

NBC Sports Group Media Conference

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Drew Brees

Sam Flood

Press Conference



CHRIS MCCLOSKEY: Good afternoon, and thank you, everyone, for joining us today for our call to introduce Drew Brees as the newest member of the NBC Sports team. In just a moment we'll be joined by Drew as well as NBC Sports executive producer Sam Flood. As you all know it was announced on Monday that Drew will be joining our team as a studio analyst on Football Night in America and as a game analyst for our Notre Dame broadcasts. Let's begin with opening remarks from Sam Flood.

SAM FLOOD: Thanks, Chris, and thanks, everyone, for joining us today. We have thrilled that Drew is officially on the NBC Sports team. He scared a bunch of people when he was pushing that sled and getting that massive workout in a few weeks ago, throwing people off the scent and even giving us pause.

But we're really excited to have a Super Bowl winning quarterback, future Hall of Famer working for us coming in in a Super Bowl year, joining Football Night and Notre Dame, and he'll be part of big events at NBC like the Olympics and the Derby as we go forward, and a perfect year to have him join the Super Bowl out in LA. We can't wait to get going.

Then for the Notre Dame games Mike Tirico and Drew will have a lot of fun in South Bend, a Boilermaker calling the Notre Dame games. Should be a fun listen and a good chance to experience college football again, which is one of the things that's exciting about this deal, touching multiple parts of the company and of the sports world.

With that, we welcome Drew and want to pass it off to you because he's the person everyone wants to hear from right now, so Drew, take it away.

DREW BREES: Thank you, Sam, and thank you to everyone who's tuned in. I could not be more excited to be joining the NBC team. Certainly in my opinion it is the best of the best from the top down. My experience thus far with every member of NBC has been first class, and I'm really

looking forward to jumping on board, again, being part of the college football broadcast as a game analyst with Notre Dame football and then as a studio analyst with Football Night in America. I look forward to working very closely with the team, especially Mike Tirico, Rodney Harrison, Tony Dungy and many others.

At this point I'll turn it over to everyone for questions, and I'm excited to get started.

Q. Sam, how do you foresee it working out with Mike Tirico and Al Michaels with Al in the last year of his contract and then also with Drew and Cris Collinsworth in terms of Drew potentially doing Sunday Night Football and maybe the Super Bowl one day?

SAM FLOOD: Well, first of all, with Mike and Al, that process, conversations continue. It will be similar to this last year in terms of how we map that out. In terms of the booth for Sunday Night Football and Cris, Cris remains among the best to have ever done it, and the plan is to have him in that chair for a long time. So the opportunity down the road is not something we're looking at right now, we're focused on Football Night in America, the Notre Dame partnership with Mike Tirico, and that's really what this opportunity is about.

Q. From the Notre Dame side of things, what do you remember about your trips there, however many years ago, and what you may remember coming forward this year when Purdue will actually be their second game?

DREW BREES: Yes, don't think I didn't see that on the schedule right away. No, I remember vividly my two experiences at Notre Dame, both in 1998 and 2000. Both games in my opinion we should have won and somehow, somehow Touchdown Jesus got us in the end. But I'm extremely excited to be in the booth with Mike Tirico broadcasting those Notre Dame games. There's no question that that is really one of the epicenters of college football, the history and the nostalgia that exists there and I think just what that place represents to so many people, it is a special place.

I will say this: I will be impartial for every game with the exception of the Purdue game because my bloodlines run deep with the black and gold and the Boilermakers.



But on a serious note, I'm excited to be a part of that and really continue, I think, the legacy of what Notre Dame football has meant to so many and obviously extremely excited to be in the booth with Mike Tirico.

Q. Even though you're not initially doing the booth for the NFL, any quarterback coming into this business these days is going to be judged a little bit against what Tony Romo has done. What do you think about the way he made that transition and how much of what he's done do you kind of study as a template for how you might make that transition?

DREW BREES: Sure. I think Tony has done a great job. I think that what Tony did was -- I think he very quickly showed football fans everywhere just the way that an NFL quarterback can see and process the game, and it's obviously maybe much different than what they've seen or heard before.

Obviously he's had a ton of success. And listen, Tony has his own style, and I think that the best piece of advice that I've gotten so far when stepping into this business and stepping into the booth is just to be yourself. I think that's exactly what Tony has done. I think that if you look at all the great broadcasters from Cris Collinsworth to Troy Aikman to Jon Gruden to all the guys from history, man, everybody had their own style, right? John Madden. You certainly want the fans to kind of get a glimpse into the way that you see and process the game but also feel your love and passion for the game.

I think that's what was so intriguing about this transition from being a player to going into the booth is that I love this game, and I love watching this game, I love talking about this game, and it gives me the opportunity to stay very closely connected, to show my love and passion for the game but in a different way, and also for fans to get a glimpse into how I see it, how I process it, and then the trick is to be able to articulate that in a way where fans can not only understand it, but I want them to walk away from the game after listening to me talk about it saying, man, I know a lot more about the game now or I know a lot more about that play or that team or I have a new appreciation for it, and also feel that it was very entertaining.

Q. With everything you have going on with your pro football career, how much Notre Dame football have you been able to watch recently? And within that question, what are your impressions of the Notre Dame program at this point?

DREW BREES: You know, ironically I watched quite a few games last year. Obviously they had a phenomenal run. It

was fun to watch them on that journey. I feel like just from watching them this last year, I got a bit of a feel for their team and their style of play, their offense. Obviously they had those two big games with Clemson along the way, as well, so those were fun to watch.

Obviously it's one thing to watch it on TV, it's another thing as you begin to really study the team and study their personnel and the coaching staff and just -- college football is so interesting, right, because you get your recruiting class that comes in, and in most cases you know that you're going to have these guys for four, five years, and so you build your team, you build your program off of that. Obviously the NFL can be very different from the perspective that, man, the complexion of a team can change very quickly from year to year with free agency and the draft, et cetera, et cetera.

I'm interested to dive back into college football and understand the style that's being played. I think more so now than ever, you see this crossover of NFL and college. You've got coaches that are jumping back and forth, and I think you have the styles of play that are beginning to mimic each other because you have quarterbacks going from college football into the pros and they're so versatile, they're so athletic, they can do so many things that you see these offenses in the NFL skew more towards really catering towards the skill set of those players coming from college.

I'm really intrigued to dive into it and understand it further, study it further.

Q. Just wondering when you were at Purdue, had broadcasting been something that you always thought about, just thinking former Purdue QBs Bob Griese and Len Dawson have had successful broadcasting careers.

DREW BREES: You know, I probably didn't think about it until two or three years ago. I've always loved watching football, even when I wasn't playing it. People would always ask me, do you go home and just shut the TV off because you just have had enough of it? And I was like, no, absolutely not. I love the game, I'm a fan of the game, I love watching college football, I love watching NFL. So if a game is on I'm typically watching it. Usually I'm sitting back and watching it from a quarterback's perspective, I'm studying the game, I'm studying the offense, trying to anticipate what moves are going to be made on both sides of the ball. That's kind of the way we process it as a quarterback.

Over the years I really started listening to commentators and listening to their delivery and how they would set



things up and the topics they would choose to talk about and the game became even more interesting that way just feeling like that was something that I could transition to.

I'd say the defining moment for me was a few years ago, actually before the NFL season started, I believe this would have been 2017, I flew my family up to Indianapolis because Purdue was hosting Louisville and Lamar Jackson in the Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. It was before our NFL season had started. We had a weekend off. So flew the family up there to watch the Boilermakers and was watching the game and was invited into the studio to chat football and the upcoming season but also to comment on the game.

I'm telling you, when I put those headphones on and I started seeing the game from that vantage point and then beginning to talk about it, it was like the lightbulb went on, and I said, man, I can do this and I would love it and I think I could be really good at it. I think that's when I started to think about it and take it serious.

Q. How much football and preparation of it, how much do you think that transfers over to the studio?

DREW BREES: I think it transfers a lot because listen, I went from playing the game to now talking about the game, right. There's a way that I would study opponents. There's a way that I would prepare to go out and play my very best. I think the analysis of a game, of an opponent, of a team is very much the same in that regard.

From that perspective, I think that especially having a great familiarity with the teams certainly in the NFL and once I have a chance to really study Notre Dame, I think that you'll begin to anticipate -- have a really great understanding both offensively and defensively what's happening, be able to anticipate what's coming, the things that are happening. You watch players grow and develop and mature and you're able to talk about that. I just think there's so many positive themes and so many great things that we're going to be able to talk about, and also just allow fans to see the game obviously, again, from a quarterback's perspective and a guy who's fresh out of the NFL game and certainly sees and processes a game differently than probably what they've heard before.

Q. You have obviously talked a lot in the past about feeling like you could play until you were 45. I probably would have taken the over on 20 years. What ultimately made you come to peace with this being the time and feeling like you were ready to walk away?

DREW BREES: Well, you know, you've heard me say this before. The last -- I'd say ever since the 2017 season, I

have truly approached each season like it could be my last. I've approached the off-season that way and then I've approached each and every game during the season that way. There was no additional pressure with that because I really tried to play every game like it was the Super Bowl, like it was the most important game of the season. So my preparation was always the same. It was always consistent. I always wanted to put my absolute best on the field every time out.

What I started to do was maybe just enjoy some of the little things a bit more, so the bus rides home, the plane rides home, the locker room after, just smell the roses, so to speak, and really just stay in the moment and enjoy it, and knowing if something happened where all of a sudden it was an injury or something and that was my last game, then I know that I poured everything I could into it.

I've just approached each year for the last four or five years that way, with that mindset, and I feel like that's served me well. I think I've played some of my best football during that time.

At the end of the day, the factors that go into this are -- I've always said as long as I could play the game at a high level, I'm having fun doing it and able to stay healthy, then this is something I'll do forever. Obviously I've had some injuries the last two years that have been frustrating, both of them kind of freak things. I don't think they were injuries that were saying I was getting old, but nonetheless, I have the thumb that holds me out five games two years ago and then had the ribs and the lung that holds me out for four games this past year. Could I keep playing? Yeah, I'm sure I could, but I'm also looking at my kids, my family, the age of my kids, and just gauging all of those things, there's a balance there.

I also just felt like I would just feel it. I would feel when it was time. And I felt that it was time.

Q. Obviously you played college football in West Lafayette and played the Colts numerous times in your career, now you're going to be going to South Bend in the fall for college football Saturdays. What stands out to you about the passion of fans from the state of Indiana, and did Notre Dame show any interest in you as a recruit out of Westlake High School?

DREW BREES: No, Notre Dame did not show me any interest and I do not blame them because there was nothing memorable about me, I don't think, as a high school quarterback, or certainly nothing that would have jumped off the page. We had a ton of success as a high school program, and we never lost a game, won a state championship my senior year, went 16-0 and won the 5A

State championship, I was the 5A State Player of the Year.

But I really wasn't recruited by anybody. I was recruited by Purdue and Kentucky, and then I'd say the only reason I was recruited by those guys is because they had two brand new head coaches, Joe Tiller coming to Purdue from Wyoming, and who was the Kentucky head coach? My goodness. Anyway, coming from Valdosta State. Both of them had spread offenses, both of them had to throw together -- it was Hal Mumme. Hal Mumme came from Valdosta State to Kentucky. Both of them had spread offenses, and both of them had gotten hired in late December and had to throw together a recruiting class, so those guys I think just kind of went out and took who they could get at that point, and I certainly ended up in the right place at Purdue, got an incredible education and four years of Big Ten football where we went to bowl games every year and won a Big Ten Championship and had a Rose Bowl appearance my senior year.

I would say the passion of the fans in Indiana, what I loved was -- it's a shame that that Purdue-Notre Dame annual match-up went away for a while. I hope that it comes back in perpetuity at some point. I'm really happy to see that Purdue will be at Notre Dame this year. That'll be a great match-up and kind of renew that rivalry.

But when I got to Purdue, man, we were playing Notre Dame every year, we were playing IU every year, so just these in-state rivalries, and you're playing for the Old Oaken Bucket or you're playing for the Shillelagh, all these trophies that are involved in the games and the history, and obviously the state is divided because you've got all these alums from three schools all spread out, it just made for an incredible atmosphere.

Q. You mentioned what you've seen and learned from Tony Romo in his transition. Have you had a chance to talk to him about that transition, and if so, what did he say?

DREW BREES: You know what, I have not talked to Tony yet, but he's certainly on my list of people to talk to.

Q. You've of course been the Saints' unquestioned quarterback for 15 years. How did you tell your teammates of your decision to retire and what message did you give Jameis and Taysom about carrying on the torch?

DREW BREES: Yeah, listen, I've had some great conversations with my teammates. I think really over the last few years, I think I've been very up front about my mindset going into every season, and that is I'm going to play every season like it's my last, and I will take time at

the end of each season to evaluate where I am, both mentally, emotionally, physically and then make that decision one way or the other.

I've taken that time the last few off-seasons to do that. I think everybody probably felt like this was going to be my last year, and I think that created a great sense of urgency for all of us as we made our way through the season and had a very successful season.

I'm really excited for the opportunity that both Taysom Hill and Jameis Winston have. I can't tell you how much fun we had together as a quarterback room, really a great group of guys, a great group of human beings, a great group of -- I think guys that really love the game of football, love their teammates. We love to work hard. We love to push each other. It was highly competitive. At the same time we were there to support one another and help one another because we just wanted the team to win.

As you saw last year, there were moments where Taysom obviously had to start and did a phenomenal job for four years. There was a moment where Jameis had to come off the bench in the second half of the 49ers game when I had the ribs and the lung injury, and he came in and did a phenomenal job. I've seen so much growth and maturity from both of those guys over the last few years for Taysom and then last year for Jameis.

We'll see how it plays out. It sounds like there's going to be a pretty good quarterback competition, but it's going to bring out the best in both of them.

Q. I was wondering what was the most difficult part of ultimately making that decision to walk away from the game?

DREW BREES: You know, this decision was -- of course it's a difficult one. I think the biggest thing is you have been a football player for so long, so going back -- I'll count high school because high school football was very important to me. From high school to college to the NFL, that's 28 years, so that's two-thirds of my life. I'm 42 years old, right, so for two-thirds of my life, every decision that I've made has had football as the focus. Every decision you make is based on you as a football player, what's going to help you be in the best position to succeed as a football player, every decision from the perspective of diet, what you're putting in your body and how you're working out and how you're recovering and the amount of time you're dedicating yourself to being the very best you can be at your craft.

You know, I understand why guys have such a hard time with the transition from football. I would compare it to if



you are a heart surgeon and you have trained a majority of your life to be the very best heart surgeon that you can be, from college to your postgraduate studies to med school to your residency to then finally becoming a doctor, being a heart surgeon, having the chance to do something that so few get to do but you've trained your whole life and have these dreams and ambitions of becoming this and all of a sudden you wake up one day and somebody tells you you can't do it anymore.

I get that -- I'd say that's where the biggest maybe fear and stress for most guys is, just from conversations I've had with so many, is man, there is a transition. There is a transition from playing the game to going and doing anything else because you can't replicate the locker room and you can't replicate running out of the tunnel. There's just moments and feelings and emotions that are really, really hard to replicate after you've been a professional football player.

Now, I think the great thing about the opportunity that I have is, number one, I transitioned from one incredible team to another incredible team with NBC, the best of the best. I transitioned from a locker room, where man, I had so many great relationships and so much love and appreciation and administration for the people that I work with -- I know this: Mike Tirico has been one of my favorite guys in the business for a very long time, and I'm as excited to be in the booth with Mike Tirico as I was to throw passes to Michael Thomas on Sundays, and I'm dead serious when I say that.

I get to talk about the game of football. I get to eat, sleep and breathe the game of football still. I get to show my love and passion for the game still, but just in a different way.

I feel like that's certainly what will help ease the transition for me from being a player to now this role.

Q. What's your ultimate goal? Do you want to do a Super Bowl? What's your ultimate goal as a broadcaster?

DREW BREES: Well, I want -- most importantly for me is I want to create as great a fan experience as I can. I know what it's like to watch a game, and I know what I would want to hear while I'm watching a game. I think what's so unique, again, about the position that we're in as NFL -- an NFL quarterback, now transitioning into the booth, is I'm excited to show fans how I see the game and how I process the game and the things that I'm thinking about and the things that I'm anticipating and articulating it in a way that's both educational and enjoyable to listen to.

Listen, I'm going to have my own style. I don't even know what that style is yet, but I'm going to be myself, and I'm going to talk as if you're sitting right next to me in my living room and we're just watching the game together.

It's going to be as authentic as it can possibly be because that's the only way I know how. I hope people enjoy it. I hope people love it. At the end of the day I am going to work as hard at this as I do everything in my life.

And as far as what the future holds, I have no idea, but I do know I'm a part of the best team in the business with NBC, with one of the very best play-by-play guys in the business in Mike Tirico, and others that will be great mentors for me, guys like Cris Collinsworth, guys like Al Michaels and others that are part of the NBC team and I think do a phenomenal job. I'm very excited with this opportunity.

Q. A lot of people in New Orleans are wondering if you and your family will continue living in the city as much as you have during your time with the Saints, or if you will now relocate to San Diego or somewhere else. Just was wondering if you could take a moment to discuss what you and your family envision on that front.

DREW BREES: We will always have a strong presence in New Orleans. I have more things going on in the city of New Orleans right now than I have since we've been there. I'm sure you might have seen the article that just came out in regards to the proposal we submitted for the RFQ for the Jazzland Six Flags piece of property, where we intend to bring a nonprofit urban farming initiative that's just going to be incredible for that community, for New Orleans East.

There's that, and there's about three other things that will slowly become public knowledge here over the next weeks and months.

I'm as excited about that as I have been about anything that we've ever done in New Orleans, and honestly I feel that now, not being a football player, that I will have more of an opportunity to be involved in community initiatives and helping continue to push New Orleans forward as we've always tried to do.

CHRIS MCCLOSKEY: Thank you, everybody, again for joining us.

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