

PATRIOTS HEAD COACH BILL BELICHICK VIDEO PRESS CONFERENCE September 17, 2020

FastScripts
transcript

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BB: Not much new from what we talked about yesterday. Like I said, looking through the film, proud of the team's effort, thought we overall handled the situational football decently – certainly room for improvement – kept our poise there through some competitive situations and there's a lot we can learn from on this film, a lot of things that we haven't experience this year that we experienced yesterday. So, it will be a good learning experience for all of us on the team and things that we can all clean up – coaches, players, everything. So, we'll try to improve on yesterday's performance and we'll need that against Seattle. They were impressive against Atlanta. Another great day from [Russell] Wilson, so we'll have to get to them here as soon as we turn the page on Miami today.

Q. Some might look at the way you played offensively yesterday and wonder how much the Patriots ripped up the playbook and built a new one. Is that exactly what happened, or how would you answer that thought?

BB: We always try to do what's best for the team to win. Everything we've done for the last 20 years, and rightfully so, has been for Tom Brady. It was for Tom Brady. Everything was dedicated to him, other than the games that he didn't play in, like when [Matt] Cassel played or Jimmy [Garoppolo] and then Jacoby [Brissett] when Brady was suspended. So, there were times when we had to plan differently, but when your starting quarterback has things that he's good at or things that you can take advantage of, then I think you try to take advantage of them.

Q. How much does that speak to the flexibility that you have within the offensive system? Or from your experience in football, would you say that's standard to be able to adapt like that?

BB: Yeah, I can only speak to the team that I'm on. Like I said, we try to do what's best for the football. That's what we always do.

Q. It looked like Joejuan Williams had a tough assignment yesterday against Mike Gesicki in some of those third-down situations. What made you confident that he could handle that assignment, and how do you feel like he faired out there?

BB: He had a couple really good plays, big plays – a pass breakup on third down, had good coverage there on the interception at the end of the game, kind of on the overthrow there. Well, he took Gesicki away and couldn't get the ball in there and J.C. [Jackson] intercepted it. Gesicki, he's a big receiver. I mean, he's not really a conventional tight end, but he's a tough matchup in the passing game, and felt like JoeJuan matched up against him and did a good job.

Q. On the fourth-and-1 decision, is there a thought that going up by six at that point isn't really worth it when you're deep in the opponent's territory? Mike Onwenu, Justin Herron and Devin Asiasi were on the field for that play. What gave you the confidence to have those guys out there in that spot in their first NFL game?

BB: Well, those players all practiced and gave us confidence to do that, so that's why we put them out there. We knew that obviously those situations are going to be critical situations – fourth-and-1's or goal lines or whatever. You would expect that type of play to come up in a critical situation, which it did. But, they've shown the ability to execute that in practice. Yeah, I mean, all those fourth-down situations, they're all different. But, certainly being up by six is a lot better than being up by three, especially late in the game when a field goal isn't enough for the offense and they've got to go to the end zone, but we just felt confident in that situation and the player's came through and executed it well. Cam [Newton] gave us a good run and we ended up inside the 1-yard line, so it worked out well, but that was good execution by the players.

Q. Yesterday was Derek Rivers' first healthy game in over a year. What have you noticed about Derek and how he's worked to get himself healthy and back out on the field?

BB: Yeah, thanks, Megan [O'Brien]. That's a great point that you brought up there. Derek's really done an incredible job. You mentioned some of the adversity he's been through, but I don't think I've ever really seen him in a down day. He's always got a positive attitude, he works extremely hard, he always works on the things that will help him and help the team – kind of the first one in and

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last one out type of guy in the building. Really glad to see him out there yesterday and have an opportunity to play and have some success and help us win, but he's really showed a lot of mental toughness and really an incredible amount of mental toughness over the last three years to deal with some of the setbacks that he's had, none of which were really his fault – just bad breaks, really. I don't think he did anything wrong, it's just that's football. But, he never had anything but a positive, hard-working, competitive attitude. He did what he could do and he rehabbed what he couldn't do. So, he's had a good camp here, good start to the season, and as you mentioned, him having the opportunity to play yesterday and go out and help the team win was very gratifying, I know for him, but for all of us, all of his teammates and other people on the team and the training staff, strength staff, all the guys that have worked with him during that time as well to help him regain all of his physical attributes, which I think he's done a good job of and they've done a good job of, but it came to fruition yesterday. As I said, I think that was gratifying for everyone. Thanks for recognizing it.

Q. You mentioned in training camp that you were concerned about ball security going into Week 1, specifically with contact situations. With N'Keal Harry's fumble out of the end zone and Damiere Byrd's muffed punt, does that demonstrate what you were concerned about? How do you approach that moving forward?

BB: Yeah, well, the punt situation was a totally different situation. Miami actually did a good job by pushing our player into the returner. It was a good play by them and something we've got to – that's a game situation that you don't really get in practice very often, although we've talked about it plenty of times. But, the actual, physical contact that led to that – the punt muff is one that's a good situational play that we're obviously going to have to spend more time on. But, I'd just say ball security in general, a lot of people would focus on the play or plays that happened where the ball is actually loose, and those are critical plays, but really we analyze every play, every time the ball is handled. Was the ball security good or wasn't it? And even if it didn't come out, if our ball security is not good, then it's only a matter of time until a defender is able to get his hand in there and if the situation's a little bit different, the traffic situation's a little bit different, the ball will come out. We analyze it on every play, practice and games. It doesn't matter whether it actually did or didn't come loose; what really matters is the technique and the handling of the ball so that it's always properly protected. We've always done that. As I said, we do it on every play in practice, we do it on every play in the game. I don't think that's ever going to change. There are corrections to be made, and it's just an awareness of that for everybody who handles the ball,

including the defensive players after they intercept it or scoop it up on a fumble, returners and obviously all the ball handlers on offensive plays. So, we'll continue to emphasize it.

Q. You played both Jermaine Eluemenor and Mike Onwenu at tackle yesterday. How did they do in Week 1 for you, and what does it say about their versatility that they, especially Mike, came into the NFL having played guard?

BB: Right, well, Mike's a very flexible player. I don't think he's played tackle since high school, but he played a number of positions for us in training camp – guard, tackle, we saw tight end there in the game yesterday. Similar but different than [Nate] Solder – when Solder was drafted, of course he was a first round pick, but came in and played the majority of his rookie year at right tackle and the jumbo tight end position. Mike's earned playing time and he's been able to play different spots for us. Right now, our two guards are pretty established players and they played well. If we can find a way to utilize our personnel productively, then we'll try to do that. But, Mike's a smart kid and he's got good versatility, he's worked hard, and he's embraced the opportunity to play different positions. Even though he doesn't have a lot of experience there, he learns quickly and is able to utilize his skills to be productive. Jermaine, as you said, has gone back and forth between tackle and guard in his professional career. He played tackle for the Ravens. He's also played guard. So, with Marcus [Cannon] opting out this year, we had a good opportunity to kind of open the right tackle position up to competition. Those two players are ahead of the rest of them at this point. We'll see how that goes, but I think both Jermaine and Mike have the ability to play inside and outside, they've shown that, so we'll just have to see how things progress moving forward, but it was good to get an evaluation of it yesterday and we'll see how it goes next week and in the succeeding weeks.

Q. What have you seen from Ryan Izzo and his development, particularly as a blocker? It seemed he was critical to the success of the run game yesterday.

BB: Yeah, Ryan's a little bit different than the situation we just talked about with Rivers in that he's played a little more than that, but he's also dealt with a couple setbacks here in his first two years. I feel like even though our opportunity to work with him this year was limited in the offseason, he took from the end of last year until the beginning of this year and improved his strength and put on some solid weight, worked on his blocking fundamentals, continued to improve those – you know, coach [Nick] Caley, his position coach – and he's certainly gotten better of the course of this year's training camp and relative to the two prior years.

He's been out there every day, so when you're out there every day working hard, you have to improve, and he certainly has. He made a nice catch-and-run for us on a play-action pass and gave us a pretty solid effort there at tight end yesterday. We needed that, so he did a nice job. But, again, kind of like Rivers, he's shown a lot of mental toughness and competitiveness to continue to work, even though things weren't always going the way he wanted them to or the way we wanted them to. He stuck with it with a good, positive attitude and day-after-day commitment, and that paid off. Thanks for recognizing that, too.

Q. We saw a pretty heavy rotation at safety next to Devin McCourty. Was that more due to getting guys up to speed after no preseason and sort of a shortened training camp? Or was it about wanting to get all of those players on the field?

BB: Well, we played a lot of players defensively at all positions. So, those guys were all out there. Of course, anytime you play a team with multiple receivers on the field – which the majority of the time, Miami had four receivers on the field, including Gesicki – so that forces you to use more defensive backs, and the safety position is part of that. So, a lot of rotation on the defensive line, on the outside linebackers, defensive ends, inside linebackers, all three of those guys played and our four safeties and corners played as well. So, I think you saw that rotation all the way across the board, but of course there's more defensive backs, especially when Miami was behind there in the fourth quarter and was not two-minute but kind of was two-minute – they had the two-minute situation at the end of the half, so probably a third of the game in terms of total number of plays were let's call it pretty obvious passing situations or passing groups. So, that always leads to more DBs on the field.

Q. Cam Newton ran the ball 15 times yesterday. Is that something you'd like to continue, or would you like to manage it better so he's not taking that many body blows during a game?

BB: Well, some of those runs were option-type runs, so we don't know who's going to get the ball. It depends on how the defense plays. It's not like handing the ball off to the halfback and running up the middle. When you run plays that have some type of an option to them, you don't know for sure who's going to get the ball. That's just an unpredictable part of that play. It's like running a pass play. Unless it's a screen pass, when you drop back and throw the ball, you don't know which receiver you're throwing to. It depends on the coverage and the matchup that you get. So, it's the same thing on an option-type run. The quarterback could keep it or the quarterback could hand it off. It really depends on how the defense defends the play.

So, I think those numbers are, with all due respect, I think they're a little bit skewed. If they play it a certain way, they could put the ball in whoever's hands they wanted to if they really want to declare who's going to get the ball. So, we'll see how teams play us going forward on those type of plays. If we run those again – I don't know – we'll do what's best each week based on the team that we're playing and how we feel like we can attack them.

Q. On the Julian Edelman on the first play of the last touchdown drive, did you guys see anything throughout the earlier portion of the game with those motions and how Miami was reacting that may have led to that being the right call in that spot? Was there something about those types of looks before, where those motion guys obviously weren't getting the ball, that made Edelman a good option to carry it on that one?

BB: Yeah, well, I think anytime you set up a game plan, you try to have complementary plays in the plan. So, if they're taking away a certain thing, then theoretically you have something else to complement that that they would have trouble defending or that they're not taking away. So, Josh [McDaniels] does a great job. Josh is an outstanding offensive play caller. He does a great job of mixing things up, setting things up and also recognizing how the defense is adjusting to certain, whether it's formations or the deployment of individual personnel or how their adjustments with certain defenses – you have sometimes one way to adjust it, but sometimes you can have more than one way to adjust it, and you want to identify offensively which method they're using. Josh totally understands defenses. He's coached on defense. He knows how defenses operate and what their choices are, and if they choose one, they're vulnerable having not chosen the other one in certain areas. So, a combination of good play calling, obviously good execution by the players, and again, having a good game plan so that if you feel like there's something that they're taking away that you have hopefully a complementary way to attack the defense so that they can't, as I said, theoretically stop both types of plays. So, I would say it probably fell into that category, as do most of our offensive plays. We try to find some place that we think we can attack, but if they take that away, rather than just trying to attack the same spot, then we hopefully can get to something that will hit the weakness of the defense, not the area that they're trying to take us out of. But, then it always come down to whether you can execute those complementary plays or not, and of course that was a very well executed play, it was a good run by Julian and then we got the penalty on top of it, so those are things – good play calling, good execution, that can lead to good results.