



Chiefs Head Coach Andy Reid January 16, 2019

OPENING STATEMENT: “I’ll hit you with some injuries here first. There’s really just one who won’t practice today and that’s Dorian (O’Daniel). The rest of the guys will go. We look forward to the challenge of playing the Patriots. We know they’re a good football team. Everybody left at this point is a good football team. We also understand that it’s single elimination. We’re getting our work done here starting today, we’ll push it right through Saturday, and that’s where we’re at. If you’ve got questions, fire away.”

Q: Some people are saying it’s going to be too cold for the crowd to be a factor, what’s your message to Chiefs fans?

REID: “It’s never too cold for Chiefs fans. They’ll be there. That’s the great thing about the sea of red, they’re loud and they show up all the time. They’ll be ready for it.”

Q: Where do things stand with Laurent Duvernay-Tardif this week?

REID: “We’ll see. We’re just going to take it day-to-day. He’s going to practice, and we’ll just see how he does. He’s improved over the last few weeks. We’ll just see, we’ll see how it goes.”

Q: Will he work with the ones?

REID: “He’ll rotate in.”

Q: What’s the plan for Eric Berry?

REID: “He’ll practice too. Same thing, day-to-day. He’ll rotate in with the ones.”

Q: With the release of Ron Parker are you confident that Eric Berry will play?

REID: “We had to make a move, so that’s what happened with Ron (Parker). We appreciate Ron, obviously. He’s one of our guys that’s been there a long time, but we had to make a move, so that’s the other end.”

Q: What specifically did Laurent Duvernay-Tardif show improvement on to bring up from the injured reserve?

REID: “Continually he got better and made improvement. Now we just have to see how much he can do as we go forward. It’s a day-to-day situation, that’s how we’ll handle it.”

Q: How much would it mean to you to hand the Lamar Hunt trophy to the Hunt family?

REID: “It’d be great. That’d be great. When it has your name on it that’s a pretty big thing. Lamar Hunt was special. I think it’s special for the National Football League and then obviously special if he’s your father. To have the opportunity to work with his kids and Clark (Hunt) in particular, I understand the importance of that. Not that he has to tell me, he doesn’t have to say anything, and he hasn’t said anything.”

Q: How important has Eric Bieniemy in Patrick Mahomes' development and do you think he'll make a good head coach someday?

REID: "Absolutely. I thought maybe even this year he would before all the spots were filled. I was hoping for him. He sure is deserving. I think he's been unbelievable. He's in the room with Patrick (Mahomes) every day and I couldn't give bigger praise for him."

Q: How has Patrick Mahomes changed the way you do things on gameday?

REID: "I get to sit on the bench for a while (laughter). That's been the biggest change. As far as calling, I think that's where you're going with it, you call things different for every quarterback. His is a little different than Alex (Smith), but when I've called it's always, 'Let's go get it.' That part really hasn't. Some of the plays have changed."

Q: Did you ever meet Lamar Hunt?

REID: "I did, yeah."

Q: What was that occasion?

REID: "At winter meetings. He was a great man. I was here for the 101 (Awards) one year while he was still alive."

Q: Is the intention to go slowly with Eric Berry and see how the week progresses?

REID: "We have a great communication process going, so we're going to keep that. We'll just see how he feels as we go. Right now, he feels pretty good and we'll see how he feels after practice and during practice. We talk to him all the time. That'll be the same thing with (Laurent Duvernay-Tardif) and any of the guys that have an injury. We try to know where they're at and how they're feeling."

Q: Is it a different plan than how we've seen Eric Berry return to practice previously?

REID: "We've spotted him in. Even when he played we spotted him."

Q: What have you seen from the Patriots when they play on the road that has led to more struggles than at home?

REID: "They're a heck of a team, so I don't get caught up in all that. I mentioned this before, you're talking about a dynasty, if there is such a thing, in the National Football League. They've been that. You're talking about a head coach that I think the world of him, I think he's a great coach. He's done a phenomenal job keeping that thing together. We're getting ready to get their best shot, offense, defense and special teams."

Q: Is there anything different about the way Tom Brady plays than 15 years ago when you may have played him?

REID: "I haven't seen any decline. I haven't seen him get any slower. That's not his deal, he's not going to run a lot unless he has to. He is as accurate, he sees things better even than when he did when he was younger. I'm wearing glasses, he doesn't (laughter). The aging hasn't hit him. He's an amazing guy."

Q: Does your fourth down aggressiveness have to do with your personnel and would there have been times in your Chiefs tenure where you might have made a different call?

REID: "Possibly. It's all dependent on the situation and the game that you're playing. Then what you have there and what you have left on your script. Every situation is different. I'll tell you I liked it last week. I

can't tell you that I'd do that this week. I've got to go through the whole process here and be ready for this group."

Q: The Patriots are playing the nobody believes in us card. Have you ever created something like that to rally around for your team to use?

REID: "It's a day-to-day thing. That's not what I do. We just go through the process and try to shield all that out. I think that probably in that building they're just going and doing their thing. They're pretty good. This is like their eighth one in a row, so with all this disrespect, they're pretty dang good."

Q: Can you describe what it is that makes Patrick Mahomes so exceptional at not making the same mistake twice?

REID: "I think certain guys have great vision and can see on the field. It's one thing knowing it, it's one thing seeing it on the field and executing it. He's got good vision. That's what these top quarterbacks have in common. They see things that the average guy can't. That's why they're the best in the business of what they do. With Patrick (Mahomes), he's been blessed with the vision, and then he's very intelligent. He learned. I told you Alex (Smith) was as smart a guy as I've coached in my career, and he didn't take a ton of steps back. He didn't take steps back at all. We were able to keep growing and I think that says something about the kid. He's extremely proud, he works extremely hard and he's been blessed with a good mind."

Q: Does Patrick Mahomes almost get an imprint of what he is seeing?

REID: "I think all the quarterbacks, most of them do that. They have to know where everybody is at all times and then it comes down to feel when you are playing. I think if you ask any quarterback in this league where each guy was, they'd be able to tell you and handle that. It's another thing when things are going on around you fast and somebody's trying to tackle you."

Q: Do you look at this as a passing of the torch game?

REID: "We are just going to try to work hard and just try to do the best we can. That's just what we are going to do. We have done that all year and go through the process. There is no more important time than right now to do that. We don't get caught up in all that stuff. We are just trying to get better every day is what we are trying to do. We know we are playing a great football team. We have to get ourselves ready to go and that's what you have to do."

Q: What is most impressive about Patrick Mahomes' leadership ability and what is an example of that?

REID: "Great quarterbacks, they have that ability. He's young, but he has that ability to influence and make people around him better. He does it with his teammates. He brings a certain energy with him. He's not trying to do (that), this isn't something these guys try to do. This is him. You fake it and guys see right through that. That is who he is and what he is. It is the same guy you guys have a chance to meet with. For some of you guys, he's made a better writer out of you (laughter). I'm not pointing any fingers (laughter)."

Q: Kareem did well against the Patriots in the passing game, has Damien Williams shown you the ability to catch the ball out of the backfield?

REID: "He's done a nice job of stepping in. Those were some big shoes to fill. Kareem (Hunt) did do a nice job against (the Patriots.) I think Damien (Williams) has done a nice job of stepping in and putting his own personality to that position and how he plays the game. He brings a lot of energy. He has a short memory, which is important. If he has a hiccup in there, he jumps right back on and wants the ball again and tries

to do the right thing. He has done a nice job. We appreciate having him here and what he has done for our football team.”

Q: Had you seen what you had in Damien Williams earlier in the season?

REID: “That position is a strong position by numbers. I think everyone felt with Damien if he just had an opportunity to go, you would get an idea. You guys asked me the same question and I thought we were going to be OK there. Not only by numbers, because the other guys are good players, too. We felt the same thing, if Damien (Williams) had an opportunity, you’d see what you have been able to see here.”

Q: What did you learn from Mike Holmgren about helping your assistant coaches?

REID: “I’m a big Mike Holmgren fan, obviously. I felt at the time, I had a hard time believing anyone did it better. I’ve been a head coach for all these years and I still feel that way. He was unbelievable how he dealt with people. He was a great example of doing just what you said, letting everybody have a piece of the pie. Everybody contributed so everybody felt a part of the team. He has my vote to be in the Hall of Fame. The other two guys are there, he is the third. Ron Wolf, Brett Favre and he should be right in there with them.”

Q: How do you maintain normality with your players heading into such a big game for this franchise?

REID: “You don’t change. It’s not what you do. You just come in and you shoot these guys straight. I think that’s what we all want. If I have education I can share with them, I share with them and then get yourself ready to play. All of this doesn’t necessarily matter on the game. You eliminate those distractions, you get yourself ready to play against a good football team and really it comes down to that when you are out there on the field. All the hype and celebrations, press conferences and all those things, once it is kick off time you want to make sure that you have prepared yourself right.”

Q: Tyreek Hill’s speed is obviously the signature of his game, but have you seen him showcase his other skills?

REID: “I think he is grown right in front of us as a receiver. You saw the speed. You saw that when he got here. Whether it was on returning punts or kickoffs or as a wide receiver in a limited role. He works so hard at making sure that he learned the fine points of playing wide receiver. He has worked extremely hard at that. And now he has developed into what we have today. Still with room to improve, but you are seeing a guy that is a legitimate wide receiver in this league. Even with his size, he is strong, and he knows how to work. He has been double teamed, he’s been singled up, he has been effective in both areas.”

Q: Do you encourage Patrick Mahomes in practice to do the off-script kind of plays?

REID: “We saw it in college on all the tape that we watched. You don’t want to detract from that unless it were an issue, and then you teach around it and with it I guess you would say. I’m not discouraging it at all, but there are things from a release point you want to make sure are right and that he understands the defense that’s out there that he’s throwing against. If he happens to come back across the grain a little bit, he knows where people are at. There’s some things that go with it, but I’m not going to take that away or ask him to take that away.”

Q: What do you mean by Damien Williams has put his personality on the running back position?

REID: “Well, he has a good personality. He comes to work, he likes to give everybody the business, but yet he doesn’t mind getting kneeled a little bit, too, and he handles that well. He has a bold laugh, it is infectious. If you’ve been in the locker room, I’m sure you have heard it. He’s learned to control that I

think. He's grown up since he has been here, and I think he has done a heck of a job. I'm proud of him for that."

Q: What is it about this matchup that has brought out the best in Tyreek Hill?

REID: "He's done well. But on the other hand, you know he will be challenged again Sunday. So, what you did there, that's history. You are going against a good football coaches there. So, they will have a plan for it and how you handle that. That is the next challenge. That's what he is focused on, he knows that. Nobody is better in the business than Bill (Belichick) at that. So, we have to make sure that we have things that he can work with and then he comes out and he works those things, which he'll do. He knows it will be a challenge ahead of him."

QB PATRICK MAHOMES

Q: You just received the MVP award from Pro Football Writers of America, how does it feel?

MAHOMES: "Yeah, it's awesome. It's a special honor. I thank all them for that. It's really a tribute to my teammates. I got put in a great situation where I have a lot of great teammates around me that make me look really good."

Q: In Saturday's game you all went for it on fourth down and were successful three-straight times, how do you feel about that aggressiveness and what kind of boost does that give you guys?

MAHOMES: "I want to go for it every single time. It's coach's decision. I always think we can get it, no matter where we're at, but at the same time we have to be smart. We have a great special teams unit for a reason. I will always trust whatever coach decides and if he gives us the chance we will try to make the most of it."

Q: When you see the Lamar Hunt Trophy for the first time, what would it mean to you to win that and be able to deliver it to the Hunt family?

MAHOMES: "It would be awesome to get that to Clark (Hunt). We haven't gotten that trophy before, this team. For us to kind of bring it back home in a sense would be truly an honor for me and this team, to bring that trophy to Clark and to this whole community."

Q: What have you learned about Lamar (Hunt) and the idea of what he was for the franchise and league overall?

MAHOMES: "I think one of the awesome things we do with our player development team is that they take us through the whole history. We come over to the museum that we have in the stadium and they take us through how he made the AFL, pretty much from scratch, and had this vision for what is now the AFC and combined it with the NFL and made this beautiful league. It truly is special to have someone like that who has created your franchise. You want to do whatever you can to bring honor to him and that family as they've helped make this a place we can play and have fun and play the sport we love to play."

Q: Talking about the history of the game, there are a lot of older black quarterbacks who are excited about what you've done. Can you understand, because of the history of the position, why they're so proud and so excited to see the things you've done this season?

MAHOMES: "You definitely can understand it. For me, it's all about going out there and playing the game I love. But at the same time, you see the things, you see everybody supporting you and stuff like that. I'm going to go out there and try to make everybody proud that's believed in me from the beginning until now. I'm going to go out there and put my best foot forward, give my best effort on every single play and try to go out there and win football games."

Q: The Patriots loss earlier in the year was kind of the first bump in the road for you this season. How did you deal with that?

MAHOMES: “We didn’t feel good. I feel like we didn’t play our best, especially early in the game. When you play teams of this caliber, when you play teams with this much history of knowing how to win and capitalizing on people’s mistakes, you can’t come back and win games like that. It was shown that game. For us, we have to learn from that, know we can’t make those mistakes and that we have to come out with our best effort from the beginning of the game all the way through the end. It’s going to be a dog fight for the entire game if you want to try to come out with the win.”

Q: You had a couple interceptions early in the first half of that game. Did they throw things at you that you hadn’t seen before?

MAHOMES: “Yeah, they do what they always do, they come out with un-scouted looks, stuff they haven’t shown in weeks, maybe even years, and they try to throw it on you and try to surprise you. That’s stuff that they’re really good at. They’re very versatile where they can do a lot of different things. Not every team can do that. For us it’s about finding ways to adjust to that as fast as possible and going out and having success and making those in-game adjustments in order to capitalize earlier in the game than we did last time.”

Q: How has being able to make in-game adjustments and communicate with your teammates developed throughout this season especially from the last time you played the Patriots until now?

MAHOMES: “It’s crazy how much you learn from every single game you play. Now I’ve seen so many looks from so many different teams that even if you’re not necessarily game planning that week for that look, you can always file that in your memory bank and pull from that. So if I get an un-scouted look, you can kind of say ‘Well, I know this team did it to me in Week 8’ versus where earlier in the season when I couldn’t really do that. I think just having those experiences and making sure that I’m prepared for everything is something that has definitely changed from Week 5 until now.”

Q: How much has offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy helped you with that?

MAHOMES: “He’s helped me a ton. He’s a special coach with how he’s able to break down the film and explain it to me. That’s the biggest thing he does for me. He holds me accountable but can still explain it to me in such a way that makes it easy for me during the game.”

Q: What will winning an AFC Championship mean to you?

MAHOMES: “It will be huge. Whenever I got here the goal was to win the AFC Championship and get to the Super Bowl and win that. For me, to try to do that very early in my career would be a huge thing for me, getting that experience, learning, and really showing you’re able to win with the team you have around you. I am just going to trust in my teammates that we can go out there and play the game we’ve been playing this entire year and try to win a big game on a big stage.”

Q: Of all the games you’ve played this year is this the biggest?

MAHOMES: “Definitely. There’s four teams left. We’re playing against the Patriots who are in the AFC Championship every single year of my entire life pretty much. It’s definitely a huge game. We are excited for the opportunity and we’re glad we are getting to compete against the best at this time of the year.”

Q: Do you and the other players feel pressure knowing what’s at stake this week?

MAHOMES: “There’s always pressure to win in these scenarios. Whenever it’s an elimination game, win or go home, you know there’s an intensity you have to bring. I think the best thing about this team is that

we can lean on each other. There's not one person who has to do it all. It's something where it's every single week. It was D. Will (Damien Williams) last week who stepped up and played a huge game. The offensive line played great. It's every single week. The defense played great last week. Everyone steps up and just leans on each other. That's what makes us such a great team and has made us so successful this year, it's not one person, it's not on one person's shoulders every single week. It's who can step up this week and make a play."

Q: Do you feel like of all 17 games, New England gave you more un-scouted looks than any other opponent?

MAHOMES: "Yeah, I would say them and Baltimore were probably the two biggest ones that threw out un-scouted looks the entire game. I think that just comes with the veteran leadership on the coaching staff and the players on the team. They have the talent where they can play the man coverage and do that stuff, at the same time they can change up the look and do stuff they haven't necessarily been doing all season long and still execute it. When you play veteran teams like this, you have to make sure you have a plan for everything every single play."

Q: How did last year teach and prepare you for this season?

MAHOMES: "Sitting back and learning, you get to see a lot of things you don't get exposed to in college, that's just the truth of the fact. First off, being behind Alex (Smith) and seeing someone who's seen a ton in his time in the NFL, and then being with this coaching staff for an entire year and getting to go through the practices and do that stuff has prepared me to come out this year and get those experiences and have a stepping stone to where everything was not so new and I've kind of seen some of these things before."

Q: If you had played last year, how close to replicating this year's season do you think you would have come?

MAHOMES: "I hope I would have won a lot of games last year, but I don't know if I could've done this. Having Alex (Smith) giving me those experiences and teaching me how to be successful was huge for me. Coming out, you don't know what you don't know. You don't know what it takes to be a really good and successful quarterback in the NFL. Being able to have someone in front of me who was one helped me out a ton this year."

Q: What message would you have for those who are worried about the inclement weather on Sunday?

MAHOMES: "I think the weather doesn't make any difference in how these fans are going to come out this weekend, honestly. I know the stadium is going to be rocking and I know these fans are going to enjoy this as much as we are trying to go out and win the AFC and bring that Lamar Hunt Trophy back."

RB DAMIEN WILLIAMS

Q: You carried the ball on multiple fourth-down runs on Saturday and had success. What's the mentality of converting those fourth-down plays?

WILLIAMS: "Well, it all starts off with the guy who's calling it. You have Andy Reid saying, 'let's go for it on fourth down.' At the end of the day, all you can do is go out there and get the job done, because you're not coming back to that sideline with him calling it, and letting it ride on fourth down."

Q: I want to go back to that 4th-and-3 against Baltimore. Did you really gain a lot of confidence from that play? Did that help you come into your own? You seem to have been able to build off that, and now you're going to be in the AFC title game.

WILLIAMS: "Of course the more reps you get, the more prepared you get, you build that confidence. Especially on big downs like that, fourth down, 3rd-and-short and being able to be successful on that, of course you're going to have a lot of confidence."

Q: The last couple of times the Chiefs have played the Patriots, Kareem Hunt was critical in catching the ball out the backfield. How do you feel like that part of your game has kind of developed through your career?

WILLIAMS: "I feel like throughout my whole career I was considered a third-down back, so I was in on a lot of those plays where you had to get outside and make those plays. Seeing those guys twice a year (with the Miami Dolphins), I had to really study them and figure out ways to get open."

Q: Is catching the ball something that came naturally to you in high school when you first started playing or did you have to work on that?

WILLIAMS: "Oh no, I definitely for sure had to work on that. If you call a couple of my coaches they're kind of mad, they're like, 'where'd you learn how to catch all of a sudden?' It's for sure something you have to work on. That's just hit the JUGS every day after practice."

Q: When did you feel like that part of your game developed? The University of Oklahoma does a lot of motion like that and plays like that, did it develop there, junior college? When did you feel like that kind of clicked?

WILLIAMS: "Of course at Oklahoma. My first day there they had me catching tennis balls, JUGS before and after and with (Oklahoma Head Coach Bob) Stoops, it was high on his list that you had to know how to catch out of the backfield."

Q: What's the ride been like from shoulder surgery, not really knowing your future, to now being the premier back heading into such a big game here?

WILLIAMS: "It was crazy because I got hurt playing the Patriots there. The whole journey from getting hurt, coming here and having the Chiefs actually take a chance on me and being in the position that I'm in now. It's something that I can't really speak on and I think that's why you see it in the way I play. I play with a lot of passion because it means a lot coming back from the shoulder injury."

Q: You have been a backup most of your career. What kept you motivated that good times could be waiting for you ahead if you kept at it?

WILLIAMS: "I just think this is what I love to do. At the end of the day, as long as I am playing football and as long as I am involved, I was cool. At the end of the day, you want to be in the position where you can be the man, and I am in the position right now to be that man and I am just going to continue to do what I am doing."

Q: At the beginning of the season when you signed with Kansas City, it was a crowded running back room. Did you ever foresee this type of opportunity, standing in front of all these people waiting for the AFC title game against the Patriots?

WILLIAMS: “Not at all. This is the last thing I would have thought. At the end of the day, I know the type of player that I am, and I knew that I was going to be involved in some kind of way. But being here in this position right now, it’s amazing. Like I said, if you know my history, where I started and where I’m at now, it means a lot to me.”

Q: Is the prep and approach here with the Chiefs different than when you prepared to face the Patriots twice a year when you were with the Dolphins?

WILLIAMS: “Of course it is different because we are playing for something big [an AFC Championship] right now. Miami, we played them twice a year, and you can go look back and the history. I won some, and I lost some. I feel like you are an NFL team, you are going to prepare to win the game. At the end of the day, it is all the same – we are preparing to win the game.”

Q: How have you been able to help create energy among the team with some of your plays and how has the team fed off the energy from you producing on key plays in these past few games?

WILLIAMS: “Just going out and being myself. Coach (Reid) speaks on that every day. He wants guys to be themselves, express who you are. Like I said, I play with passion. Where I was at and where I am now, I’m letting that all out each time I am on the field. Guys see that, and guys feel that. If it is real and it is genuine, people feed off of that.”

Q: Where have you seen Chiefs QB Patrick Mahomes’ leadership the most?

WILLIAMS: “Really, off the field. Just to see, he is a young guy, so I feel like when people think about that, they think about how you have to be ultra-focused. At the end of the day, he does his job and he does it great, but off the field, he’s a brother and he’s a friend. He is doing every little thing with you. It’s fun just to see him so involved with guys, not just guys on offense, but defensive guys. He is in the mix, and it is great to see a quarterback like that.”

Q: What is the best example of Mahomes’ off-field leadership?

WILLIAMS: “Just shooting the basketball around in the locker room. And he is really competing, he wants to win (*laughter*). We tell him, ‘You are the starting quarterback. You need to go sit down. We got this.’ (*laughter*). Just seeing him actually involved, you don’t get that a lot.”

Q: How is his jump shot?

WILLIAMS: “He has a little hesi (hesitation jump shot) on him, but I don’t know about the shot. He has a little hesi on him (*laughter*).”

TE TRAVIS KELCE

Q: How does Chiefs QB Patrick Mahomes now compare to his competitiveness in practice last year?

KELCE: “Can we really compare the two (*laughter*)? I am not going to lie, it is a very similar mentality – he is very confident and he is very creative – of how he went about being a scout team quarterback last year. Kind of testing the waters even more so than he did this year, especially during Sundays. I think it kind of prepared him for the moment. He got his confidence going that he could still make the types of throws that in his mind he feels like he can make.”

Q: Beyond his talent, when did you know he could lead this team?

KELCE: “I have answered that one before. It was probably once he threw that first touchdown pass against [Los Angeles]. It was dual-read. He kind of had to not only read the defense and see what they were doing but while the play was going on either hand the ball off or pull it. He pulled it and threw a dime right inside a tiny window to Tyreek Hill, who did the rest from there. I think right then and there, game-time decisions and instinctual decisions, putting the ball where it needed to be.”

Q: How do you react to Patriots QB Tom Brady’s comments that everyone thinks the Patriots ‘suck’?

KELCE: “I don’t think they suck. I can tell you that.”

Q: How did Mahomes respond to the loss against New England, which was one of the first bumps in the road during his career?

KELCE: “I think the second half tells you how the guy handles adversity. I am pretty sure he will tell you he didn’t play that well in the first half and made some mistakes, as our offense did as a whole. We made some mistakes. That second half, we kind of rallied back and gave ourselves a chance to win the game. Sure enough, how he handles adversity is how we are going to go as an offense.”

Q: What worked for the Chiefs offense against the Patriots during the regular season, given the Patriots’ typical effectiveness on defense?

KELCE: “Just execution. You have to play mistake-free football against this team in all three phases of the game. Sure enough, when we play that way, we give ourselves a chance.”

Q: How much do you relish the opportunity to play in games with other elite NFL tight ends, specifically Patriots TE Rob Gronkowski?

KELCE: “I cherish every game I get to go against an elite tight end – last year against (Eagles TE Zach) Ertz, I think it was the second game of the year; every chance I have had to go up against Gronk; and even when we played in Dallas last year against (former Cowboys TE) Jason Witten. The list goes on, but I think it is definitely one of the games that I will cherish and that I will remember forever when we get to go against them.”

Q: Does it potentially mean more to play against Gronkowski this week, given comments that Gronkowski may consider retirement after the season?

KELCE: “I hope he can play as long as his body (lets him) and as long as he wants to play. I think he is a hell of a player. That is for sure.”

Q: Is it harder to catch passes from Mahomes when they are thrown with a sidearm or from different angles than a standard release? How do you develop those abilities?

KELCE: “Reps is how you develop it. Just going through the motions of training camp and even in games knowing that the play is not always dead and that he is always going to try to find a new way to get you the ball. It is just a continuous effort to maintain concentration. That is probably the biggest thing between him and (former Chiefs QB) Alex (Smith) is that Alex was always right on top of the ball and it came out pretty much the exact same way. With Pat, the flight of the ball might be a little bit different – he might throw you a little bit of a screwball or a slider here or there – but it will get to you eventually, and you just have to make sure you concentrate all the way into the hands.”

LB JUSTIN HOUSTON

Q: When you look at that trophy, what would it mean to you win the Lamar Hunt Trophy and hand it over to Clark Hunt and the Hunt family?

HOUSTON: "I think it will mean a lot. It means a lot just to make it to this point. I've never had this opportunity, so I think it will mean a lot to me, to them and to the city."

Q: As a guy that has been in this league for quite a while and has been productive, do reach out to anyone who has been in this situation before about the experience?

HOUSTON: "No. I talk to a couple of guys around the league, but not on the regular."

Q: What's it been like matching up with the Patriots over the years? There are some different faces, but the quarterback is the same and the head coach is the same.

HOUSTON: "It's difficult any time you play them – whether it's here or there – because they're smart. They have a coach on the field (QB Tom Brady). He sees everything. He's been playing for a while so there's nothing you can throw at him that he hasn't seen. To give us the best chance of winning we have to keep him off the field and keep our offense on the field."

Q: What worked so well in that game back in 2014? What was special about that night?

HOUSTON: "I think we came out firing in all phases and I believe they didn't play their best game. I know it's going to be a different game this Sunday. They are going to bring it."

Q: You mentioned after the Seattle game how impressed you were with how CB Charvarius Ward and CB Tremon Smith and some of the young guys who were playing on the defense. As a veteran leader, what do you feel like you and some of the other guys have done to help them prepare for this playoff run?

HOUSTON: "We can't take credit for that. That's coaching. I think the coaches have done a great job of getting them prepared and helping them understand. Also, just playing experience. That was their first game. You grow confidence the more you play, and I think those guys are doing a great job doing that."

Q: You kind of grew up with guys like LB Tamba Hali and LB Derrick Johnson and they never had this opportunity. Do you think about them a little bit now that you're getting this chance?

HOUSTON: "I do. I talk to the young guys and explain that situation and tell them how important this situation is. Not too many guys get this opportunity. I was telling them how I have played with some of the great ones who have played here and they never had this opportunity, so take advantage of this opportunity. Let's make the best of it."

Q: When you're the guy giving the postgame speeches in the locker room, what makes you want to be that guy?

HOUSTON: "I speak what I feel in my heart and my mind. I just know that we're young and I have experience in certain situations, so I just try tell them and help enlighten them."

Q: Have you felt like you've needed to take on a leadership role in the locker room this year as opposed to other years since you are one of those veteran guys?

HOUSTON: "I've been doing it for a couple of years now, so it's not just something that just happened overnight. I think I worked to get to this position and to be here. They look up to me."

Q: Facing a quarterback like Tom Brady who likes to get rid of the ball as quick as he does, what changes for you guys in your preparation?

HOUSTON: “Put them in third-and-long situations. We have to do a great job of stopping the run. If it’s third-and-short, the ball’s coming out fast. If you put him in third-and-long situations, then he has to hold the ball a little longer. Hopefully it will give us a little time to get there.”

Q: When you hear Patriots QB Tom Brady say after the game ‘everybody thinks we suck’ do you laugh at that and be like ‘I’ve never thought that before’?

HOUSTON: “Yes, because I just think he’s just trying to get himself and everybody else over there fired up. Everybody knows the Patriots, this is I think their eighth year making it to the AFC Championship, so I think it’s something for himself and the Patriots.”

Q: Do you ever get like that where you try to motivate yourself with strange things like that?

HOUSTON: “No, I don’t. To each his own. Whatever gets him fired up. I think that’s what he wanted to do.”

Q: Do you get excited when the weather is extremely cold as a defensive player?

HOUSTON: “It doesn’t matter to me on gameday because on gameday I’ll be warm regardless. I just hate TV timeouts when you’re standing there. Besides that, it doesn’t matter what temperature we play in.”

Q: Patrick Mahomes has been a special player and someone you admire. In his first playoff game what did you see from him and how he handled that situation?

HOUSTON: “I think everybody has seen what he’s been doing all season. Nothing changed. He attacked the game like he’s been doing all season, continued to play, stayed humble and kept his head right.”