**PATRIOTS HEAD COACH BILL BELICHICK**

**PRESS CONFERENCE**

**August 23, 2022**

BB: Alright, morning. Early start here. Really looking forward to working with the Raiders today. This will be a great opportunity for us to continue to build on the last couple of weeks: the Giants preseason game, the Carolina week. Looking forward to the opportunity. We had a good day out here yesterday. Feel like we got acclimated a little bit. Looking forward to being ready to go.

**Q: Other than special teams, can joint practices be more valuable than preseason games?**

BB: Yeah, I think they’re valuable in the kicking game, too. There’s a ton of value. The contact’s less, so you can put more players out there longer, and have less concern. You can control situations, make sure you get the third-down red area two-minute end of the game kicking situations you’re looking for that may or may not come up in a preseason game - probably will come up in a preseason game, but the players that would most likely be involved in them during the regular season. So, those are all great opportunities for us. Just the fundamentals working against another team, a quality team like the Raiders. Working our fundamentals against their players and what they teach is great work for us.

**Q: What do you think are the qualities that make Josh McDaniels a good head coach?**

BB: I’ve talked about Josh a lot. He’s done a great job. All strengths for him. I’m just worried about if we know what we’re doing out here today. You know I think the world of Josh.

**Q: Did you see a difference from Josh prior to, and after he came here?**

BB: Yeah, Josh is the type of person that grows every year. I like to think we all do. We all learn things every year. This will be his opportunity to take whatever that was, in a different situation – he wasn’t the head coach at New England, so it was different, but here, he is. So, I’m sure he’ll take advantage of that. He’s a really smart guy, works hard, good football guy. A solid person. I’m sure he’ll do well.

**Q: What benefits will there be seeing different looks this week for your offensive line?**

BB: Well, every look’s different because the team’s different, the players are different. We didn’t see [Maxx] Crosby, we didn’t see Chandler Jones, we didn’t see [Johnathan] Abram, we didn’t see a lot of these guys. That all is different. Whatever Pat [Graham] chooses to do, he does, and we’ll deal with it. Carolina – I thought Phil [Snow] did a good job with what he did there. We certainly had some things we had to handle with them. Didn’t handle, had to adjust, so we learn something every week.

**Q: How have you seen LaBryan Ray progress?**

BB: Good. LaBryan’s got a good background, played multiple positions at Alabama. I know he was injured most of his senior year, so that was a tough year for him from a production standpoint. But, he’s been able to work into a number of different roles for us and been out there every day, works hard every day, so he’s gotten better and improved. It’s been good to work with him.

**Q: What have you seen from Jahlani Tavai?**

BB: Yeah, Jahlani’s done a good job. He came in last year and picked things up quickly. He’s a smart kid, really good football player, can do a lot of different roles: on the line, end of the line, third down, kicking game. He does a lot of things. Did that in Detroit. Did some of that in college, and was able to pick that up. Of course this year, it’s different for him, being here in the offseason program, being here from the start of training camp. He’s really developed a leadership role on the team. Really good communicator. He's done a nice job for us.

**Q: What growth have you seen from Rhamondre Stevenson?**

BB: The last three years for Mondre have been big jumps – from Junior College to Oklahoma and Oklahoma into the NFL. And then now, in his second year in the NFL, his growth from year one to year two in terms of training, again, understanding the NFL – what we do, what the opponents do, the pace of the game, the pace of the season, and so forth. He’s just shown a lot of consistent growth over that period of time. Really good football player. Does a lot of things well and has a great future in front of him.

**Q: What growth have you seen from Christian Barmore from year one to year two?**

BB: Same thing for all those guys, really. First year to second year, first of all, they have a much better idea of the length of the season, what the pace of the season is. The spring, the break, training camp, the length of the regular season, the daily competition. In the NFL, that’s different than college, when most of these guys are just better than everybody else – they’re just better than them. So, it’s a daily competition. Understanding what we do, and then understanding what goes on on the other side of the ball, how other opponents play, techniques, schemes, matchups. So, a year of all that is like two graduate courses. It’s like getting an MBA and then a doctorate in football. They grow tremendously, and now they have that. So, there will still be growth, but it will probably a little more incremental than that big jump from year one to year two. No different than when any of us took our first job and, after a year on the job, you just know a lot more than you did when you walked in there and you don’t know anything. You think you do, but you really don’t.

**Q: What makes Duron Harmon such a ball magnet?**

BB: Duron’s a smart, instinctive player. Always has been, well coached at Rutgers with Coach [Greg] Schiano. Played really good secondary there. Has a really good feel for the game. Instinctively reading the quarterback, understanding patterns and situations. He’s a smart football player.

**Q: How much did it help you to get out here yesterday as a team before joint practices?**

BB: It’s good to be out here. We had a good day of work. We got a lot of things covered. Traveled all day Sunday, so, we were able to get out here and have a productive day. And we’ll come out here and do it again.

**Q: Did you ever think Las Vegas would be an NFL city and have facilities like this?**

BB: Facilities here are incredible. This is the Taj Mahal of football facilities. It’s a great environment, looking forward to being in the stadium. Of course, we come back out here in the regular season. It certainly looks like they’re ready for football. Stadium looks good, facility looks good, and they have a good team. And a good coach. And a good staff. So, I’m sure it’ll be very competitive.

**Q: There was a stance 10, 15 years ago against Vegas and the gambling aspect. Thoughts as far as Las Vegas as a whole and the NFL embracing Vegas?**

BB: That’s all over my head. I’m just a coach. I’m trying to coach a football team, wherever it was. New England for the last 20-something years, but before that, I’m not worried about where franchises are, what’s going on in other cities, all the questions you asked about, honestly. Just trying to help the team, coach the team, put a good team together, do my role on the team, whatever it was. Those are questions for somebody more in that arena than I am. Sorry.

**Q: How has communication on the offensive line changed versus last year? How have you seen that group adapt to those changes?**

BB: Well, it’s all a work in progress. We’ve had some people missing from the offensive line at various points during training camp. Always room for improvement there. We have a long way to go. But, I think we’re gaining on it. I know we’re gaining on it. It gets better every day, and we create some difficult situations that force us to communicate and recognize things in our practices. And we’ve seen those from Carolina, saw them in the Giants game, and I’m sure we’ll see them this week against Vegas. Those are all good opportunities for us to not only improve our communication and recognition, but also coordinate the techniques that go with that so we can execute the running play or pass protection properly – whatever it happens to be.

**Q: How much of the long-term is in mind when you make a change like that?**

BB: Like what?

**Q: The communication on the offensive line.**

BB: We make changes every year. We don’t just xerox the playbook from the year before. We’re not running the same thing we ran in 2001 when we won a championship. So, a lot of things have changed over the years. They change every year. Some of it depends on what we have, what we’re seeing, what we have to deal with. Some of them may depend on a change in strategy that we want to employ, or an overall philosophy. I can’t think of a year that there hasn’t been changes, modifications and adjustments. We’re always looking to do things better. That’s an annual rite of passage.

**Q: When Josh McDaniels and David [Ziegler] come here, almost every press conference they’ve praised you and appreciation for what you’ve done. What does that mean to you?**

BB: Look, it’s nice, I mean, nobody has more respect for Josh McDaniels than I do. Dave [Ziegler] did a great job for us, but none of that really matters. It doesn’t mean anything. This is 2022. Nobody’s done anything this year. I haven’t done anything, our team hasn’t done anything. So, we have to prove what we are this year. Whatever happened in some other year, however great it was or wasn’t, it doesn’t really matter. We’re not living in the past and it doesn’t make any difference. We’ll see what we do this year, and that’s what we’re out here working for. I got a lot of work to do, I have a lot of responsibilities, so does everybody else on the team. And we’re all trying to get ready to play in the regular season and perform at a high level. So, I appreciate the compliments, but really, none of that matters – not in 2022. That’s all in the past. Thank you, though.

**Q: How much improvement have you seen from Damien Harris and Rhamondre Stevenson in terms of pass protection?**

BB: Well, pass protection in the NFL is a hard job. Period. We’ve been fortunate, we’ve had some of the best third-down backs that you could possibly have. From Kevin [Faulk] to Shane [Vereen] for three years, to James White. When you look at those guys combined over that period of time, there were very, very few mistakes on anything: assignments, execution, decisions. All of which they had a lot of. And those players primarily played on third down. When you play players on every down, then you’re looking at a different type of player, and a different set of responsibilities. Some of those are advantages for us, some of them may not be advantages. But, those guys have all improved. But it’s a lot. They’re looking at all three downs, not just really third down. So we have to plan accordingly on that. At running back, there’s always work to do. There’s always things to improve in: pass protection’s high on the list, so is route running. Of course, reading the blocks, and understanding the tempo, and if the guys are blocking in front of you, how double teams of these two guys is different than double teams of these two guys, and things like that. They rely a lot on what happens in front of them, just like safeties do. Safeties rely a lot on what happens in the front seven – where they go, where they fit, how quickly they do it, and so forth. It's not just what they do, it’s how they integrate into what happens in front of them. And that comes with a lot of experience, and teamwork, and reps. So that’s where we are at that position. Again, very similar to the safety position on defense.

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