

PATRIOTS HEAD COACH

MIKE VRABEL

POSTGAME VIDEO CONFERENCE

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Steelers 21, Patriots 14

Q. Obviously lesson learned here with the turnovers. You guys had lots --

MV: Obviously. We've known -- we don't need to learn a lesson. We don't need to lose a football game to know that turnovers are very hard to overcome. They erase all the good things that you do. They take away momentum. They take away points, give them field position.

We didn't need to turn it over as many times as we did to learn a lesson. I think we knew that before. It was very unfortunate.

Q. To what do you attribute the turnovers, penalties --

MV: I mean, the penalties, we cleaned that up, but the penalties -- called a couple defensive holds they called on them. You'd have to tell me that that penalty on Carlton Davis is actually defensive pass interference. That's new for me. Again, I think that the turnovers are much more critical than the penalties, much more critical.

You know, ball security comes down to technique. It comes down to other people protecting the guy with the ball, second guy in. Those are all things that we continue to talk about, have talked about, and will talk about. And decision making. Decision making when you have the football in your hand, whether that's a quarterback, whether that's a player that's reaching it, and it gets knocked out.

We'll watch the tape and we'll clearly address the ball security. We've got to move on. Fix it and move on.

Q. Is this a game where you felt like you kind of beat yourselves and put yourselves in position to win but the turnovers obviously did away with that?

MV: You could just -- I'm not going to state the obvious. We just have to not give them so many chances with the turnovers, take care of those things. There's a lot to clean up. A lot of good in there, but unfortunately just not enough to get us to win, to get us to really have any sort of advantage in a football game. Every time I felt like we were going to take the momentum and be able to score

and move forward in the game, and the defense did a great job there. Unfortunately it got to be one too many opportunities on their part.

Q. Just kind of a quick postgame feeling about Drake and what you saw today --

MV: A lot of good. A lot of good. And unfortunately some decisions that have to be better. I'm sure we'll have to protect him better. And just understanding that you don't have to win it all on one play. There's opportunities to move on and save the day the next play. You can't put the ball in harm's way at that position. But certainly Drake wasn't alone.

But there's a lot of really good things in there, his ability to extend plays, scramble, pick up 1st downs for us, run multiple plays inside the pocket, outside the pocket. There's a lot of good things in there, just some decision making that we need to have be better for him and for himself.

Q. The sequence at the end of the second quarter, you're getting close. What was it about the Steelers' defense that made throwing the ball three straight times the right call?

MV: Just loaded up. Just loaded up and really just gapping you out, going with bigger personnel. Again, we liked some of them. We liked some of the plays. When they don't work and we don't execute them, there's certainly always room for second-guessing. Whether we run it in or throw it in, we have to execute and make great decisions, and we didn't. But that was something that we felt good about those plays. We just, again, weren't able to execute. Probably were able to slip a run in there on 4th down. We had time-outs, some opportunities to call it based on the look, and then let the quarterback make a decision. Some of those are two-way calls that go in when you're down there and trying to just get the best play.

Q. I'm just curious what you saw on that final 4th down conversion that was the only one to not work out today?

MV: Looked like they pressured us and Drake got the ball out, and again, probably have to just drop step and be able to knife. Know those are going to be bang-bang plays and



try to split them and get the 1st down. It's hard to circle around some defenders. I didn't have the best view of it. I would say that the decision that Pop made wasn't the right one there just because we didn't get it.

Got to try to either drop step or make them miss.

Q. You went for 4th down deep in your own territory at one point. Were you chasing momentum at that point, and did you feel this was a game that your team needed that to get going, given the way it was going?

MV: I just want to be aggressive, want to be decisive and aggressive and give these guys opportunities to win the game. Felt like those were good calls for us. The players executed it. We just weren't able to score off of some of them.

Q. You mentioned the turnovers erase all the good things that you do. You guys go down 14-0, but what did you think of your defense for most of the rest of the game?

MV: Resilient. We've got to be better in the red zone when they do get there. I think they settled down, really played the type of defense that we expect except for the last drive there. Again, wherever they put the ball down, you just keep reminding them to go play defense, and they did, and they got stops, and there was energy, and we've just got to keep trying to turn the ball over. You see how critical that is when we can do that, and finding opportunities to get it out of the quarterback's hand or when they do fumble it try to keep it in bounds or recover it. It's a game of inches, and we weren't able to recover the fumble and they were. Had plenty of chances.

Q. How do you handle Rhamondre Stevenson with two fumbles?

MV: Yeah, it's like you sit there, and we were so excited about him and everybody is excited about him, the fans are, and we know what his capabilities are, and we've got to get him back. We need him. We absolutely need him. You see what he was able to do for us last week, his ability to make some plays. Again, we'll just have to look at the technique and we'll have to look at the ball security, but we're going to need him. We need his ability, but we also need to take care of the football.

It's a long answer to tell you that I'm not really sure 20 minutes after the game what we're going to do, but we need him because he helped us win the game last week, and it was a different story today.

Q. I understand you left points on the field, but you

were also able to put together some long drives. How do you think this could help you to build your team's identity offensively?

MV: Yeah, I appreciate that question. I do. We have to score. You have to score in this league. You have to -- again, I'm great with the long drives. We're going to have to continue to use that and gain confidence, but we're going to have to find ways to create explosive plays. It's hard to drive the ball 19 plays. Impressive that we can do that.

But it's also a reminder that you have to hit some X plays and you have to continue to score touchdowns when you get down there after 19 plays. I appreciate that.

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