in the past that remain unknown to the audience. This possible worldbuilding can reveal the reason why the visionaries see into the future in the first place. Some fans believe there is a force equal to Death: Life.

This new force has repeatedly and directly prevented Death's plans for a period of time. A spinoff series to tie up loose ends will certainly breathe new life into the series that "Final: Destination: Bloodlines" has already begun to do.