

PATRIOTS HEAD COACH

MIKE VRABEL

POSTGAME VIDEO CONFERENCE

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Patriots - 28, Texans - 16

Q. How does it feel to be in the AFC title game, and what did it take to get here?

MV: I'm always excited for our organization, excited for the players. I am appreciative of their work and their efforts. Everybody's stepping up. We're using everybody. Everybody's making plays. Everybody's helping us win.

I'm excited for these guys, but also they're not satisfied, and I can tell that.

It wasn't pretty. Defense kept us in there. When we needed it, our offense was able to come through late in the game there in the second half with a touchdown, give us a two-score lead. I felt like that drive, backed up there from the 3-yard line, where we ran the ball and took a lot of clock was pretty classy.

Q. Your defense has allowed 19 points, if you look at it in two games. What have they done well in your mind?

MV: They're playing well together. I feel like they're complementing each other, and our turnovers are created by more than one guy. There's some great efforts.

But it's somebody tipping a pass or it's somebody that's putting pressure that's usually helping -- or Zak's dialing something up that kind of changes the look. We're taking advantage of our opportunities.

And that's what it's going to take in the playoffs, is you've got to take care of the ball and turn it over.

Q. How would you define the resiliency of your football team?

MV: I think, again, there's times where it doesn't look great. And we know going against a great defense, which I mean that's what they are, it's hard. There's some tough sledding. There's some plays that don't look great. It's a fast, talented defense. And we talked about that coming in.

But in the end, I felt like we just kind of stuck around. And we always talk about it only takes one play. And early on,

that might have been Pop and Marcus. K.C. caused that touchdown that Marcus took back, or Kayshon in the second half and Drake giving him the ball. So it just takes one play. And I think that sparks us.

Q. You mentioned the offense there in the fourth quarter. We've talked to you about Drake all season, but maybe not the best first three quarters. Just talk a little bit about what he was able to do and kind of stay resilient in that fourth quarter?

MV: We talk about not going in the blender. And I think it's hard. They put pressure on us, and we know we've got to take care of the ball. Drake knows that.

But to be able to stay the course and to trust Kayshon and give him a great ball that was him or nobody, and those guys have kind of done that all year -- when we needed a play, they've been able to do that for us.

Q. You said at the beginning that the players aren't satisfied. You can tell that. Can you give me an example of what you saw that indicates that? Also, a coach's job is also to tune out the noise. There's going to be a heck of a lot of noise this week. Are you satisfied that you've got your place to tune out that noise or is that a work in progress?

MV: We know the stadium is going to be loud. So the louder the better. Every opportunity -- I think what we've done is we've asked them to embrace the preparation, embrace the strain and also enjoy every minute of this, enjoy walking into this stadium, coming in here, enjoy putting your uniform on, enjoy going out there doing warm-ups and enjoy seeing your family. But mostly enjoy the execution.

We'll keep doing that, and we know we've got to go on the road to a No. 1 seed in the AFC, and it's not going to be easy. But we'll come out and be ready to go.

Q. You talked about a loud stadium potentially in store for next week. How much do you feel that the home crowd played into the victory tonight in the last home game of the season?

MV: Well, they help. They help tremendously. And,

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again, they ratcheted it up there in the fourth quarter and some of those third down stop back by the lighthouse that I thought was really ratcheted up.

When they chose to punt that was huge for us. They got a great punt but and we took the ball.

But the harder we play and the more plays that we make, the louder they're going to get. I've said this since we've been here -- they're knowledgeable fans. They've seen a lot of good football over the course of 20-some years. They know what it looks like, and they have high expectations.

Q. I'm curious, what did you see from your defense as concerns the takeaways tonight, and how they were able to just generate so many of them?

MV: Again, it was a group effort. We talked about it being a group effort. Whether that's understanding the call, understanding where each guy fits. But I felt like, especially on Marcus' -- we talked about some of these boots, and K.C. was able to force the quarterback into some mistakes and we tipped some passes.

Again, there were some other plays that were close with the quarterback's arm. I think we kept changing the look up on him a little bit. Give our guys credit to be able to disguise. We talked about that and certainly affecting the quarterback is a big part of winning in this league.

Q. You mentioned at the outset everybody's stepping up, everyone's making plays. What does it mean to a coach to get a three-phase effort in a win here tonight?

MV: A lot goes into it. We always give credit to the players, but I'm extremely lucky for the staff that we have, their knowledge, their alignment, their loyalty, and their ability they've given our players to have confidence in their job is something that I really appreciate.

So, again, the results will always be for the players, and because of the players. But I appreciate the staff, and I can't thank them enough. Again, I tell the players all the time, I'm proud to be their coach, but I appreciate the staff as well.

Q. You always do such a good job of complimenting your players, but in terms of preparation, you take so much pride in getting them ready. Was there something you did in specific that you did for this game that you reflect on now that worked in this game?

MV: I thought we've tried to add situations to the

postseason. I think we've tried to, instead of doing it on Saturday, we've tried to maybe add those situations during practice on Wednesdays and Thursdays and Fridays as opposed to doing them in the walk-through, just because we know how critical they are.

Again, we've tried to stay consistent and not make it -- we understand how important these games are and how critical each play is -- but to not just change everything we do. We practiced on Thursdays fast and we put pads on, and they embraced that.

We knew it would be a physical game. We knew it would be a tough game. Again, we just have to keep getting better.

Q. There was a lot of talk about the Texans defense this week, do you feel your defense took that personally at all?

MV: I'm sure they're going to tell you in 30 seconds as soon as you guys go rushing out of here. Again, they're really good for a reason; they've shown it each and every week.

But our guys are prideful men. And they want to compete and they want to win. And, again, they deserve the recognition that they're going to get. They're a top-five defense for a reason as well.

Again, that's how some of these things go. When it comes down to turnovers. And we've got to get back on track. We forced second-and-long, so we stopped the run. And I'm proud of each and every guy in there.

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