

Bothered by lingering pain in his surgically repaired left knee, tight end Nate Byham asked for his release from the New England Patriots in the summer of 2014, just five days after he signed with the team and just two days into practices.

"I asked to be released because I didn't feel my knee was healthy enough for camp," said Byham, who has had four surgeries on the same knee.

Byham, a former Franklin High School and Pitt standout, served as a volunteer assistant for the University of Albany (N.Y.) in 2014, and became the team's tight ends coach in 2015. (He's still serves as an assistant there as of 2018.)

Byham signed with the Patriots on Sundays. He originally was drafted by the San Francisco 49ers in the sixth round of the 2010 NFL draft. The 26-year-old is a four-year veteran who played for two seasons in San Francisco and Tampa Bay. He was considered more of a blocking tight end.

Byham sustained a season-ending injury in Tampa Bay's 13-10 loss to Arizona on Sept. 30, 2013.

The Bucs placed him on injured reserve Oct. 1 after sustaining a serious knee and calf injury.

Byham, 6-4, 264, had been Tampa Bay's No. 3 tight end behind Luke Stocker and Tom Crabtree, but was listed as the backup TE to Crabtree before the Arizona game. Rookie Tim Wright out of Rutgers is the No. 4 tight end.

Byham had three catches for 38 yards on the season.

Byham, now 26, was taken in the sixth round of the 2010 NFL draft by the San Francisco 49ers.

An All-Big East selection from Pitt, Byham was the 15th tight end taken in the draft, and the 182nd player picked overall. He made the 53-man roster after a solid exhibition season in which he caught 10 passes for 116 yards and scored a PAT.

His first regular season catch was for 5 yards in the 49ers' 2010 opener Sept. 12 at Seattle. He finished the season with five catches for 27 yards, playing in 15 games and making three starts.

But his career with the 49ers would be short-lived. He missed all of the 2011 season after tearing his ACL. The 49ers cut him the following August when the knee was slow to come around.

Byham was picked up by the Tampa Bay Bucs in October 2012, and scored his first career NFL touchdown on a 3-yard pass from Josh Freeman Nov. 18 in a 27-21 overtime victory over Carolina.

Byham was reunited at Tampa Bay with his TE coach at Pitt, Brian Angelichio. The Bucs are coached by Greg Schiano, the former coach of Rutgers, a Big East rival of Pitt's.

Byham had 11 catches for 83 yards and a TD and has appeared in 29 NFL games, making five starts in his pro career.

He is now an assistant coach at Albany.