

**NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS HEAD COACH BILL BELICHICK
PRESS CONFERENCE
January 5, 2007**

BB: We're in the home stretch here. What are you working on today?

Q: We talked a lot this week about your former defensive coordinator. What about your current one? It seems like Dean Pees has done a really good job for you guys.

BB: Dean has done a great job. I've known Dean for quite a while. He's had a big impact on us here. He really has a great command of the whole defensive system from the nose guard to the free safety and all the way in between. He's very knowledgeable, well-prepared, a real thorough guy. I really enjoy working with him. He's done an outstanding job for us.

Q: How unique are the circumstances that brought him here, with him being in the college ranks for so many years and then coming here?

BB: I think you see a lot of guys make that transition. I think there are number of them in the league. I can think of several, guys who have been college coaches that are now NFL coaches and after a couple of years have become coordinators. Good defensive coaches or offensive coaches can adapt to a little different style, rules, talent. He's certainly in that category. Dean could coach for anybody, at any level, at any position.

Q: Is there some element with a college coach that brings something different to the game because it's a little more rigid on what you can and can't do?

BB: I don't know. I think there's a lot more scheme and skill, obviously, at this level. I'm not taking anything away from college, but a lot of college football is option football, in one way or another. You might not have it every week, but you have it at some point during the year and then you have to defend it, and that's something that we don't have a lot of, we don't spend a lot of time defensively on, so that really cuts into a lot of the college defensive preparation and schemes to handle the option of running quarterbacks. At this level, we have a lot less of that and a lot more sophisticated passing game. I think there's kind of a trade off there. I know I've talked to pro coaches that have gone to college and they're happy not to have to deal with some of the passing game at this level, and then college coaches that come into the NFL are happy not to have to deal with the running quarterbacks and the option game at that level. There's a trade off there.

Q: How tough is it for a defense to lose coordinators like Romeo [Crennel] and [Eric] Mangini and have injuries and still be at the level that you guys are at?

BB: As we've said many times, there's change in this league every year on every team. Everybody has it. Different coaches, players, different levels, but there's always transition every year. I think that's something that we all understand and accept and deal with in whatever form or fashion it comes.

Q: How important a role do your veterans then play?

BB: I think experience is always important and it's good to have, and veteran players are good to have, but at the same time, to a certain degree, everybody is on their own, and everybody has their own job to do. I can't do somebody else's job. They can't do mine, and that's true for each player. Everybody has to, in the end, uphold their area of responsibility and their preparation. As much as somebody can provide experience and leadership and guidance, whether it's a coach

to a player, or a veteran player to another teammate, it still comes down to each individual doing their job and performing at their highest level at this point in the year.

Q: For coaches is there a difference between coaching and preparing and playcalling for a playoff game versus a regular season game?

BB: I think anytime you're in a single elimination series, it doesn't get any more important than that. Everything is just heightened. One mistake, one play and the season could be over. I think that's different than playing in the eighth game of the year. I'm not saying the eighth game of the year is not a big game, it's not an important game, or any game, but it's hard to be eliminated from the rest of your season on a play in the sixth game of the season, no matter how bad it is. Not that any of us want those, but it's just not the same. Now, at this point in the season, one play, one call, one game, and it's going to be it for somebody. We all know that. I think that certainly puts more of an urgency, not that there isn't an urgency in a 16 regular game season schedule, it's not like we play 162 games. But in a 16 game regular season schedule, there's urgency on each game. But now, every game is a single elimination. Every game. Your season rides on the outcome of that one game.

Q: Can it affect your playcalling at all where you're more willing to empty the barrel a little bit?

BB: I'm willing to empty the barrel every week. I'll do whatever we need to do to win. I think every game is important. I don't know about that. I just think you want to...look, you always want to make the best decision you can make. I don't want to say it's even more true now, but in a way, I guess it is. Whatever the decision is, you want to make it the best one and the right one. You always want to do that, and maybe you give it just an extra thought here to make sure and think, 'Is this what we really want to do in this situation against this team? Is this really what we want?' You probably ask yourself that question a couple of more times than you normally would. Put it that way.

Q: Do you think players and coaches get a second wind when the playoffs start?

BB: I think there is just more at stake. Again, I'm not trying to minimize the regular season games, but there's just more at stake. There's a little extra urgency. There's a little extra focus. There's a little extra intensity. I don't know how to measure that, but I can feel it. I think all of us feel it.

Q: On Wednesday you talked about [Tom] Brady's success in the postseason. How do you hope a lot of these new receivers will react to him on Sunday, or how are they starting to feed off of him now leading up to the game?

BB: Again, we've had 16 regular season games, four preseason games and over 100 practices. All of that is a cumulative thing. When we get into games and get into situations, that we'll be able to execute the plays based on the look and the coverage and the situation that comes up, the way they're designed to be executed. All of that, all of those practices, all of those meetings, all of those games and regular full speed repetitions of the play will hopefully put us at a higher point and a higher level of execution this week. That's really what you're building towards, is to get everything perfect and do everything right and understanding that realistically that's not going to happen, but that's always your goal and your objective. Each week, each practice, each meeting, each walk through, you hope that you're getting a little bit closer to that. I hope that's what we're doing.

Q: Given some of the changes at the safety position in the last couple of years with injuries, how much of a stabilizing presence has [Artrell] Hawkins been for this team?

BB: Hawk has done a great job for us. He really has. He's done a great job. It's a little different than last year, in that he's been here the whole year. He's been here all the way through training camp and all the way through every game situation and every adjustment that we've had. Whereas when you come in the middle of the season, you're kind of working from game plan to game plan and you just don't have that same kind of base. Especially in a game like this, with the Jets that do a lot of different things, give you a lot of different looks and personnel combinations, 'Here's how we want to play this. This is the way we played against Cincinnati,' or some team a long time ago. I think everybody can identify with that, if they've been here and they've experienced that. Now if they haven't, then of course, that's different. I think that experience last year and being here the whole year and his communication and his toughness and his ability to have a presence in the game and see the same thing, but see the difference from one play to the next based on the situation and on some subtle differences, he does a good job of that. That's important.

Q: How vital is his responsibility of getting the team lined up?

BB: It's a big part of it. That's part of the safety's job, is to control the secondary, and that's your last line of defense. Similar to the quarterback on offense, you make a mistake in the secondary and it's a touchdown. If the nose tackle makes a mistake, it doesn't have to be a touchdown, if the people behind it play properly. It's like a quarterback. A guard could miss a block and that's a mistake, it doesn't necessarily mean it's going to be a turnover. The quarterback makes a mistake, they could be in the end zone celebrating. It's decision making and it's recognition and it's making sure that everybody is on the same page. That's part of the position. That's part of the responsibility that comes with center, quarterback, middle linebacker, and safety. Those people control your team from the inside out, and that's part of their job.

Q: When you're facing a defense like the Jets that changes so much from week to week, how difficult is it to prepare and do you put maybe a little less stock in what they did last week or the week before?

BB: Yeah, I don't think you can be too worried about what they did. I think you can identify it and respect it, but I think you have to, to a degree, figure out how you think they're going to play you and what you need to do, make sure you can defend what you think they have the highest percentage chance of doing.

Q: Does it become a guessing game a little bit?

BB: It's always a guessing game. There's no one team that just goes out there and only does one thing. Even if a team just does two or three things, and they do those things well, there's still going to complement each other so that they can present problems to the other side of the ball. It's always a guessing game, but I think it's more of just understanding, 'These are the different possibilities,' and how would I handle each one of those. Then, whichever one comes up in the game, then to be able to react to it and get it done. Versus getting surprised by something, 'I never realized that on this I would have to do that,' and that's when you really get killed.

Q: There's also the element of seeing something that they haven't shown at all at this point too.

BB: Yeah, right. That's true. That's definitely a possibility and I think that there's two ways to look at that. There's that element of surprise and certainly we've done that in the past. I'm not saying that. But anytime you do that, then you're also taking the approach of we're doing something that is new, and we've had a good year and we've won a lot of games doing things that we have done before. Do we really want to take on something that is brand new. Versus do we want to take on something that maybe looks a little bit different, but it's actually something that we're very comfortable and familiar with doing? When you start taking on a whole new approach, yeah you're going to catch a team by surprise, the question is whether you can go out there and do it well enough to be successful, when you haven't done it all year. I'm not saying you can't do that, I'm just saying that's the element of risk that you take when you make that decision.

Q: I'm guessing that putting together a game plan every week is time-consuming. Do you put together the offensive and defensive game plan and then go over it with the assistant coaches? How does that whole process work?

BB: Well, that would be a lot longer discussion than we have here today. We have a very experienced staff in all three phases of the game, and I have a lot of confidence in them. I think they do a great job of understanding what our opponents do, how to attack them and putting our players in position so that they can be competitive. We talk about things in different ways, and it's a long week from Monday to Saturday. There are different phases of that. To answer your question, believe me, the whole game plan doesn't get done between Tuesday at noon and three in the afternoon. It's a long process that continues today and it will continue tomorrow, for that matter. I'm involved in it. Obviously they do the majority of the coaching and the interaction with the players and they have a lot of input. Sometimes more comes from one person, whether it be me or somebody else. Sometimes it changes a little bit. It depends on the situation, and what the priorities are that week or however we see it.

Q: What are your thoughts on Bill Cowher resigning today?

BB: Did he announce that?

Q: Not yet, but it's expected.

BB: I think the same thing I said about Nick [Saban]. I have a lot of respect for Nick and Bill, as individuals and as coaches. Whatever decisions they make, I totally respect. Whatever they have to say about it, I guess I would agree with what they say. Bill has been there...I hate to even comment on it because it hasn't happened yet. Obviously Bill is a great coach. He has a great record. I coached against him when I was in that division, when I was in Cleveland. Here we are 15 years later, it seems like one of the few years that we haven't played them. It seems kind of unusual to not be playing Pittsburgh. He's had a tremendous career there and he's had great success. It's always a hard team to play against.

Q: What have you seen from D'Brickashaw Ferguson as a rookie?

BB: He's started every game, played every game. He's pretty much been there the whole season. He's a really athletic guy. He runs well. He plays on his feet, out on pulls, plays where he has to go up and block linebackers on the second level off the line of scrimmage and things like that. He's very athletic. He runs well. He's quick. He has long arms. He has a big body. Like any rookie, he does some things better than others, but he's competitive and he's athletic and he's pretty smart. He looks like he doesn't make very many errors.

Q: Have you seen any one thing? You mentioned his athleticism, has he had trouble with power? Any matchups that seem...

BB: Well, I think it depends on who he plays against. There's not a left tackle in the league that doesn't have trouble with Jason Taylor and Aaron Schobel in this division. I think you could talk to any left tackle, those guys, they're great pass rushers and I'm sure left tackles that play against [Richard] Seymour feel that same kind of respect for him. There's a lot of good players over there that they have to play against. Yeah, every tackle has had trouble with those guys at one point or another.

Q: How has Leon Washington impacted their offense? It seems like his role increased as the season went on. Has his role change any since you played them earlier?

BB: No, I wouldn't say it's... I'd say he basically does the same things, maybe it's a question of how many times he handles the ball, or how many times he gets them. He's good on loose plays, like draws and screens and short passes and things like that, when he gets the ball in some space. But he can run the ball in traffic and he'll run the ball inside like we've seen [Cedric] Houston and [Kevan] Barlow and the rest of them do. I think he can do all of the things that they need him to do. Let's put it that way. He's not in there all the time, but he is an elusive, quick guy that has the quickness to him that's probably better than any other back that they have. They have other guys who are bigger and probably more powerful, but he's quick and he's added a threat and a dimension on punt returns.

Q: Is he a little like [Maurice] Jones-Drew?

BB: I'd say they're different. He's not just a get the ball and run outside type of guy, even though he's not big in stature. He runs inside. He does have an element of power. He's quick. He's a small back, but he doesn't really play small. I'm not saying he plays like he's 240, but he doesn't play like a little, tiny scat-back, almost like a wide receiver back there. He runs tough inside and he gets the ball up the field and breaks tackles and he runs through people and he has good balance. He's been a productive player for them. He's certainly a guy that you have to be aware of out there defensively.

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS LOCKER ROOM QUOTES

January 4, 2007

Ty Warren, Defensive Lineman

(On being named AFC Defensive Player of the Month)

It's a tremendous honor for me. I'm happy that whoever votes on that voted on it, and it's a good thing.... You have so many other names out there, you wouldn't think a guy like myself -- kind of like a hermit in the league-- would be honored like that. But it's definitely an honor.

(On whether the honor takes the sting out of not being named to the Pro Bowl)

I think that those honors and stuff like that will come in due time. I'm not really too worried about that. I'm just going to keep on improving my play and it will come in due time.

(On the Jets offense)

They've gotten better over the season. They have been one of the top offenses in these last eight weeks. They definitely present a problem and I'm sure they'll be coming into this game with some wrinkles.

Vinny Testaverde, Quarterback

(On Bill Belichick's coaching style)

I think Bill has his philosophy on how to be successful and he goes about his coaching or preaches to his coaches and players what he wants to get done and he's done it as good as anybody that I've been around. He knows a lot about all facets of the game, all positions, offense, defense, special teams. He knows what wins games and what loses games. When you break it down on a week-to-week basis, [those things are] different. He takes each team, he breaks them down, and he applies what he thinks we need to do to win.

(On why other teams haven't been able to recreate Belichick's system)

I think it has happened in other places, but probably not many. There probably haven't been too many coaches who have been able to bring together the group of talent that he has brought together and use the knowledge of football like he has been able to use and apply it to his team.

(On being on a different side of the Patriots/Jets rivalry)

From the players' point of view, it's just about lining up, playing football, going out and executing. I think the rivalry and all that's stuff is pretty much for the media and the fans.

Ray Mickens, Cornerback

(On benefit of his familiarity with the Jets)

Really, I'm just doing my job and my role. If it's personnel analysis or something like that, obviously I have some insight on the personnel. But it's all on film. You just watch film every week and just like you prepare for every opponent you watch it on film. If there are some questions, they'll come and ask me.

(On if familiarity gives him or the Jets an advantage in one-on-one matchups)

I don't think there is an advantage either way. You watch film and regardless of what you did in the past, you have to look at the film and see what [they're] doing now. Whatever they're doing now, you have to prepare for. It's the same way about me. I don't want to say [it's] irrelevant that we know each other and practiced with each other, but in the same respect, you have to take it for what it is.

(On playing for the Jets when Eric Mangini was a coach's assistant)

He was a hard worker. A guy that I respected even in the position he was back then. I've always had respect for him and I think it was a mutual respect.

Larry Izzo, Linebacker

(On the importance of playoff experience)

Experience is definitely an advantage, but I don't think that not having [playoff] experience is going to prevent anybody from being effective. It's a game. We're all professionals and we've been playing this game for a long time and you expect to perform at your highest level regardless of if you've been in that situation or not.

(On playoff atmosphere)

Any time the fans are into the game and things are going well, you can definitely take advantage of that and gain some momentum, but we've played on the road where you don't have that support and we've been effective in that environment also, just as the Jets have.

(On the importance of special teams in the playoffs)

In playoff football, field position is a big factor. The New York Jets are obviously very strong in the kicking game. They have a Pro Bowl returner, they're good in coverage, they're well coached, so it is going to be a big challenge for us to get the edge in that phase of the game.

Artrell Hawkins, Defensive Back

(On playoff pressure)

It's just business as usual. Obviously, you know there isn't as much room for error. You know the consequences of not playing well, which is your season finished. That provides a bit more pressure, but at the same time it's still football. You have to go into the game knowing your assignment, giving good effort and [executing]. That's what we have to do every week. There's pressure in this league in Week 15, Week 1 and definitely in the playoffs.

Ellis Hobbs, Cornerback

(On whether the Jets offense will change for the playoffs)

Going into a playoff, I don't think you're going to try to change your whole offensive scheme for one game, especially a playoff game that is this critical. Your players have been doing so well with it. Understanding that and understanding what they're trying to do, we just have to go out there and defend it.

(On facing the Jets for the third time)

Each team knows the other team pretty well. We're not going to bring any surprises to the table. We might have a few wrinkles here and there that we'll see from the Jets as well as we will [have some]. But let's just go out there and play football in between the lines. The team that can go out there and do what they do most effectively will win.

(On what stands out about the Jets offense)

The key for those guys is third down efficiency, how they are able to stay in manageable down and distances and then convert those to keep the drive alive.

(On if the playoffs are fun)

It's always fun. It's the playoffs. We were talking about it last week how out of all the teams and out of the whole season and what you work for, at the end of the day, there's only a few teams that make it to this level.

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BB: We're buzzing right along here. It seems like this week is going quick. I wish we had a little more time. These guys, they do a lot of things. [They have] a lot of things to get ready for. It's probably good that we have a little bit of experience playing them. They have quite an extensive scheme. Anyway, we're on to some of our situational stuff here later in the week. We're trying to utilize all of the time that we have to be ready for this one.

Q: What type of dimension has [Laurence] Maroney added to the offense this year?

BB: I think that Laurence has done a good job in all areas that he's played in. There's still a lot of room for improvement. He's helped us in the kicking game. He's helped us offensively in the passing game, the running game, pass protection. I think he is able to do what we need him to do.

Q: Yards after contact, where does he sort of fit in?

BB: I think that all of our backs have been pretty productive there. Laurence has, no question. Corey [Dillon]. Kevin [Faulk]. They've all gotten some yards after contact. That's an important part for any player who has the ball.

Q: How has he progressed in pass protection?

BB: Good. Good. He made a lot of progress in the spring camps and in training camp I think that's probably where he made the biggest jump. Now it's more of a question of a different look or some new adjustment in a protection or something like that that we might make on a week-to-week basis, but I mean just the basics to just picking up a linebacker, the Will linebacker in 60 protection, that type of thing. The degree of difficulty, you still have to block them, but I mean the degree of difficulty of those kinds of plays is not what it is when teams start giving you different looks and switching guys and bringing them from here and there and running pick stunts and all of the stuff that goes with it. They're hard to pick up and that's why they run them. That's experience and working together with the guard, or the tackle, or the tight end, or whoever is involved in the combination of the blitz pickup. Sometimes it's just not one-on-one.

Q: What has Maroney's addition allowed you to do in terms of options for Dillon, ways of using him differently, ways of resting him?

BB: We just run our offense. We don't really care who is in there. We don't call plays based on, 'This guy is in there, we have to run that play. That guy is in there, we're going to run this play.' No. We call the play, whoever is in there runs it.

Q: Has it allowed you to use Dillon in different ways than you did last year?

BB: No, I think he's doing the same things. Laurence is getting his share of snaps. Kevin is getting his share of snaps. Corey is getting his share. Again, we don't sit there in gameplan meetings and say, 'Well, last year we ran these plays, but this year we're going to run these plays.' We just haven't done that.

Q: Do you feel Corey is fresher now than he was at this time last year?

BB: You'd have to ask him.

Q: From what you've seen.

BB: Last year he had a couple of injuries through the course of the year. This year he hasn't really had that. I think in January it's hard to call anybody fresh that's been playing. I'd say ask him.

Q: What has Vinny Testaverde brought here in terms of leadership and a veteran presence?

BB: I think just that. He hasn't played very much, and that's good. I think he's prepared to play if he needs to play. He understands the offense and has taken some reps in practice. He definitely gives us a good look, along with Matt [Cassel], on the opposing quarterbacks. Vinny's job is to be prepared and be ready to go, and thankfully we haven't needed him. That's what his job is. That's what the most important thing is. Obviously he has a lot of experience. He's well-respected. He's seen a lot of things. That's good and that's part of his value to the team.

Q: Does he interact much with Tom Brady?

BB: Yes. I think all of the quarterbacks have a good relationship. Obviously, they meet together. We meet together as a group -- the quarterbacks, with Josh [McDaniels] and myself, them independently and so forth. That's just the chemistry, or the dynamics, within that room. I think it's a positive. Vinny has a lot of things that he's seen and he can add, but he's not coaching the team. He's trying to get ready to play, and that's what we really need him for.

Q: Do you think Mike Wright playing a little bit more over the last couple of weeks on the defensive line has bolstered the depth that you guys have there?

BB: Well, it's given Mike a chance to play more inside than he has. Mike has done a good job for us all year and he's played consistently from the first preseason game. He's had playing time in every game and some games more in the kicking game and less on defense. In some games, more on defense and less in the kicking game. He's a versatile guy that's played different spots for us on the defensive line. He's played different roles for us on special teams. I think that he's going to get a certain number of plays each week and for the most part he has been productive on those plays, in a lot of different roles, whether it be regular, sub, nose tackle, kickoff return, kickoff coverage, punt return. He's contributed in a lot of different ways. Field goal.

Q: Obviously you've had some moving parts on the defense. How much has the play of the defensive line helped you guys out as Tully [Banta-Cain] transitioned into being a starter or some of the things that you had change in the secondary?

BB: I think, defensively, it always starts with the people on the line of scrimmage. Without consistency on the defensive line, it's almost impossible to have any consistency at the next two levels. That's where it starts. Those guys play at a pretty good level. Not perfect. There's a lot of things that they could do better. They have a competitive level of play and that certainly helps the linebackers. If the linebackers can play with consistency, that helps the defensive backs in terms of their pattern matches and run force fits and things like that. If you don't know where the guy in front of you is going, then you're never going to be in the right place aggressively. You're going to be waiting to see where he goes and then try to balance off your spacing and so forth. Whereas if you're confident that he's going to be in a certain spot, then you can aggressively go where you need to go or do what you need to do, whether it be covering a pattern, or whether it be fitting in a run, or blitzing, or whatever the case might be. It always

works in layers. If you're not good on the front layer, then you're not going to be as good as you could be on the second two.

Q: At this point, does this defensive line rank with anyone that you've ever had?

BB: I don't know. Right now, we're just trying to see if we can play competitively against the Jets. I'm not really worried about career rankings.

Q: Does [Chad] Pennington's brain power and his ability to see things at the line of scrimmage add another level of a cat and mouse that you don't see most weeks?

BB: Yeah, I think Chad does a great job of that. He's outstanding. Managing the team. Managing the formations. Changing plays. Recognizing defenses. Either changing plays or making adjustments to the plays that they have called based on what the defense does, I think he's outstanding. One of the best that we've played against.

Q: How do you see the special teams matching up?

BB: The Jets are always good on special teams. They're good again. They do everything good. They haven't given up any long returns this year -- they're the only team in the league. Justin Miller is a Pro Bowl returner. They have a great kickoff return. [Rashad] Washington has given them a lot of plays on the punt return. They're a good punt rushing team. They're a good field goal rushing team, as we saw. The field goal kicker is good. [Mike] Nugent has made a lot of kicks. He's played very consistently. He's made some big kicks for them. I think they're good on special teams. They have good specialists. They have good core players. They're well coached. They're tough. They don't make a lot of mistakes. They don't get a lot of penalties on special teams. They're good at everything.

Q: Just going off of what happened last week with Pacman Jones, does Miller compare to Jones in terms of return style?

BB: Well I haven't seen Miller return any punts this year. He's really a kickoff returner. Washington is the punt returner.

Q: How does Washington compare?

BB: Well he's quick like Pacman. They both are guys shorter of stature, stocky build, guys that are hard to tackle, hard to knock off their feet, have good balance, have a lot of quickness, hard to get in space. It's obviously a concern. They're both good. Miller is a fast guy that has a lot of playing strength as a runner. He runs through a lot of tackles. You see him break a lot of arm tackles. He certainly has the speed to get outside, but at the same time, when people overplay the outside, he's strong enough and aggressive enough to hit it up inside and run through a couple of arm tackles and go the distance like he did against Cleveland. That was an impressive return when he ran and about three guys had him and he just kind of was strong enough to run through them. They were grabbing on his jersey and trying to pull him down and all of that and he just ran through them. It was an impressive run. And he's had a lot of them. He's had eight of them, or whatever, for 40 yards [or more], however many it's been. It's been a bunch of them. It seems like it's every other game.

Q: [Jerricho] Cotchery and [Laveranues] Coles have combined for over 50 percent of their passing yardage and their catches. Is it too simple to say just stop those two and you stop their passing attack?

BB: Talk to Miami. They ran a shovel pass to Washington. They ran a screen for 60 yards. Those are really two plays that led to a lot of points in that game. [Chris] Baker is a good receiver. They use [Justin] McCareins. They use [Brad] Smith. [Tim] Dwight earlier in the year before he got hurt. Pennington spreads it around. Certainly those guys are good. I'm not taking anything away from them. They're outstanding. Stopping them is a lot easier said than done. They move them around. They line them up in the backfield. Sometimes they're outside. Sometimes they're inside. Sometimes they're on the same side. Sometimes they're on the opposite side. Sometimes they're in the slot. Sometimes they're the outside guy and somebody else is in the slot. It's hard to find them. You just can't make a defensive call and say, 'Well I know where Coles is going to be. I know where Cotchery is going to be,' because you don't know where they're going to be. Once they come out and line up, maybe you can make some adjustments, but they do a lot of motioning, they shift and it forces a lot of communication. It's hard to just say, 'Well, we're going to get this guy,' because you may not know where he's going to be. They do a good job of that. They move those guys around a lot. They have a good group of receivers. They have one of the best groups of receivers and quarterbacks that we've faced all year. They're hard to stop. The tight end, Baker, is a good player. Obviously they get a lot of production out of the backs, especially you drop back and try to get depth and take away the receivers, and Washington kills you. Like I said, talk to Miami. He killed them.

Q: Do you see a lot of misdirection in the running game?

BB: They use a lot of reverses, or fake reverses, to complement their, kind of, power running, off tackle type of plays and some of the zone plays. They use Brad Smith, he's kind of a deceptive player, he's does everything. He plays receiver. He plays running back. He's taken some snaps at quarterback. But he's run reverses. He's run fake reverses. They've used Coles and Cotchery in some of those deceptive types of plays too. They do a good job of keeping you off balance. They're going to have two or three of those every game and they're going to have a couple of new blitzes on defense and they're going to have a couple of things on special teams, a new punt rush or new field goal rush, or some type of adjustment in the return game. What you've seen in the last couple of weeks doesn't necessarily mean that's what you're going to get.

Q: What's the trick to keep these guys focused and away from outside distractions at this time of the year?

BB: Not let the media in the locker room. [Laughter]

Q: [Laughter] Seriously.

BB: Seriously? This is what we've worked for all year. We've been at this since the players started the offseason program at the end of March. Spring camps, training camp, two-a-day practices, preseason games, a demanding 16-game regular season schedule, all to get to this point. So that's what you do just to have the opportunity to be one of the 12 playoff teams, which we are, one of the six in the AFC. You work that hard to get to this point, then you'd like to think that that's when you really want to put your foot on the gas and try to take advantage of the opportunity. There's no guarantee that this opportunity will ever be here again, for any of us. Everything is year to year. And obviously it's a one-game season. You can have a bad game, a bad play or a bad series earlier in the year, in the second, third, fourth game of the year, whatever. In the long run, it might not make any difference. If you have one of those plays now, one of those series now, one of those games now, and that's it. Everything is heightened. It's more important. There's more attention to it. It's more critical. There are no second chances.

Q: Do these guys do a good job of that on their own or do you have to get up and kind of remind them of that every once and a while?

BB: I don't have to remind them that we are in the playoffs. I think that everybody knows it's a one-game season. Certainly we talk about what's important, what's critical, what we need to do to give ourselves the best chance against the Jets, and each one of us has a job to do. I can't do somebody else's job. Somebody else can't do my job. One player can't do another player's job. They have to do their job, and they have to do it the best they can and they have to do it at a level that's good enough to get you to the next game. That's the way it is for every team that is playing right now. So we're in the same boat. Whichever team plays the best, that's the team that is going to move on. It's not about stats and records and last week and last year or some other game or whatever. It's about who is going to play better on Sunday. We talk about it, sure, but I think everybody is aware of it as well, too.

Q: I think I saw a quote that Troy Brown epitomizes what you want in a football player. Can you explain why?

BB: I'd say the three most important things for any football player, and Troy exemplifies them, is being well-prepared, which includes physical and mental conditioning, working hard and putting the team first. Any player who does that is a good team member. I don't care what position they play or how many years they've been in the league or anything else. Players that are tough, smart and dependable, which he is, those are the qualities that are desirable for any player that a coach has on his team, especially this team.

Q: Is there something to be said for younger players getting to see that everyday?

BB: Sure. I think every player on the team has an opportunity to be a leader. Every player, each day, either comes to work prepared, ready to go, works hard, or doesn't, and plays his role and puts the team first, or doesn't, and the guys that do that on a consistent basis have the respect of their teammates, their coaches and the organization. That shows positive leadership. But it's no different than being in any other group. Pick out any group that you want to belong to. If the person is prepared to do what they're doing in that group, and they commit to the group ahead of themselves, and they work hard at it, then I'm sure they will have the respect of that group. That's the way it is with a football team. That's the way it is with any other group, whether it's a church group, or a family, or whatever it is. To me that's the fundamentals of leadership. It's not about how many Pro Bowls you've been to, it's not about how many passes you've caught or how many years you were All-American, or whatever. It's about what you do on a daily basis in the community, or team, or group that you're a part of. Troy is outstanding at that.

Q: How does being able to rotate Jarvis Green in improve your defense?

BB: I think anytime you can change up the style of play to your opponents, that gives them some problems. It's different when we cover different types of receivers or block different types of rushers or tackle different types of runners. It's an adjustment that you have to make, and so if you can do it and still maintain a good level of execution, then again, that makes it harder for the offense to adjust to different players, different styles of play and it certainly gives your team depth and quality snaps through the course of the game, which it's a long game, it's a physical game, especially on the defensive line. There's a lot of plays up there and you can't really get around any of them. You look at a corner and there might be six, eight, 10 plays that that corner is really involved in in the game. Now the ones that he's involved in, probably make the difference in the game too. Whereas on the defensive line and the offensive line, there's not one play that they're really not a pretty significant part of. Having a lot of players to do that and

players that you have confidence in, that are quality players, that's a big part it. That's a big part of the game. Football is a physical game and a lot of it is won and lost on the line of scrimmage. You want as many good players in those positions as you can have.

Q: What kind of strides has he made playing inside?

BB: He's played both. He's been productive in both spots.

Q: Do you feel like he's made strides inside in particular this year?

BB: I think he's played well at both spots for a number of years. A few years ago he had a lot of production inside against the Colts in the playoff game. We've seen him do it before.

Q: You said yesterday that you have confidence in your kicker or he wouldn't be on the roster. Is there a difference on when you would go for a field goal with him? Is there a difference in range? Is there a difference in how you would set up for a game-winning field goal for an untested kicker like him?

BB: No, not this one.

Q: Why is that?

BB: Because I have confidence in him. So I think if I sent him out there to do the job, he's going to do it. I can't talk hypothetically about if I was a kicker how I would manage the game. I'm not the kicker, so I don't know. Or, if you were the kicker, I couldn't tell you what I would do in that situation because I haven't seen you kick. I'm just telling you that the kickers that I have, I have confidence in Stephen [Gostkowski], whatever the situation is that we would want to kick in, I have confidence that he would kick well, kickoff, kick field goals, whatever his assignment would be. I think he is a player that can do what we are going to ask him to do or I wouldn't put him out there.

Q: In an end of the game situation, would it be a different consideration for him than it would have been for Adam [Vinatieri]?

BB: No, I would say no. Definitely not. Whatever the situation is, if you have confidence in your kicker, whoever that kicker is, put any name on the guy that you want -- Nugent, Gostkowski, pick a guy, whoever you want, if you have confidence in that player and the situation and that role comes up for that player to perform in, then you put him in there and he does his job. That's what the situation calls for. Maybe I'm missing something here, I don't know.

Q: I'm just wondering if you would send Adam out to kick a 50 yarder, maybe you wouldn't attempt it with this kid who hasn't made a game-winning field goal. Maybe your strategy would be different at the end of the game and maybe get him closer.

BB: So why wouldn't you get closer no matter who your kicker was? Do you think we want to kick a 50 yard field goal with kicker A and kick a 30 yarder with kicker B? I'd rather be on the 30 yard line regardless.

Q: But it might change your playcalling at the end of a game.

BB: Look, we are trying to make plays regardless of who the kicker is. We are trying to get the ball as close to the goal line as possible in that situation. I don't care who the kicker is. It could be Lou Groza. It could be Bert Rechichar. I don't care who it is. You're trying to win the game.

You're trying to get the ball as close to the goal line as you can and raise the percentages for whoever you have to kick it. I don't know. I must be missing something. I'm sorry.

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS HEAD COACH BILL BELICHICK
PRESS CONFERENCE
January 3, 2007

BB: This is an exciting time of year for all of us. You think back to January, February, and some of the team-building that went on at that point -- the preparations for the season, offseason program, and all the work and effort and energy that has gone into the season, to get to the point to be in the playoffs, it's an honor to be one of the last teams in the playoff hunt here, after the regular season has culminated. Obviously, it's a big challenge for us this week against the Jets. This is one of the best teams in football. They're very hot right now. They've won six of the last eight, beat all the division teams on the road, and they're very good in all three phases of the game. They have a lot of great players. I think Eric [Mangini] and his staff have done a great job down there this year. They have them playing very well. Obviously, they came up here and handled us, so we know what kind of test we're in for. I'm sure it will be a tough, division game, like they all are. This being the third time, it's about as well as you could know a team when you play them the second game of the year, right at the beginning, and then in the middle of the season, and now in the postseason. That's spread out, that's a pretty good body of work. We've seen all their plays this year, I'm sure they've seen all ours, so I think these two teams know each other well, have a lot of respect for each other. Certainly at this end. We know that we're going to have to play our best football of the year to be competitive with the Jets. That's what we need to do, we need to have a good week, we need to play well on Sunday. We know it's going to be a dogfight, like it always is.

Q: What are the changes that the Jets have made from the first time and second time that you've played them?

BB: They haven't had many. They haven't had many. It's the same offensive line. It's the same receivers. Their backs have kind of been in and out a little bit. The quarterback, obviously. The tight end. Defensively, it's the same front seven. [Victor] Hobson, [Bryan] Thomas, [Jonathan] Vilma, [Eric] Barton, [Kimo] von Oelhoffen, [Dewayne] Robertson and [Shaun] Ellis. Don't forget this is a team that, two years ago, was a field goal away from the AFC Championship game. They're a very experienced. They have some young players on the team, but they're a very experienced team. They're one of those experienced teams in the playoffs this year. All of the players that we talked about -- [Chad] Pennington, [Laveranues] Coles, [Jerricho] Cotchery, [Chris] Baker, those guys have a lot of playoff experience there. Don't make any mistake about it. They have guys who have been there before and have played a lot of good football for them. Certainly in two years there are some new faces, I'm not saying it's the same team from two years ago, but it's pretty close.

Q: This is the first time that you have played a team three times in the same year since you've been here. What kind of role do you think that familiarity will play on Sunday? Is there anything that's a little bit different about it?

BB: No. Anytime you get them the second time around, you look back at the previous game. But when you play teams in the division twice a year, every year, you get to know them pretty good. We've seen teams like Denver and Indianapolis and Pittsburgh multiple times in a year. Three versus two, you look back at that first game in September, that was so long ago. What was that, four months ago? Not that you can learn something from it, I'm just saying it's a long time ago.

Q: Some of the tendencies that you think of when you're going into a matchup like this, do you have to try to take this for what it is now and for what the Jets have been

over the last three weeks rather than looking too much back on those other two games that you played before?

BB: I think it's a balance of that. I think it's a balance of it. I don't think you want to ignore a matchup between your team and the other team because there are a lot of common threads in that. But at the same time, it was a long time ago, in some respects the Jets and the Patriots in September would have more bearing on the Jets and the Raiders even though it was last week just because of the people playing in the game matched up against each other. That being said, there's also a trend that every team has from one point in the season to another. I think in some respects, the Raiders game is more important than our first game with them. In other respects, our game gives a little better matchup picture of certain players performing against each other, or how certain schemes match up in watching the game from last week. I think it's a balance of that. I think there's a lot of information out there. Like I said, we've seen all of their plays. They've seen all of ours. I think everybody knows each other pretty well. You have to be careful of that, over analyzing things, but at the same time, you want to make sure that you can defend things that they do well and try to not let them take advantage of the things that you feel like they're going to jump on.

Q: Now that there's been a full regular season played, is it possible to determine how much of an effect Eric has had down there from your perspective?

BB: I think they have a good football team. That's obvious. I think a lot of people have played a part in it. Obviously, Eric has done a good job. The staff has done a good job. The players have played well. In the last half of the season, they were right at the top of the league in a lot of statistical categories, especially defensively. They're really good on special teams. They don't turn the ball over. They hit a lot of high percentage completions, which goes a lot to the quarterback, the protection and the receivers. I think there's plenty of credit to go around down there. They're 10-6. They've won six of the eight. They won all three division games on the road. That's pretty good. I think everybody has had a hand in that.

Q: Out of necessity you've used a lot of people in the passing game. Is that element where you need it to be at this time of the year in terms of the rhythm and timing?

BB: I don't know. I don't know. We'll take the players and the team that we have and put our best effort out there on Sunday and see where that takes us. I don't know. I don't have any predictions on how it's going to go or what we're going to do. We'll just go out there and do our best with all the players that we have, just like we will at every other position.

Q: Does it increase the degree of difficulty when you've had to use so many bodies?

BB: I'll don't really rate the degree of difficulty. I think that for the gymnasts. We just go out there and take the team and try to prepare them and prepare for the game. The ratings on who was this and who was that, I don't know.

Q: Corey Dillon passed O.J. Simpson last week for all-time yardage. Do you have any insight as to how he's been able to perform at such a high level for so many years?

BB: He's strong. He's durable. He's tough. He has good run skills. He's hard to tackle. He's pretty much out there every week. He makes a lot of yards on his own. He does a good job of reading the blocks and getting what is there and then he does a good job of getting some extra yards on his own with his balance, his toughness, his power and his vision.

Q: What, if anything, is it that you tell some of your rookies about some of the differences between what they experienced for the last 21 weeks versus what they're about to experience in the playoffs?

BB: It will pick up a little bit. It will pick up. It's probably different, but similar, to going from preseason to the regular season. It's just a higher level and everything is more focused. It's a one-game season, so therefore it could be a one play season. Games come down to one play or one situation. Everything has to be as perfect as you can get it, as good a football as we can play, that's what we need to do.

Q: How has your relationship with Eric evolved and changed from when you worked together for so long to where it is now?

BB: I don't think this is really a game about relationships, I think it's about two football teams. That's what we are. We're trying to put our best game out there, and I'm sure Eric and his staff and his team are going to do the same on Sunday. That's really our focus on the game, to perform our best.

Q: There's times where you've played other coaches that you know or other coaches that you've had relationships with.

BB: Yes and it's the same situation -- it's our team against their team. We played against Miami a couple weeks ago down there with Nick Saban. I've known Nick for a long time. I've known Eric for a long time. We're not playing. The teams are.

Q: How comfortable are you with Stephen Gostkowski going into the playoffs?

BB: I'm confident in all of our players. I'm confident in our team. That goes for everybody. If they're here, I'm confident in them.

Q: Where do you think he is now compared to where he was in training camp?

BB: Training camp?

Q: Just how he's progressed since then.

BB: We've had 20 games. We've had over a hundred practices. I'd like to think that everybody has improved in that time. I think he has. I think everybody has. I don't know how you could play 20 games and have a hundred and something practices, two hundred and something meetings and all of that without improving. I think everybody has gotten better in that period of time. I would hope so.

Q: How is Rodney [Harrison] doing?

BB: He's doing all right.

Q: Is he better than he was after the game on Sunday?

BB: He won't play in this game. He'll be out.

Q: Bad may be the wrong word, but do you feel bad for Rodney after all he's done to be on the field this season?

BB: I don't think it's a bad word at all. I do feel bad for Rodney. Nobody has worked harder than he has. He's had a couple of significant injuries, three in the last, however many months it's been, 13, 14, I don't know how many months it's been. Nobody works harder than he does. Nobody does more for the team in every area. It's a tough break. I feel terrible for him. Nobody wishes he could be out there more than he does, but I feel the same way, not from my standpoint, but from the team's standpoint and what he deserves. Unfortunately that's the way it is.

Q: After seeing the tape, do you believe it was a clean hit?

BB: We're onto the Jets. Do you have any Jets questions? We're done with Tennessee. We're done with last year. It's the Jets.

Q: Is injured/reserve a consideration for Rodney?

BB: Not now. Look, we'll do whatever we think is best for the football team and our players. Whatever that is, that's what we'll do.

Q: Does the presence of a rookie kicker affect your decision making going into the playoffs?

BB: No. I don't think it can. No. You have to have confidence in all of your players and do what you think is the best thing for your team. If you don't have confidence in them, you should find somebody else.

Q: What is it about Tom Brady that makes him such a good playoff quarterback?

BB: What makes Tom a good playoff quarterback? I think his record speaks for itself. It really does. He's a clutch player. He's smart. Tough. He makes good decisions. He's well-prepared. I think we can go on and on and talk about Tom Brady's record and success in the playoffs. It's pretty well documented.

Q: What is the toughest thing about Pennington and the way he plays?

BB: He's very efficient. He's smart. He reads coverages well. He does a good job of controlling the defense, I think that's why he hits so many passes. He knows where he wants to go with the ball, when it's open he hits it. If it's not open, he can look the defense off, try to create some space. He has a really good group of receivers. They can get open. They don't need a lot of time to get open. They catch the ball well. He gets the ball to the receivers in position where they can run with it. So a lot of times they get yardage on catch and run plays, it might be a short pass, but it ends up being a significant gain because he hits them in stride. They find a hole in the defense and that type of thing. I think he does everything well. He's smart. He has a quick release. He reads coverages well. He makes good decisions. He doesn't hold the ball long. He uses all of his players. I know that Coles and Cotchery have had a lot of production, but he works the other receivers. He works the tight end. He works the backs. He's a pretty solid player in all areas.

Q: What does [Nick] Mangold do well?

BB: He's a good player. He does a lot of things well. He's a good center.

Q: Does he have good aptitude for a rookie? You had that situation as well with [Dan] Koppen.

BB: He's a good player.

Q: What types of challenges does the Jets offense present, the way they shift right before the snap?

BB: They change personnel groups a lot. They change formations. They line up the same players in different spots and try to build formations differently. It forces a lot of recognition late, either right before the snap or sometimes after the snap. It's hard to really get a good read on where they are because they do shift around and move around a lot and they substitute a lot. Communication is an issue and, visually, recognizing what they're doing is an issue.

Q: Do you see the same thing defensively?

BB: Yes, they do a lot of different things. Definitely. They have a lot of different packages. 3-4. All various sub packages -- 4-2, 4-1, 3-2. They have some five, six, seven DB packages in there. Different combinations of people that do different things. They move [Kerry] Rhodes around a lot. He plays different spots. They've move their corners around some too. Their linebackers, they can rush, they can cover, sometimes they're on the line. Sometimes they're off. They give you a bunch of different looks.

Q: Is it particularly difficult with them to identify pre-snap where the rush is coming from?

BB: I think they do a good job defensively. There are some things that you can identify, you still have to block them or you still have to get away from them, whatever it is. Again, there's times where it's hard to...they give you the same look and maybe do a couple of different things off of it. That's not uncommon. A lot of defenses do that. But, they do a good job of that. They do a good job of just playing what they play and making you try to defeat them. That's a problem too. I think that's the biggest problem. Blocking them. Getting open. They have good players. They have a really good front seven. Their secondary has been a very productive group. Rhodes has a bunch of interceptions. Their safeties are active. The corners are competitive. They jam well. They're physical. They tackle well. That's why they're not giving up very many points. Good field position. Good defense. Good read area. They don't give up many big plays. That's a good formula.

Q: I realize that pass defense is a lot more than just the secondary, but your team only gave up 10 touchdown passes this year, which I think was even better than 2003. Why do you think the pass defense and the red zone especially were so good this year?

BB: Again, as you said, defense is team defense. In order to be good in any area, whether it's pass defense, run defense, long ball, short ball, short yardage, it takes 11 guys. I think it's a combination of team defense and the way the unit has performed. Again, it's easier to play pass defense when it's longer yardage and you know what they're going to do. You still have to stop them, but you can do that. So that has to do sometimes with the run in the front. Each group complements each other. I think whatever success a team has on defense, certainly there are key components of it, but it has to be pretty good as a whole overall unit or eventually it's going to lead to problems everywhere.

Q: Do you think that touchdown passes allowed is a significant stat?

BB: I think it's relative to how many touchdowns they're scoring rushing. If they're not getting many rushing and they're not getting many passing, then it's significant. If they're getting them all on the ground and none in the air, what difference does it make as long as the ball is in the end zone. To me, the most important stat is points. There's only two ways a team can score -- one is on big plays or two is to drive the ball and that means red area defense. If you're not giving up big plays, and you're playing good in the red area, then they're not going to be scoring a lot of points. If you're giving up big plays and you're not playing good in the red area, even though they only get down there once or twice a game, you're still going to give up a decent number of points even though they might not be down there very often. If they score, that's how it adds up. The Jets in the second half of the year are the best red area defense in the league. They've given up the second fewest long plays in the league behind Miami, long passes, so that's why they're not scoring. If you look at the teams that give up a lot of points, it's either big plays or inefficiency in the red area. One or the other. How else are they going to get them? Those are the two key components. I'm not saying the other things aren't important, rushing defense, third down, et cetera, et cetera. In the end, if you want to score, you're going to have to get it one of those two ways, either a big play or red area.

Q: Do you have any bad feelings about Eric leaving here?

BB: I never said that. We're way past all of that. We're talking about a playoff game here where the season is at stake for both teams. That's where my focus is right now.

Q: Mike Westhoff, what has he done so well with coaching the Jets special teams unit to make them so effective? They don't have many penalties.

BB: They do everything well. We've competed against him when he was in Miami and then when he went to the Jets. He's been in this division, since I've been here, in 2000. His special teams units always play well. They're a problem. They return the ball well. They cover well. They have some deceptive plays. They've onside kicked a couple of times this year. They ran a fake field goal against us a couple of years ago. They've been in a couple of different funky punt formations, unbalanced line, walking up under center, stuff like that. They give you a lot of different things that you have to prepare for. At the same time, they're very sound. They do all the fundamental things well. They tackle well. They use their hands well in coverage. They play with good lane discipline and leverage. As you said, in the return game they don't get many penalties so whatever yards they get, they can keep. They have a couple of good returners -- [Rashad] Washington and obviously Justin Miller, a Pro Bowl guy. They're physical. They block well. They're sound. They're tough. And they've been like that. He had good special teams when he was in Miami. They've been good at the Jets. He's done a great job wherever he's been. It's always a problem going up against him.

Q: What's the number one priority covering kickoffs?

BB: Anytime you go in the kicking game, a big part of it is the kick. If you get a good enough kick, you and I could go out there and cover them. That's not always going to happen. So then once you actually have to cover them, it comes down to lane discipline, leverage, toughness, tackling. You have to get the guy on the ground. Even if you're in good position, if you don't tackle him, then all the rest of it is meaningless.

Q: With the success that Laurence [Maroney] and Ellis [Hobbs] have had, does that give you good flexibility there?

BB: We have confidence in our returners -- Laurence, Ellis, Kevin [Faulk], Willie [Andrews]. We've used a lot of different guys back there and I think that our production has been fairly

consistent. Whoever we use, we have confidence in. It's a combination of ballhandling, blocking, reading the plays properly, and at some point a good returner will make some yards on his own if you can give him some space -- either running over somebody, breaking a tackle, or eluding him or outrunning him. Some combination of those. In Miller's case, he does all of the above. He's strong. He runs through them. He's quick. He dodges them. He's fast and he outruns them. That's why he is a Pro Bowl returner. He has a lot of weapons.

Q: What is it about Daniel Graham that makes him such an effective blocker?

BB: First of all, he's experienced. He knows what to do. There's a lot of things that happen pretty quickly on the line of scrimmage there. You're really lined up very close to those guys you have to block and they move and they stunt and all of that. Experience. Intelligence. He's tough. He's strong. He has good lower body strength. He can get moving. He has good balance. He's a hard guy, once he gets on somebody, he's a hard guy to get off. Some blockers you can move, or toss, or shed a little bit easier. He's hard to do that because of his balance and lower body strength.

Q: How much of blocking is experience and how much of it is sort of a natural affinity for?

BB: Well, it's a combination of both. If the guy is just standing there, then it's a one-on-one block, we've all done the Oklahoma drill in high school and all of that. That's one thing. But, when they start moving and stunting and changing up on you, sometimes it's three blocking three, or four blocking four. So it's just not one guy blocking his man. It's the combination of all of us seeing a certain look and being able to sort it out and get them all picked up and then use good technique and good blocking fundamentals after you're able to sort that out and pick it up. It's a combination of both of those things. If it's just, like I said, one player with a guy standing there, well then that's just one-on-one blocking. But a lot of times, that's not the case.

Q: In November the Jets front seven was able to put a lot of pressure on Tom Brady. How much of that had to do with the conditions of the field and how much of it had to do with missed blocking assignments by the offensive line?

BB: The Jets front seven puts a lot of pressure on everybody. That's a good group. von Oelhoffen is a good end. Ellis. Those guys anchor their respective sides of the line. Robertson is quick and explosive inside. They're good on the outside with Thomas and Hobson. Vilma and Barton do a good job inside. So they have a good front seven. They mix up the rush combinations. They'll occasionally bring a safety down, Rhodes or [Erik] Coleman, and put them into the front somehow. You have to block a lot of different people and even if you know who to block, you still have to block them and that's a problem. That's why they're one of the best defensive teams in the league. They have a really good front seven. They're all hard to block. They all make plays. You just can't say, 'We just have to block one guy.' You have to get all of them. That's a challenge. It was certainly a challenge for us. I don't think we did a particularly good job of it, but neither have a lot of other teams. I think you to give them some credit for the way they play as well. Hopefully we can do better this week, but it will be a challenge. They're good upfront.

Q: Do you think the field conditions will help out now?

BB: Both teams are on the same field.

Q: Could you just talk about Asante [Samuel's] season?

BB: I think Asante has had a solid year for us, all the way through, going all the way back to training camp. I think that's an important part of it, is the preseason and the training camp leading up to the season, that's where a player builds his fundamentals and techniques. There's no position on the field where technique and position and the little things are more important than in the secondary. You get guys on the line, they're only lined up that far away from each other, they hit and then the play is over and they're pursuing and all of that. In the secondary, you have to cover a guy for two, three, four seconds and be in position and read the release and read the route and break on the ball and use proper technique to make the play on the ball or make the tackle or whatever. It's a long play in relative terms, from a technique and a position standpoint. There's times where as a secondary player you could be in good position for 95 percent of the play and then the last 5 percent, you mis-time the ball or reach with the wrong arm or something like that and then it's a completion. The fundamentals and techniques in the secondary are important. They start in the offseason and they extend into training camp and that's what has to carry the players at that position a long way. I think Asante has done a good job of that. He works well with his safeties, when they have combination coverages, knowing where your help is, and how to use it and that type of thing. He's a smart player. He's instinctive. He has good ball skills. I think a lot of those things play into it. I think it's hard for a player just to come in at the end of a year and do everything right without all of the fundamentals that go into that position because it's a long play from a technique standpoint. Just like the quarterback, it's a longer play. It's not like lining up this far away from a guy.

Q: Nick Saban just took the Alabama job.

BB: Did he really? He did?

Q: Yes, he's at the podium now. Can you comment on that?

BB: I'm sure that whatever Nick has to say then I'm sure that's the truth. Whatever decision he made, I'm sure he has good reasons for it. He's a good coach. He's a good friend. He's a smart guy. I'm sure whatever the situation is, he has a good reason for what he did.

Q: Are you surprised by that decision? You looked a little surprised.

BB: I thought it was going to be announced earlier and it hadn't. I don't know. Again, it's Nick's decision. It's his personal situation so I couldn't really comment on it. I spoke to Nick, yesterday I guess it was, but we didn't talk about that.

Q: Do you think it will revive your friendship, getting him out of the division?
[Laughter]

BB: It will certainly put it on different footing. It would certainly put it on different footing.

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS LOCKER ROOM QUOTES

January 3, 2007

Rosevelt Colvin, Linebacker

(On Coach Belichick)

This is my eighth season in the NFL, four with [Belichick] and four without, and I've been lucky enough to win two championships here. It's definitely a benefit to have the knowledge that he has of the game, not just him but the rest of the coaching staff. The way he prepares this team and puts players in a position to make plays is a plus for us. Hopefully we can use that to our advantage. On game day, it is going to be up to us to go out there and execute all the things that we've practiced all week long.

(On Rodney Harrison's injury)

Rodney is a tough person and a tough guy. He's a leader in this locker room. He definitely will be missed. But all year long we've had people who have been out and [other] guys have had the chance and opportunity to go out there and make plays.

Ty Warren, Defensive Lineman

(On Jarvis Green's playoff performances)

Jarvis has been doing that for a while. I remember back in 2003 against Indy, he had a big game in the playoffs. In 2004, when [Richard] Seymour was out, it was just me and him on the end and he did a good job that year. Jarvis a good player. He is a good professional and a good player. He works hard.

Ray Mickens, Cornerback

(On his career with the Jets)

I had a good career there. That's basically where it stops. I'm looking forward to playing them.

(On the Jets offense)

They execute well. They don't make a lot of mistakes. You definitely have to be on the top of your game. It's going to take our best performance.

Artrell Hawkins, Defensive Back

(On Rodney Harrison's injury)

It's been hard on him. It's been hard on the defense to see him go through what he has gone through last year and with the two injuries he's had this year, but he's a tough guy. If he could play, I know he would be here. My heart goes out to him. He's tough and he's courageous.

(On what the Patriots miss without Harrison)

[We'll miss] his tenacity for the game. The energy and the spark he provides to everybody, and along with that, the obvious, which is his playmaking ability.

(On the defense allowing the least amount of points in franchise history)

I think we're all proud of that, but that's not going to help us going forward. I don't think anyone is sitting around patting themselves on the back. All our concentration is on stopping the Jets.

Kevin Faulk, Running Back

(On if Eric Mangini's time with the Patriots helps the Jets)

We've had coaches come from their coaching staff and know their personnel and they didn't have an advantage. We just have to play the game no matter what the situation is.

Mike Vrabel, Linebacker

(On Bill Belichick and Eric Mangini)

Bill has coached with a lot of guys that have gone on to coach other places. I think it will be the same with any of them, going against them. It's a challenge for Bill and he wants to beat them just like they want to beat him. Maybe after the season they'll talk, but I know that if he played Romeo [Crennel] or [Bill] Parcells or anybody that he's been associated with, there's going to be some struggle there because they know each other pretty well.

(On playoff pressure)

You're not going to try to psyche yourself out for a playoff game, but obviously things are a lot more important. It's a one game season, and if we don't play our best football, our season will be over.

Daniel Graham, Tight End

(On familiarity between the Patriots and Jets)

We know what they're going to do. They know what we're going to do. But it's going to come down to who is going to execute.

(On the loss to the Jets)

They outplayed us last time. We didn't come out and do the things we wanted to do as an offense or a defense. We know to come out [on top] this week we have to play a better game than we did last time.

(On the playoffs)

It's do or die. We don't have any time to make any mistakes. There's no coming back to correct mistakes from this game. We have to go out and play a full game.

New England Patriots' Head Coach Bill Belichick, 1.3

Opening Statement

We're ready to go; it's an exciting time of the year. After all the months of preparation and the 16 game regular season, it's exciting to be here and be one of the final 12 teams. It's an honor to be part of it. Obviously, we're going up against a real good football team. The Jets are playing as well as anyone right now, they won six of there last eight and all of their division games on the road. They came up here and handled us. They have a lot of good players, Eric (Mangini) and his staff has done a great job with their team. We know we're going to have to play our best game of the year on Sunday to be competitive. That's what we are going to work toward and I'm sure it will be a dogfight like it always is in this position between these two teams. That's what our expectations are and that's what we're working on.

On the two teams being so familiar with each other...

Especially in the particular situation, when we played the Jets the second game of the year and again in the middle of the season and now in the playoffs, it's so spread out that you've seen every game. We've seen all the preseason games; we've seen all the regular season games, just because of the timing and the schedule of the games. You can learn something from everything, but you do have to be careful about overanalyzing and having too much information. You have to boil it down to something and figure out what you want to do and how you want to approach it. You can't worry about every single thing that's happened all year, because there are too many things to worry about. You can be prepared for them and aware and hopefully ready to deny them when they happen, but we can't run every play they've run or every blitz they've called any more than they can do that with us. We have to put our chips on something and hope we are somewhere on what they'll be doing against us.

On seeing similarities in the Jets under Coach Mangini...

There are definitely similarities defensively. The bottom line is, the Jets are a good football team, Eric has done a good job with them, their staff has done a good job with them. They have a lot of great players. This was a team that two years ago was a field goal away from an AFC Championship game in Pittsburgh. They're playing as well as anyone in the league right now in the second half of the season. They lead the league in a lot of defensive categories, special teams categories. They're completing a lot of passes on offense, high percentages, big time of possession, red zone efficiency. They are doing a lot of things well. It's a total effort and a lot of them deserve a lot of credit for the success that they're having.

On being surprised with the Jets' success this season...

No, not at all. Two years ago they were a field goal away from the AFC Championship Game. Last year they went through three quarterbacks and a bunch of other guys. This year, you look at the front seven, you look at the receivers, you look at the quarterback, you look at a lot of the key components of that team and they're the players that are some of the strongest players on the team, that were carrying them a couple of years ago. They have a lot of good players that continue to be a strong part of that franchise. Obviously, they've supplemented it with some younger players, guys like (Mike) Nugent and (Leon) Washington and so forth. There are a lot of guys that you can add to that list, but there's still a core group. Eric has done a great job and he's seen the team improve through the course of the year. I'm not surprised at all, it's a good football team, it's been a good football team and I'm sure they'll continue to be a good football team.

On his relationship with Coach Mangini...

I made comments about Eric when he was hired. I still feel that way, nothing has changed there. This game is about these two teams this week playing to keep their season alive. That's really what my focus is and that's what our team's focus is, to try and play well on Sunday and keep our team's season going. It's a very competitive situation and it's a one game season right now and that's the approach this week and that's the focus right now.

On the loss of Rodney Harrison...

We'd love to have all of our players healthy and we'd love to have all of them out there, but unfortunately, he won't be able to play in this game. We'll just have to go on without him. That's unfortunate, but that's the way it is.

On the impact of the missing Ty Warren for the game in New England...

I couldn't put a percentage on it. We'd like to have all of our players available for every game, but realistically, in the NFL, that's hard to do. The players that are there and the players that are playing and the coaches that are coaching need to do the best they can to help the team win. In that game, the Jets' players and coaches did a better job than we did all the way around. They deserved to win, they were the better team on that day and that's why they were victorious.

On playing better since the loss to the Jets...

You can take a lot from that game. Those are the same two teams that will be playing on Sunday. You're going to see mostly the same players out there. It will be determined by which team plays better. Not who won the last game, not who won last week, but who plays better on Sunday. That's the way it always is. I'm sure like every game, it will have its own elements and its own personality and its own twists and turns, which makes every game unique, but a lot of the matchups and I'm sure there will be a lot of things that will be similar to a couple of months ago. Whether the results will be the same remains to be seen.

On Coach Mangini being involved in their adjustments last year...

Of course.

On this game being his worst nightmare...

It's an honor to be in the playoffs, to be one of the 12 teams. We are trying to extend our season by a week, just as our opponents are. That's how I feel about the game. It's a one game season, we're going to do the best we can as a football team to play our best football and move on in the competition. That's what it will take, our best game of the year. Whoever you play at this time of the year is a good football team or they wouldn't still be playing. We have a lot of respect for the Jets; they came up here and beat us. I don't think anyone has more respect for the Jets for our opponent than we do.

On not shaking hands with Coach Mangini after the last game...

I never said anything negative.

On Chad Pennington's season...

He's had a great year. He's done a great job. He does a lot of things well. He's smart, he has a quick release, and he sees the field well. He hits receivers on shorter patterns, in stride, so they can run after the catch and gain yards on those plays. He uses a variety of receivers, getting the ball to the open guy, all the receivers, the tight ends and the backs. He's a very productive player; he's very good in the red area, which goes back to his quick release and accuracy. He's an outstanding quarterback and has been for a number of years. He's always played well against us and always played well against everybody really, he's had a good, solid career.

On enjoying coaching against another cerebral head coach...

It's a game between two teams that know each other well, that have played two games against each other earlier in the season. They're going to try and put their best football out on the field Sunday afternoon, both of them. I'm sure it will be a highly competitive game and everybody will be out there trying to do everything they can to extend the season for their team. The team that plays the best, that's the team that's going to win.

On preparing for the Jets' offense...

It's definitely more challenging. They have a lot of different personal groups; they change them on a regular basis. It's harder to see the play until the ball is actually snapped and a lot of times you can't recognize it until after the play has started. It definitely limits the anticipation because they

give you so many different looks until the ball is snapped and then they run the plays that they are used to running and they execute them well. Up until that time, it's hard to zero in on anything. They disguise things well. Most importantly, they have a lot of good players and those guys are productive and they make plays. That's the heart of the matter right there.

On Tom Brady and the passing game...

Tom is a good quarterback. There's no quarterback I'd rather have. He's done a good job and had a good year. But I think like every player and every coach, that there are things that could be better and things that we can all improve on. I'm sure Tom feels that way. That's the way I feel, I'm sure every player feels this way. Football is a team sport and it's working together with your teammates and getting things done on a collective basis against high competition throughout the league and a lot of different schemes and players and personnel matchups that you face from week-to-week and that's what the game is. We've had a productive year offensively and a lot of that comes from him. But we're always looking to do better and nobody is harder on himself than Tom is, in terms of working to improve and trying to find a better way. That's how I characterize it.

On what trait has allowed Coach Mangini to be successful this season...

The team has been very consistent; they don't make very many mistakes. They do not have many penalties, they don't turn the ball over that much. You earn everything you get against them and they take advantage of their opportunities. I think that comes from good preparation and good coaching and good execution.

On taking pride when his former assistants have success of their own...

Right now, down the road for me is Sunday. My focus is on this game and that's plenty. With what happens at some other point in time, is not a high priority. I'm concerned with how our team is going to play against the Jets on Sunday and that's where my focus is.

New England Patriots' DT Richard Seymour, 1.3

On facing the Jets for the third time...

We split earlier in the season, which everyone knows. They're a tough football team. They play smart, which says a lot about their coaching staff. He (Coach Mangini) has brought a mentality there, where they play together, they play smart and you can see it in a lot of their interviews and a lot of things that's coming out of that organization. We understand it's going to be a football game; it's a game where we are definitely going to have to prepare throughout the week because they do a lot of things offensively. We have our work cut out for us to say the least.

On how the Jets have changed since the last meeting...

They still do a lot of the same things. They get the ball out. They don't take a lot of negative plays. They try to stay on the field, with a ball-control, possession-type offense. They take some shots down field, a couple of shots per quarter and wear you down. They do a lot of quick counts, some no huddle stuff, so we're definitely going to be prepared for all that they're going to throw at us. It's important for us to prepare well for this football team throughout the week, because it's going to be a situational type game, where we are just going to have to be aware of all the things that they can do to us defensively.

On playing a 4-3 in the first game and a 3-4 in the second without Ty Warren...

We won the first game playing the 4-3 and they came up here and beat us at home playing the 3-4 defense. Whatever gives us the best chance of winning, I think that's what we will do. We have the ability to do a lot of different things up front; I think it says a lot about our versatility, that we can move in and out of a lot of different fronts.

On saying the Patriots were out coached in the last match up...

That's just the emotions of the game, especially after the loss. They (the Jets) did a good job so hats off to those guys. They were a close football team, they play smart and they go out and they play tough. You have to give the players in that locker room a lot of credit along with their coaching staff. We just didn't do a good enough job that day. We understand what we're getting ourselves into this week, we understand that they are a good football team and they beat us the last time here. With that being said, everyone is going on to be ready to go on Sunday and we are going to need everybody, playing against a football team like this.

On winning their last two games against two good teams...

It's good to go into the postseason with some momentum. It's always good to have some momentum this time of year. Confidence says a lot. We've been in a situation like this before. You look at the Jets and the same with them, they are a hot football team, they have a lot of momentum, they have a lot of confidence and they understand that they can play with anyone. That's a dangerous combination. It's going to come down to the team that is the most prepared and plays the best in a game situation.

On Coach Mangini knowing the Patriots' defense...

It's a balance on both sides. Both teams are familiar with each other. We played them twice this year and then we're familiar with a lot of their guys and a lot of their players. It's a division opponent, it's not like we're playing a team like San Francisco, where we don't know a whole lot about them. Both teams understand each other's strengths and weaknesses. We each understand what you need to do to be successful. It's just going to come down to the team that does it the best on Sunday. Obviously, Eric has been here and he knows a lot of our players and we know him.

On not having Rodney Harrison for the game...

Rodney brings intensity, he brings leadership in the secondary and he's a physical guy back there. Receivers may want to go across the middle more, I'm not sure. He means a lot to our team, obviously, it's a big loss for us. If a guy is down, the next guy has to step in and take his

place and we expect him to do just as good job as the starter. We look at everyone as being on this team for a reason, they're in the NFL and everybody has reason why they are here.

On Coach Mangini's ability to adjust during games...

Even when Eric was here, he was a smart coach. He was aware which way the wind was blowing. We just understand that he's a smart guy and he's going to pay attention to detail and so is our coach. When I look at both of those guys, they do a good job of covering from 'A to Z' and a good job of managing all the situations and not leaving much to chance. That's what a good football coach does. We understand that and we know that no stone will be left unturned.

**NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS QUARTER BACK TOM BRADY
PRESS CONFERENCE
January 3, 2007**

Q: (On Coach Belichick)

TB: He always prepares us pretty well. This morning he [gave us] a great synopsis of their team and [he] understands really well what gets you beat and also what can make you successful. He does a great job of communicating to the team in kind of a... I wouldn't say that it is a simple way, but more of a way that you realize that it's not completely overwhelming. You just have to handle a bunch of things they do really well and try to eliminate some of the mistakes that got us beat the last time.

Q: Talk about the last time you played the Jets.

TB: Well, I think that hopefully we've grown a lot since that last game. I think this team has a great challenge this week. They are very difficult to prepare for because they present so many different scheme-type things and it's one of the toughest teams we prepare for all year. So, it's kind of the way it's going to be this week. But our team has shown some resiliency this year and I hope we are up for the challenge.

Q: Last time you played them, what did they do to frustrate you?

TB: You guys wouldn't even understand if I told you, so...

[laughter]

Q: Is there a simple way to put it?

TB: It just comes out that they made more plays than we did. All the scheme stuff is different, but hopefully we are a little more prepared [this time].

Q: Do you not know who's coming, who's covering? Do they do a good job of that?

TB: Yeah. They change it up a bunch. They are a multiple front team, multiple blitzers, safeties, everyone's involved, corners, safeties, linebackers. They create a bunch of negative plays. That's really what they've done the last six or seven weeks since they played us. They have obviously been one of the best defensive teams the second half of the year, so I wouldn't expect that to change.

Q: Can you talk about the offensive line?

TB: Well, they have played well all year. They've played great. They've been healthy. Great leadership. It's a tough group. I think we run the ball really well at times. The pass protection has been very good. It's a great group, very hard working group. They are very well coached. They are all kind of the same type of guys. They all hang out together, a lot of fun to be around.

Q: With as many different receivers you have had to work with, can the passing game be where you want it to be?

TB: I think we've been very productive at times this year. We made a bunch of progress over the course of the season. We're 12-4, and it complements what we do running the ball. We made some nice big plays last game. We'd like to see that continue as well. It's been a rewarding year

for a lot of us in a lot of ways. We are sitting here with a great opportunity ahead of us and, like I said, let's see what we can achieve this week. Hopefully, we can go play much better than we did last time we played the Jets.

Q: Do you think this has been your most challenging year from a personal standpoint?

TB: Well, we're 12-4, so it's been a pretty good year. It wasn't 14-2 like some of the best years we've had here, but there's a lot of reasons for that. Every year is different. The receivers that we have here have worked very hard. We put a lot of pressure on those guys. This is a very difficult offense to understand. Reche [Caldwell] has had a great year, Troy [Brown's] done great, Chad Jackson is starting to make some plays, Kelvin [Kight] has come from the practice squad to become an active participant out there, Jabar [Gaffney] has come in midway through the year and has done a great job. They always do what they're told and they do it pretty well.

Q: How much do you look forward to this time of year? Personally you have had such great success in the post-season.

TB: Yeah, it's my favorite time of year. You know, you look over the course of the 16-game season, and you come to this week and you are so fatigued from 16 games, but you definitely get a second wind. It's just a different feeling, different approach. Like I said, it all comes down to how well we execute on this one game, and because of that the pressure is elevated that much more. We've been in a bunch of these games and we have been pretty successful, so I think there's some confidence that we have.

Q: Because of what you and this team have accomplished, has the bar changed now for you and the group?

TB: I think the goal is the same every year. I don't think that's changed since the day I took the field. That's always been the goal. We achieved that the first year I played, the third year I played, the fourth year I played. So those have been exciting years. You look back on those years and you say 'man all that stuff we did the entire season, it was worth it, it really paid off.' This team's worked very hard this year. Coach Belichick has been really tough on us this year. His expectations have been very high and the players have kind of met the challenge.

Q: Is it too simple to say turnovers, or the lack thereof, is what has allowed you to win these last three games?

TB: Probably. Probably.

Q: Is it a big part?

TB: Yeah. I mean it's always a big part. Turnovers are always a big part of the game, but there's a lot of things that are big parts of the game-- how well you do in the red area, time of possession, how you do on third down, negative plays, penalties, and they all contribute. Turnovers are probably the most obvious thing but... We still could have lost the Jacksonville game [and] we didn't turn it over that game. [It was] just a few plays that we made or that we didn't. Weeks when we lost games, we didn't make those plays. That's been a very positive thing to take away from those three games.

Q: What can you tell a young player who hasn't been through this before about the difference between the regular season and the postseason?

TB: Ultimately the game is still the same, it's probably more the preparation that goes into it and the week leading up to it, the distractions that you have in your life. Try to put everything off that can wait until the offseason, try to put it off until the end of the year. Everyone, with the holidays, it was a very distractive month with the holidays and kind of coming to the end of the year, but right now you just put everything aside in your life and try to go out and put everything you can into each week.

Q: Will the deep balls to Reche Caldwell against Tennessee have a benefit down the road?

TB: I think the nice part about hitting deep balls is, you know, a one play drive, that's pretty deflating for the defense, because a bunch of times this year when [we've] had to go 12 plays or 13 plays, [we've] needed to put together 12 or 13 really good plays. And if you can score in one play then the chances are much better that you won't screw something up. And this game is ultimately about screwing up. At some point... you're not going to go 70 plays in the game and have 70 perfect plays. So if you can score on a 60-yard pass, when you look back at the end of the day you realize those can really contribute to putting a bunch of points on the board.

Q: The bomb you hit in the AFC Championship Game two years ago set the tone for the rest of the game.

TB: Yeah, we played a great football game that day. It's probably the best game we've ever played since I've been here.

Q: Corey Dillon passed OJ Simpson last week on the all-time rushing yards list. Talk about his ability to play at such a high level for so many years, so many starts.

TB: Very few missed games, as tough as can be, practices hard, runs so hard. He is just a great teammate, a guy who puts everything he can into it each week. He has been great to have around. I think all the guys who have been here playing with him for the last three years, it's really been a privilege. You're playing with one of the best backs of all time.

Q: Do you think that the team's mindset will be appreciably different going into this game than it was going into that second Jets game in November?

TB: Well, it's the playoffs. You have to play your best or you won't be working next week. So, I think you look at it... how we played eight weeks ago has zero bearing on this game. I can't overstate that enough. It has so little to do... we're a totally different team at this point. You just realize that if you don't play your best, then you have a great chance of being beat. Why? Because you are playing against teams that are the best in the league and your margin of error there is that much more slim, so you can't got out and make a bunch of mistakes or else it's much easier to get beat.

Q: This team has lost key contributors over the course of time. How did you react to that emotionally or is there no time to react to it emotionally?

TB: It's just stuff you have to get used to as a player. You realize you don't control any of the personnel decisions that go on. Coaches leave, players leave. When you sign up and you sign a contract to play with the team, you're signing up to play and not to coach or to make decisions on other personnel. You just try to come out every day and do your job and be a great leader and set an example for all the players of what it takes to be successful.