



NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS

Postgame Transcript

December 28, 2024



PATRIOTS HEAD COACH JEROD MAYO POSTGAME PRESS CONFERENCE DECEMBER 28, 2024

JM: This is what I told the players, there's really nothing good to take out of that game today. Just the lack of execution. Look, that's a good football team, and they're a well-coached football team. We just didn't play well enough in any phase of the game. No complementary football, and that's what you get. Fire away.

Q: Jerod, after what you guys were able to do in Buffalo, a short week and a lot of talk about coming out strong, how disappointing and frustrating, surprising is this effort from your team today?

JM: It's very disappointing, and it comes back to consistency. That's what it is, consistency.

Q: Jerod, before the game you said on the radio that Antonio Gibson would start at running back and then Rhamondre Stevenson was on the field. What went into the last-minute change there?

JM: That was just a coach's decision. Coach's decision.

Q: Did something change from the time you did the interview to the game to lead to that, or was there a miscommunication that maybe the message wasn't handed down?

JM: I understand your question. Look, it's a coach's decision. So I'll leave it at that.

Q: Jerod, you and DeMarcus Covington have described your defensive struggles this year to fundamentals, run fits and tackling. The Chargers just became the third team to score their season high in points against you, so looks like the defense has regressed. What gives you confidence that this defensive coaching staff is suited to develop this defense next season?

JM: Look, I have nothing but confidence in the coaching staff, and we'll get better. That's part of what we have to do. I have to look at the film to see some of those things you're talking about what happened on the field. But we've got to get better.

Q: Jerod, just curious, I do see Drake Maye over there, but obviously Drake suffered the head injury, had to be evaluated for one in the first quarter. You guys are down by 30 in the fourth quarter and you sent him out there for two drives. How much thought was there to pulling him from that game down 30 and trying to protect him?

JM: Again, look, we're trying to develop a quarterback, and he wants to play. He's a competitor. He went out there.

Q: Jerod, with one game left, how much pressure do you feel, and do you feel like you and your coordinators are coaching for your jobs?

JM: I'm always under pressure and it's been that way for a very long time, not just when I became the head coach of the Patriots. I'm okay. Look, I always do what's best for the team.

Q: The fans at home have never been shy about expressing their thoughts about the team. We've heard it with Mac Jones and we've heard it with Bailey Zappe. Were you cognizant of the chants that were being directed towards you at the end of the game today?

JM: Look, you hear those things, but at the same time, they paid to sit in the seats, and we've got to play better. If we play better, we don't have to hear that stuff.

Q: Jerod, can you describe for us the play where there was the fumble on the pitch from Drake Maye, and what was the design of that play?

JM: Yeah, look, I have to watch the film and see what exactly happened, but just the exchange, obviously, was the problem there. It was a turnover.

Q: A consistent message with you each week has been, "we have to get better, we have to pick things up." Obviously it feels like this may be trending in the wrong direction. Do you see it that way, and at what point do you feel like you need to see it get better?

JM: Yeah, to me, every game is unique. It's a game in itself. Look, I said at the beginning of this press conference, it's about consistency, which we are not right now.

Q: Jerod, I was curious, it looked like on that field goal right before halftime some of the players were signaling that it wasn't actually a good kick. I was curious kind of what you saw on that and your thoughts about that whole play.

JM: Yeah, to me, it really didn't matter what anyone saw. They look at all the scoring plays and they called it good, and we've just got to be able to move forward.

Q: Do you see this being more of a talent issue or a coaching issue because you did say you've got full confidence in the staff.

JM: Yeah, I have full confidence in the staff. I have full confidence in the players in there. I think again, it just comes down to being consistent across the board.

Transcripts are provided by the Patriots media relations department as a courtesy to the media and are edited for readability. All press conferences are posted and archived in their entirety on patriots.com. The duplication or posting of this transcript in its entirety as original content is prohibited. Media are encouraged to link to the complete transcript on patriots.com when sharing full quotes with their audiences.



NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS

Postgame Transcript

December 28, 2024



The following FastScripts transcript is provided by ASAP Sports. Please note that for speed and efficiency, this transcript has only been lightly edited and the final edited version of this transcript will be circulated at the end of the night.

PATRIOTS QUARTERBACK DRAKE MAYE POSTGAME PRESS CONFERENCE DECEMBER 28, 2024

Q: Drake, take us through your day, especially your health and what happened and coming back but also just how disappointing after what you guys were able to do in Buffalo was this effort today from you guys?

DM: Yeah, just kind of got my bell rung on the first drive. I don't know if any of y'all ever played and you got hit, but sometimes you get your bell rung, and you've got to shake back. I guess the spotter called down again and had to pass some tests. I feel good, I still feel good, and then I was good to go. Just the game, things weren't going our way. I kind of felt like in Arizona where I couldn't get in a rhythm offensively. Obviously the pitch was unfortunate. Just had a blitz off the edge that just happened to be a good call on their part, and then just felt like all day we were – nothing they were doing. We've just got to play cleaner football. We've got to help our defense out when they're moving the ball well. Staying on the field and time of possession was pretty one-sided.

Q: Drake, you were passionate defending Jerod Mayo and Alex Van Pelt when you were asked recently. Can you just explain what in your view they're doing well that gives you hope and promise for the future?

DM: Yeah, I think they're still bringing it every week. I think that's the biggest thing you see. They're not quitting. They're still coaching as hard since week one. They're still studying film as hard. We're still meeting as hard. I think the biggest thing was you don't see those guys quitting. I think the score may not tell that today, but I feel like the guys are still wanting to win. We're still leaving it out there every week, and I think that was kind of my message to the team. Man, just give it all you got. It's our last two games, and this one today, so we've got one more chance next week, so just leave it all out there.

Q: Coach was asked about you staying in the game late, and he said, again, we're trying to develop a quarterback. He also said that you're a competitor and so forth. Was there a discussion late in the game about you staying in or coming out earlier than you did?

DM: I wanted to be in the game. I think that's the biggest thing. I wanted to be in the game. I want to be out there with those guys. If our guys are out there, I want to be out there with them. Shoot, may see something that may help us next week out there.

Q: Was there a discussion, though, or is it just an understanding?

DM: Understanding. Yeah, just understanding.

Q: Drake, is there sort of a fine line when you turn into a ball carrier like you did on the play where you got your bell rung of trying to make the yardage but also, again, we've talked about this, about trying to protect yourself?

DM: Yeah, for sure. I think probably should have just thrown it away or played the next series. It was 3rd down so I was trying to get a 1st, and I guess I stepped out of bounds before, but I definitely think in the first quarter of a game where 3rd down is my mentality to go get it, but at the same time you've got to know kind of the situation.

Q: Drake, I'm just curious, on the touchdown to Demario Douglas, were you aware when you took that shot, was that the play call, or was that a result of kind of seeing that you had a free play based on the penalty that was called?

DM: Yeah, kind of seeing a free play. We worked on it this week, and just give those guys a chance when we know we've got a penalty to give those guys a chance. A negative play on a free play doesn't hurt, and I think the biggest thing is not to take a hit, so I tried to get it off before I took a hit, and Pop made a great play.

Q: Drake, over the last month, the team may not have been winning games, but there was a feeling there was development, there was growth taking place, and the group was heading in the right direction. This result obviously kind of hits in a different way. How do you feel overall about the growth and development of the team overall, and do you have questions about whether you are trending in the right direction?

DM: Yeah, I think Jon Jones hit it in the locker room after. I think it's just two different teams that's showed up with us between this week and last week, and I think two playoff teams we've faced and we see what we can do against a playoff team last week, and I just feel like it wasn't there this week. I think just look back, self-evaluate, look myself in the mirror. I definitely left some plays out there, so everybody has got to look themselves in the mirror and say, hey, am I doing whatever we need to do to be on the same page and play good football. I think it's in there. I think it's in store for us. Like I said last week, we've got people in here that can make plays, good players in this league, so we've just got to put it all together and find a way to do more and get on the same page offensively and kind of get the ball rolling. I feel like that's kind of the tale of two tales when we're rolling well and when we're not we're kind of stagnant.

Q: Coach Mayo mentioned trying to develop you, develop a quarterback. What was your mindset in the two series you played in the fourth quarter? Do you feel like at this point in your NFL career you're able to protect yourself out there? You know how to do that without compromising competitive integrity?

DM: For sure. I think the second part of your question, definitely an even balance between being competitive and protecting myself out there, especially in a scenario like that, but at the same time you want to go down there and move the ball. Want to move the ball, want to get some juices flowing for these guys and make everybody, at least offensively, say hey, we can still move the ball on these guys and go score. So that's the mentality. First part of your question was –

Q: The value of those two series.

DM: Yeah, the value. I want to be out there. Like I said, I want to be out there with those guys. At the end of the day, those guys up front, they're battling their butts off, so I'm not going to be out there and go to the coach and say, "hey, take me out." That's not me.

Q: Drake, what happened on the toss to Demario Douglas, the fumble there?

DM: Yeah, we've practiced the play for a long time. I felt like we were executing it well. They happened to bring the nickel off the edge, and I think he just kind of – right by Pop, and that's unfortunate. Just a good call on their part. I've got to give him a better ball to catch. That falls back on me. I think kind of Pop readjusted his thing a little bit, his route or his path just because of the blitz off the edge. But yeah, we just got to give him a chance – can't turn the ball over.

Q: Drake, I was just curious with Cole Strange, obviously Ben Brown was out today, so we saw Cole at center. What's it been like working with him and just how was that being out on the field with him for this first game today?

DM: Yeah, I thought he handled it well. A lot of pressure on him. His first start at center, it's a different job than playing guard. I was proud of the way he worked, proud of the way he fought. Got to watch the tape and probably go over some little things that maybe we can do better, but he caught the guys offsides. That's really him doing that. He snapped the ball, and really credit to him.

Q: Drake, the first play you came back into the game you scrambled nine yards and took another hard hit there. Is that the kind of message or signal you try to pass to your teammates that we need to play tough, we need to play competitive game?

DM: Yeah, anytime I'm telling the doctors I'm good to go. I'm going to come back and give it all I've got. Maybe could have had Boutte on a crossing route there that I could have thrown it, but ended up getting a flag. But I think that's the message to those guys, hey, I'm coming back in, I'm ready to go. Kind of the same thing when I came back from concussion. I'll be the same player. If I feel like I'm not 100 percent ready to go and the best me out there, I won't put myself back out there.

Transcripts are provided by the Patriots media relations department as a courtesy to the media and are edited for readability. All press conferences are posted and archived in their entirety on patriots.com. The duplication or posting of this transcript in its entirety as original content is prohibited. Media are encouraged to link to the complete transcript on patriots.com when sharing full quotes with their audiences.



LOS ANGELES CHARGERS

Postgame Transcript
December 28, 2024



The following FastScripts transcript is provided by ASAP Sports. Please note that for speed and efficiency, this transcript has only been lightly edited and the final edited version of this transcript will be circulated at the end of the night.

**CHARGERS HEAD COACH JIM HARBAUGH
POSTGAME PRESS CONFERENCE
DECEMBER 28, 2024**

Q: Jim, how does it feel to clinch a playoff spot today?

JH: With humble hearts, we move on to the next game. Just so proud of the team. All those that made it happen. The players, the coaches. I mean, there was so much great play. I mean, our offense, our offense, great. Defense, great. I'm proud of our captains. Justin Herbert played a near flawless game. Derwin James reached five and a half sacks, career high, but he does it every single game. Rashawn Slater and Brad Bozeman, I thought that was the best offensive line play we've had the entire season. The run block and the pass protection was so good, so good across the board. Khalil Mack, he's led us the entire season, and he had a great game. Really proud of JK Dobbins, what he's been able to accomplish, career-high in rushing, missing four games, everything he's overcome. Just, yeah, incredible feeling that the hand of God is really on this team. And we're going to keep grinding and keep moving forward. But super, super proud of everybody. Everybody. I mean, it's everybody in the family, everybody in the organization that just keeps doing anything and everything they can to help our team be successful and to win. And, I mean, you got to be your best when your best is needed most. I mean, to do it when you have to do it, maybe some people expected it, but it's not easy to win any NFL game. And when the guys, when they've got to have it, they go out and play like they did, it's just a tremendous testament to who they are as football players and men, just highest character I've been around, and I love these guys.

Q: To have a convincing win like this, what do you think it can do for the team now as you head into the playoffs?

JH: Yeah, I mean, they just gave it everything they had, and that's all they were asking of each other was give us everything you have and give it your very best and do it for each other. Play for each other. I mean that's a powerful thing. I think that bodes well for us.

Q: Ladd McConkey today set the two rookie receiving records, passing receptions and yards for a rookie. How impressed are you by what he's been able to do this season?

JH: Yeah. He's been incredible teammate. I mean, he's been humble and hungry from day one. He's a mighty man. He's a football player. Great to see. And there have been a lot of great receivers in Chargers history to set the rookie receiving record. Just phenomenal. So much gratitude to Joe Ortiz, Chad Alexander, the entire personnel department. I mean, to do what Joe's been able to do is incredible and just – just smile and say yes, you know. That's part of our team, part of our family. So great job. Great job by them. Also, Justin Herbert set an NFL record in the history of the National Football League, the most passing yards of any quarterback in their first five years. And he, like I said, near flawless performance. And I can't think of one player, one throw or one check that he made that wasn't just – one ball placed where it shouldn't have been. Just an incredible, incredible performance by an incredible player.

Q: Joe Hortiz was leaving the locker room. You called him back in, give him a bear hug. That felt like a moment. Can you describe what you were feeling, why you decided to do that, the emotions of that?

JH: Yeah. I mean, I love the high five. I mean, the high five to me, that goes back to being one of the great inventions of all time. But I needed a hug from Joe. I needed to hug Joe. I just love, love Joe. He's the same brilliant guy every single day, and he is a team guy all the way. And he takes no deep, long bows, but he should. He should take a very deep, long bow for just how good he is and what he's been able to do with this team. When you go back and look at the way he's put it together, him and his staff, it's incredible. I mean, look at the free agents that were brought in, the signings, the midseason signings, the workouts, the tryouts, the draft picks. I mean, it's just good, good, good, good, good, good, good, good, good, good, good, good. Good. I mean, it's so many and so – and we've all benefited, you know, from the guys that were here last year, the stalwarts like Justin Herbert, Derwin James, Khalil Mack. Joey Bosa, I mean, I thought he had a great game. He had a great game today. Tremendous series. And Rashawn Slater, Zion Johnson, Quentin Johnston. Quentin Johnston, you know, tremendous game, the way he came back. I mean, a little high, you know, maybe, but I thought it was a catchable ball. But then to come back and get us a first down on the next drive and then another and another. Joshua Palmer, another guy that – for all the players that were here last year, they're the ones who have led us, and it's been their leadership that has motivated us, kept us going. And, also, it's the antidote for complacency, great leadership. And that's what our players have given us. So now onward. It's onward and keep grinding and, you know, even – never like the lighten up. Tighten up. Tighten up. Keep tightening up. As we move forward, that's our mission now. And, yeah, we want to get this – 11 sounds better than 10 so we're going to go get ourselves prepared for our next game.

Q: You guys were able to convert a couple of fourth downs especially early. When the offense is clicking like that, how much confidence does it give you to be aggressive in those situations?

JH: Yeah. It was very -- when you've got Number 10 back there and the way the offensive line was performing, I mean, the big guys up front were getting the job done. They were handling their man. They were handling the movement. They were handling the games and the twists. And great job Mike Devlin. Also what a fantastic job he's done. Had us really prepared for this game and our guys executed at a super high level. So, yeah, that gave me a lot of confidence that Justin was getting the protection. If he can finish a throwing motion, then I know that the ball is going to be thrown accurately. And the way our receivers are playing, the way Josh Palmer, Quentin Johnston, Ladd McConkey, and Dissly, a couple of nice key first down catches and runs by him. Felt very confident that we would pick those up.

Q: Offensively, you talked a lot about this season about you've been grinding on that side of the ball, trying to find your best football. Did today feel like a turning point for you at all offensively in terms of sort of everything clicking?

JH: It was four quarters of really good football offensively. Four quarters of really good football defensively. Great game plan by Greg Roman. He called a great game. I thought there was – it was fastball, curve. Kept us in rhythm. We were efficient. We were able to make big plays. We were able to have some long drives. The field position, there was some hidden yardage there that was hurting us early. But come off your own 8-yard line, own 6-yard line, 94-yard touchdown drive, 92-yard touchdown drive, 29 first downs. That was, I thought, it was a great master class of calling the game by Greg as well.

Q: Getting JK Dobbins back from IR, how big an influence did he have on the offense?

JH: Big. Really big. And all the backs. I mean, Hassan was making big plays for us. Kimani had big runs. But it was great. The backs, the way the backs are playing right now, very rarely are they getting less – they're never getting less than what the play is blocked for, and they're getting more than what the play is blocked for. Some big first down pickups in the run game as well. JK had a big one on third down. Hassan had a big one on third down. I think maybe JK had another or Kimani got one as well. Yeah, love the way our backs are running and holding on to the football. They've done a great job. Kyle McDonald has done a tremendous job with ball security. So, yeah, just keep tightening up, find out – there's things that we can improve, and we'll go about attacking those as well.

Q: Jim, big turnaround in San Francisco, big turnaround at Michigan. Here back in the playoffs. Is there a common thread? Different situations, different teams. But is there a common thread in the team that you see that allows for that?

JH: Yeah, I really just speak of this team. Very little to do with me. If it goes right, then it's our players. They're doing a great job. It's gone bad a couple times. That's on me. But, yeah, this is – I've been drinking the Kool-Aid here. From day one, it's really started with – I mean, I can't give enough credit to Derwin James, Justin Herbert, and those two in particular. And Khalil Mack and Rashawn Slater. I mean, stalwarts. Brad Bozeman has come in. He's been a stalwart. There's a bunch. There's probably, like -- I counted it up early. There was maybe 15, 15 stalwarts that we had, and it's grown since then. It's quite a bit higher now. But those guys, those guys. And you talk to them, and there's more to do. So, yeah. As a coach, I'll end it by saying, answering that question, there's no coach who could have it better than to be coaching these players. Nobody. Maybe the only one would be future us could have it better than us.

Q: Jim, Drake Maye had a pretty good game last week against Buffalo. What was the key to kind of slowing him?

JH: I thought we had really good coverage. He's a heck of a good player, no question about it, and was able to get out on a few scrambles. Made a great heads-up play on the offside. Pass rush was really good, but I thought it was just a really – I mean, our team played one of our best games defensively, and that's saying a lot because Justin Minter and this defensive staff and defensive players have had some great games. But to play a complete ball game, four quarters of tremendous defensive football, that was -- I think it was more – I mean, that was a factor. That was the key factor. We played really good. Thanks.

Transcripts are provided by the Patriots media relations department as a courtesy to the media and are edited for readability. All press conferences are posted and archived in their entirety on patriots.com. The duplication or posting of this transcript in its entirety as original content is prohibited. Media are encouraged to link to the complete transcript on patriots.com when sharing full quotes with their audiences.



LOS ANGELES CHARGERS

Postgame Transcript
December 28, 2024



The following FastScripts transcript is provided by ASAP Sports. Please note that for speed and efficiency, this transcript has only been lightly edited and the final edited version of this transcript will be circulated at the end of the night.

**CHARGERS QUARTERBACK JUSTIN HERBERT
POSTGAME PRESS CONFERENCE
DECEMBER 28, 2024**

Q: Justin, to be back in the playoffs, what does it mean?

JH: It's a testament to all the hard work we've put in this offseason and the way things have gone. It's been an honor to play alongside this team. We had a huge opportunity tonight, and we went out and took it.

Q: Jim called your performance nearly flawless today. All your decisions. What made it click for you guys?

JH: I think we had a great plan. All week, we knew how big of a game this was for us, and guys were dialed in, focused, and we executed today. It was awesome to see. We were on it from the protection to the routes to the run game. I thought all three phases showed up today, and that was huge for us.

Q: Ladd McConkey has been all over the field this year. He broke a couple records. You have most yards for a guy in the first five years in the league. What's gotten to you guys last few weeks?

JH: He's just such a tough player. He's a playmaker, and he finds ways to get open. He has done such a great job of battling injuries and being out there for us. On third down, anytime we go out there, he's a threat. All I have to do is get him the ball, and he makes my job so much easier.

Q: What kind of impact did having J.K. Dobbins out there?

JH: Yeah, huge. It's so tough to lose a guy like that for a couple of weeks, but I thought we did a great job of holding it down while he was gone. He came back and brings so much energy and so much to our run game. He's great out of the backfield and the pass game too. I think one of the most underappreciated aspects of this game is his protection. He does such a great job on third downs, picking up blitzes. He knows exactly what he's doing, and he's really well coached. It's great to have a guy like that back.

Q: A day like this, all three phases, what does a day like this mean for you guys in confidence heading to postseason?

JH: Yeah. A lot. I think you take a look at the game and, like you said, all three phases showed up today. That's the type of football we want to be playing in December, January, and hopefully on. That's the type of football you want to be playing, especially in these big games like that. It was really good to see.

Q: Is that a no elevators hat?

JH: It is, courtesy of Simi Fahoco. I appreciate it.

Q: That's forever ago, the no elevators thing. But how do you feel like moments like that galvanize the team, brought the team together to allow you to stand in this moment now?

JH: Yeah. I think we talked about it a couple weeks ago, how close this team has come together. I think everyone plays for each other. They play for the coaches and they obviously play for the Chargers fanbase as well. It means a lot to us. It means a lot to everyone in the locker room. You go out and play on Saturday and Sunday and it shows, and it was really good to see from those guys.

Q: I saw you greeting fans after the game. What did that moment mean to you to have that shared experience?

JH: Yeah, it was just cool to see. We're a long way away from Los Angeles, and to have Chargers fans out here representing, it was really good to see. I wanted to thank them, sign a couple of autographs and just say hi because it's a long trip. Whether they're out here or whether they're from L.A., we got to do everything we can for those guys.

Q: Justin, what makes Ladd so effective as a wide receiver?

JH: He's just got such a great understanding of the game. He's so physically gifted, and he's got great understanding of defenses and how people play them. He finds ways to get open. I've talked about it all year. He's one of the guys on third down, you've got to find him. He'll find a way to get open.

Q: There's been a lot of talk this week about how he was drafted. The Patriots traded with you guys. Was there an effort to get him the ball and show the Patriots what they're missing?

JH: I actually didn't know about that. We just went out and did our business. There's probably no hard feelings. He's a very talented player. Thankful to have him on our team. He's certainly made my job easier. Just go through your reads. In he's open, he's open and you get him the ball.

Q: Did you get a chance to talk to Drake after the game today? If so, what did you tell him at the time? What did you see from him?

JH: Just in passing, just saw him after the game. Didn't really get to spend much time, but he's obviously very talented. He's an incredible quarterback and I'm going to enjoy watching him for years to come.

Q: There's been a lot of connections to him and you kind of having a similar skill set. If you were to think about one thing that sticks out to you your rookie season, your second season, what's helped you develop, what would you say that is?

JH: I would say it's always the next play mentality. Especially my rookie year, we struggled. It was tough. It made me who I am today. As long as you're playing the next play, it's all about that. Whether I throw an incompletion, interception, I can't let that last play affect my next one. And those guys in the locker room, in the huddle especially, they require my best effort. As long as I do that I can hold my head up high.

Q: In terms of the coaching and the roster and everything, since your rookie season, since your second season, how has that kind of helped you to where you are now?

JH: I think Coach Harbaugh and our general manager, Joe Hortiz, have done such a great job of getting the right guys here. You look in the locker room and everybody plays for each other. I talked about it briefly. The respect we have for everyone in the building, in our locker room, the coaching staff, player personnel staff, it's been an honor to play for them, alongside them, because everyone is doing their best, and it showed today.

Q: Jim takes attention off him and credits the players. What kind of impact does he have, his energy?

JH: He's been everything. Those guys in the locker room respect him so much. They want to do right by him and make him proud. The way he cares about this team, all the individuals as well. He's a competitor, and he wants to win no matter what it is. It definitely shows, and it's the way everyone fights for him, wants to play for him, and respects him.

Transcripts are provided by the Patriots media relations department as a courtesy to the media and are edited for readability. All press conferences are posted and archived in their entirety on patriots.com. The duplication or posting of this transcript in its entirety as original content is prohibited. Media are encouraged to link to the complete transcript on patriots.com when sharing full quotes with their audiences.