

New England Patriots Media Conference

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Bill Belichick

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BB: Well, it was, as always, draft day's always an interesting day. A lot of preparation and you just wait to see how things unfold. So Mac was available there at our pick and he's a guy we spent a lot of time with and felt like that was the best pick at that time for us. And look forward to working with him. He's a smart kid. He's been in a system that's similar to ours. We have had a lot of good conversations with him. I think he'll be able to process the offense. It's obviously going to take a lot of time. We'll see how it goes. Cam's our quarterback. Whatever position, whatever time Jarrett or Mac are ready to challenge and compete, then we'll see how that goes.

But right now, Mac, he's just got a lot of learning in front of him. I know he's very anxious to get going on it and get started and so we'll start trying to give him material to work on and be ready for the rookie mini camp in the second week of May, and then on to the rookie development program and so forth. So should be a good opportunity for him to be able to Mac there, certainly better than what we had last year. So look forward to that.

And tomorrow we're going to have a pick in each round, have some extra picks the third day of the draft, so we'll see how all that plays out, but just kind of go back tonight and tomorrow, reset the board and get ready for tomorrow just like we did today. So that's kind of where we are.

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions.

Q. I wanted to ask you how much Coach Saban's input went into your decision to draft Mac tonight?

BB: Well, I talked to Coach Saban and some of the other coaches down there. I talked to those guys, and every year they always have a lot of players in the draft every year and Coach Saban's always very helpful in his evaluations. I have a tremendous amount of respect for Nick professionally, but also personally, and so we have always had great conversations about his experiences with the players and he does a good job of projecting what they would be like on this level because he's been on this level and knows the differences and knows the demands that

are different from what they are at Alabama. So Nick's great. He's a great resource and nobody knows more football than Nick does on any level. So whether it's evaluating players or scheming or anything else, game planning, there's nobody I enjoy talking to more than Nick.

Q. There was some rumors that Mac Jones could be taken as high as 3 to the 49ers. Was he a play that you were expecting might be there for you at 15 and was there any thought of moving up for him at any point during the first round?

BB: We don't usually go into the draft with a lot of expectations and obviously I missed a lot of those mock drafts so I'm not really that familiar with where everyone was going. Just try to do the best we can to help our football team and that's what we did today, that's what we have done in the past, and that's what we'll do tomorrow and on Saturday.

Q. With Mac how important was it for you just to be able to evaluate him in a system that you know and the competition that he did play against in the SEC.

BB: Well, each player has got his own set of circumstances. We can't control that. We just have to evaluate what they are. Last year we saw Kyle Dugger at Lenoir-Rhyne and that's about as different as you could get from watching Mac Jones at Alabama. But in the end, we have to do the best we can to evaluate the players and put a value on them and project them onto our team and what they think they would do and bring and so forth. So that's what we do with every player. You can't control that, and you have to try to figure it out and find some type of equilibrium because what the players did and where they are is not anything you have control of. You just have to try to evaluate it and figure it out and project it into the New England Patriots and I'm sure that's what every other team is trying to do is project into their organization, and then the scheme, the fit, the player, the personality, the work ethic, the everything that comes with them. And they come in different, all different shapes and sizes. So like I said, Kyle and Mac, I don't know if you could, from a level of competition standpoint, it would be hard to get a bigger gap than that. But we can't control it so we just try to work with it.

Q. College stats are a little bit different than pro stats,

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whether it's different levels of competition and all that, but accuracy is still accuracy and Mac set a collegiate record I think it was 77 percent with his completion rate. How important was that in evaluating him and how transferable is accuracy at the college level to the pro level?

BB: Yeah, well you said it. They're two different levels, so we'll see. All the players that were drafted today and the ones that get drafted in the next couple days, they were all good in college, so whatever it was, it was. We'll see how it transfers to the NFL. It's a little different game. Competition is quite a bit higher and there's a lot more happening a lot quicker. So, I don't know, we'll see how it goes.

Q. Did the trades and everything that were happening in front of you, how much did you have to pivot and sort of be ready to Mac different moves throughout because of all the action happening in front of you?

BB: Well, again, we couldn't really control any of that, so, I mean, when you're a 15, you're a 15, so somebody's got to be a 14, somebody's got to be a 13. So unless you move, it's, you know, there's the same number of teams that are going to pick in front of you. So, again, we try to grade the players, evaluate the players, and take a look at the board and make the best decisions we can. I wouldn't say we were in the most flexible position today anyway, so staying a 15 kind of seemed like the best thing for to us do and it worked out fine for us.

Q. I know the leaders can come from anywhere on a roster, but it seems like it's almost a prerequisite at the quarterback position. I'm wondering what you learned about what makes a leader in the pre-draft process just at the college level?

BB: Well, again, we tried to do our homework on all the players. Yeah, players like center, quarterback, defensive signal caller, free safety, inside linebacker, and so forth. Like, those positions all have a level of communication and to a degree leadership and so forth. So every player has his own characteristics and what he brings to the team. Some players bring things in some areas and not in others and vice versa. So, again, there's no one thing that I think necessarily outweighs everything else. You look at the total composite and try to put some kind of a value on that and then that's what it is.

Q. Is that any more difficult in this off-season where you don't see the in-person practices and so forth?

BB: Well, we had multiple Zoom calls with a lot of players. I would say most every player on our draftable board we

had more than one, probably more than three calls with nearly every player. So that was just part of the process. A lot of times in other years you might have had those interviews in an All-Star Game or at the combine or at a pro day. This year, like last year, we did them virtually, so it was a little bit different, but we still could talk to the player and watch film together and talk about his process, career, and go through his tape and so forth. So it was a little bit different, but it was still, there was still quite a bit of interaction between ourselves and the players.

Q. Going back a few months here, you were speaking generally about quarterback play in December and had said accuracy obviously is vitally important. Decision making and anticipation, to you, were bigger parts of the position and I'm wondering when you looked at Mac and his game, how much did anticipation, if at all, separate him in that regard when you're considering the other quarterbacks who went tonight?

BB: Well, again, there are multiple components to all those things and the things you just mentioned and those characteristics are important, as are a lot of other ones. So I think, look, at this point we're just going to have to see, like we do with every new player, every new draft choice, see how those things transfer to the National Football League, to the speed, to the athleticism and instinctiveness and awareness of the players that any player's competing against on the other side of the ball, whether it's quarterback or any other position. So we'll see how all those things play out, and look forward to helping the rookies, the new players, this year come in and learn and become familiar with terminology, with techniques, whether it be rules or things that are different in the college game coming from the pro game, try to help them with all those things and see how they do with it. So that's, it's really, at this point the process is a lot more about going forward than it is about looking back.

Q. One of the things that Nick said publicly about Mac Jones is that he has very good visualization of not only what his players were doing but how defenses would react and I'm curious how that came across to you, that ability to kind of maybe pre-snap to have a conception in his mind, but also to be able with his eyes to anticipate and see plays unfold and if that's unusual for a quarterback coming out of the college level?

BB: Again, I think players are at different levels on those things. Obviously any player at Alabama, certainly the quarterbacks at Alabama, are very well coached. They understand the offensive design of the play. They understand the defensive adjustments and the weaknesses and strengths of different fronts and

coverages and how to anticipate and read blitzes and all that. So any player coming out of that Alabama team that has had that kind of exposure is going to be pretty well prepared for that. But this is a different level and the things that happen in the National Football League are, again, they're, we have more time, we have more scheme, the players are more advanced physically, they have much more experience, and so what's going to happen at this level is going to be more complex and faster and more difficult than what happened at the last level, just like going from high school to college. So that takes some time, that takes some adjusting to. Was he good at it in college? Yeah, I mean, everybody that was drafted today was good in college. You don't go in the first round if you don't have a high level of performance at the level they're at. So how that moves ahead, we'll see. We got a lot of work to do, but we're looking forward to getting with it and looking forward to working with Mac. I know he's looking forward to it. It's a big challenge. It's a long road. It's a big grind. But that's what we all signed up for. So we're excited to move in that direction, but we all have a long way to go, so we need to learn what he can do. He needs to learn a lot about professional football and refine his fundamentals and techniques. We need to coach all the other players as well. So, again, I just see this as a big process going forward for all of us. But, again, we're anxious and excited to get it moving. We're getting closer. We're a couple weeks through the off-season program and in a couple more weeks we'll be able to start activities with the players on the field and get to rookie mini-camp and get to rookie development program and just move things further ahead. In the meantime, we'll do what we can do in other ways virtually and so forth.

Q. Going back to your comments off the top, you said that Cam's our quarterback. What exactly does that mean?

BB: Just what I said.

Q. Just that, I mean, if, when you start practice, he'll be the first guy back there, that's the starter, how long does that last for?

BB: I don't know. Somebody would have to play better than he does.

Q. We asked you before the draft about grading and you mentioned it earlier in the call here when a team is making its evaluations. Was Mac the highest graded player on your board when it came time for you to make the pick at 15?

BB: Yeah, I mean, we're not going to go through all the grades on everybody on the board. That's not really

something that I would want to talk about in this setting.

Q. Is it safe to say that there were not a lot of players you were considering at that point?

BB: Like I said, the grading of the players on the draft board and all that, I mean, we have met on that for hours and hours and hours. I mean, we're not going to get into that now.

Q. I'm curious because he's coming from obviously a program that you respect. How much does performance in big games at that position matter to you?

BB: You know, I think I said this multiple times. Everything matters. So try to take everything into consideration and I don't know and do you think Kyle Dugger played in any big games last year? I don't know. I mean, they weren't National Championship games. But we evaluate the games that they played in. Some guys played in them, some guys didn't. Some guys played at FBS schools, some guys didn't. Some guys played in Power Five schools, some guys didn't. Some guys came out early, some guys didn't. Some guys opted out, some guys didn't. Some guys, you know, were injured and missed time, some players didn't. I mean, you know, each guy is different, so whatever the information is that you have to work with, that's what you have to work with. You can't change it, and if they did, they did, and you evaluate it. And if they didn't, they didn't, and you have to evaluate that too. I think when you start grading these circumstances of the player instead of the player himself, and grade things that were out of the player's control and you start factoring those into the grade, I don't think you can do a very accurate job of putting a value on the player. Where he was, what he did, some of that is out of his control and if you want to make him accountable for that, then I'm not sure that that's really a right thing to do. So we don't do that. Maybe other teams do. I mean, I don't know. You would have to ask them.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

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