

NBC Sports Group Media Conference

Tuesday, February 3, 2026

Rob Hyland

Drew Esocoff

Mike Tirico

Cris Collinsworth

Melissa Stark

Kaylee Hartung

Press Conference



Chicago for a dramatic divisional game we will never forget. That brings us to this weekend. Super Bowl LX and the Milan Cortina Winter Olympics on the same day is the product of the great partnerships with the NFL and the IOC.

And the excitement goes far beyond NBC Sports. Comcast Universal and all divisions of our company, from our NBC stations, NBC Entertainment, NBC News, Universal Theme Parks, will all participate in these events, plus Telemundo and Universo will be covering the game and spending the full week here in the Bay Area.

All play a big part in the success, and all will realize the halo effects of these events, whether it's NBC News on the ground here in the Bay Area, NBC Entertainment shows being promoted throughout the pregame show and the Super Bowl and the Olympics and NBA All-Star Game, or the Jurassic Park-themed surprises you will see around town. This weekend is really an example of our company coming together.

Again, we are so excited that the time is here, just five days until kickoff.

With that, I'll turn it over to the folks who will bring you the Seahawks and Patriots in Super Bowl LX this Sunday on NBC and Peacock.

THE MODERATOR: We'll have coordinating producer Rob Hyland give an opening statement.

ROB HYLAND: Thanks, Dan. We've been fine-tuning this production plan for well over a year, but I've been dreaming about this opportunity for more than 30 years.

Four years ago I was handed the keys to the SNF production by the best to ever do it in Frank Gaudelli, who produced seven Super Bowls. We've had a lot of great Super Bowls at NBC since the start of the Sunday Night Football package. Fingers crossed we have another great one on Sunday night, and I couldn't be more excited to be working alongside the Hall of Fame director in Drew Esocoff. Drew?

DREW ESOCOFF: Yeah, it's a great team. Every four years -- it's four years now, used to be three years -- you'd get an opportunity to broadcast a Super Bowl, but when

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for joining our Super Bowl LX conference call today. Joining us on today's call, coordinating producer of the Super Bowl, Rob Hyland; director, Drew Esocoff; play-by-play voice calling his first Super Bowl, Mike Tirico; our game analyst, Cris Collinsworth, calling his sixth Super Bowl; sideline reporter Melissa Stark on her second Super Bowl; and sideline reporter Kaylee Hartung on her first Super Bowl.

Each person will make an opening remark to begin, and then we'll take your questions. First we'll have opening comments from NBC Sports president Rick Cordella.

RICK CORDELLA: Thank you, Dan. Good afternoon, everyone. I'm excited to be here in San Francisco for Super Bowl LX. We've been steadily building toward this weekend following what will likely be the busiest fall in the history of NBC Sports, certainly since I joined 20 years ago.

A quick thanks to our production, engineering, and announce teams. These are our colleagues who are passionate and dedicated to presenting the best-in-class coverage we see every week on Sunday Night Football and Football Night in America.

Both shows set viewership records this past season, and Sunday Night Football is pacing to be the No. 1 show in primetime for a 15th straight year, and FNIA has been the most watched studio show in all of 20 years it's been on the air.

Two and a half weeks ago in the playoffs we were in



you get to do it with people that you're with every week and enjoy being around, it's even better.

MIKE TIRICO: I will hop in. Thanks, Drew, and we feel all of that for you. There's no better person to be around week after week. That's the joy of this. We all spend about half of the week for 22 weeks together, and to get it to culminate this Super Bowl is a thrill.

I think for all of us, Super Bowls bring back very specific memories, people you've watched the game with. If your favorite team was in it, moments that have lasted forever. And to be a part of that scenario for this year's Super Bowl is the thrill of a lifetime.

As I've said a few times, you don't dream about this because the dream is so silly that you stop and you wake up before you get to this point. But Sunday will be a thrill.

For my first, I couldn't feel better than to have a guy who's been a part of two as a player and now six as an analyst next to me, and that's Cris. He'll, quote/unquote, slide into the next part of this call.

CRIS COLLINSWORTH: Good to be here with Mike and everybody here. Good to be here with Drew. It's not happy hour, but it's a rare moment when you and I aren't hanging out together somewhere for dinner. It's an amazing group of people. We have had a fun, fun year. We really have. We've seen some tremendous games.

Fred Gaudelli is here, and I couldn't help but flash back to the last time we had Seattle and New England. As soon as you knew it was that, you flash back to Malcolm Butler and maybe the greatest Super Bowl that was ever played.

I can remember the raw emotion of just being in the booth as that play happened and knowing that you were seeing a little piece of history, knowing that the next words out of your mouth were going to be part of something for the next decade or century or however long that's going to last.

That's what Super Bowl is. The Super Bowl is history. But it's also a day of celebration in America. It's a day that everybody takes off. It's a day that everybody has a party. It's a day that we all get together, and for one fun day, we're all sort of on the same side enjoying the company of each other and what this country represents.

We understand the obligation. We understand the honor of it. We really appreciate the fact that you've shown up here to have the discussion with us.

Melissa?

MELISSA STARK: Hi, everyone. I couldn't work with a better team. Joined the Sunday Night group four years ago, and as Dan said, this is my second Super Bowl. The first one, Fred Gaudelli and Drew Esocoff were my guys, and now it's Rob Hyland and still Drew Esocoff.

It just goes to show you that we're surrounded by the best of the best, and there's no group that I'd rather be with. We're going to be prepared for everything, then a game breaks out. But we think we're going in prepared for anything and everything that could happen with our amazing editing team and graphics and everybody who supports us. They make all of us look good.

We just hope we have a great game. I'm excited to have Kaylee Hartung join me on the sidelines for her first-ever Super Bowl.

KAYLEE HARTUNG: Thank you, Melissa. This is truly surreal. When I joined the Amazon Prime Video Thursday Night Football crew four years ago, I didn't even know this was possible. I've had Fred Gaudelli's tutelage every step of the way through my NFL journey, and every opportunity I've gotten to spend with the Sunday Night Football crew through divisional playoff games the last three years, they've made me feel like a part of the family, and I'm so grateful for that.

So even though I am sort of parachuting in in this moment, I feel like it's something they've allowed me to build to with them. I am eternally grateful for that. Let's have a great game.

Q. It was surprising for many to see the Patriots were on the Sunday Night Football schedule at 4-13 against the Bills, then they went off and beat the Bills. Was that the first sign that you thought the Patriots were going to be really good and maybe make the Super Bowl?

CRIS COLLINSWORTH: I don't know if I went all the way they were going to make the Super Bowl on that night, but you knew something was different. You really did. I think that it was the first time that the thought crossed my mind that now the Bills know what it's like to play against Josh Allen because Drake Maye was out there making those plays, running around, big throws down the field, making plays with his legs, and they sort of had the equal.

I'm not going to put Drake completely in that category because Josh has done too much. But so many times in this league, it takes that special player to come into an organization and make those special plays in the biggest moments to where you go, oh, this is really happening.

When Tom Brady led that first drive for the touchdown in his first Super Bowl, late-night game, I don't know that any of us thought that was going to be Tom Brady, the GOAT, the greatest of all time.

But certainly Drake Maye has now shown us over the rest of that season that it was no fluke and that now there is an equal to the Buffalo Bills in that division.

MIKE TIRICO: I concur with everything that Cris just said. When you think about the Bills being 4-0, and they were the bully on the block in this division for the last half decade, so for New England they had to go through that team to win the division, and that was a huge part of it, and Stefon Diggs coming back and all the energy that was that last year at Highmark, and it felt like up until that point, the Bills were going to be the team. Then that opened the door for doubt, and I think that played out as we went through the rest of the season.

Did I walk out of Orchard Park Sunday night back on Milestrip Road thinking, hey, the Patriots are going to be in the Super Bowl? No. But did we say, hey, the Patriots might be a pretty good team? Yes, and here they are.

Q. Cris, I know you mentioned it in your opening statement, but I wondered if you could do us the favor of going down memory lane one more time. On that last drive right before Malcolm got the pick, if you could tell us what you were thinking. This was an iconic moment kind of like Kirk Gibson hitting a home run in the '88 World Series, and is it something you've thought often about?

CRIS COLLINSWORTH: All the time. All the time. You know, it was Marshawn Lynch running it to the 1. It was goal-line defense coming in for the Patriots and the spread offense coming in for Seattle. Were they really going to throw?

I think Belichick, was he going to call a time-out?

But when the interception actually happened, I didn't know what happened. I can tell you that now. I was watching the field. I started to watch the monitor so I could see it up close, and I remember going, no, this is a piece of history. I want to see it with my own two eyes.

I didn't want to just watch it on the monitor.

There was an explosion of bodies that all hit at the same time, and the crowd went crazy, and my first thought was, I don't know who has the ball. Secondly, it was, I don't even know who those players are that just ran into each other. It was so chaotic.

And then in a moment's time, Al screamed out, Malcolm Butler interception, whatever it was, and I just -- sitting there going over and over again in my mind thinking, Marshawn Lynch had two tries from the 1. If he didn't make it the first time, then so be it; but you're also going to take additional clock off, which is going to give Tom Brady less opportunity to make a play.

I did consider the possibility of it being a pass, but I thought for sure it would have been a run pass option out of the pocket in some way. So the play shocked me in every way imaginable.

And then when it was intercepted, I just sat there literally -- I've never timed it, but for 45 seconds thinking, what am I going to say about all that stuff that was going through my head. I said, just say what keeps repeating in your mind, and that was, I can't believe that call. I don't know if I said it once, I don't know if I said it twice. I just don't remember.

But that was the one that I kept coming back to, and then of course I saw all those guys at the combine, Pete Carroll and Darrell Bevell and all those guys at the combine a few weeks later. So we talked it through.

But by the end of the conversation, I still couldn't believe the call. That's where it ended.

Q. Melissa, have you talked it over with Kaylee, the unique situation of a Virginia graduate and a Washington and Lee graduate both being parts of the Super Bowl?

MELISSA STARK: I love it, we're representing the state of Virginia, exactly. I'm so excited to have Kaylee there. We've gotten a lot of people reaching out from the University of Virginia and Washington and Lee this week. We're making everyone proud. This is great. Kaylee's first Super Bowl, and I'm so excited to share the stage with her.

CRIS COLLINSWORTH: How much NIL money did you get?

KAYLEE HARTUNG: Melissa is the athlete out of the two of us.

MELISSA STARK: Yeah, it's really awesome. Kaylee, I'll let you --

KAYLEE HARTUNG: No, I feel like the first time we met, which would have been the draft in Vegas, right before you were starting up with SNF and I was starting up with TNF, I feel like we made the Virginia connection out of the gate.

Because Melissa is someone who I have looked up to since I was in high school, and she was on Monday Night Football, and UVA was always in my sights, in part because in my mind Melissa Stark went there and Katie Couric went there, and they were both doing all the things I dreamed of doing.

So we made that Virginia connection early, and we're proud to have it, and I feel very lucky to call her a great friend.

Q. Curious to hear from Cris and anyone else your thoughts on Josh McDaniels and maybe the redemptive arc of his career. Last we saw him, he was getting fired by the Raiders, and he shows up on the Patriots offense. What do you make of Josh McDaniels and what he's shown outsiders this year?

CRIS COLLINSWORTH: If you heard me call a game ever, you know what I think of Josh McDaniels. I can't explain what's happened when he's had his head coaching opportunities, but you take what Drake Maye started this year -- remember, this is year two for him, but this is year one in this offense. They started out with the pennies, and they have just started from square one and had to teach him every single step of the way along this offense.

I just went back and literally watched all the games along the way from Drake Maye's standpoint, and to see that offense evolve from sort of this Tinkertoy set in the beginning and to see how it's evolved over that time to where he is now running the show -- it's not Josh spoon-feeding him anymore.

This is the ability to run the entirety of that offense. And for that all to happen with any player, much less a second-year player to be able to figure it out, I think it's been one of the really great teaching moments that I've seen.

The idea that Josh is a veteran play caller, is perfectly happy at the end of the Denver game to not throw the ball, to not put it in harm's way. They're in a position, it's snowing, and he understands if we just three times and punt it, our defense is going to win the game. The relationship between he and Mike Vrabel and how to best win a football game just jumps off the screen at me.

Yeah, I think he's brilliant. Honestly, if I had a football team, and I know it hasn't always worked out, he would be one of my lead candidates to be a head coach again. I know that will sound outrageous to some. It doesn't to me.

Q. For Mike, I just wanted to ask you how you've been balancing getting ready for both the Olympics and the

Super Bowl at the same time, and what's it mean to have that lead role for both events at the same time for the first time?

MIKE TIRICO: Well, it's been great. Last week was kind of in a cave, if you will. Just spent most of last week getting ready for what's ahead. The advantage with the Olympics is being a part of it all, all year and all few years leading up to it. Last March doing the World Figure Skating Championships in Boston was part of let's build and be ready for what's ahead this winter with the combo of the Olympics and the Super Bowl.

For me, this is beyond comprehension, to be able to have the trust of the folks who we work for and with, to be able to do both of these events, but it does not happen without the absolute best team in all places. Let's not forget starting the NBA and our Sunday Night Basketball franchise last week.

We all prop up on the shoulders of not just the most talented people but the nicest people at NBC, and they have everything ready to get you there, make sure you're prepared to be on the air, make sure you have all the research you could ask for, and all we have to do is get on the air and talk.

This is not a hard job physically. We're not building buildings. We're not digging ditches. We're talking about sports, and we're treated very well along the way. The opportunity is one that you budget your time, be prepared, and go have fun doing it.

If I can't have fun and embrace and enjoy this month, and this week specifically, then I should go find something else to do. And thankfully I'm staying here for a little bit. I couldn't be more excited about the opportunity for this week.

Q. My question is for Rob and Drew. In the days leading up to the Super Bowl, you all traditionally use local high school players for like a game. You're going to be doing it with folks from De La Salle at Levi Stadium, kind of simulating pregame and simulating plays, running the field, camera positions. I'm just curious, two things, how important is that to your production of the game, and how much jockeying is there from local high schools during these Super Bowls to be that team?

ROB HYLAND: It's a good question. I reached out to the head coach at De La Salle more than a year ago, Justin Alumbaugh, and ran the idea by him. He said, Of course, we want to be there, we want to do it.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

For us from a production standpoint, we have a lot more equipment, and it's a really great opportunity for us to see new camera angles, new replay sources. It's really not like it will be on Sunday at 6:30 Eastern, but at least it gives us an idea of replay patterns and camera patterns.

So for me, it's a chance as a producer calling the replays to make sure I'm familiar with all the additional sources.

DREW ESOCOFF: Yeah, I'm kind of a high school sports junkie to begin with, and when we did the Super Bowl in L.A., we had Long Beach Poly, and now we have De La Salle, and these are two schools that when you grab "USA Today" once a week and you have the high school rankings, they were there every week, every year, so on and so forth.

One funny story that Rob knows is I went to visit the compound when FOX was doing the Super Bowl at the Meadowlands, and within 10 miles you had Don Bosco, Paramus Catholic, Bergen Catholic, St. Peter's and all the big public schools. And Richie Russo, my buddy who's the director, brings their local high school from like Marlboro, and I don't think there's anybody over 5'6" getting off the bus.

It's really fun. It's great for the kids. For what we need, they do it as well as it can be done because they do it at the highest level for high school athletes.

ROB HYLAND: They have a practice this afternoon, another one tomorrow, and then a final walkthrough. So they come well-equipped with a playbook of each team. Someone will play the role of Sam Darnold, someone will play the role of Drake Maye, everyone will have the right jersey numbers on and formations that we'll see on the field based on past games.

Everyone has a role. We'll even rehearse the National Anthem and America the Beautiful on the sidelines with the high school kids in the right jersey numbers so we know who we want to see during those moments. It's been something that I think John Madden started years ago with Freddy Gaudelli, and it's been great for us.

Q. Rob, this is the first Super Bowl you're producing; Mike, first one you're calling; Kaylee, first one on the sidelines. How are you getting ready for the game, and how are you balancing all of your commitments leading up to kickoff?

KAYLEE HARTUNG: Yeah, I think one of the biggest challenges for me and this team of all this is that I'm balancing Super Bowl, headed from here straight to the Olympics. This past Sunday I came a day early so I could

sit down with Steph Curry for a feature for "The Today Show." No matter how much I think about what I have to do, I know Mike Tirico has to do more.

I think the first game Mike and I ever worked together was a college basketball game for ESPN at Ohio State. We were in Columbus. I remember us having a conversation and immediately bonding over our color-coded prep work. It's something I've leaned on Mike for, for advice in all the years that we've known each other, because that was probably 2014 maybe, '13 or '14.

So all that to say, my job is not as hard as his is, and I can't feel sorry for myself at all. It's the most exciting opportunity of my career.

All that to say, yeah, you just take it one thing at a time, one commitment at a time, do the best with the job you've got, and be in awe of the people around you as they manage it all, too. Rob?

ROB HYLAND: Yeah, actually preparing for the game, we have an extra week, so the preparation part when it comes to what's happening on the field, you've got a lot of time to get ready for the game. It's the other things, the rehearsals, the meetings that you just have to manage. I know I speak for Drew; we love every bit of this week but can't wait to kick the ball off the tee at 6:36 and do a football game.

MIKE TIRICO: For me, it's great to have the extra time, like Rob said. I almost feel like the game could start at 6:30 Eastern Time, 3:30 Pacific Time today and we'd do just as good a job as we hope to do on Sunday.

I'm really trying to enjoy the experience, enjoy the time with everybody because we all work towards things in life, and maybe once we get there, we don't appreciate the view. So just try to be a part of this in a little bit different more magnetic way to make sure that these images, these days stick, take more selfies so we can look back and laugh at each other three, four years later to remember this. Just to enjoy it.

Look, it is a football game. At some point very quickly it's going to be 2nd and 5, and muscle memory will kick in for all of us and we get into the nuts and bolts of what we do. But in the interim, it is a different game because of calls like this, media obligations, all that stuff.

So take it in, enjoy it, and do it with the people you care most about in the business, and walk away with a great memory. That's what I'm trying to do to make the first one feel unique but ordinary.



KAYLEE HARTUNG: We've already gotten our team photo today.

MELISSA STARK: I can't wait for those selfies. I'm so excited.

Q. I want to ask you first, Cris and Mike, Bill Belichick's snub not getting a first-ballot Hall of Fame, and to a lesser extent, Robert Kraft, what are your thoughts on that?

CRIS COLLINSWORTH: I'm just going to give you -- I don't know why I'm doing this. I'm giving you all my first thoughts that pop in my head. When I heard each one of those -- everybody is running for cover (laughter). My first thought was why do we have a Hall of Fame, honestly, if those two guys aren't in the Hall of Fame right off the bat? What else can you possibly do to earn a spot in the Hall of Fame?

At least during my time in the league, we've never seen anything like it, that combination, and of course you're throwing in Brady and Vrabel and a lot of McCourtys along the way and some different people. I don't get it, honestly.

Sometimes I think you think long and you think wrong, and I think that's what's going on.

MIKE TIRICO: Just to add in my two cents, I agree with Cris that these two guys are Hall-of-Famers. Sometimes if you're sitting there and doing those types of selections and ballots, there are other circumstances like who's on the ballot for the last time, who needs to get in, how do you balance it, am I going to take someone from the non-player category, and you start to overthink it.

And without being in the room, it's very hard to be critical of why did X number of people not turn in a ballot with those guys as Hall-of-Famers.

But clearly, if there are coaches in the Hall of Fame and there are owners in the Hall of Fame, those two guys need to be in the Hall of Fame for it to be a legitimate Hall of Fame, period, end of thought.

Will that get fixed here somewhere down the line? Probably. Does it change your life significantly if you're not a first-ballot Hall of Fame? I don't know. I'm not in any Hall of Fames. I can't answer that.

We don't get wise with each ballot, we just get results. We don't even get the numbers, we just get you're Hall-of-Famers.

All we're doing is a lot of Monday morning quarterbacking

to the results of the vote without ever getting the answers. It's going to be hard to sit down at some point and say concretely this is why it happened.

Appreciate the voters who have spoken up. They've lent some very interesting thoughts into the conversation. But when you come back to 30,000 feet, if you're going to have Canton and it's going to represent the history of the league, those two guys have to be in there.

Q. Chris, for you, this is your sixth Super Bowl, fourth involving the Patriots. If you could rank the top 3 moments, win or lose, out of the Patriots games you've called in the Super Bowl?

CRIS COLLINSWORTH: Fifth, actually. This will be my fifth. Yeah, I've got to stop and think for a minute now. I think the Seattle game that we did was number one. I think the New York Giants game was number two. That was unbelievably dramatic there. The Philly special was pretty special, too.

The Philly game was so stunning from what came out of Philadelphia, to be able to pull that off with a backup quarterback and the whole thing. So probably number three -- they've all been really good. But my first Super Bowl ever was Jacksonville with FOX and Joe and Troy, so that's pretty special for me.

Yeah, it's been an amazing run. It was funny that as New England started to make that run this year, what did they start off, 1-2, something like that, but they started to make that run, and I remember thinking, there's just no way. There's no way this is going to be New England again the year that we're doing the Super Bowl. It just always seems to fall that way.

It's great. It's been a tremendous addition. It's the first where Belichick hasn't been a part of it. If you're a broadcaster, you've had ups and downs with Bill over the years. I've got to say that the Super Bowls that I called with him, they were always ups. He was incredibly open and honest, forthright. When he agreed, he'd say it; when he didn't agree, he'd say it.

But now it's interesting, one of his guys has taken the reins and have them right back in the Super Bowl.

Q. This is a question that any of you can take. Obviously we have had in recent years -- the Super Bowl has kind of spoken for itself. Kansas City has been in there against all sorts of prominent teams, big stars, very well established. This year, familiar teams, familiar match-up, but the stars really not that well-known. Does it affect your approach at all to the



broadcast when you have maybe some unfamiliar stars who the nation hasn't really gotten a chance to get to know yet?

MIKE TIRICO: In some ways, it makes the job easier because you get to tell people's stories. I think any of us who do this for a living live to tell the stories of others and highlight them at their biggest moments and frame their careers as they reach an apex.

Sometimes you go, okay, it's great to have the big brand names in there. I was lucky enough to cover four Super Bowls in terms of the trophy presentation and being a part of the pregame. Three of those in my ESPN/ABC days.

The first one was Super Bowl 34, January of 2000. I was so excited to get to be a part of the Super Bowl. It becomes St. Louis against Tennessee. You go, wow, that's the Super Bowl match-up? Turned out to be one of the great games.

The Kurt Warner story gets told every year and is inspirational 25 years later. The Super Bowl is bigger than almost anything else, and somebody's story and somebody's day will play out. And no, it's not Mahomes and maybe it's not some of the other bigger brand-name teams and the stars of the league that we see on a regular basis on commercials, but you probably will soon because somebody will make a name in the Super Bowl.

I think it's an opportunity for us, and hopefully we can crush that opportunity.

MELISSA STARK: I think for the sideline reporters, it's a great thing because we want to humanize these players. We want to give you a reason to root for them. I feel like having Kaylee on one sideline, I'm on the other one, we have it all covered. We talk to so many of these players that Mike and Cris are talking to other -- I feel like we just have it all covered.

We're hoping we can bring you some of those stories.

KAYLEE HARTUNG: How fun is it to get the opportunity to create stars in this moment on this stage? I think we can have that happen on Sunday.

CRIS COLLINSWORTH: Yeah, led by the two quarterbacks. Somebody is coming out of this game, like, with a hell of a story. They really are. Either Drake Maye is this close to being MVP, turning it around. Is this the same start that Tom Brady had in year two? You can hear the whole thing come out of it.

And Sam Darnold on the other side could not have had

more doubts at the end of last year. Couldn't win the big game, folded under pressure, all that kind of stuff, and now in these playoffs going toe to toe with some of the great quarterbacks and some of the great teams. And should he emerge with a Super Bowl championship, that story and that turnaround is going to be one of the really, really exciting stories to ever be told in a Super Bowl.

Q. I wanted to ask you about the Seahawks specifically. Obviously a strong team a year ago, but great strides from a 10-win team to where they are now. What are your thoughts on specifically how Mike Macdonald has effected change from year one given all the roster turn and then the results they've enjoyed?

CRIS COLLINSWORTH: I think one of the great advantages that we had as a group is we get to go behind the scenes. We get to go watch practice. We get to go talk to people associated with the team and around the team. Not always what they would say if you were doing an interview on camera or in the newspaper, but you get a feeling that everybody knew. Everybody knew what Mike Macdonald was as a coach.

When he left, that created things that happened after that, right?

But Mike Macdonald, when you sit down and you begin to look at what defensive-minded coaches do and how defensive-minded coaches think -- we've got two of them, which is a little bit rare in today's world, that will be heading up these two teams.

But Mike Macdonald, this defense - I hope I can capture it, I hope I can describe it in the right way - attacks. They simply attack, whether it's on the defensive line, rushing the quarterback, whether it's the linebackers, Thomas and Jones, jumping all over routes that are coming out of the backfield and being physical down the field with their cornerbacks and Emmanwori, who's a strong safety/linebacker/corners. I mean, this guy is everywhere on the field.

But the overriding theme for this team is to attack. And we've seen Drake Maye; we've seen the Patriots take some sacks during the course of this playoff, and so it's going to be really interesting for me to see how that attacking philosophy marries up with what they're doing on offense and then what Josh McDaniels and Drake Maye has in store for that attacking style.

It's an exciting defense to watch. Is it the Legion of Boom? No, it's completely different. But it's exciting to watch.



Q. Could you touch on Darnold, too? Obviously a big difference year over year and big difference two years over two years going way back to the beginning for him.

MIKE TIRICO: Yeah, I'll give you a quick one on Sam. If you think about a year ago, Sam Donald in Seattle was not really the equation that people were playing out, so how quickly things change, and a new offensive coordinator in Seattle, as well. So many things came together so quickly here, and good for Sam because he was riding high until that Detroit game, and then the Rams game with the nine sacks and they were eliminated in the playoffs.

But he had taken not just what he learned that year in Minnesota or the year before when he came to San Francisco and was a part of it, but that collective set of experiences, and that is a pattern we have seen around the league. Just because it hasn't worked doesn't mean the individual can't do it. It's the right time, the right place, and any of us who have moved around and then found the right place at the right time, we have an appreciation for, hey, it's not just me, it's building some confidence and having people around you with confidence. I think we've seen that with Sam.

And good for him because it will inspire a lot of other folks who were quickly ready to move on to the next hot thing, and remember, he was that for quite some time during his college days, No. 3 overall pick, and then the right place with the right system at the right time, he can be a Super Bowl champion by Sunday night, which becomes one of the cooler stories that would have been written in Super Bowl history.

Q. My question is to Mike. Sir, you are a legend for broadcasters, and this is Black History Month. My question, sir, is how do you feel whenever somebody gives you flowers, especially this month, knowing everything that you've been able to do for Black broadcasters?

MIKE TIRICO: Well, I appreciate the comments. Thank you so much. Thanks for making me feel old, too. Always nice to be called a legend. It means you're old and they're kicking you out the door.

I'm just trying to do my job in the best possible way and appreciative. No matter the marks you may put on it, appreciative of all the people who have come before us who have given us the opportunity to succeed and thrive in the jobs we do. If you in any way, shape or form are in a position of visibility where you can touch, represent, inspire others, you have to thank the people who came before you to make that possible. So that's where my appreciation is.

It doesn't matter skin color, doesn't matter race, doesn't matter gender. I love the opportunity to be out there and help broadcasters who were like me 25, 35 years ago watching this and hoping someday I get a chance, and if you're around the right people, as we were just talking about Sam Darnold, sometimes you'll get those opportunities.

So I'm appreciative of that, and for the folks who are watching who feel like they're represented, whether it's who I am, where I came from or how I go about my work, I'm very honored and appreciative that they feel that way. Like I said before, all we do is talk about sports. This is all we get to do, and we're very lucky to do that with some special folks along the way.

CRIS COLLINSWORTH: Nobody outworks the guy. Nobody. The other part of it is you can't hold the door for him. He always holds the door for you. You can't buy a cup of coffee for him. He always buys a cup of coffee for you. There's nobody that approaches the job as more of a teammate than Mike does. It's been pretty cool to see.

Now for him to have this moment in time where he's going to do the Super Bowl, he's going to be the lead voice in the Olympics, he's going to be the lead voice in the NBA, and how -- I can barely keep these two teams straight in my mind. How he keeps all of that inside that computer brain of his, I have no idea, but there's nobody like him.

MELISSA STARK: There literally is no other person that could do it.

MIKE TIRICO: Thanks for your question. Appreciate you.

Q. Rob, and Mike and Cris, if you want to weigh in. Over the last two years with the United Football League and last fall with the Atlantic Coast Conference, in the event a controversial call is reviewed, you get the chance, the home viewer, to see the replay center of the UFL or the ACC, and you get the opportunity to see the replays that the referee does on the sideline and you get the knowledge of here's how they come up with the call. Is the NFL going to do that in the event of a controversial call in the Super Bowl, and if not, should that be the practice going forward? I know a lot of people think every college football conference should do what the ACC did this year.

ROB HYLAND: Listen, I commend the ACC. I remember the first time I saw it, I was blown away by the transparency.

Let this be clear: We have a very good relationship with the NFL. They are very communicative when there are infractions or plays under review. Terry McAulay is in constant communication with Park Avenue, where decisions are made.

Listen, we are always in broadcasting trying to get viewers close to the action to give them the best seat in the house. If someday the NFL decided to open that door and let viewers in, I think the viewers would probably enjoy it.

But it's working now. But I have enjoyed how college football has done it, and again, we're always in search of access, be it microphones, camera angles. If you can get a peek inside that conversation and a listen in, I think it would do the fans a lot of good.

MIKE TIRICO: As an ACC school alum, I'll say bravo to the ACC. It's good that we lead in football doing something. It's great to see that. I hope more people do it.

What we are blessed in in our show is we've got somebody who's been on the field for three Super Bowls in Terry McAulay with us at a moment's notice, and Cris and I lean on him as much as possible, and there is no one who understands the rules and the applications quicker than Terry.

We are blessed to have that, so from that standpoint, the maximum that we can do, we have access to because of Terry. That's a great part of us feeling comfortable and covered going into the game on Sunday.

CRIS COLLINSWORTH: And the great thing about him is his body language. Sometimes we don't even have to hear him to know what he's thinking.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for joining us today.

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