

PATRIOTS HEAD COACH BILL BELICHICK

POSTGAME VIDEO CONFERENCE

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BB: All right. Well, first of all, you know, just on behalf of the players and the coaches that wore the patches, in my case Timothy Clegg, or the number or the initials on their helmets, you know, proud to be out there and recognize the people that have fought and died for our country and defended us. And for the ones that were enlisting today, just the tribute to, you know, our great military and what they stand for and how they protect us. So definitely proud to be a part of that, seeing the families on the way on and off the field keeps things in perspective here.

But, you know, good win for our team, certainly a lot better than the last time we played the Colts. Had a lot of big plays defensively. Obviously, the third down and field position they created for us, big play in the kicking game, and, you know, were able to convert enough of those, score enough points to win. And so that's what it's about in this league.

So always things we can do better but really good to walk off the field today with a good win against the Colts, a team that we obviously couldn't play very well against last year. So it was a little different story today.

Big day for John Jones. Big day for our team defense. Coverage, rush, great game plan by the defensive coaches and well executed. Put a lot of pressure on the Colts and were able to take advantage of the situations, headed by Ju. Big day for us out there. Really big day.

Q. Coach, can you talk about the pressure up front, led by Judon and Uche with three sacks each and what they were able to do to Ehlinger?

BB: Yeah. You know, the sacks are the sacks. Some of those came when the quarterback was flushed out by somebody else, somebody else got them. But it was a lot of pressure from -- we got pressure on early downs, created some long yardage situations. And Ju, Josh, Dan, we had a couple of secondary pressures in there that hit as well. It was just good team defense.

Any time you have a good pass rush, you have good coverage. Any time you have good coverage, you'll have a good pass rush. Some of those sacks looked like coverage sacks, where there was nobody to throw to.

Some of them were great rush sacks where they didn't have time to execute the passing game.

But good team defense is really what it's about.

Q. Bill, I know you talk about this a lot, but how pleased were you in the second quarter to see the John Jones blocked punt and then that led to the touchdown pass from Mac to Stevenson, the complementary football you like?

BB: Yeah, that was great. That's, you know, great job by our special teams unit. We had good returns today. We had good kickoff return. Had a couple good punt returns. One in particular went for, I don't know, we got good field position on that. I think that was the first one.

Then we came back with the, you know, with the block. John timed it up perfectly. It was well designed by Cam and Joe. And they timed it well, hit well. We had a chance to scoop it in there but couldn't quite stay on our feet. Then offensively, you know, finished the job and get the touchdown so good play, good throw from Mac to Rhamondre.

John's interception was a good catch, another tough catch, a low ball. Came up with it and got a couple good blocks there, and you're not going to catch John from behind. Once he saw some space, it was all over. So it was big plays for us. That's 14 points that are kind of bonus points that it's hard to count on going into the game. But when you get them, that makes a big difference in the final score.

Q. Bill, what went into the decision to rotate at left guard Cole Strange and then move Isaiah Wynn from right tackle to the left guard spot?

BB: We play a lot of people in every part of the game. On the offensive line, skill positions, all the defense, you know, we play a lot of people. That's what we do.

Q. Bill, you always say a player's always a work in progress, no matter what level they're at. What has Jonathan Jones done since when you first got him to put himself in a position to be able to have a game like this?

BB: Well, John's had a lot of good games for us. John's



one of our best players. So, of course, he started out as an undrafted free agent out of Auburn, came in here and lit up things on the special teams with his speed, his toughness, his intelligence. He's a smart football player. Worked his way into a big role defensively. We signed him for that role. Kind of a third corner. Now, of course, the game, everybody plays with three corners most of the time.

So this year, we had some depth inside and moved him outside, and so he plays outside and inside, like a lot of our players do. We play them in different spots. He made a transition to playing on the perimeter this year. Has done a good job for us. Myles has played inside. He's played opposite of Mills and Jack Jones. Sometimes he moves inside and Jack and Jalen are outside. Again, following up, we rotate our people defensively and have a lot of good players. They all deserve to play and they all help us.

Q. Bill, besides Jonathan Jones and Judon's play, Ja'Whaun Bentley had a big game as well. Could you talk about his importance on the defense?

BB: Yeah. Ja'Whaun does a great job. Bent does a great job for us. His communication and the ability to run the defense, control the front, make calls. We have different formations that cause us to check things, whatever it is, check the front, check the coverage or just check into a different defense at times. In no-huddle situations which we faced really all year, Cleveland gave it to us, Jets last year, Indy gave some to us today, that communication ability.

But nobody works harder than Bent. He stays on top of it. Everybody has a ton of respect for his preparation and mindset. He brings it every day. Really, every play. You see that from him out on the practice field and, you know, it's kind of contagious.

It's a good thing that other people build on our defensive line communication on pass rush. Our secondary, of course, Dev and John do a great job of that. But really, it's everybody having that communication. So yeah. Bent's a good football player and just whatever we ask him to do, he's done really well this year. He's played more on the end of the line than he has in the past and played well there. Rushed the passer, good zone player, good tackler, smart football player, tough kid. Glad we have him. Glad we re-signed him. Good player.

Q. Bill, against a good Colts front, how did you feel Mac handled pressure today?

BB: They have a good defense. The front's tough. They gave us some problems. So collectively, as a team, we had some trouble for sure. Some negative runs, and there

was some pressure. Didn't turn the ball over. Fumbled it, but didn't turn the ball over in a passing game, so that was good.

Had trouble with their front, no doubt about it. They have good players. Talked about those guys all week. They rotate them through. They have seven or eight guys they play. They do a good job. Good linebackers too, Franklin, Leonard. Good depth at that position too. Kenny Moore is a good star. Good defense. Steph, a lot of good players.

Q. Bill, (indiscernible) with the start today. What did you think of him since he came back. What did you think about the way he played?

BB: Look at the film. Take a closer look. 11 guys out there. Can't watch them all. I think we all hung in there. But sure, things that were good, sure things could have been better.

Q. How did the wind affect the kicking game?

BB: Affected a lot. Pretty strong to their bench. Just about all the kicks went to their sideline. We had the kickoff return to their sideline, the punt return to their sideline. Kicked with the wind into their bench. That's where we got the block from.

The Colts tried to come back to the field a couple times on the kickoff returns, and just good strategy on their part, you know, figuring that we're going to kind of overload to the boundary side or the wind side. But it definitely affected it. McLaughlin had the miss before the half.

Nick -- didn't bother Nick. He bangs them right through the middle. He's amazing. But, no, it wasn't easy kicking out there today. Conditions were a little bit challenging. So, yeah, definitely affected the direction and it was hard to touchback. Jake hit the ball well. I forget how much touchbacks we had. We had a few, but it was hard to touchback the kickoffs today.

Q. Bill, you mentioned that kick returns. I want to ask you about the Marcus Jones. Your thought on his performance today and also his improvement throughout the last couple of weeks.

BB: Marcus's improvement has come all year. A little limited in the spring, wasn't able to do everything in the spring, still coming off of the injury from college. Actually, two of them. And then he's just gained more and more confidence and more and more experience as we've gone through training camp and through the regular season. His ball handling, his ball security, decision-making, setting up blocks.

He's been doing that well in practice, been doing it well in other games, whether it's kick returns, punt returns, the decision-making, fair catch, not fair catch. Knowing how well we have the gunners blocked or don't have them blocked at times in game situations. So he's just really gotten better every week.

This was a big -- this is kind of a big challenge for him this week with the left-footed punter. It's something we really haven't seen all year. So you know, he can kind of, you know, put the jugs and put them in the opposite direction and all that. Not really the same. We brought Michael here, Palardy, and that was actually good, you know, I think good for Marcus to be able to handle those lefty punts out in the kind of windy practice conditions all week.

So I think that that helped him as well. Again, one of those little things, and Palardy did a good job. I think it helped Marcus's ball handling on a left footed punter.

He's gotten better every week. A hard-working kid. Each situation that we talk about, they come up in the game and he just continues to handle them better and better. You know, as we've seen from other returners as they gain experience, you know, guys like Edelman that never return punts, different than Troy Brown and Welker, who were returners from way back when.

Troy had a ton of experience returning punts, and Troy's done a great job with Marcus, I might add. Troy's done a nice job with him in terms of catching the ball, ball handling, making the first guy miss, setting up blocks, ball security, decision making, reading the ball, reading the flight of the ball, spin of the ball, so forth.

Troy's done a great job with him. He deserves a lot of credit and Marcus has worked hard to get better every week. Same thing with kickoffs. Another one, how deep is it, how much hang time is it.

A little different than punts with guys coming down. You have to make that decision on where the ball is laterally on the field, where is the return, how much time do you have to get there. Do you want to touchback, bring it out. Those are big decisions and then, of course, there's execution of the setting up the blocks and running. All those have gotten better. Thank you.

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