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POSTGAME VIDEO CONFERENCE

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New England Patriots 23, Buffalo Bills 16

SM: The guys out there playing, appreciate that effort. We beat ourselves in some situations. Good for James to get a thousand yards to tie the record there, so a couple bright moments and with that I'll turn it over to you with your questions.

Q. Sean, you brought James back in. Clearly there was an intent there to get the record or tie it, I guess. Why was that important for the organization?

SM: Well, number one, you're trying to make sure you're protecting him as much as we can. We're smart with it, so we got inside, I think there was a three -- Mitch, got inside the one, two, or three-yard line, wherever it was and we put James in there. He's worked all year for the offense, the offense has worked all year, the O-line in particular and James, so get a chance to get on a short run. It was good to see.

Q. There were other examples of that Von had a sack early, Martin's punt. How much of that is building the culture here? Knowing, being aware of these things and trying your best, within reason, to reward the players?

SM: Yeah, I just think it's a fine line, right? It's a delicate balance. You want to know. You want to be aware and it's hard because you're trying to put the health of the player and the team first and so, but, you know, you're this close to a milestone and in this case with James and some of the other guys as well.

Q. Joe Andreessen got the start, was out there a lot. I think he led the team in tackles. What did you see from him out there today?

SM: Yeah, the thing you're looking for from a middle linebacker is can he run the defense? Can he handle the operation? How good is the communication? I'm sure Joe wants some plays back, but when you have that type of production from a middle linebacker, that's what you're looking for and the operation and communication I thought was pretty darn good especially with some new players out there with him.

Q. Health-wise, I know you don't have a lot of information usually, but does it fool like you got out of this game the way you hoped to?

SM: Yeah, knock on wood because sometimes things show up the next day. Yeah, I mean, I feel like it. Let me just knock on wood again just to make sure. I'll now a little bit more tomorrow and when I got back in the locker room.

Q. That being the case, this appears the healthiest you've been going into the playoffs for it seems like several years. How rewarding is that to get to that point with your full team?

SM: Yeah, it's good. You want to be as healthy as you can be going into the playoffs and as strong as you can be.

Q. You went the whole game with Damar, or at least very close to it. Was that intentional?

SM: It was. He's been out... what did he miss? Two or three weeks there, just trying to get him back going and get him back going with T. Rapp and that communication. You talked about the health, Sal did, in terms of if you drop a guy back in there in a playoff game, he hasn't been out there in several weeks, what does that look like? Can he actually function? So it's good for us to take a look at Damar, Curtis Samuel as well and for them to get out there, too, and get that confidence of which is what it's like at game speed and get into a rhythm here.

Q. To have Sam tick that punt in the first half that went inside the 20 and gotten that incentive, you could have kicked a field goal there. There's good reaction from Sam, too when that --

SM: Was that the one after half? Yeah. I feel good for Sam. You like to be able to kick a field goal there. Felt like it was outside of T. Bass' line at that point just because of the -- felt better about going in the other direction so Sam, good for him. That's important when you can create field position like that so happen for Sam.

Q. How about Ja' Marcus' effort on that play to keep it from going into the end zone?

SM: Yeah, great effort. Great effort. Ja'Marcus is -- he's



just a great guy to have on the team and in the program and any role that he's asked to do and embrace, he does and gives great effort with it.

Q. How did you Mitch did? He's one play away all the time for you. How do you think he played?

SM: Well, I thought it was important both for Mitch and for Mike to get a little bit of run as well and both honestly threw the ball a little bit more than we planned for. Some of those were because of third downs and a couple two-minute drives at the end here for us on offense with Mike, but it's good for those two to get out there and I thought they both did some good things.

Q. Sean, when you have a game like this where a lot of starters are watching on the sideline, how do you kind of upshift, if you will, moving into the playoffs and what's your message to the team?

SM: That's a loaded question. There's a lot in that question. We got to take it one game at a time, right? Everything is earned and there's nothing given in the playoffs and you're going against the best every week so we start with one week and really one day at a time and get back in here and find out when we play and take it one day at a time.

Q. Understanding you're taking it one day at a time, as you enter the postseason, I guess what would you consider a success during the playoffs this year?

SM: Well, I think the ultimate goal every year is to win the Super Bowl, so I don't think, I know. We're taking it one day at a time. That's -- when I've been to the Super Bowl, and I've been there twice, that's how you got to do it. Take it one day at a time work your tails off to prepare. You can't shortchange it. You want to jump to, hey, end of the week and playing the game? No, you want to jump to week two? Huh-uh. It's right here. Focus on what's right here and right in front of us.

Q. Was it good for you to see Josh be able to keep that streak going even though it was one play? You mentioned it was important to him.

SM: Yeah, it was, and for all the right reasons, right? You guys know Josh. It's not about, hey, I want to keep this streak going just because it's important to him that he's out there with his teammates and so being able to follow through on that, albeit a handoff, it was the right thing to do.

Q. Sean, you guys became the first team in NFL history with 30 passing and 30 rushing touchdowns in

one season. How does that speak to the balance you guys have been able to have on offense this year the way Joe has handled calling the offense?

SM: Yeah, we talked a lot about being a two-dimensional threat, a two-dimensional offense and that's important. Controlling the line of scrimmage is a big piece of that and Josh's ability to do some things and extend plays, that certainly factors in as well, so good balance overall is always good.

Q. We talked about guys getting some incentives. Von was another one of those guys. He was pretty quick off the snap. How happy -- everything that he's gone through, how happy were you to see him get that?

SM: It was great. In particular it was great because I think it was the first third down and third play of the game, so it made it a lot easier on me even though we left him out there for just a little bit more of a check-and-see. So it was good to get him out there and get him out and hopefully get him fresh for next week here.

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