

# PATRIOTS HEAD COACH MIKE VRABEL

## POSTGAME VIDEO CONFERENCE

January 11, 2026



Patriots 16, Chargers 3

**Q. There's a saying that defense wins championships. Your team had six sacks, pretty much made Herbert's life miserable. How well did you think they played?**

MV: I thought they played extremely well. I thought they were committed to stopping the run. The sudden change was critical. It was a very good defense that we were playing.

We turned the ball over far too many times. What our defense was able to do early in that game, in the red zone, inside the five yard line or inside the nine yard line, I think really set the tone for them for the rest of the game.

Could have been better. A lot of scrambles. We knew that. Again, trying to rush, make sure that those scramble lanes aren't there. Secondary did a fantastic job with the play extensions, making sure that those plays didn't get loose. Just really proud of everybody.

**Q. How proud were you to see the effort and the finish towards the end of your defense? Obviously the could smell blood. And speaking of blood, how is your lip?**

MV: We talked to them about being willing to spill some blood out there, that the big dogs come out in January. I think Milt took that to heart in the way that he played the game, in the way he finished the game.

He came over and got me pretty good. That's what happens.

**Q. What did you think of Drake Maye's performance tonight?**

MV: Yeah, I mean, again, we got to take care of the football. Thought he came through when we needed him. The tipped pass is something that was unfortunate. That turned into an interception. But the throw to Hunter I thought when we needed him was elite.

**Q. Talk about Zak Kuhr. Obviously defense played unbelievable. He stepped in this season, done a remarkable job.**

MV: He really has.

**Q. Talk about the game he called tonight on defense.**

MV: I would tell you this means a lot to him. These players mean a lot to him. I think that they want to do well for Zak and for the entire staff that put a lot into it.

I'm proud of Zak for not only the performance calling the game, but the preparation and what goes into it. He's earned every bit of recognition that he's getting and should get.

Again, it takes everybody. There's great communication from upstairs, getting it to the players. They certainly respond. All the credit has to go to them.

But Zak was able to change up some calls there at the end. I felt like that mixed the pressure in because that's what we felt like we needed.

**Q. On third down you were one of ten, defensively one of three on fourth down. How much momentum did you take from those stops?**

MV: A lot. I think they probably got tired of hearing me talk about them being fourth in the league in third down. What they were able to do as an offense, so to be able to do that...

You have to be able to create some longer yardage situations. We were able to do that. That was real positive. I think being able to get drives stopped, certainly the Chargers want to possess the football, wear you down. I don't think we ever let them do that.

**Q. Was there a particular aspect of their defensive performance which you thought was the most significant?**

MV: I think the stop early, the fourth down stop really set the tone. But being able to stop the run...

If you look at the runs they handed off to the running back, that's kind of I think where things started. You're going to look at the rushing yards, whatever it was, quarterback



scrambles on passes.

Our ability to stop the run and force second and third and long situations I think really helped us. Those are only good if you can take advantage of 'em. We caused some turnovers. We hit the quarterback. One time it bounces into the runningback's hands. He's taking off running. Harold runs and makes a great effort play. That's going to go for 12 yards. Started as a strip sack. Next time that very easily could be our football.

Just the effort. Everybody played. Everybody contributed. Guys went down. Other guys went in there and stepped up. We play a lot of guys on defense. I think they all appreciate that. I think they all have roles. That's fun to see everybody contribute.

**Q. The run game tonight, what you saw from Rhamondre, TreVeyon and Drake as well.**

MV: Yeah, I thought it was good enough. I did. I thought that it was good enough. I thought we were close on a few. Anytime that you can finish the game running the football against the Chargers and a defense like that, I think it's very positive.

Certainly we weren't one-dimensional. We were able to run the football. We were able to get some yards on first down. I thought the backs ran hard. I thought they did a great job of taking care of the football.

Drake, obviously if he gets the looks that are advantageous, he can take off and run, just like he did last week. He did the same thing this week.

**Q. The way the game declared, when did you feel like you got a handle on it?**

MV: I think after Drake's pass, after the completion to Hunter, putting us up a couple scores. I thought that was a critical sequence. I thought it was a great drive.

We were into drives. We talked all week about fighting to get the first first down, then we stalled. It was like, Okay, we're getting the first first down, now we have to fight to finish the drive and do that.

That drive we certainly did.

**Q. Other than the defense, it certainly feels like your special teams at least keep you in the game for a long period of time. How do you feel about their performance?**

MV: I thought it was solid. We didn't have a lot of

opportunities. I thought Marcus handled the punts extremely well. I thought the decision to let the ball bounce and get a touchback, those are big decisions that we trust Marcus in to come up and catch the punts.

The way that we covered kickoffs... I thought it was a very clean game from our special teams perspective. They set the table for everything that we do offensively and defensively.

Appreciate you guys.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

