

NBC Sports Group Media Conference

Tuesday, September 28, 2021

Al Michaels

Cris Collinsworth

Tony Dungy

Rodney Harrison

Drew Brees

Press Conference

CHRIS MCCLOSKEY: Thank you everyone for joining us today for our call to preview one of the most anticipated games of the season as Tom Brady returns to New England and the Bucs visit the Patriots on Sunday Night Football on NBC, Peacock, and Universal.

Joining us today is Al Michaels, who will call on Sunday his 44th Tom Brady game. Cris Collinsworth, who has called four Super Bowls, all featuring Tom Brady. Tony Dungy, who coached against Brady eight times, including two AFC Championship games. Rodney Harrison, who won two Super Bowls as Brady's teammate. And Drew Brees, who along with Tom are the only two quarterbacks in history to throw for more than 80,000 career yards.

We'll begin in just a moment with opening remarks from our speakers followed by questions for the press. Please limit yourself to one question and a brief followup as we anticipate many questions. Drew is also calling the Cincinnati-Notre Dame game, so questions on that topic are also permissible.

AL MICHAELS: Thank you, Chris. Talk about an anticipated game. I can't think of any game that's been more anticipated than this one in the 36 years I've covered the NFL in primetime.

The interesting thing that's kind of fallen through the cracks here is that we could see this game on the horizon in the middle of last season because we knew, according to the NFL formula for selling, that every four years, the AFC East is going to meet the NFC South. So they met in '17, and we looked it up, and what the league tries to do is whoever the home team is the first time, the next time you have a game featuring those two, you flip it.



So we looked up '17, and we saw that New England went down to Tampa Bay. So we knew this game was on the schedule, but we just didn't know when and we didn't know who would get it, and we were pretty confident it wouldn't be a 1:00 regional on a Sunday but it would be us or ESPN on Monday or the late Fox window. So we were thrilled, obviously, to get this game.

It's beyond the hype. The hype is what it is, and you guys all know it and see it, and it will continue all week long. The great thing for Cris and me and Michele, we get it and we get the game, and as my old partner John Madden used to say, all of a sudden, the game breaks out.

We're excited about this. I've got to get a plug in for a guy. Drew Esocoff, who's our director, I think he's going to be the star of this show because it's a visual medium. I've worked with him for 22 years. He's under the radar with everybody. Nobody knows really who he is, and this guy just hits every note.

I mean, I go back two weeks ago with doing Baltimore and Kansas City, the crazy game, are they going for it? Are they not going for it? Drew has 20, 25 cameras to choose from, and he's right on the money when Harbaugh is going out there to ask Lamar Jackson if he wants to go for it or not. It was perfect. It's great television. Spielberg gets 20 takes. Drew Esocoff gets one take. This guy is fantastic.

As far as I'm concerned, we're just going to follow Drew because the reactions of Belichick and Brady and everybody else are going to be priceless, and Drew will be the star of the show.

The next speaker will be my partner, Cris Collinsworth.

CRIS COLLINSWORTH: Wow, we may get 20 on cameras out of this game, Al, after that buildup. That was awesome. And I agree. I agree.

There's so many interesting things on a personal level with this game, obviously, but for me, what I'm most interested in is watching the football matchup. This is as good as it gets. With all due respect to Drew and every quarterback that's ever played the game, Tom Brady holds a special place with all those Super Bowl trophies, and the guy that's going to be trying to stop him is one of the greatest



defensive minds we've ever seen.

They know each other inside out. And which path are they choosing to attack the other? I can't imagine there's a better story, if you just love football, than simply that. I can't wait to watch it.

Tony, what do you say?

TONY DUNGY: Well, Cris, I'm the same way, and I agree with Al. I can't remember a regular season game that had this much buildup and anticipation. I think back to when I was in Indianapolis and went back to Tampa the first time, and I'd only been in Indianapolis -- or I'd only been in Tampa six years. Tom Brady, 20 years in one spot with the same coach and now going back, it's going to be amazing.

I also am curious who is going to have the advantage? I think of, if I played a game against Peyton Manning and he played against my team, all the practice time he had against the defense, all the practice time Tom has had against that New England defense, knowing their calls, what they like to do, will he have the advantage?

Or as my partner Rodney Harrison has told me for 12 years, here's what you have to do to stop Brady. We did it in practice. We know how to do it.

So I'm going to be curious as to which side has the advantage of this 20-year background. Maybe Rodney can speak to that a little bit.

RODNEY HARRISON: Yes, obviously, I'm extremely excited about the game, two guys that I have the utmost respect for. Coach Belichick back, what, 18 years ago gave me an opportunity to come play for him. Tom Brady over the years, over 18 years of getting to know him and just being friends with him, just respect his level of competitiveness. Two guys that are the ultimate guys in terms of preparation, how hard they work.

Just really excited about Tom about to break Drew's record. That's a little shot at you, Drew, if you didn't know. Yeah, I'm just really pumped up.

And Coach Belichick, he wants to win it just as much as Tom. The two competitive guys, I'm just really pumped up to see it. Drew?

DREW BREES: Thanks for the shout out there, Rodney. It's amazing how not only does NBC get this game, but they just happen to get it on the weekend that he's going to break the record. So appreciate that, everybody.

No, this is going to be -- there's no question this is the game that everyone circled at the start of the year. There should be some fireworks.

CHRIS MCCLOSKEY: Thank you, everybody. We will now take questions.

Q. My question is about what you guys were talking about, the Xs and Os. I'm very fascinated with this matchup of the Bucs offense and Brady and the Patriots defense. I'm just curious what do you guys think are some of the keys, looking at it from both perspectives? The keys from the Patriots' defense perspective against Tom Brady, and the keys for Tom Brady going up against Bill Belichick's defense.

CRIS COLLINSWORTH: I look at it as just how many times in practice have the defensive players been picked apart by Tom Brady and thought somewhere in the back of their minds, if we could just hit this guy, we would take care of a lot of business right here, right?

Every defense thinks that when they're practicing against their own team and scrimmaging and the whole thing, and now it's really going to happen. So do you see them blitzing Tom Brady? Would they have blitzed him if he were 30 years old? Is it different now that he's 44 years old? Do you play man coverage? Do you try to get him to hold the football?

We have seen Bill Belichick use every kind of defensive scheme imaginable, and now whichever one he likes best, whichever one he likes best is what we're going to get. So I think this is going to be a real tell for both sides of the ball, both for Tom and for Bill, to see exactly what they're coming up with.

TONY DUNGY: We know Coach Belichick's record against rookie quarterbacks and young quarterbacks. I don't know what his record is against 44-year-old quarterbacks with this kind of experience.

The other thing I'm curious, if I'm in that Tampa Bay offensive meeting -- and I don't know if Tom's going to suggest it -- I would go hurry up and make them make their defensive calls on the field. I know he's heard every call. He understands what they're doing. He's played against that defense for years and years. Then what does New England have to do to try to counteract that?

I'm curious to see that, and we'll see what happens. But I think it's going to be a great chess match.

RODNEY HARRISON: I think for me just watching the Patriots secondary, they've given up some plays. They

haven't really been able to make a lot of plays on ball. If I'm Tom, I'm watching that tape. I know he likes the quick passing game, but he also likes to take a lot of big shots, and not having Stephon Gilmore and Jonathan Jones giving up some plays the first few games. And J.C. Jackson, he's played well in the past as well as making some plays in the run game.

I just think the pressure that comes with everything, I think you're going to see, like Cris Collinsworth was talking, you're going to see a multitude of things. You're going to see man coverage. You're going to see some zone. You're going to see some pressure. You're going to see three guys rush. You're going to see sometimes six, seven guys rush. He's going to throw the whole plethora of the defensive game plan against Tom.

The same type of stuff we used to do in practice. We used to move around. He's been in the league 20-some years, whatever it's been, but at the end of the day, you can't let him come to the line of scrimmage, just like rookie quarterbacks, and know what you're playing. You've got to move around and show him different looks.

As much as you can hit Tom -- and it's shown in the past, if you can hit him, if you can make him uncomfortable, you can rattle him. I think you saw a little bit of that last week against the Rams. That's the way you have to play Tom. You have to play very physical. Not just with Tom, but with his receivers as well. You've got to jam them up and kind of slow them down and disrupt them.

DREW BREES: I think Tampa has a ton of weapons, and it's going to be really hard to handle all those guys. I think Tom has the ability to find each and every one of those guys depending on what the look is that he's given. At the end of the day, I think the Patriots are going to have to find a way to take the ball away. They're going to have to find a way to steal a possession.

To me, they're outmatched in this game personnel-wise, and they're going to have to pull out all the stops to beat them.

TONY DUNGY: I asked Drew on the show Sunday night, if we were playing against the Saints on Sunday, who would have the advantage, he or Sean Payton, and he said very quickly he would.

I'm telling you, Peyton Manning would feel like he had the advantage playing against me and the Colts defense, and I'll tell you Tom Brady feels like he has the advantage having practiced against that defense, but we'll see how it plays out.

Q. Drew, the record's been talked about, 68 yards away. I'm just curious what does that record mean to you? What does it represent? How are you going to feel Sunday watching Tom very likely capture it?

DREW BREES: Well, I'm a firm believer that records are meant to be broken. I think back to all the records that we had a chance to set, break, what have you, in New Orleans, and each one kind of has a special meaning. They all happened in kind of a unique way.

I'd be all for Brady just launching the first play of the game and just go ahead and get it out of the way. You said he needs, what, 68 yards? Let's have New England kick it in the end zone. They start at the 25. Have him launch one to Mike Evans and let's just be done with it.

No, there's no doubt I think that's probably going to get knocked down pretty quick. I can't think of a guy who has invested more into his career, into his preparation and kind of what he's meant for the game. It's definitely a special record because it speaks to the longevity that he's been able to experience and the level that he's been able to play at.

Q. You guys have had such a special relationship over the years, competitors but also friends. What will you want Tom to know when he captures that? Are you able at any point in time, when you get a record like that, to just for a moment kind of take it all in, or are you just so locked into the game?

DREW BREES: You're so locked into the game. You really can't allow yourself to go there too much. It's really something that you try to get out of the way emotionally prior to the game. I'll be honest with you, what, are we sitting here on Tuesday? I know the way I felt leading up to games like this, whether it was playing an old team or whether it was chasing a record.

I would visualize being in that moment. I would visualize breaking the record. I would visualize everything that was going to happen, and I would almost get the tears and the emotions out of the way on a Monday or Tuesday. I mean, literally like cry it out on a Monday or Tuesday so that by the time I got to Sunday, it was all about business, and it was all about the game, and it was all about getting the job done.

Q. This is for Rodney. Thinking back to your time with the Patriots, you played with Tom in 2003. How strange is it to think almost 20 years later here he is back in this matchup against Bill and the Patriots? How weird is that when you think back to your early time with him?

RODNEY HARRISON: I never thought when I first came to the Patriots, I never thought that Tom Brady would leave. He was a fixture here. Like Edelman said, he is the Patriot way. The example that he set every single day, getting here at 5:00 in the morning, all the sacrifices that he made, the time that he put into his body, preparation, physical, mental, spiritual, all the different things.

But to see him and know his work ethic and you see how he takes care of himself, you sit back and say maybe it's not surprising because he's willing to do what everybody's not willing to do. I'm just so extremely proud of him. I'm happy for Tom because he looks happy. He looks like he's in a good place.

That's what you want. You don't want to play football and not be happy. The guy's accomplished a lot.

Financially he's done extremely well. But it's nothing like going to a place, waking up, going to work, and being happy that you're there, and I'm just so happy that he's at a place where he feels comfortable and he's winning.

Q. For the group, where do you guys stand on this Brady versus Belichick debate? Who deserves credit and who doesn't? I don't know if that's fair, but where do you guys stand on that?

RODNEY HARRISON: I'll start off. I think it's stupid, okay? I think it's disrespectful. Not only is it disrespectful to Tom and Bill, but it's disrespectful to all those great players that came along that were part of those championship teams because, at the end of the day, it wasn't Bill and Tom versus everybody else. It was an entire team.

Tom's a tremendous player, and Bill's a tremendous coach, but none of that stuff happens without the other players. So that's where I stand at it. It's not about Bill. It's not about Tom. Tom wouldn't be the player that he is if he didn't have Bill and vice versa. Do you think Bill would be the coach that he is if he didn't have Tom challenging him, questioning him, pushing him? They're made for each other, and that's the beauty of it.

Everyone wants to pit them together, put them against each other as opposed to celebrating success. 20 years together, that is a long time to be able to win championships, win titles, division titles, win a bunch of games. It takes a lot of unselfishness. It takes a lot of sacrifice to do that.

Everyone wants, well, it's Tom that deserves credit. It's Bill that deserves credit. No, it's a team game. It's the ultimate

team game. So, no, you can give them props and tell them the greatest of all time, and nobody would probably argue with that. But at the end of the day, it's not Tom's more responsible or Bill's more responsible. I just think it's dumb.

DREW BREES: Well said. I agree.

CRIS COLLINSWORTH: I think the problem is we're all human beings though too. It's part of the fun part of sports is that you get to debate all that stuff. You don't have to play to be in a bar and arguing with your friends. It's what makes fantasy football what it is. It's all of that stuff.

So that debate's never going away. It's the reason they have the Academy Awards. Everybody wants to go, okay, these are the five best actors, but this one is the best this year. It's just human nature. So you're going to get it. It's going to be a part of this game. It's going to be a part of this week, whether anybody likes it or they don't like it.

But at the same time, there has to come a certain amount of respect out of the week, and I hope that out of the broadcast you will hear some of that, that okay, I get it. Tom won the Super Bowl. I get it. The Patriots are rebuilding and they've got a rookie quarterback. All the different things that are going to go with the discussion this week.

But in my lifetime, the greatest run that we have ever seen out of a coach and a quarterback is standing right in front of us for this game, and they're on opposite sides of the field. Football's been my lifetime anyway, but how do you get more passionate and more interesting and more theatrical than that? I mean, it's just going to be a great, fun watch.

RODNEY HARRISON: Let me say this. Nobody ever questions who's more responsible for the Indianapolis Colts' success, Coach Dungy or Peyton Manning? And Peyton left, and he won another Super Bowl with a different team. Like it baffles me that people can sit back and actually say, well, Tom's more responsible or Coach is more responsible.

It's like Coach gave Tom an opportunity to play. He saw something in Tom that no one else could see. No one else could see. And he gave Tom an opportunity. He believed in Tom. If he didn't believe in Tom, Tom wouldn't be passing Drew Brees' record coming up this week. But he had arguably the greatest coach of all time that believed in him, saw something that no one else saw in him. So I would just be careful with all those comparisons and who's better and this and that.

Coach Dungy would tell you the same thing about Peyton Manning, how much he learned from Peyton and vice versa.

AL MICHAELS: We live in this over hype, over analyze world, and everyone has to have a new take. That's why you see a lot of this, and it just goes on and on and on, and a lot of it is just nonsensical regurgitation is what it is.

Rodney summed it up perfectly. This is a team game. There are 22 guys out there on every play. There are 53 guys on a roster. 106 guys are ready for action on any given Sunday or Monday. This is not golf. It's not tennis. It's not one guy. It's 22 going back and forth for 20 years.

I think the other guys just summed it up perfectly. It's let's have fun and enjoy the game. Whatever happens is going to happen. It's not going to give you a definitive answer to an unanswerable question.

DREW BREES: Let's not forget Adam Vinatieri too. Let's not forget the kickers, the special teams guys. We've got to put them in there too. We've got to thank them.

RODNEY HARRISON: Great point, Drew. That's what it comes down to. You can't separate them.

Q. I'd just like your impressions of Mac Jones through his first three NFL games.

DREW BREES: I'll take this one since I'm a big Mac Jones fan, and I kind of made that point to start the season.

I've been really impressed with him. I'll take this last game specifically because I had a chance to watch it pretty closely. I felt like the Saints' defense, especially the defensive line, really got after New England up front, both with the four-man rush and with their pressure packages. But I felt like Mac Jones showed a level of poise and maturity that is beyond his years. Man, he stood in there. He took a lot of hits. He stood in there with confidence to deliver the ball down the field.

It was unfortunate, because I didn't think many guys were getting separation for him, but I think what I see is a guy who's got pretty good command of that offense. He doesn't look like he's ever rattled. He looks like he is in a position where he's playing with confidence. I think he's only going to get better as the season goes along and he continues to develop a rapport with the skill position players and obviously as they continue to come together as a team.

I've been really impressed with what I've seen from him thus far.

CRIS COLLINSWORTH: I think Kyle Shanahan would agree with you. He came very close, and it was a very difficult decision for him, whether to take Trey Lance or Mac Jones. They studied it all the way down to the final week of the season, or to the final week before the draft. That's how well he played. That's how much he impressed the 49ers as they were going through the process.

I think for all of us that have watched Brady play the game with New England and Josh McDaniels' offense for all those years, it's amazing how much -- and I'm not comparing him to Tom Brady so don't get me in trouble with something that only I can say. But it feels like their offense again.

Okay, they did a certain thing with Cam and they did different things, but now you sort of feel that offense coming back. I think it's going to be really interesting to watch, not just how he grows, but how that offense grows with all those new parts in there now with all the free agents and all the different guys and how long it takes to start to really feel that way again or if it ever does. We'll find out. This will be a good place to start.

TONY DUNGY: I would agree with Cris. I think, when I watch this, I see a New England Patriots type player -- poised, accurate, smart, just on top of things, under control, and playing in a great system with great coaches. I think he's going to just continue to get better and better. He's in a perfect situation, and he's playing well.

RODNEY HARRISON: As for me, I'm looking at Josh McDaniels. You look at this offense, and you see it's a kind of wide open offense, and it's very conservative. Looking at Mac and making sure he goes through his reads, and you go back and watch the tape again, there's times at second and three he throws the ball down the field as opposed to just taking the easy completion.

I think he hears the talks and all the conversations about the Patriots offense not being a big play offense, and I think they should open it up a little bit. I think they should let him run the no huddle and maybe the hurry-up offense just to get another feel for it.

The offensive line isn't great. Teams are starting to blitz him. I watched the tape against the Saints, it seems like they're blitzing him every other play, and that's what he's going to continue to get until he's able to handle the pressure, to handle all the different looks they're going to give him. You're going to see teams continue to blitz him.

You're going to see that from Todd Bowles. He's sitting there licking his chops. We're going to go corner blitz,

nickel, dime blitz, middle linebacker blitz. We're going to do all these different blitzes. So I think he's going to have to expect that the entire season until he can prove that he can consistently beat it.

Q. This question is for Rodney. Rodney, I'm wondering, you know both Tom and Bill as competitors and you know their personality well. How much do you think each guy follows what the other one is doing now that they're on different teams? Do you believe that like in their minds, if they're being totally honest, like is there competition between them even when they aren't on the same field?

RODNEY HARRISON: I know one thing from Tom and Bill, they're focused on the game ahead. Tom has so much going on in his life, as do Coach, that really when Coach is focused on, say, the Cincinnati Bengals, he's not really paying attention to Tom. Coach has a unique ability to be able to focus on what the week one or the week ahead of him. I think that's how both of them kind of operate.

They have a tremendous amount of respect for one another. I can't sit back and say that Coach Belichick or Tom wants the other team to do, the other person to do terrible or anything like that. I just think that I've seen nothing but respect.

Coach will call Tom out. He used to call him out in the meeting rooms. He used to say, hey, we can't even complete a simple screen pass. The guy from Attleborough High could do that. He would get on Tom. He wouldn't care if Tom was All Pro or Pro Bowl or anything like that.

That kept Tom hungry, and he kept fighting and clawing and trying to grab that respect from Coach Belichick. That's something that Coach Belichick coached him hard, and Tom wouldn't be as mentally tough as he is right now if Coach Belichick wouldn't have coached him the way he coached him. So I think Tom has a tremendous amount of respect.

He still wants to kick Belichick's butt, you'd better believe that. If he can hang 50 on the Patriots, he definitely will. It's not just because they're the Patriots. He wants to hang 50 on anybody. That's just how competitive he is, and that's how his mind works.

Q. You were talking earlier, when you were there, as a player, it's hard to imagine Tom Brady play anywhere else. As you were watching things play out a couple years ago, were you very surprised? Could you see it coming to the end of their relationship, or on that day

he signed with Tampa, was it still --

RODNEY HARRISON: I was more surprised about 20 years. I was more surprised about 20 years. That's a long, long time. For one guy to play one career, 20 years at one place. I played nine years, which I thought was an eternity in San Diego. I played six with the Patriots. This guy played 20.

So once again, anyone that's trying to make it out of a negative situation, it's not. It's nothing but positive. Of course you're going to have up and downs when you go through any type of relationship, absolutely, because you don't always agree.

There's times when Coach Belichick, he would say something to me, and I would get irritated. I just had ten tackles, a sack, and an interception. You're talking to me about what? That's what I'm thinking in my mind, but he's the head coach and I respect him, and I try to learn from him.

Yeah, that's his way of motivating people. He's not going to sit there and tell you how great you are. He's going to keep that sarcastic criticism to a certain degree to keep pushing you, to make you a better player. That's what it's about.

Q. I was just kind of wondering your thoughts on the off-field transformation Tom's made to become sort of more relatable and even well liked the last couple years, from poking fun at himself in commercials and tossing the Lombardi Trophy from boats and things like that. Do you think it's from this change of scenery or getting to a point in his career that he's just more comfortable with himself? Where do you think this other side of him we're seeing now has come from?

RODNEY HARRISON: I think you're seeing the real Tom Brady, the Tom Brady that we love, that we as players love, the Tom Brady that we saw behind the scenes that he couldn't show his personality. When you play for the Patriots, it's all business. It's business, business, business.

You're going to have a great time when you win and you celebrate, you get opportunities whether it's signings, commercials, endorsements or things like that, but ultimately it's Tom wanting to win. That's what it comes down to.

CRIS COLLINSWORTH: That and avocado juice will perk you right up.

Q. Number one, thank you very much for taking the time here. This question, Cris, I'm going to direct it to



you but obviously leave it open for everybody. In week one, your week one telecast with the Rams and Bears, you and Al had a brief exchange about Andy Dalton and Justin Fields, and you said inserting a young quarterback too soon could lead to bad habits. This past Sunday night, they cut to a shot of Trey Lance, and you said the longer he gets to watch while Jimmy Garoppolo played, the better. What is the optimum incubation time before a new quarterback gets put in?

CRIS COLLINSWORTH: If I knew the answer to that one, I would be something other than a broadcaster. That is obviously the million dollar question.

I think it's really hard to understand how hard it is to play the quarterback position in the NFL. I used to just be blown away even in our meetings what they would expect from Boomer Esiason, that he had to know every single check and call and had to know it by Tuesday. It was just unbelievable.

When you're back there -- so I was watching Fields a little bit in that game too, and there were a couple of times that he sort of scrambled back and right. Okay, but you can't do that in this league because the defensive ends that are rushing you are faster than you are sometimes, especially when they've got a running start and you don't, so Myles Garrett is going to catch you there.

To see the presnap looks these guys get, to see the complete difference that it is presnap to post snap and expect somebody who's in his second or third NFL game to be able to decipher all that like Drew can is just literally impossible to expect that.

So if they at least get to sit and watch Andy Dalton, for lack of a better person, just do it. Do it week after week in practice after practice and watch film after film. Pretty soon all of that starts to slow down.

I'm not saying that Patrick Mahomes wouldn't have been Patrick Mahomes, but remember he didn't play in his first year until the final week of the season. You can't tell me that Alex Smith going to press conferences and watching him handle the media and watching him stand up in front of the team and present didn't help him become the player that he is.

It's almost impossible for me to explain to people how hard playing quarterback in the NFL is. Drew, take a shot at it. It's a different position, in my mind, than anywhere else on the field.

DREW BREES: So to Cris' point, each situation is so different, and each player is so different. I think when,

especially when you look at the quarterbacks that are drafted in the first round, in some cases teams are drafting a guy that might have tremendous upside. In other words, they're looking at certain measurables and even immeasurables or intangibles. They're looking at it as what can this guy be at some point?

And then knowing the nature of the quarterback position, this is a guy who even if it takes him a few years to become our starter, he's going to be our guy for the next 15 years, right? That's different at the quarterback position than it is at any other position, as far as the longevity that a guy could potentially play this.

There's some guys, on the other hand, that may have a career in college that you say, wow, this guy has already kind of shown us exactly what he can do. He's got 50 starts in college under his belt man. We know exactly who we're getting. If he can just play that way, like this is going to be our guy for a long time. Again, each guy is a little bit different.

I'll take this draft class for example, right? There's five guys that were taken, Mac Jones being the last of them in the first round, but Mac Jones, in my opinion, was the guy who was the most NFL ready. That was the statement I made. He's the most NFL ready because I watched the offense he was running at Alabama and the sophistication of it and how he executed that, and it was very different than watching the other four guys and the offenses they ran. So I felt like Mac Jones was going to be the most ready to come into the NFL and play right now.

Now, does Mac Jones have the most upside compared to those other guys? Well, probably not when you look at the level of talent and the level of athletic ability and just what some of these other guys can do.

Now, some of those other guys, let's take Trey Lance, for example. Trey Lance played one game last year, right? Or was it none? Then he'd only played one season prior to that. Here's a guy who hadn't taken a snap in about two years in a game, and you're putting him out there. To be honest, I think that Trey Lance is still two years away from being a solid starter in this league and being able to execute that offense the way that Kyle Shanahan wants a quarterback to execute that offense.

So now, Trey Lance may end up being the next Patrick Mahomes, but it may just take a little while. So, again, it's how much time do you have, what are you willing to invest in this guy, and a lot of it too is what team are you going to? The guys that are drafting in the first round quarterbacks are in the top ten. Well, they're in the top ten because they had the worst records in the league the year

before. It's not very often that you see a guy go in the first round to a team that's like a playoff caliber type team. Typically it's a rebuilding situation and it might take a little time.

Man, you don't want to have the guy go out there and just get hit and banged around when maybe that might not be in his best interests. So, again, each situation is different.

Q. Can I sneak in a quick follow to Tony? If you were head coach with a gifted young quarterback like Justin Fields this week, when you get him back to home base on Monday, what did you do to help him establish some sort of 22-year-old equilibrium?

TONY DUNGY: I think Drew hit it on our show the other night. You've got to do some things that really play to his strengths. You've got to build him up and allow him to have some success.

But I would say every situation is different. The thing about whether you play the quarterback or let him watch is practice time, in my opinion, as the coach. The first string quarterback gets 90 percent of the reps in practice in the regular season. The backup quarterback gets very little.

I can promise you this, I wasn't there when Peyton Manning was there, but if I told him as a rookie you're just going to sit and watch Kelly Holcomb and you're not going to practice and you're not going to play, but you'll get better by watching, there's no way that would have happened. He threw more interceptions than any rookie quarterback ever, but he learned from it, he grew from it, and it was valuable to him to go out there and experience it and go through it.

Every quarterback is different. These quarterbacks aren't going to burn up the league when they come in. We just have to understand that. I coached against John Elway in his first game he ever played, and he completed two passes. I coached against Alex Smith in his first game. I think he threw more interceptions than completions. But those guys that are good quarterbacks grow from it, and they're mentally tough and strong, and they'll be okay.

When you get these kinds of guys and don't let them practice, I don't know how that really benefits them. Again, quoting Drew Brees, you've got to do things to take advantage of what they do well, and that's what I would try to do as a coach.

Q. Coach, you mentioned that 2003 game, and you returned to Raymond James Stadium as a member of the Indianapolis Colts. I'm just curious, as a coach -- and I even asked Tom more about this actually. As a

coach, how do you push those emotions aside and focus on the business at hand when there are so many emotions at play, when you're coming back to a place that was once home?

TONY DUNGY: You try to, and I tried to do everything to downplay it. I didn't do any one-on-one interviews that week. I didn't do anything different. I told everybody, every time I was asked, it's just another game. We've got to take care of business.

When you walk in that stadium and you go to the visitors locker room, which you've never been in before, and you come out the visitors tunnel and you're not sure what the reaction is going to be and you see people that were so special to you for 10 or 12 years and now they're in opposite uniform or they're not your teammates anymore or your staff, it's emotional.

I remember the national anthem. The camera's on me, and I hope I don't cry out here. It was just that type of situation. I think it rubbed off on our team. Our guys knew how much it meant to me even though I was saying all week it really doesn't. We played as bad as we could play for 55 minutes, and we finally got it going.

No matter how you say it and slice it and try to say it, for Tom Brady going back after 20 years, I can't even imagine.

Q. Thank you so much. That was an epic game for sure.

TONY DUNGY: Yeah, I'm glad we got it together in the last five minutes, that's for sure.

CHRIS MCCLOSKEY: Again, thank you everyone. Again, coverage for Tom Brady's return to New England begins Sunday with Football Night in America from Gillette Stadium 7:00 p.m. at NBC and Peacock. Thank you, everyone.

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