

**NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS LINEBACKER TEDY BRUSCHI
PRESS CONFERENCE
OCTOBER 17, 2005**

Thank you all for coming. I think the first thing I should do is say thanks for your patience. I know I haven't commented a lot on this. It's been a long road to this but I appreciate your patience and your professionalism on how you handled my situation, especially the local media. I just want to say thank you for doing that. The organization from the coaches to the trainers, Mr. [Robert] Kraft especially. The way that they have helped me get the best possible medical advice to make sure things were right and make sure it was possible for me to continue what I love doing. I want to thank them for that. I want to especially thank the people at Mass General who've been with me since day one. Dr. [David] Greer has been huge for me. You got that statement from him. He was the physician that put his hand on my shoulder and said, 'Tedy you've had a mild stroke.' I said 'what?' [laughter]. He's the guy that's been with me. I want to thank him. [The] people at Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital who helped me from day one on my rehabilitation to get back to walking right, seeing right and all that stuff. They really did a great job and I want to thank them. Jim Whalen the head trainer here with the New England Patriots. Joe Van Allen, Dave Granito and the training staff – they're the best trainers in the league by far. I've only known them for so long but they've got to be the best for what they've done for me. Just helping me the way they have, they've been incredible. The strength staff – Mike Woicik, the way he's helped me rehabilitate. My teammates – my teammates have been so supportive of me. My wife – my wife Heidi - she's been by me ever since it started – since the 9-1-1 call. Her support has been so special to me. A special thank you to her. But having said that, here I am. I fully anticipate to practice Wednesday. It's been a long road to rehabilitation mentally, physically and emotionally. It's been a rough road. The first month and half of the year – my third son was born, we win an AFC Championship, we win a Super Bowl, I go to a Pro Bowl – I come home and I have a stroke. It's been a roller coaster. It's been a long way back and here I am. I fully anticipate practicing Wednesday. I want to help this team in any way I can. I've been cleared to play medically by many physicians and I'm just here to tell you – thank you to all the fans especially who have given me all their support – e-mails, letters, flowers sent to my home. The support I received from them has been absolutely incredible. I've said before, the fans in New England were the best in the league. I have first hand knowledge in how special they can be and how supportive they can be when a player really needs to be picked up off the ground and given support. They've done so much for me and I want to thank them for that. Go ahead, anyone have any questions for me.

Q: What ultimately led to this decision?

TB: I think just my rehabilitation process. I just kept getting better – I kept getting stronger. Workouts improved. Just everyday the progress that I made just continued to get better and better and all of a sudden I came to the point where...they tell me I can play, I feel like I can play, shoot I know I can play, so lets just play.

Q: What about those fans who don't think you should return. How do you comfort them?

TB: Well first of all I just say thank you because it's obvious that they care for me and they're just worried about me. I can't express to them enough how we've had the same concerns. We've had the same questions – myself, Heidi – we've gone through everything. That's why we've seen so many people. There's a man upstairs [Robert Kraft] who says measure nine times and cut once. He's told me this throughout this process. We've measured a lot of times. I believe we've done that. We've made sure. We checked and checked and checked and okay let's check another time because we want to be sure. I think that they don't know that I've done

that. I want to tell them that I've done that. Unanimously, every doctor and physician that's seen me has given me clearance. So I would hope that would help them realize that I have been cleared to play and I'm not just doing this because 'I just want to play - forget it - I'm going for it.' I'm not doing that. This isn't something you just go for. This is something you make sure everything's right. I mean come on - I lost my sight. One morning, one day you wake up and you can't see your sons very clearly anymore because you've had a stroke. You can't walk right. Two days before you're playing in a football game, now you can barely go down the steps. Two days before you're making tackles in the Pro Bowl and then all of a sudden your vision on your left side, you can't see your hand right here. It was a traumatic experience. It's been a long road back. I'm not going to jump into something without being absolutely 100 percent positive and I am. I would hope that they would know me [well enough] that I would make sure of that. I would make sure of that and I would never want to put what I have with my family at risk, because first and foremost I am a family man. But I'm going to make sure before I resume what I do professionally, that I'm cleared to do so.

Q: What kind of emotions did you have watching this team the first six weeks?

TB: I think I lived it like a fan really. I think I went through everything a fan would go through first and foremost. Cheering every time the defense stops an opponent or the offense scores and getting excited and doing the best I can not to jump up and down on the sideline, but to contain my emotion. Wanting to get out there. Trying to help the guys who are out there. Trying to give them as much advice as I can without trying to impose anything on them because they're all good football players. I would just say everything.

Q: What kind of fears did you have in getting back to normal and not even thinking about returning to football?

TB: Right. Would I ever see again? That was one of my biggest concerns. I've been through times where I've had pains - my arm hurt or a sprained knee or something like that - but never something to where I lost my vision. I lost part of my vision, so that was a big concern with me was would I ever see again? I had a stroke. I lost some field of vision - 'Would I ever see again? Six weeks out of my stroke, we did a visual field test and it was restored. That was one of my big concerns initially.

Q: Was there a point in the rehab process where you thought it was possible for you to come back this year?

TB: That's just the process we were going to go through. PUP [Physically Unable to Perform List] and we'll cross that bridge when we come to it when I came off PUP. The whole time in my mind, I believed it was possible. I believed it was possible that a comeback could be complete whether it was next year, whether it was this year. That's what I was working for - when it would happen, I didn't know.

Q: When was the point when you realized it could be this year?

TB: I can't really say I woke up one day and said, 'Yeah, I'm going to play this year.' It was me being able to complete workouts. It was me being able to run the conditioning test over and over and over again. It was me getting my strength back. It was a combination of all those things coming together. That told me, this is going to happen.

Q: How long does it take you to get back into game shape? Are you carrying the same weight as you were before?

TB: Weight is fine. Right now I think I just have to worry about practice shape first and foremost and I'm going to practice Wednesday and the coaches will keep their eyes on me and evaluate me just like any other player from that point.

Q: Have you been breaking down film since the season began?

TB: I have been in every meeting. I wouldn't say I was in every meeting during training camp. But as the season started and we started game planning for teams -maybe about the third week of the preseason- I've been in virtually every meeting, hearing what the adjustments would have been, studying the offenses. I don't think I would have any doubts whatsoever mentally.

Q: The PUP list. Was it your idea or Coach Belichick's idea to put you on that list?

TB: It was sort of a collective decision. Coach Belichick has been great about just being there for me. He accepted my suggestions on how I wanted to handle things, and just been 100 percent supportive. So it's something that we came up with. Let's start on PUP and from then, six weeks into the season... I'm a one day at a time type of guy, so let's not write the whole year off right now. Let's just see where I go and see how I progress and then when this point comes, let's face it, and that's what we're doing now.

Q: Are you aiming to play against Buffalo?

TB: I'm aiming to practice. That's what I'm aiming to do. I'm excited to put my helmet on. That's what I'm excited to do right now. Like I said, I'm a one day at a time type of guy, and this has been a step-by-step process. The minute I was told I had a stroke, it wasn't 'Whoa is me' or anything like that. It was always 'Okay, where do I go from here? What do I do next? What do I have to do now to get better?' That was my mindset from day one after I was in Mass General.

Q: How fortunate do you feel to be able to get back to normal?

TB: There were times in my mind when I thought I was done. I thought I was done at times. 'I can't see. I can barely walk. How am I going to be able to play football again?' I'm just being honest with you here. That's the way I felt. So to come from there, all the way to where I am now... to looking forward to getting all the doctors to tell me the same thing; to be able to resume my career and do what I love. I'm very excited. I'm very excited. If I could express to you what this means to me I would, but I don't know if I really can. I'm sorry.

Q: Did the fact that the team was struggling make you push your rehab a little more?

TB: No, because I couldn't. I couldn't let how the team was doing affect my mindset on my rehabilitation, because I sort of believe I had to take it upon myself that my rehabilitation and getting myself 100 percent healthy has to be first and foremost, before the team in my mind. I couldn't let Rodney [Harrison] getting hurt affect it. I couldn't let any type of loss affect it because what was doing was so important to me, and because there was no way I was going to be able to help them anyway if I wasn't able to perform the way I felt I was capable of. So what I had to focus on was my rehabilitation first and foremost.

Q: Does it surprise you that you're up here right now in the middle of October? If someone told you in February that you were going to be standing here in the middle of October, would that have shocked you?

TB: I wasn't in a place to hear that then. I wasn't in a place to even think about football, let alone being done after an entire season. If this happened or not and someone asked me if I was ready to play after the Pro Bowl I would have said 'You're crazy, man. Get out of here. I'm not even thinking about football.' But having this happen, football was the furthest thing from my mind. The only thing on my mind was getting better.

Q: Did Heidi say this is your decision?

TB: This isn't my decision. This is our decision. This is our decision. I wouldn't... what husband would just do this on his own? I wouldn't do that to my wife. She's been with me ever since the beginning. She jokes about having a degree in neurology and cardiology because of all the information she's gotten and all the doctors she's spoken with. This is our decision. We've come to this decision together.

Q: Was there a family summit or meeting before a formal decision was made?

TB: I think after numerous medical opinions and one of my visits to Mass General --I was constantly being told, 'Tedy, you can do this'-- on our way home, we stopped at one of our breakfast spots in North Attleboro that we like to eat breakfast at --the boys were at home with the babysitter so we could sit down and talk peacefully- we looked each other in the eye and said, 'Let's go for it. Let's do it now. Why wait till next year if I'm feeling the way I'm feeling now and I'm being told what I'm being told?' Because I wouldn't want to just say I'm feeling better and I'm ready to go without my doctors telling me it's okay for you to do so. That was a point where we decided to do it now.

Q: Do you feel any apprehension about the first drill, the first hit?

TB: I think I feel sort of the same way as I do before training camp, really. There's always a feeling I get before every training camp to where you do that first contact drill and you sort of have that little bit of antsy-ness about you and just, 'Okay, are you going to still put your face in there?' I maybe have that same type of feeling, but I relate it to that. I don't relate it to any type of apprehension of what I've gone through, because I think my confidence is 100 percent back.

Q: How long will it take you to get back to where you feel you can play in a game?

TB: I don't know. I'm going to let Bill decide that. I'm going to go in practice Wednesday, Thursday. I'm going to participate fully now in every team drill, meeting, practice, whatever there is. And right now, that's all I am. I'm another player on this team and I'll get evaluated by Coach Belichick and the coaches to where 'We believe Tedy can help us here... so let's put him there.' So when they see me and they evaluate me and how I look in practice, I'm sure that decision will be made.

Q: Is part of the process now educating your teammates about strokes and about "I'm not fragile" and "don't hold back"?

TB: I would hope I'm educating everybody on stroke. I feel like I'm the face of stroke. I'm working now with the American Stroke Association, helping them get the word out about stroke and the warning signs of stroke. Because when this happened to me, I didn't know I was having a stroke. So I'm working with them, trying to get the information out, especially to people my age. I've gotten numerous letters from kids who are 16, 20, 25 years old, 12 year olds who have had strokes and who have made 100 percent recoveries, and their letters have really helped me

to get to where I am now. Working with the American Stroke Association, I hope to get the word out on stroke and help educate the people of America.

Q: How about the guys treating you fragile?

TB: If they do they're just going to have to watch themselves in practice. If they think they're going to treat me any differently... if they want to come out me a little bit differently, that's ok, because I'll just hit them the same way. You know?

Q: What is your understanding of what caused the stroke?

TB: That is a medical question. That is a medical question. I've had it explained to me in big words. If I could just refer that to the statement that Dr. Greer gave to you, I'd like to keep [medical questions] there.

Q: How do you think you can help this team?

TB: I wouldn't be standing here in front of you if I didn't think I could play football. I have confidence. I know my physical abilities. Game shape, practice shape, things like that, putting on the shoulder pads, that's why the NFL has training camps, so I don't have that step in the process. So it's going to be different for me, but I think that my ten years of experience will help also. I'm not just going to get in there and have to get reps to recognize a 'Wham' or something like that. I know what it looks like. I know how to react to it just from experience. So I'll think I'll be pulling from my experience a lot more.

Q: Is there anything that you have to do legally in terms of the team? Did you have to sign off on anything?

TB: In terms of that, that's once I get to actual playing. Right now, they have to decide if I can play. Man, once they see me out at practice, let them decide if I can play or not. That which you're talking about is something I haven't had to deal with.

Q: When did the idea of a possible return start to creep up?

TB: Like I said, it wasn't really one day. I think it was an accumulation of all days. I'd say being able to see again might have helped a lot, but to tell you the truth, it's been a process.

Q: What are your thoughts on this team so far this season? There has not been a lot of consistency.

TB: They're my guys, man. They play hard. They work hard. They practice hard. They're doing the same types of things that we've done in the past when we've been extremely successful. This season is still young. We're at a bye week right now at 3-3, but once again, we're not going to look back on how we've done. Right now, we're going to look at this bye week as an opportunity to rest and get better and get some guys back - me, hopefully - and go from there. The next opponent is Buffalo and I think we'll just focus on that and leave all of our focus on that. But [in this year's team], I see fight, I see hard work, and I see a lot of things that make me want to play with this team right now.

Q: Has what you've gone through changed your perspective at all on life and playing football? Do you feel a little different perspective on things?

TB: Yeah. I thought my perspective was pretty good before. I thought I had made some decisions in my life that have helped me become a good husband and a good father and appreciate the things that life has to offer. Having this happen ... I truly believe it was meant to happen. There's no ifs, ands or buts about it. I had a stroke, but the word is 'had.' The word is 'had.' I had a stroke, I've recovered from it, and here I am.

Q: What did your workouts consist of? What exactly were you doing to get ready for this?

TB: My workouts consisted of everything and anything. Every off season program that we've had here that I've done in the past, all of those workouts, all of the conditioning drills, the conditioning tests ... I've done it all. I've done it all. Yes, running, lifting, jumping, everything. Name some more. Yes, I've done it.

Q: What do you miss most about Sundays and playing football?

TB: I think I just miss the game of football. It's what I do. I play football and I'm a football player. Playing the games is the most fun thing about it. There are meetings and practices and training sessions that you have to go through, but playing football and being a part of this team - this New England Patriot team - is something that I really feel special about. The game. The game is what I missed.

Q: You obviously love football so much, but when you were standing there watching it on the sideline or on TV, it had to be frustrating to watch your team play, knowing you could do nothing about what's going on.

TB: Yeah, well, I thought there were still some things that I was doing to contribute a little bit, just in the meeting room and on the sideline. It was frustrating that I couldn't get out there, but I think I knew in the back of my mind the whole time that there was going to be a time for me, and the time is now.

Q: Have you thought about the first time you will be hit on the field and what that might be like? Will you go out there with no reservations?

TB: Absolutely. I don't have any reservations and I can't. Football is a contact sport and I wouldn't have some to this point unless I had the clearance that I have had and the information that I have. That information, that clearance, those doctors, those physicians, all of that information that they have unanimously given me, that gives me the confidence where my head will be ringing because I just hit somebody in the head. That's what I'll go with.

Q: Do you have any doubt in your mind that you will be able to play the game again?

TB: No, I don't. I don't.

TB: If I could just say one more thing, this guy over here, [Patriots Executive Director of Media Relations] Stacey [James], has been incredible for me. If I could just thank him publicly, because of the way that I've been a headache for him. I've been a huge headache for this guy. Stacey, I just want to say thanks for everything that you've had to deal with in regards to me. Thank you very much.