**PATRIOTS HEAD COACH BILL BELICHICK**

**PRESS CONFERENCE**

**November 8, 2022**

**Q: I wanted to start by asking just the focus of the meetings today and then the practice tomorrow before you obviously head into the bye?**

BB: Well, the players aren't in today so the coaches are meeting today, and then we'll decide what the focus will be on tomorrow when the players come in. So, I'm sure there will be some individual fundamental things and also some team scheme adjustments and things to talk about situational plays, things like that. So yeah, we have plenty to work on.

**Q: I wanted to talk about [Matthew] Judon for a second. Obviously, there's a lot of focus on his ability to get to the quarterback and how he affects the game in the pass rush. But how about Judon against the run and what's special about somebody that just kind of seems to that innate ability to find the ball, and how impactful is it for you?**

BB: Yeah, I thought Jude really played well against Indianapolis. It kind of started on that first play where they ran the stretch play into him, and he set a good edge on that a couple other times during the game. I think [Jalen] Mills ended up making the tackle but just doing a good job on the end of the line of scrimmage, forcing the ball back inside to L.G. [Lawrence Guy] and [David] Godchaux, [Ja'Whaun] Bentley and those guys back in there some. A key part of that job for the defensive end/outside linebacker. Jude's an instinctive player. He does a good job of getting vision on the ball and also taking the right angle or making the right decision based on where the blocker is, where the ball is, how fast the runner's going, or what angle he's at and so forth. Those are football skills that are hard to coach because they happen so fast and it's just a decision that the player has to make on the field in a split second.

**Q: Also, how do you feel about the depth in regard to your secondary at this point as well where really going back to Patrick Chung, but it seems more predominate over the past couple years you've been very comfortable instead of having a third linebacker using whether it's [Kyle] Dugger or [Jabrill] Peppers recently, you know in that spot. So, the depth and also what's the thinking there in regard to having somebody that's more of a safety size but maybe as physical as a linebacker playing that outside spot?**

BB: Right well, we play a lot of people on defense at all three spots in the secondary, linebacker and the front, so I'd say probably as many as anybody in the league. But the players that deserve to play will get an opportunity to play and I think that rotation keeps everybody involved, keeps everybody fresh. Sometimes those roles get divided up based on the matchups that we're seeing and the personal group that we have on the field to go against certain offense personal groups. Some of its just rotational to keep everybody involved and give them some different things to look at, different body types, or different skill sets to look at to have to block and defend against. So, it's really a combination of both, but it's a luxury to have and we're very fortunate to have a good number of those players. A lot of them play in the kicking game as well too, so they're getting snaps on defense as well as special teams. That helps balance out our team and I'd say give us good depth at both spots, good depth in the kicking game and also good depth defensively. You lose a player like Cody Davis who is on every special teams unit or even a plyer like [Ty] Montgomery earlier in the year and you have to replace him on three or four special teams units each. You start running into a lot of players. It's hard to find one player to come in and do that, so a lot of times those jobs roll into everybody picks up one more unit or picks up one more thing, and you divide it that way, but you need multiple players to be able to do that and so we've kind of been able to manage that. So, that's again the depth in those units really help us out.

**Q: I wanted to ask you something about Sunday. I know after the game several offensive players noticed that Shaquille Leonard was calling out some of the plays before the snap. I was wondering when you went back and watched, is that a result of any tells or did you notice any tells that any of your players maybe had before the snap that would lead to a player like Leonard sort of knowing what was going to happen? Is there anything as a coaching staff you all can do to prevent that?**

BB: Yeah, so right Mark [Daniels], we definitely want to prevent that. Yeah, I though that there were two or three plays for sure that Leonard really got a big jump on and stopped us basically on those plays. [C.J.] Mosley got a couple of those a couple weeks ago in the Jets game. It looked like Mosley almost heard the play in the huddle. He was on it so fast. Leonard had a couple like that, too. So whether that's something we were giving away or just something that he anticipated based on whatever the keys were that he might have picked up, we certainly want to try to prevent that. I thought that Leonard for sure did it, and Mosley had a couple plays like that as well. That's what good defensive players do. They anticipate things and they are able to sometimes get a read on what they think is going to happen. They're not always right but sometimes they are, and they can certainly make you look bad offensively but as an offense, you always want to be balanced and then try not to give things away to the point where you don't have something complimentary that goes with them. So, that's kind of the game within the game there. Obviously if a player or team is stopping one thing, if you have something complimentary to go to then you can off-set that. So, we certainly had that situation come up as well, too where we were able to take advantage of whether it was a player thinking he knew what the play was, or the defense trying to play a certain play but not defend another play. You have to kind of strike that balance. So, yeah that's what it looked like to me, too.

**Q:** **As we reach the halfway point here, how would you characterize the way that this rookie class has performed and developed as a whole so far?**

BB: I think our rookie class has been attentive. They've tried to, I think, really learn, be coachable and take the information and instruction that they've gotten from their coaches and also from their teammates. They have a long way to go. As you said, we're kind of around the halfway point of the regular season. When you take a look and compile the preseason, training camp and all that on to it, we're well past that. These guys have played a lot of football. They have improved. But of course, the biggest games are yet to come. There'll be more challenges, and more difficult challenges going forward than what they've had already. So how good they are or aren't, or how they respond or don't respond, for all rookies in the league, not just our rookies of course, but everybodys will be a big question mark. It'll be a big question to be answered for each of them individually and their teams of how they perform in the second half of the year. If they hit the proverbial rookie wall, or level off, or do they build on the experience and the things that they've learned already this year to grow and become better and contribute more in the latter part of the year. I think we've seen plenty examples of both. So, we'll see how all that plays out.

**Q: Obviously last weekend, you had words about the military and the TAPS program after the game. I'm curious if this week, you have Veteran's Day coming up, you've coached a player that I know of, who finished his NFL career, Jake Bequette, and went on to serve in the Army. You have Joe Cardona who's in reserves now but has been an active-duty officer as well, maybe again. You also had Malcolm Perry here for a short time. He retired from football to go into the service full time who ended up being a Marine Corps Officer. I'm curious about your impressions of Malcolm as a player. But more so the decision he made, what your thoughts were at the time and the level of respect that you have for his decision to do that.**

BB: A number of guys – and maybe just to back track for a second on that Bob [Socci]. Of course, [Eric] Kettomi, would also be in that Navy group. [Phil] McConkey was out of the Navy when we had him – Kyle Eckel, Chet Moeller at the Giants. But I think one of the other people in the Malcolm Perry category would be John Stufflebeem. Admiral Stufflebeem played and punted at Navy. Then we had him in training camp when I was with the Lions. He was certainly an NFL caliber punter, but he elected to stay in the Navy and went on to serve and rise to the rank of Admiral. Of course, everybody probably over the age of 30, remembers him from the daily press briefings that he gave with the post 9/11 press conferences. So, Admiral Stufflebeem made that same decision to forego an NFL career to serve in the Navy. I spent a lot of time with Pat Tillman when he came out in whatever year that was, '98, '99, somewhere in there down at Arizona State. He ultimately made that same decision to play, and then go, and Malcolm. Again, I have a tremendous amount of respect for all those people and for Malcolm. I had several long conversations with Malcolm prior to his entry into the draft. Then after he was released from the Dolphins, or not released, when we claimed him from the Dolphins, then when he was here. Then the process of him leaving, coming back, and so forth. So, we had a number of conversations. I have a ton of respect for Malcolm and the decision that he made. I'm sure he'll be a great teammate and a great Marine. I'm glad he's on our side. Glad he's defending us, and he's on our side. But yeah, that's obviously a big life decision for Malcolm and one that I, and as an organization, have total respect and appreciation for. But that's real-life football. There's real bullets out there. We coach and play a great game. But that game is, that's for all the marbles. So anybody that's in that arena, we have the ultimate respect for. The TAPS families that were at the game last weekend, was very, very touching to greet them and to at least show the appreciation and respect we have for their loved ones. Also, to see all the military people out, even Army, the bands, so forth. All the people on the field. In the end they all defend our freedom, and we appreciate what they all do. Thanks for asking about Malcolm. That's great. Great reference.

**Q: Rhamondre Stevenson lost a fumble in his first game last season, but he hasn’t lost one since, and I think he’s only put the ball on the ground once. What kind of work have you seen him put in with his ball security and what kind of coaching points have been there from Vinnie [Sunseri] and last year, Ivan Fears?**

BB: Right, we talk about ball security every day. Certainly Rhamondre [Stevenson] has taken that to heart. His ball security has become very, very good and it’s not just the balls that come out, it’s all the time. It’s how the ball is handled and carried. Whether the player is running in practice, whether he’s getting tackled or whether he’s in the open field and seemingly no one’s around him. But we all know in the National Football League, if you have the ball, there’s going to be a lot of people after you and they’re going to be coming fast and in a hurry. So, ball security is at the utmost, at the top of the list. He’s been a great example of someone who’s improved their ball security tremendously, takes a lot of pride in it and again, the thing is, you see it every time he touches the ball. Not just on gameday and not just when someone’s trying to rip it away, but he keeps it very secure all the time. He’s done a real good job of that.

**Q: You said one of Mac Jones’ strengths is seeing the field really well and he talked a bit about not trying to get caught up in what he calls, ‘false reality,’ just looking at still frames from tablets and things and just trying to stick to his coaching, what his reads are supposed to be, what’s open. How do you feel about his mental process, how he’s seeing things and just how to keep on building on some of the good things from the past couple of weeks?**

BB: One of the best things we’ve done in the last couple of weeks is take care of the football, in the passing game especially. We’ve had it striped out, but in terms of the passing game, we’ve kept the ball from being intercepted and really from the defense getting their hands on very many of them, and that’s a good thing. But, the quarterback, I think that’s really a good point about still pictures and where guys are and all that, but it’s also where their eyes are and where their movement is, what direction they’re going in and what their body position and posture is at that point and time. Are they getting ready to break forward? Are they still drifting backwards? Are they gaining ground, depth backwards to try to throw over them? Are they coming forward? So, you’ve got to be careful about throwing in front of them or you can throw over them, and all things like that. Again, for the quarterback, he also has to manage the pass rush and see around a bunch of big bodies in there that are 6’5, 6’6, 6’4, whatever offensive and defensive linemen and to be able to stay calm with all that’s flying around him there and still get a good, clear visual picture of where the coverage is, where they’re going and what they’re doing, how fast they’re going to get there. All that processing takes place in split seconds and when you talk to quarterbacks that really can see that, they do a good job from the sideline telling you exactly what they saw. Then you go back and look at it on film and you see all the things they talked about. Where the defense was, where are the defenders, how they were positioned, where the rush was, if somebody flashed in front of them, if they weren’t able to step up because of pressure from the right or left side, or whatever it is and so forth. Those guys see a lot and can process a lot. It’s really amazing how much they can do in a second, second and a half and then get the ball out of there. But that’s their job and that’s what they need to do is see the defense, read the coverage, throw the ball to the right receiver and manage the timing of the rush, either avoid it or slide to where there’s space that they can throw the ball. Like I said, a lot happens in those two seconds.

**Q: Understanding every quarterback is different and every play is different, what, if any, are some of the general coaching points for how to play under pressure at that position? Because it looks like the offense has one of the highest sack rates for when players are under pressure across the league, and I know there’s some of the negative plays that maybe Mac has mentioned about improving your early down efficiency?**

BB: Yeah, you’re right Andrew [Callahan], every play is different, all the circumstances are different and the relationships of the route, the defenders and the rush and so forth. In the end, it comes down to team execution and trying to, in the passing game, have a good rhythm and a good timing. When that all works, then you usually have good positive plays. When it doesn’t, when the receivers get jammed or they’re not open or the protection breaks down or the coverage takes something away that you think is going to be a good option and it turns out not to be, then that’s where it’s just not as clean. I think the best thing we can do, just in terms of the overall production, is more efficiency as a unit. Every single person making sure that their execution is as good as it can be on the play, and we’ll have more positive plays, more positive results, less long yardage, more points, etc. That’s kind of the focus for us this week.

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