



***New England Patriots Head Coach Mike Vrabel
Cleveland Browns vs. New England Patriots
Preseason Week 3
8-27-26***

How would you characterize the defense tonight?

"Not good enough. We got a couple sudden change stops, forced them to kick some field goals which I think is always positive. But not good enough. We couldn't match the speed of the quarterback in the zone read and some of those things. But we'll get back to work and figure out who we get back to work with."

You talked about not being a very deep team last week. What did you see that you can build on as you look forward to rosters?

"I'll make those decisions tonight, tomorrow morning, over the weekend, and, you know, we're always going to try to strengthen the roster. You know, find guys, and Eliot (Wolf) and his staff, and everybody included. It's a very fluid process. There's going to be players that are going to be with us, and then there are going to be [players] maybe picked up by somebody else, and they are going to be looking at other people. It's just about being patient, and figuring out who the right guys are."

We haven't talked to you since the Kayshon Boutte trade. How did you make the decision to cut the wide receivers down?

"That was one place where we do have some depth. I think for all parties involved, that was probably the best thing without injuries, you know? Okay, sure, he probably would have been inactive, unfortunately, because it's kind of the way it was. It's just him not playing special teams, but I tried to thank Jayshon as many times as I could. I texted them like every day. Just his maturity, his growth. His ability to put into words last year and share his own personal struggle, but also the growth that he made from that, that is positively going to affect a lot of people. I know that that wasn't easy for him to do, and I tell him all the time about how much I respect him."

It looked like QB Coach Ashton Grant and Secondary Coach Scott Booker were calling plays tonight for you guys. What went into that decision?

"Book didn't call plays tonight so he must have just been animated on the sideline. I was just giving Ashton an opportunity to call plays. (Patriots OC) Josh (McDaniels) has called plenty of games in the National Football League. And I think Ashton is a very, very good young, offensive football coach. I try to look for places to be able to give other coaches opportunities and I feel like this was a good time."

Early in the week you said that you were still deciding whether or not you were going to play the starters. How did you ultimately come to the decision to sit them?

"I just think that it's best for us right now to try to start next week with the guys that we have. I know that's a difficult decision. I don't think there's a right or wrong answer. We have to just continue to try to prepare the football team the best that we can. We just wanted to try to get to the regular season with the guys that we had."

As you do that, how do you feel overall? Big picture, as you start pushing to get ready for Seattle?

"We have a lot of work to do like everybody else. The new journey, the next step in a journey, is now building a team, and putting that together here, having a cut down day, and then it'll be, how can we improve along the way? How do we continue to develop the young players, how do we improve as a football team as the season goes on? We're excited to get started. But I also think we need a couple days here to kind of get away from each other. We've been going at this since July 20th, and I think a couple days may be good for everybody here."

We won't get to speak to you before Sunday. Do you anticipate activating Patriots LB Harold Landry III?

"Does that disappoint you, or does that excite you, that you won't get to talk to me? I can answer for you. I can answer. No, I think we'll just continue to see when we get back, those guys stay back. Whether (Patriots S Brenden) Schooler and Harold both stay back, and they have to be able to pass certain things, because once you take them off, that's kind of what it is. We just want to be very careful and smart with them, and not force them in anything, but on the same note that if they can relatively perform where we expect them to, and where they expect themselves to, that could be a possibility that we can be able to bring those guys off."

How difficult is Sunday if you're a player. A lot of guys out here are chasing dreams and you start to cut down the roster.

"You put a lot of time in with guys, and we hope that they give you everything that they have. It's not easy, but it's a tough part of this business. We want to try to be as respectful to him. Some of these players that we move on from we'll bring back on the practice squad. And I think for the most part, these guys, they gave us everything they had. We'll treat them the same way."

Patriots CB Christian Gonzalez, for the first time this summer, expressed some frustration about the contract negotiations. How would you navigate that situation, and just what's your reaction to his comments?

"Well, I don't have a reaction. I have conversations with Christian, and I understand that this is probably something that's difficult. I've never been in that position to this extent. I try to treat it with class, but also, him and I communicate. He's always free – our players are always free to feel how they want to feel, and you just have to stay patient, and hope that we can continue to work to some sort of degree."

You took the team to the Hall of Fame yesterday and Andre Tippett spoke to the team. What did that mean to you?

"I've known Tipps since 2001. And I think for a lot of guys, especially me, I haven't been back to the Hall of Fame since 1998. I played one game with the Steelers, and this was as close as we were going to get. The players really appreciated seeing the stuff that they had to offer. We appreciated the Hall of Fame for allowing us to come and treating us so well. Having Tip be there and be able to speak about the fraternity and his career, and everything that he did. He's a great Patriot, and we were glad to be able to honor him in front of our football team, but also have him show us around and be proud of the Hall of Fame."

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