

# **PATRIOTS HEAD COACH MIKE VRABEL**

## **POSTGAME VIDEO CONFERENCE**

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Patriots 38, Dolphins 10

**Q. I'm guessing you might be pleased with the finish and kind of taking care of business before heading into the postseason.**

MV: Yeah, and I think there was a little lull there in the second quarter, but I really appreciate the way that the defense responded after the block to force them to make a long kick, and then the way the offense was able to go back and get Andy into field goal range, and fantastic kick by him.

I tried to ask them to replicate those last two series and that intensity and that execution as we went into the second half, and I think that's what we saw.

**Q. What's your initial reaction to learning that you guys will host the Chargers next weekend?**

MV: We'll get ready and get rolling and try to do what we do every week, which is prepare and figure out who we have available and what we feel like the keys are going to be and try to practice and be ready to go. That's all we've done all year, and that's all we'll be able to do this week in the playoffs.

**Q. Just a thought on Rhamondre today with 131 yards rushing, 22 receiving, three touchdowns. The last three games, seems like especially after contact he's been real good. Just what you've seen from him.**

MV: Just building his confidence. I appreciate all of our backs' ability to protect, and Rhamondre does that. I think that goes sometimes unnoticed, and I know that that's not as sexy or exciting as the run game production and the pass receiving, but he cares deeply about this team. I was excited to be able to have him be a game captain for us, and I think he's just continued to get better. He's continued to make people miss and to run hard and still protect the football.

**Q. I know you have to review the film, but what did you see from Will Campbell and Milton Williams throughout the week and today in their return?**

MV: I mean, I thought that they were okay. I thought that Milton factored a few times. Again, a lot of great efforts out there. I'm not going to single Will or Milton out. I'm sure they did okay.

**Q. You end this first season with 14 wins. Just what does it mean for you to have a start like this here?**

MV: It means we are the second seed and we're going to host the Chargers, and we start over. The only wins that matter are going to be the ones that we can get moving forward.

**Q. To that point, when you stood in this room months ago and said we want to win the division, host playoff games and compete for championships, you're here. I understand the season is not over, but how does that happen in a matter of months?**

MV: We got the right guys in the building at the right time, and we got good quarterback play. We figured out how to not beat ourselves. I think we play to an identity, and guys make plays. That's what happens. I'm excited for all those guys that -- again, when you chase wins, usually the production comes along with it, so we need to focus on winning and the efforts that are going to help us win, and in turn you end up with all the plays that you're going to need, and I think you saw that.

**Q. I'm just curious, with Rhamondre Stevenson, is there anything you can pinpoint to the turnaround he had towards the second half of the season from the fumbling issues early on to now just kind of dominating on the field?**

MV: Just hard work and perseverance. I think Tony and all the offensive coaches do a great job in emphasizing ball security, and I think just him being -- we kind of felt like we got into a little flow with him and TreVeyon and Rhamondre and kind of figuring out where that balance was, and I think that they did a great job. We need them both. We need D'Ernest. But figuring out the balance with Rhamondre and TreVeyon and those guys both taking advantage of the opportunities that they have. I felt like that's a good flow by Josh and Tony calling the game and getting the guys in there.

To the players' credit, they take advantage of the times that they get, the touches that they get.

**Q. With that said, how important is it this time of the year to establish that running game and that physical presence heading into the playoffs?**

MV: Well, you'd better be able to do that in the tournament, and you'd better be able to take care of the football. You'd better be able to create some turnovers, and you have to have efficient quarterback play. That's no secret. And you're going to have to execute in situations like we did at the end of the half, whether that be at the end of the half or the end of the game to get some points. But that's what it comes down to.

**Q. Jack Gibbons forced a fumble, almost had an interception. What has he meant to you this season, specifically since he's had to step into a bigger role without Robert Spillane?**

MV: Well, he's always prepared. We talk about playing multiple positions with limited reps, so he's always prepared. Usually in the right place at the right time, and takes coaching, and he's a very instinctive player. Gets everybody lined up. He's a great communicator. He's a great teammate. Excited and happy that we have him.

**Q. You called a time-out on the 4th and 1 play in the first half. Was that mainly due to the play clock running out or trying to give yourself the time to check the spot on Hunter's catch?**

MV: Probably a little bit of both, making sure that we had the right personnel. We didn't execute the play, so a little bit of that is being able to check the spot, see if it was a little closer. But just didn't execute very well on that particular play.

**Q. When you signed Stefon Diggs in the off-season, you probably had an idea of what you wanted to see from him. He goes over 1,000 yards in the year for a seventh time in his career. What have you seen from him in terms of his leadership on and off the field and the performance today?**

MV: Very consistent. I mean, he sits where Mike sits every day. He's up front. He's attentive. There's an energy to him. He's been out there. He's been available. He's taking care of his body.

Then the production, I think has been fantastic. I'm glad that we have him.

**Q. Turnover differential, how key has that been in the**

**overly aspect of what this team has done?**

MV: I mean, it's gotten better, right? We battled back. It wasn't very good. When you have five in one game, you've got plenty to make up. But I felt like there was a conscious effort, and the attempts on defense improved. The ball security, the two in traffic, not relaxing at the sideline, quarterback making great decisions, I think that there was a conscious effort to do that.

In this league when the games are as close as they are, that makes a big difference. We need to still try to affect the football and turn it over defensively. I'm just frustrated with the blocked field goal. We went all 17 weeks, and all we did was become the 38th or 39th blocked field goal in the NFL this year.

Appreciate you guys. See you in a couple days.

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