

**Marty Schottenheimer News Conference
Wednesday January 10, 2007**

Talk about Tom Brady and his skills.

"He is a terrific field general and he understands the game of football, which is obvious. It's a combination of his personal playing skills as well as his leadership ability that has been the impetus for that football team's success the past five years."

What about the crowd and the effect that they will have on the game?

"The more sound that we can put out, the better our opportunities will be. It's hard when you are out there trying to run an offense, especially in the shotgun and it's harder to communicate."

Do you think it is being overplayed that Brady has been in more playoff games than Rivers? Do you think it will be a factor?

"No, but I can understand why people want to talk about it."

Talk about the complexity of the Patriot's defense in big games.

"I don't view it as the complexity of the system. I view it as 11 guys on defense who know exactly what to do and who are extremely well coached and do the right thing from the technical and fundamental standpoint as well as anyone in football."

How important is it to get off to a fast start?

"In our house we would like to be able to do that, but in the past we have shown the ability to scratch and scramble our way back. I hope we can get off to a fast start. Anytime you can get off on top is an advantage but it certainly is not any success at the end."

Does the last game you played against them provide you anything that you can get out of this week?

"Maybe some concepts they used in offense or defense but I do not think so."

How did Luis Castillo look?

"To be honest with you I did not watch him."

Are you keeping your eye on Philip and his excitement? Is that a concern at all?

"No. What we are trying to do is lay one stone on the other as we try to build a stairway to hopefully a successful week."

Chargers Running back LaDainian Tomlinson

What does Tom Brady bring to the table?

"Obviously a lot of experience. Tom is very poised and he gets his team in the right situation a lot of times and always gives them an opportunity to win the game."

How important is it to have home-field advantage? For the crowd?

"I think it's very important and obviously all year long we've been feeding off our crowd, but you know I think they've done a great job of really being loud when our defense has been on the field. And for the most part they've been pretty quiet while we've been operating on offense and that's the way we want to have it. We want the crowd to be quiet while we're on offense so that we can get our checks and everything we need to talk about out there on the field offensively. And then on defense, we don't want Tom and the Patriots to be able to hear each other talking and be able to make checks. So the crowd has to be as loud as possible."

Importance of getting out to a fast start:

"Well, that's always good too, but we haven't gotten off to a fast start every game. Obviously we've had to battle back some, so it's important, but I don't think it's the most important thing."

Any rustiness during the bye week?

"I think today we were pretty good. We didn't seem to show any signs of being rusty at all. Guys moved around well and we threw and tossed the ball well. I thought we did a good job today."

How is Philip Rivers handling himself considering he's about to play in the biggest game of his life? Do you see any changes or differences in his anxiety level?

"No. I think he's been pretty good. And it's only Wednesday so we'll see what happens towards the end of the week as we get closer, but he's done a good job so far."

Will you ever find a need to talk to him on the side and explain to him how tough it is playing in a playoff game?

"You know I don't know yet. I haven't really thought about it. I don't even know if there is a need for that. He's handled himself I think as well as any quarterback could in their first year starting. I don't want to try to change anything for him."

Last time you played the Patriots, Tedy Bruschi wasn't on that defense. How is that defense different with him now?

"Well obviously he's their leader. He's the one that's able to guide most of the plays and make plays for them. And also just understanding what's going on out there, he can coach them up and let them know what he's thinking. They didn't

have that with him before and obviously I think it hurt him at the time. But now he's back and you can see that he makes a lot of difference on their football team."

What did you get out of that game last year that you can apply this year?

"Nothing. Nothing at all. That was last year."

A lot of people talk about their defense being hard to come around and those guys in training learn a lot of moves. Do they do much more of that than anybody else does?

"I think Bill does a great job of adding a wrinkle here and there for their defense. And I think that's one thing that you always have to expect from them, that they might come with something you haven't seen before."

We keep hearing you guys saying that you can't worry about the Patriots and can only worry about what the Chargers do. Is that because you guys have reached the level now that you can pretty much dictate what you want to do on the football field?

"I don't know. I think that's the way you approach it at any time, worry about yourself and not the team you're playing. Because if you worry about the team you're playing too much then you're going to be in trouble because you really won't know what to expect from your own team and don't know what you're going to bring to the table. I think you always have to focus on what you do best first and see what happens after that."

If Bill Belichick is such a master at stopping opposing offense, how come he hasn't been able to stop you yet? What have you been able to do?

"I haven't been able to do anything. I just play the game. Obviously it's been a regular season so it's a lot different from being in the playoffs. And so we'll see what happens this game."

Philip said he thought when you guys played the Jets two years ago, the team was overly excited. Did you sense that as well?

"I think playing in the first playoff game after a while, we were really emotional. I think guys were overly excited to be in the playoffs and it was a situation where I think we shot our gun too early being so emotional and playing off adrenaline. And so when it came down to the end of the third quarter and fourth quarter we were kind of out of gas already. That was something to learn and something to take from that first playoff game."

What has Todd Durkin meant to you especially during this season?

"Todd has always done a great job of training me in the off-season. And obviously he prepares me to take a pounding and be able to withstand the journey that you have to go through in the National Football League."

How does your play help alleviate the pressure off Philip making his first appearance in the playoffs?

“Well, if we run the ball well, obviously I think that takes a lot of pressure off of Philip throwing the football. I think it ties in, we would like to be able to run the ball effectively and if we do that obviously it will take some pressure off him.”

CHARGERS PRESS CONFERENCE

MONDAY, JAN. 8, 2007

(Includes Marty Schottenheimer, LaDainian Tomlinson, Antonio Gates, Marlon McCree and Shawne Merriman)

Chargers Head Coach Marty Schottenheimer

"We've obviously drawn a very, very fine opponent in the Patriots. They're an outstanding football team in every phase of what they do. They're extremely well coached. They've got good players, but we still intend to show up."

(on Philip Rivers' enthusiasm about the game)

"I think everybody is excited about getting on with it now that we have the bye week. My feeling is that if you're going to be a champion, you have to play and win along the way. If you play them in the first round, second round or championship game, it really doesn't matter. You're going to have to win. For us it's staying in the moment and finding a way to win one game this weekend."

(on concerns about Rivers in his first playoff game)

"None. That's his makeup. Crunch time in the NFL for a quarterback and a football team is the fourth quarter. I think he's, if not the best, he's in the top two or whatever. I have no reservations whatsoever."

(on why it's so difficult to pressure Tom Brady)

"I saw a tape of one of the Jets games and they put real good pressure on him. They knocked him down and knocked him around, but his knowledge and understanding of where everybody is on the field is as good as anybody I've seen. They have a good scheme. He'll throw the ball away and line up to play another down as well as anybody in football. He can do that because he knows where everybody is on the field."

(on Rivers' foot)

"He's fine. He's doing fine."

(on DE Jacques Cesaire's health)

"He's sore. He's the one that would probably be questionable this week. That would be my sense. Beyond that I think everybody will be ready to dress and play. We're pretty healthy for the most part. The bye that we earned, when it came it made up for the fact that we started the year off with our bye quite early."

(on Luis Castillo's status)

"He'll practice all week and be ready to play. It may take him some time to get back in it. Two things: number one, he's got very good ability to rush the passer because of his quickness and his strength. The other thing that in my view is a quality that's every bit as important is his ability to stay on his feet in the running game. Where you might be able to knock somebody down with a low block, he is so nimble with his feet and athletic with his lower body that he makes it very difficult for you to get him on the ground."

(on the quick passing game New England utilized against the Jets)

"All I am aware of is the statement that somebody made, I think it was Tom Brady, that they were surprised by the pressure that the Jets brought in the first game that they had played and they weren't going to be fooled this time. Obviously they were not."

(on Brady reminding him of anybody)

"No, I think he's a young man in and of himself. I think his decision making is virtually flawless. On occasion there will be an interception but you look at it and it was probably because somebody hit his arm while he was throwing it or the ball was deflected somewhere. I mean his ability to orchestrate an offense is pretty impressive.

(on the 'mystique' of playing the Patriots)

"It isn't as much about the Patriots as it is about the Chargers. In that sense, we'll put together a plan, and our objective is to try to find a way to beat an awfully good football team. We're at home. I think that's a plus for us. We've had the wherewithal over the last couple of times we've played (the Patriots) to win. Do I think the outcome of any of those games is going to have a bearing on this one? No, not at all. But the fact of the matter is that we're here at home. They've got to travel and all the other aspects of that that are a little more difficult. But at the end of the day, it's going to be simple: the outcome will be determined by the team that takes care of the football and makes the fewest errors."

(on LaDainian Tomlinson's hunger for a long playoff run)

"I've heard him make reference to it. We've never specifically discussed it, but his sentiments are in that vein, and I think they're shared by everyone in our building and in our community as well."

(on how Castillo's presence can make others better)

"In this particular contest, I think the Patriots are going to do what they're going to do. You don't get this far and then all of the sudden try to reinvent the wheel. That right tackle for them finds himself in single protection at times, albeit you can do that when you're back there and you're throwing the ball very, very quickly and accurately, which obviously Brady does.

"The fact that (Castillo) hasn't played lately, maybe their sense is that they can go ahead and handle him with one guy, but we've got some others around there that pose some problems. My sense would be as I look at it, their best approach is to probably try to beat the pressure by getting the ball out of the quarterback's hands. I would think that would be the approach they would take. Brady doesn't get hit a whole lot. That one Jets game here was the first one I think they played. The Jets brought a bunch of folks."

(on New England's advantage in playoff experience)

"They have a number of their players that have been in the playoffs before, but they have others that haven't been. These are completely different teams. Our team is different; their team is different. The only concession that you can make is that they've played one playoff game and won. They're one for one. Beyond that, I don't know that there's any difference."

"The key guy - the quarterback - does and has (experience). That's the reason he's one of the preeminent quarterbacks in pro football, maybe in history. What they did, I've made this statement before: to win three championships in five years, that's pretty impressive.

(on the success Tomlinson has had against the Patriots)

"I think when you look at our offensive line, it's a very efficient group. They enjoy blocking in the running game. They do a good job of blocking in the running game, as evidenced by the numbers. Ultimately, the key is 21. When he puts his mind to it and we go out and do things in the blocking unit that we can, he can be a threat on any play to go the distance as we all know."

(on the improvement of the Chargers secondary)

"I think it's a combination of factors. Quentin Jammer has had a terrific season. Drayton Florence has made steady progress. Together they've made a number of plays that in the past we weren't making. Terrence (Kiel) has continued to develop, but Marlon McCree is the guy that has made it go back there because he's kind of the coach on the field. He has an ability to anticipate certain things happening. These guys, that secondary spent a lot of time with our coaching staff working on the details, the fundamentals, the techniques that are essential to back in that area of the field."

(on their improved communication)

"Yeah, because we've got a guy back there (McCree) that by his very nature, he's going to make sure that everyone is on the same page in most circumstances."

(on the pass rush helping)

Absolutely. There's no doubt about it. Those numbers don't lie.

(on the importance of gaining an early lead)

"We've done a little bit of both of those in this season. I would imagine this is a game that will go into the fourth quarter. We'll prepare for it as though it will go into the fourth quarter. I think that's one of the advantages to being at home. At home in the fourth quarter you'd like to think that you've got an edge."

(on the impact a healthy Keenan McCardell and Eric Parker can make)

"The fact that they've spent time since last March, early April working together, our quarterback and those two receivers, I think that there's a real confidence in Philip as to the fact that they may not be where the play is designed for them to be in the route, but he trusts they're going to be there when the ball gets there. Then he'll obviously let it go. That's what you have to do. You talk about a guy who trusts his receivers, watch Tom Brady. Those guys aren't out of the break yet and the ball is already out of his hand."

(on Junior Seau's absence)

"I'll be honest with you, I haven't thought about the question, but my initial reaction is that he's been such a great player that you hate to see him in the situation he's in where the injury keeps him out of it. That would be my first thought."

And your second thought?

"Probably the same as my first thought (laughs)."

(on Rodney Harrison's situation)

"Rodney came back and re-injured that knee, the extent to which I'm not aware. We'll just have to wait and see what happens."

(on the improvement on the offensive line being due to coaches or experience)

"I think there's a combination of things that have occurred there. We've put ourselves in a position where they're getting a lot of individual instruction. I think it's accelerated the process. I'm not talking just about Marcus McNeill, but I'm talking about the whole unit. There isn't a moment on that practice field out there that those offensive linemen aren't doing something that has to do with the position they play and what we're trying to get done. Through all the special teams (practices), if they're not involved, the coaches have them over there working all the time."

(on the last time he had a line as good as this one)

"I thought we had some pretty good offensive lines in Kansas City with Tim Grunhard and his group. This group has made considerable progress. They're very physical. Kris Dielman would rather bite your head off than look at you. He's got the perfect personality for an offensive lineman in my opinion."

(on getting his players over hyped)

"I'm mindful of the fact that particularly with the young guys, but as I said to you earlier, we have to stay in the moment. Whether it's play 12 of Wednesday's practice, teamwork, that's where the focus has to be. When that one is over and we're moving to the next one, we have to be able to stay in the moment. The good thing is that you can practice that, the ability to take a mind that

begins to wander for whatever reason and bring it back to the point of focus where nothing matters but that which is in that frame."

(on the weekend's games)

"I watched every play of every game, all four of them. I enjoyed them all. My wife and I sat there and watched them, and of course the dog. The dog didn't give a damn one way or the other, but Pat had some interest in the New England/Jets game, as did I."

(on the Diet Pepsi commercial that he was in)

"I thought I was pretty good!"

Chargers Running Back LaDainian Tomlinson

(on the intensity at Chargers Park this week)

"It's the same. Obviously having some background and some experience against this team helps, but it's a different team from last year. Preparation is still going to be the same."

(on his success against the Patriots)

"I'm not sure what the key is. I think we match up well against them. I think the biggest point for me is that they play a 3-4 defense, and we face a 3-4 throughout the year with our own team. Obviously we're very familiar with the 3-4. We kind of get an understanding of what works and what doesn't work."

(on the linemen also feeling comfortable against the 3-4)

"I think so. I remember a time where all we were facing more were four-down defenses. Then when you would face a 3-4 defense, it was kind of weird for all of us. You switch up the blocking scheme for the linemen. For us it was different. We just weren't used to it. Now it's a different situation where we see it all the time. We know what to expect. It kind of becomes part of just an everyday defense. I think that's helped us a lot."

(on the strength of New England's defense)

"To me it's the front seven. Their d-linemen, the linebacker group, that's the core and the strength of their defense to me. When you talk about their d-linemen, the guy it all starts with is Richard Seymour. Then you've got big fella' up in the middle in Vince Wilfork. The linebackers, Teddy (Bruschi) and (Mike) Vrabel, (Rosevelt) Colvin and the young guy on the other side (Tully Banta-Cain) that's been playing good for them. That in my mind is the strength of their defense."

(on if he wishes Junior Seau and Rodney Harrison were playing Sunday)

"No (laughs). Certainly Junior, I'm happy I don't have to see him. Hopefully he'll get back well, but I don't want to see Junior. Rodney, I don't know what his situation is, but it would be great if he can throw us a bone there."

(on this being a statement game)

"No, not a statement game. For us, I think it's more important as Antonio touched on, it's important for us not about who we're playing but the fact that this particular game (is so important). It didn't matter who it was going to be. It could have been Baltimore and it would have been important to us because we have to take the next step. I don't think it really mattered who we were going to play. I think the focus is on us and what we expect out of ourselves."

(on the mindset compared to 2004)

"I think in '04 it was more about 'We're happy to get in the playoffs and we've had a great season.' It was the first time we'd been in the playoffs in such-and-such years. It was like a big

hooray because we were in the playoffs. I recall getting back from Cleveland (after clinching the AFC West) and we had so many fans in the front (of Chargers Park) like we had just won the Super Bowl. Now it's more like we expect it. We expected to be in the playoffs. We expected to be division champs. We expected to be at this point right now. It's more of a what are you going to do now."

(on Philip Rivers' excitement)

"I'm not sure what to expect from him. He is excited about being in the playoffs, but some part of being a quarterback, you keep that even keel of not getting too excited, but in the weight room just a while ago, he was talking about how after the New England game (Sunday), he was already ready to go. I was thinking to myself, 'We've got a long way to go! We've got six days to go, Philip.' It's good I think because he is excited to be in his first playoff game, but I think for us who have played in a playoff game that we've got to remind him that a fast horse runs fast, but it doesn't run long."

(on Rivers' perception that the Chargers tried too hard in '04 against the Jets)

"I think we were trying too hard, but not only that, we were running off emotions the first part of the game. Everything was emotional, and once that emotion died down, then it was time to play football and we were already drained. I think that's a big thing, to keep your emotions in tact. Don't be so emotional the first part of the game that in the fourth quarter you have nothing left."

(on a playoff run being the missing piece in his career)

"I really haven't even thought about it to be honest with you. I'm not concerned about my career. This is about this team. For me, this has been a special team from the beginning. I think it will be missing from all of our careers to miss out on this opportunity that we have."

Chargers Tight End Antonio Gates

(on being able to focus on one team versus three like last week)

"Obviously it's time to go to the drawing board and see what we need to do in order to beat the Patriots. The main focus is us. We're at home. We've got the greatest fans in the world. We've got to continue to do the things that got us to this point and just focus on the San Diego Chargers."

(on the toughest facet of New England's defense)

"The fact that they try to disrupt the timing. They're a 3-4 defense, so obviously we've been going against a 3-4 defense throughout training camp. We have an idea of what they try to do. They do a great job of trying to disrupt the timing for a tight end. They're going to try to jam you up at the line of scrimmage."

(on Rodney Harrison's availability)

"He's a great player. They're a good team without him, but they're an even better team with him. My focus is not necessarily on Rodney Harrison. It's on what the San Diego Chargers offense can do against the New England Patriots defense."

(on the success he and other tight ends have had against New England)

"Some opportunities presented themselves. Obviously the cornerstone comes from the running game opening up the passing game. Usually if opportunities present themselves this week, we definitely will try to take advantage of them. For the most part, we're still focused on San Diego and doing what we do best. That's going out and playing football."

Question asked by LaDainian Tomlinson – With that said, do you expect to be bracketed at all by the safety and corners and linebackers?

"When you have LaDainian Tomlinson in the backfield, they tend to focus on him. I try to do my part in getting open and taking some pressure off of him."

(on Philip Rivers' growth)

"Philip is a quarterback/coach. He does a lot of communication. He continually refocuses the offense with detail things. 'We need to get our depth. We need to get over the ball for our routes.' He's just been doing a tremendous job throughout the season in communicating with the tight ends, the receivers and the running backs and keeping us gelled as one."

(on his inexperience in the playoffs)

"He's overcome the adversity coming into the season. I'm expecting Philip to come out and have one of the best games of his career. Obviously that's the focus point. It's on Philip Rivers and can he get the job done. Everybody in the locker room believes that, 'Hey, this is our guy. He can lead us to a world championship.'"

(on noticing a different mindset amongst his teammates)

"It's the mindset of not just being satisfied with being in the playoffs. The complacency...obviously two years ago we lost against the Jets. Everybody remembers that loss and remembers how we felt after that game. Something that we've taken from that game is the complacency and not being able to say, 'We're happy to be here.' We're on a mission, and we're trying to win a Super Bowl."

(on the 'mystique' surrounding the Patriots)

"You definitely respect them because of the things they've done in the past and the things they've done throughout this season. You just want to go out and play with respect, but at the same time, you fear no one. I think that's our mindset. We didn't want to go out as we fear the New England Patriots, but we respect them. We respect the fact that they play hard and they're going to come ready to play. We need to be prepared and we need to be ready to play."

(on having to beat New England to 'take the next step')

"I think winning this game for our sake is more important than the team we're playing. In order to win this game, we need to focus on our preparation and overcoming that hump of not winning two years ago the playoff game that we had. We're at home again, we're really excited. We're just focused on winning this game regardless of who we have to play this week."

(on how often he's been covered by just a cornerback this season)

"On occasion. Teams try to give me a multitude of looks. Sometimes it might be a safety, it might be a corner, but more the most part on third down I usually see a corner because I usually play the slot. I don't necessarily think it's based on my position. It's based on my placement on offense. I'm in the slot so a nickel corner is usually the guy that covers the slot."

(on how that helps open other things up)

"It gives us an advantage because obviously we can run the ball out of that same package. Vincent Jackson is a tremendous blocker at wide receiver, and we're able to block guys that are cornerbacks as opposed to trying to block a defensive end and a linebacker."

(on Rivers' ability to spread the ball around)

"Philip looks at the big picture, making this team a better team. He's the type that reads his progressions. If he sees an opening, he takes advantage of it. He doesn't necessarily have a situation where he looks for one person because he understands - as we all understand - that we have a ton of guys that can make plays on this team. It's in the best interest of this team that he gets everybody involved in order to take the pressure off the running game, in order to take the double teams away. Now people have to respect guys like Vincent Jackson, Eric Parker and Keenan McCardell."

Chargers Safety Marlon McCree

(on Tom Brady)

"Tom is very smart. He's not a guy that you can rattle just because you apply pressure to him. He's been to three Super Bowls. He's got a lot of poise and confidence. He throws to everybody. Normally you go into a game and you know basically who he's going to throw to because he's got one or two favorite receivers, but he spreads the ball around. Jabar Gaffney had eight catches yesterday and before that he only had (11) on the whole year. You never know who he's going to throw to. He finds the guy that's open and he gets the ball to him."

(on the difference between this Patriots team and those of the past)

"They're a little different. I think Tom is the person who makes their ship sail. As long as he's there, they're a Super Bowl caliber team. I was just telling the guys as we were all sitting in the hot tub and the cold tub, I've beaten the Patriots when I was with Carolina. San Diego beat the Patriots last year when they were on a (21-game home) winning streak. The thing that we haven't done is we haven't played Tom Brady in the postseason. He's a whole other animal. I told them that whatever we've done in the past is irrelevant because none of us have played them in the postseason. He's only got one loss in the postseason. He's another animal and we have to prepare for him."

(on how he thinks Brady will attack the Chargers secondary)

"I think they'll go after Drayton. I told him that just because Drayton is more aggressive, but I don't think that there's a weakness in the secondary. Drayton understands that. He knows that teams aren't throwing to (Quentin Jammer) as much because Jam has been getting a lot of (pass breakups) and he's led the team in interceptions. For some reason, they're not throwing as much to Jam as they were early in the season. They're going to go at Drayton and Cromartie, but both of those guys have been tested all season. They're battle tested, so we're confident in what they're going to do."

(on liking Antonio Cromartie's chances against Brady)

"It's not Brady. It's going to be Cromartie against Reche Caldwell or Jabar Gaffney or something like that. Cromartie, I don't think there's a wide receiver in the league that can run by him. It's going to take a team effort. It won't just be Drayton against Brady or Cromartie against Brady. He's going to have to get around our front seven. He's going to have to avoid some pressure, and then he's going to have to find the guys. We just have to cover them up long enough for our pressure to get there."

Chargers Linebacker Shawne Merriman

(on knowing the Chargers opponent)

"It's the best. It's a better feeling than we had last week when we were scouting three different teams. We got to a point where we were working on the Jets, Kansas City and the Patriots all at once. They run a couple plays and you're looking like, 'Who runs that?' They'd say, 'Oh, the Jets run this.' It's definitely a help now that we know who we're playing."

(on what he likes about the match up)

"One is that we haven't seen them this year. I said that if we play Kansas City one more time I was going to lose my head. It felt like I knew their offense in and out. I'm just glad to play someone else different. At the same time, we're going to see a team that knows how to win."

They know how to win in the playoffs. They've been there and done that plenty of times. It's going to be a challenge for everybody."

(on pressuring Tom Brady)

"It's very difficult. Some of the things he does, he recognizes defenses like the back of his hand. I know personally that he spends a lot of time looking at defenses, so he knows not just how to play football, but he knows a lot about the game of football. That's what makes him a great quarterback."

(on trying to rattle Brady)

"You kind of make him make some decisions that he really doesn't want to make early by showing some different looks and things we haven't done all year. I'm sure we'll come out and try some different things. They'll come out and try some different things because it's the playoffs and that's what you're supposed to do. This is my first time actually getting a chance to play in the playoffs. It's big for me to come out and see a guy like Tom Brady and the New England Patriots. That will pretty much let us know where we're at as a team."

(on how they were successful against Brady in October of '05)

"We knew coming in that he was going to get rid of the ball quick. He wasn't going to take hits because he's not that type of quarterback. He's not going to move around in the pocket too much. He's going to get rid of the ball throwing a lot of short passes, just getting the ball out of his hands and letting his players make plays. That's what we're expecting to see."

(on the 'mystique' of the Patriots)

"I don't know if I'm correct or not, but Brady is 12-1 in the playoffs? That's incredible. To come and play a team like that, a team that knows how to win, they're not too hyper about this situation because they've been down this road before. Obviously they have some different players then they had during the times they won, but the organization didn't change. It's still there. It's going to be a test for us to come out and play them hard for 60 minutes. That's what this game is going to be about. We can't play them three quarters and expect that the game is over in the fourth quarter because he can come back. We can't come out slow that first quarter and expect to play three quarters after that because the game might be over by then. We've got to come out and play 60 minutes of football."

(on what New England's history is worth come Sunday)

"To us, we're going into the week knowing that they're capable of doing a lot of things, but what it means to us is they're a team that we have to beat to get where we want to go. That's really all it means to the San Diego Chargers. Not any discredit to the New England Patriots because they know how to win, but everybody to us has the same record in the playoffs. All your stats and my 17 sacks go away. You have to start all over again. That's what it's all about, reestablishing yourself as that team in the playoffs."

(on how the Chargers are better on defense this year)

"I think that last year we had the talent to win, we had the talent to do certain things that a lot of teams couldn't do, but we didn't have that togetherness. We hadn't been on the field for a whole year like we have now. Even earlier in the year, if you look back at the Ravens when we didn't close the game out like we should have, you look back and say, 'That was early in the season.' We got better as a team as the course of the season went on. We're going to continue to get better, and that's what makes us a better defense than we were last year."