

January 16, 2004

AFC CHAMPIONSHIP

INDIANAPOLIS COLTS AT NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS

An interview with:

WILLIE McGINEST

WILLIE McGINEST: Hello.

Q. I guess the obvious question, a couple days away from the game, emotions, how are you doing? How fired up are you guys for this?

WILLIE McGINEST: We are just getting ready, pretty serious preparing. The guys are pretty relaxed. I don't think anybody is really uptight. We got a lot of veteran guys on our team. Just working hard, just going over everything, making sure we don't leave anything, you know, behind, just prepared, watching a lot of film and doing what we usually do.

Q. Hi, Willie, Alex (Inaudible), Florida Sun Seminal Times. Obviously, you had that tremendous play against the Colts last year. Can you talk about that play? Was that one of the biggest plays you ever had?

WILLIE McGINEST: It was just a tackle, end of the game. I left them in the end zone. I had a good read on the play clock. (Inaudible.) I came off the edge and made a tackle. That was, you know, awhile ago.

We are not really focusing on that. You know, luckily, it went in our favor. That could have went either way. We know it's not going to be that way this team. They are a different team. They are playing a lot better, and we are different.

That's kind of in the past. We want to let that play go, and we are not really focusing on that, we are just focusing -- basically, if you watched the Kansas City game, we got a lot of other stuff to worry about besides that play.

Q. Willy (inaudible) with ESPN. More than any other quarterbacks, Peyton Manning controls the game from the line of scrimmage. How does that (inaudible)?

WILLIE McGINEST: You know, that's a big part of it. He reads defenses really well, and the thing for us is that we just got to be poised. You know, we can't panic. He is going to change their play. He is going to do what he's going to do regardless. We can't get up there and make three,

four, five plays, we got to get in our defense, got to read well, and we got to execute.

That's the main thing. He will probably have two or three different plays, (inaudible), he is not going to change his program. They have been too successful at doing it. He has been really good at doing it, as you saw last week, and we are not going to change much. We are going to play hard, do what we do, and the main thing for us is just to execute and try to stop those guys. We are not going to -- you can't stop them totally, just try to contain them and play our type of football.

Q. Mike Wolf: You talked about the veterans on the team, but you do have some young players in key positions. What do you tell them this week?

WILLIE McGINEST: They got to jump on the bandwagon. Fortunately for us, our young players have been showing up big, **Eugene Asante Samuel**, **Klecko**, a couple of other guys, they have been playing well, and for rookies, they are real mature. So we are not worried. We are not going to panic. They have been playing good for us all year.

And they know it's a big game, they know what's at stake, and they will come to play, they will be ready.

Q. Willie, can you explain why you have been so dominant at home?

WILLIE McGINEST: You know, I don't really think it's a home thing, I just think we have came together as a defense. We have a good system in place. We have a lot of versatile players that can do a lot of different things, which allows our coaching staff and our coaches to mix, you know, mix what we do, and, you know, we gel together and we play well together, and we are kind of on the same page. You know, the first game we came out, I don't think everybody was on the same page at the beginning of the season, and as the season went along, we started to understand and just play well together.

Q. Willie, your whole coaching staff is known for the way they prepare you for games. Can you tell us what Bill does. Can you illustrate that?

WILLIE McGINEST: Well, I mean, besides just preparing for the team, we go over a lot of

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different types of situations in football, things that could happen, situations that could happen. They prepare you say that way. We watch a lot of film. We get together, you know, individually, we go over things that individual groups need to do.

And, you know, they -- basically, before we even came in, they had everything pretty much out there. They just -- just a matter of putting us in the right place and us executing. We got to go over everything. It's not a big puzzle. I don't think **Indianapolis** is going to just change every single thing they do because they have been too successful at the way they have been playing, and, you know, with us, we are going to play the way we play, and the best team will win.

Q. Willie, when you look at this offense, what's the first thing you look to take away?

WILLIE MCGINEST: There is too many things to take away. They got a lot of weapons, they got a good running game, **Edgerrin James** is running really well. A lot of people doubted him at the beginning of the season, saying he wasn't the same, but he had 100-some yards last week, he is running the ball, catching the ball out of the backfield, and all the receivers and the tight ends are catching the ball well, playing good.

Offensive line is protecting and giving **Manning** enough time to do what he needs to do, and he is on fire right now, so they are running and all cylinders right now, so it's going to be tough, not going to be easy.

Q. Willie, Jason (inaudible) from the Miami Herald. What's the strangest situation that Bill has ever come up with at the end of practice when he is going through situational stuff that you guys ever seen?

WILLIE MCGINEST: Probably the safety situation that happened in Denver, I would say. I think we went over that one time, and it actually came up in the Denver game where we took the safety and punted and everything worked out fine for us. We got a good bounce on the play and got the ball back and scored, ended up scoring.

Q. When did he go over there?

WILLIE MCGINEST: Sometime during camp.

Q. Willie, Rick (inaudible), Chicago Sun Times. Today is one of the coldest days in Boston history, and you are playing a dome team. Any

thoughts about how the weather might affect things on Sunday?

WILLIE MCGINEST: I don't think it's going to have any bearing on the game on Sunday. Kansas City was kind of chilly and they went out there on grass, it's not a dome, and they played real well. They put up I don't know how many points, but they played well, so I don't think the weather is going to bother them, especially it being the AFC, a lot of drilling and pumping, guys will be ready.

Q. And today the ball wasn't different, didn't fly any differently?

WILLIE MCGINEST: Well, I don't throw the ball, I don't throw or catch it, I just try to tackle them. It's cold out there, nobody is immune to it, but I don't think it's going to affect the game.

Q. Willie, Joe (inaudible), CNN. You have had the opportunity to see Peyton from the beginning of his career onward. Can you talk about how he has changed as a player?

WILLIE MCGINEST: I think he is got a little more relaxed. They put a lot of responsibility on him. He doesn't throw as many interceptions as he did. He is more poised, he is more mature.

I think the biggest difference is, when he first started, he had players calling and he ran the place. I think now he is so mature, doing so well that he is running the whole offense. They might give him a play, but he has the liberty to change things up. He is hitting his targets, he sees the defenses really well. He is just on top of his game.

Q. Have you ever seen anyone play the position as well as he has played it the last two games?

WILLIE MCGINEST: I have been around a lot of good quarterbacks, like **Marino** and other guys like that. **Elway**. I played against a lot of good quarterbacks. So I wouldn't put him up there yet, but, you know, he is definitely on its way if he keeps playing the way he is.

Q. Hey Willie, you have had a great season individually. Can you talk about why things have come together for you this year?

WILLIE MCGINEST: I got to credit our system. My health, I have been healthy, the system I am playing in. Playing around a lot of good players. When you are in the system and you have a lot of good athletes and a lot of guys on your defense that's making a lot of plays, it opens it

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up for you, so as long as we got a great group of guys on the defense that's doing a lot of different things, it makes it hard to focus on one guy, and our defense has been playing really well, a lot of different guys in a lot of areas and it just opens it up for everybody.

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