

Kansas City Chiefs vs. Oakland Raiders

Sunday, December 30, 2018

Game 16

Postgame Quotes

Raiders Head Coach Jon Gruden



OPENING STATEMENT: "I would like to congratulate the Chiefs. Andy Reid and his staff have done a great job assembling that team. Patrick Mahomes has my vote for whatever I am voting for. Obviously, the turnovers were a big part of today's game. We moved the ball extremely well. We turned the ball over at midfield I think three or four times. I am really proud of the effort of Kolton Miller chasing down the man and our defense fighting. There is nothing wrong with the effort. I will take responsibility for the loss. We have a lot of work to do. I really like this football team. I liked the way we finished. I know today was not a good note, but great group of guys that laid quite a foundation I think we can build on. I am excited about that."

Q: Was that Kolton chase down symbolic of the season?

GRUDEN: "I think so. I think the goal line stand that followed that was also a good message that our fans can remember from this team. We have to add some pieces. We know that and hopefully we can do that here soon."

Q: Do you know how close you might be to be a team to go to the playoffs?

GRUDEN: "I am not going to get into that today. I know what we were when the season started. I know we lost a lot of men for a lot of different reasons. We still managed to fight, scratch and claw to be a competitive football team. For that, I am very excited and proud."

Q: What did you see on Derek Carr's first interception?

GRUDEN: "Obviously there was some miscommunication there. We had the matchup we wanted. Jared (Cook) thought we went to a running play. The noise, the hand signals were not clear, but that was going to be a pass, Cook against (Daniel) Sorensen. Sorensen won. One man thought it was a running play. One man didn't."

Q: How can you sum up your first season back?

GRUDEN: "I love it. That is all I will say. I love it and it is a great responsibility. I am sure I have a lot of critics out there, but I am really excited to continue to stick my shovel in the ground and keep digging."

Q: What was the biggest change in the second half of the season?

GRUDEN: "I think our men learned the system of football that we are playing here. I think they believed in one another. I think they got to know each other. We had so many different players coming and going, it is kind of hard not to only play good football, but have some comradery, unity and chemistry. All of those things are really important in pro-football. Look at the Chiefs. Those guys have been here a while. They have been building

at this operation. It is going to take us a little bit. We have some things to look forward to in the offseason. It is a bittersweet ending for sure. It is hard to lose a game like we did today.”

Q: Was Mahomes part of the Gruden quarterback camp?

GRUDEN: “I think I summarized what I thought when I saw him. His film at Texas Tech I had seen before. He is a trick show artist. This guy here is an amazing quarterback. If you counted the top 20 throws he made at Texas Tech, they were the top 20 throws in the country. He is an amazing talent and that is a credit to Andy for trading up and getting him. It is also a credit for them to let him watch a guy like Alex Smith for a whole year. It is a credit to the Chiefs for surrounding him with quite an arsenal of talent. They are going to be tough in the playoffs, you’ll see.”

Q: What about Derek’s progress in the last few months?

GRUDEN: “I don’t think he did bad today either. I thought he did some good things today. You throw for 4,000 yards in the NFL with what he has been through, it is quite a year. Quite a year indeed, new system, young tackles, inside three guards are all gone, receivers coming and going, new featured back. He did some really good things to build upon. We have to get better around him, and I have to get better myself.”

Q: What intrigues you about Mike Mayock as a general manager candidate?

GRUDEN: “He loves it. He is a passionate personnel man. He has done it for a long time. I know he has had opportunities to get back into the NFL as a general manager. We will see what happens. We will see how the dust settles.”

Q: Where are you in your GM search?

GRUDEN: “We have interviewed some people. Like I said, hopefully we come to a conclusion and get on with life here because we have a number of picks in this year’s draft and we plan on doing a good job researching these players and add some real weapons to our football team.”

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Raiders QB Derek Carr



Q: How do you think Kolton Miller pushed through his rookie season?

CARR: “I think he is awesome. I think he is going to be a great player. He was hurt all year and everyone talked about if he was practicing with a knee brace and all of those kinds of things. That man was struggling all year. It is hard enough being a rookie in this league, let alone playing through injury and losing and when you are the first-round pick. I told him you should have gone in the second round. It is a lot easier. They do not expect as much, but when it is a first round pick and people talking about him, he just doesn’t care. He is awesome. He just shows up every day, works his tail off and I can’t wait to see how he looks when he comes back. I know he is going to hit the weight room hard. I am really excited to see what kind of player he turns into because he is a special one for sure.”

Q: Will it be a big benefit to have the veteran Jordy Nelson back next year?

CARR: “I think the thing that will benefit us is that I will have been in the system already. When we are learning it all together, it makes it harder for both sides to get on the same page to be honest. When there is Jordy, myself, hopefully we get our guys resigned that we want to stay here, more guys you have in the same system, they can coach those positions. There is so much communication after the huddle breaks. When new guys are thrown in there and Jordy is having to correct things like “Get this here. Run this split.”, it will help that we have been in the system. We know that there are going to be new guys. We are not naïve. I am going into my sixth year now crazy enough. I know there are going to be new people that we are going to have to get caught up to speed. Having Jordy for sure will help with those new guys, whoever comes in.”

Q: How did the word accountability come into play this season internally?

CARR: “From the top down, everyone is accountable to each other. Everyone admits to their own mistakes. Everyone is called out equally and evenly when it is their turn. It is drastic to say the least. It started from day one and it did not change. The guys that were here and have been here understand that conversation we had of holding each other accountable. Coach Gruden came and he is going to do that regardless. I was really proud of our guys dealing with a lot of things we had to deal with. Our veterans stayed true to the process and laying that foundation of what Coach Gruden wanted and showing our young guys what it takes to compete and do things in this league. We all have to step up and play better. Get some more wins next year because that is really all I care about.”

Q: Gruden has been the same man every day. How is that important?

CARR: "It is very important because when you get a locker room full of grown men with all different kinds of opinions, if you waiver in your leadership they are going to notice and they are going to call it out right away. It just is what it is. That is the NFL. Coach Gruden does not waiver. He lets you know what he expects from you. He holds you to that standard and if you don't like it, he will let you go on somewhere else. If you do like it and you do love football the way he does, you are going to love playing for him. He has not changed one bit. I love playing for him. He has helped my career tremendously with the knowledge I have. We need some more wins, which are going to come with him. There is no doubt about that. We know that, but as we continue to grow and get some more guys in here that believe how he believes in doing things, we will be spot on.

Q: Are you hopeful that (Jared) Cook is resigned?

CARR: "There is no secret about it. The last two years, he is my go-to guy. He is the guy I have been trying to get the ball to. I trust him. He works his tail off. We have a great relationship. One we have worked on and communicated well and gotten it to a place over two years we know what each other is thinking and those kinds of things. Things happen like today, but you hope to keep a guy like that. As a player, you just show up and hope your guys are there. If not, you trust the coaches.

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Raiders Players



WR JORDY NELSON

Q: How close is this team to taking the next step?

NELSON: “You have no idea. Every year is different. Every team is different. Every year is different. It could be one year. It could be a few years, you never know. You can’t predict because things change. You just have to work and that’s it.”

Q: How difficult was this season for you?

NELSON: “There are a lot of ups and downs, a lot of unknowns, a lot of new things but again, it’s football. There are some good things and some bad things and some experiences you will take away from it. We enjoyed it.”

Q: Did you see things down the stretch that give you optimism for next year?

NELSON: “Yeah, obviously we have some young guys that you can see have grown over the year, through their experiences and playing time. It’s hard. If you look at our two tackles being rookies, it’s possible that they are playing against guys that are five to ten years older than them. That’s a huge difference. I think they battled extremely well. The most valuable thing is the experience they got and I think they did extremely well, especially down the stretch, especially once they knew what they were doing.”

Q: How deflating was it to have turnovers on your first four possessions?

NELSON: “Not ideal, especially very ironic, that is pretty much how we started out the last game against them. You can’t turn the ball over against one of the best teams in the league, especially on the road. When we don’t, we play well and put ourselves in opportunities to win and when we do it’s a battle.”

LB TAHIR WHITEHEAD

Q: How much pride do you take in playing almost every snap, wearing the green dot and being a leader through some difficult periods?

WHITEHEAD: “I take a great deal of pride being out there every play and wearing the green dot. Essentially, that leadership role, they say the best ability is availability, in this league. I take a great deal of pride in being able to be on the field whenever I am needed and throughout the duration of the season. That is just a testament to the hard work that is being put in on and off the field, from a training standpoint. From a recovery standpoint and taking care of myself and I’m just going out there and making sure I’m available and able to play.”

Q: What do you think was established this year, in terms of a foundation, that you guys can build off of for next year?

WHITEHEAD: “I think, exactly right, that is the case, a foundation is established. Down the home stretch, the back end of the season, we understand the type of guys we have in the locker room. The guys that have a blue collar mentality just show up and work. We just keep our head down and keep chopping. I have gained a great deal of respect for the men in this locker room throughout the course of the season. With it being my first year here I was pretty much just trying to come in and lead by example. Seeing how guys worked pushed me and motivated me to just work even harder. Throughout the season we all just fed off each other, kept showing up and just kept working, even though the season didn’t go quit how we envisioned. We just kept showing up and working every day.”

Q: How do you look back on that goal line stand?

WHITEHEAD: “It just shows the type of men we have in this locker room. At that point in the game, it’s easy to just put your head down because we are getting behind. I missed two big plays in the game, interceptions that could have turned the tide in the game. You know, you can’t dwell on them. You have to go out there and keep playing, keep chopping wood. That is exactly what I did. They made more plays than we made. That is just what it came down to.”

RB DEANDRE WASHINGTON

Q: Comments on the Kolton Miller making the tackle on LB Reggie Ragland after he intercepted the ball:

WASHINGTON: “That is what we need. Those type of plays, you see guys character. You see guys who really love this game and really want to win. To see him run down and make a tackle like that and right after that the defense made a fourth down stop. That’s big, that’s big. Him making that play gave the defense a chance.”

Q: Is it a weird place for you to be in to be looking to the future this season?

WASHINGTON: “It is a weird place. I was telling coach, I was sick to finish the season the way we did today. Really, just getting our butt whipped, is kind of sickening. Like you said, it’s kind of a weird place because you see it. You see guys on the team who really want to win. You see all of the effort plays. You see guys breaking their neck trying to get there on this-and-that. Things just didn’t go the right way. We didn’t make plays when we needed to, really, this whole season. We finished this season not making the playoffs, obviously not the record we wanted. You see those little glimmers, those little spots of light in different situations and in different games. We just have to figure out how to multiply that and keep that spark light up instead of getting lit and then blown out. Then we have to figure out how to get it sparked up again. We have to figure out how to keep it lit the whole time. We have to figure out how to do that.”

Q: How frustrating was it being able to move the ball and then having the first four drives end in turnovers?

WASHINGTON: “Those turnovers are frustrating, especially against this offense. We knew you can’t drop the ball on the ground four times or let them get it four times and think you are going to have the opportunity to win the game. You’ve got Pat Mahomes, you’ve got Tyreek Hill, those guys are great. They are AFC champions for a reason. To give them the ball four times, four free possessions really, it’s going to be hard to win the game. It’s a testament to their defense, causing those situations. Their defensive players, they have been doing it all year, trying to get the offense more possessions, more possessions. They did a great job, the first time we played them, of getting the ball out. I think we had three then. They got another four today so we will never be able to beat anybody by putting the ball on the ground three or four times.”

RB DOUG MARTIN

Q: How has your health been these last few games given your injuries this year?

MARTIN: “These last few games, I’ve been 100 percent healthy. I had a knee, a rib and an ankle [injury]. But, the past few games I’ve been completely healthy. I just showed what I can do when I’m healthy. Today wasn’t the best game. It didn’t come out the way we wanted to. I give my hat off to Kansas City. They’re a great team. I felt like they wanted to win more than we did.”

Q: It seems like you found a rhythm today and ran the ball like you always have – yards after contact, getting low, doing things you’ve always done. How did it feel today?

MARTIN: “It feels amazing to get back to that. It brought me back to the days that I was really toting the rock – 2015, 2012 – back in Tampa when they were feeding me and letting me find that rhythm. Hats off to the O-linemen, the full backs and the tight ends that have been blocking for me as well.”

Q: In the first half, you guys got off to a difficult start due to the turnovers. How frustrating is that?

MARTIN: “It’s frustrating. I was frustrated with myself because I had that turnover, the fumble. It was something we talked about. We hammered and hammered and hammered on it before the game. I coughed it up. I didn’t have the ball in my correct arm. I should have had it in my left arm. Overall, we need to take care of the ball as a team. We got to be better at that next year.”

T KOLTON MILLER

Q: On catching Reggie Ragland from behind on the interception return.

MILLER: “I took my angle like we practiced during camp. We practiced angles and stuff. So, I just took my angle, tried to run him down and I did.”

Q: A lot of guys would have probably given up on that interception, but you stayed with it. Take me through that play.

MILLER: “It was just effort. [I] was just wanting to stop that and we ended up getting a stop in the end [on fourth down].”

Q: How surprised were you that you were able to run him [Ragland] down from behind?

MILLER: “To be honest, I was trying to knock the ball out from behind him. But, I didn’t get to do that. I’m glad we got the stop.”

Q: This season, you faced a battery of top edge rushers. Going through it all, how do you think it’s made you better?

MILLER: “Just fighting against those guys, fighting through injury, it’s been a huge learning year this year. I’m going to bring it with me into the off season and get better.”

Q: Were you surprised by anything in your rookie season?

MILLER: “The speed of the game. I was sort of expecting the size and strength. I feel like I really grew this year.”

Q: How do you think your experience this season, combined with an offseason of being able to get bigger and stronger, will help you next season?

MILLER: “I think it will make it easier to be honest. You can punch better. You can catch guys. It makes it easier to draw guys off the ball, So, I think a good offseason will do me well.”

K DANIEL CARLSON

Q: On the season.

CARLSON: “Obviously, we’d love to keep playing and go into the postseason. For me, this is something I can build off of. As a team, we’re coming together. We’re building and next year is going to be exciting. Hopefully, we’ll be peaking around this time [next year] and getting ready for the postseason. I’m going to keep working and continue to improve and build on what I’ve done this season. I feel like I’ve gotten better from when I showed up here to today. I’m going to hit the off season hard.”

Q: On his confidence heading into next season.

CARLSON: “I’ve always had confidence in myself. Obviously, it’s been a shaky season. Early on when I got cut and was going through all of that, you do question yourself sometimes. But, at the end of the day, I knew I had the ability. I got a great opportunity here. The coaches, the team had faith in me and I was able to pull through. That’s my job and that’s why I believe in myself. I’m going to do everything I can and everything I can control to do that again next year.”

Q: You made a 50-yard field goal for the third time this season. Is there anything that has been especially important for you from those distances?

CARLSON: “Everybody doing their job. We’ve had such good protection all year, great snap and hold, it makes my job a lot easier – especially from longer [distances]. If anything is a little off, it plays a bigger part in that kick. You might not see it so much on extra points. But, if all 10 other guys have done their job to a very high level, I get a lot of the credit for it. But, they’ve made my job so much easier. Whether it’s a 50-yarder or a 20-yarder, I approach it the same. Luckily I’ve been able to connect on a good stretch of them towards the end of the season.”

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Postgame Quotes

Chiefs Head Coach Andy Reid



OPENING STATEMENT: “As far as injuries go, really (Derrick) Nadi, he had a concussion. That would be one and then Jordan Lucas had a stinger and they came out of the game. Other than that, I think we are going to be pretty healthy there and I think they will bounce back pretty quick. I’d like to just thank our fans. They were phenomenal tonight. I mean, extraordinary, phenomenal. We came off two losses here and we are getting close to New Year’s, it’s cold and they could’ve just stayed home, but they didn’t. Everyone showed up and they were incredible. Our players feed off that. Now we have another opportunity to play here. We can’t wait to bring whoever it is, we don’t know yet, whoever it is, here with our home field advantage. I am proud of our team and the job they did. The guys came out with tremendous energy. It started with our defense, the big plays they made, the turnovers. I thought Bob Sutton had a great game plan and the guys executed. Eric Bieniemy had a phenomenal game plan, as did Dave Toub. The coordinators I thought were spot on. This was a tricky game. Jon (Gruden) has done a nice job. He’s finished the season strong here. He’s taken what players he has there and done a heck of a job. We had to really bear down and make sure we took care of business and again I am proud of our guys for doing that, for taking care of business. We had some new guys that stepped up and played and they did a good job for us. With that, time’s yours.”

Q: What kind of incentive was getting the bye and getting home field advantage in the playoffs?

REID: “Listen, I mean I’m not going to tell you we didn’t want to play here. That’s a good thing. On the other hand, I would say just getting back playing good football. We just felt like we had kind of let off the accelerator a little bit there and didn’t take care of opportunities we had. I think the guys wanted to bear down on it. It wasn’t going to happen again in their minds. It was fun to be around that part of it and feel that energy. That’s how they came out and played, just the way they practiced all week, with that same intensity that I felt before the game and during the week during practice.”

Q: Other than some isolated periods, you all have played good defense at home, better than on the road, why is that?

REID: “I don’t know that. I just know what we are capable of doing and where we’re going. It’s good to kind of get some guys in there who are flying around and making plays. We are getting healthy again and that’s a plus for us.”

Q: How important was it for the defense to set the tone early and build that foundation in the first two quarters?

REID: “That was really important. To step up and things can change just like that. You get a couple of things in place and you get a little bit on a roll and get your confidence

going, I think that's huge. As a football team, not just as a defense, but as a football team. That was important."

Q: Can you put into words what Patrick Mahomes has meant for you guys this year?

REID: "Yes, he's been the MVP. He's done good. He is a heck of a player. I was fortunate to be around a three-time MVP and a couple of guys who were right on the edge of being the MVP and this guy is in that category. He is so deserving. In a world of great players, for him to do the things he's done is phenomenal, and he will continue to do that. He still has room to grow. That's the exciting part and something for Kansas City to be very excited about. His work ethic and everything else is MVP caliber level. He comes to work with a purpose, makes everyone feel a part of it, makes everyone around him better and has done that for our organization, for all of us, his fans and coaches and owner too. He's been very important."

Q: When the season started did you envision him having the 50 touchdown passes and 5,000 passing yards?

REID: "You never know. I am not much of a crystal ball guy. I know he had a good foundation that was set, Alex Smith was a big part of that and helping him understand what this league is all about, but who knows. In this game you don't know week-to-week. You go out and do your best. You work hard, and you keep that process going every day, every week that you have an opportunity to do so and he did that. Does it surprise me? Nothing he does really surprises me. I saw that the first year. You don't know, but heck, I still think he can keep growing. We haven't seen the end of it."

Q: Tyreek got banged up in the Baltimore game but seemed to have his burst back today, is he back to 100 percent?

REID: "He looked pretty fast today and probably had a shot on him just before half there on that deep one. The quarterback's arm got hit just a little bit right at the end there, or he would've had another touchdown. His speed looked like it was healthy."

Q: A lot of records broken today between Tyreek Hill and Travis Kelce, those guys have been part of what Patrick Mahomes is doing here, what can you say about their performances this season?

REID: "You have to give credit to the o-line too. They don't get any records other than the satisfaction of those guys. Every time one of those names comes up they get all fired up vicariously. I will tell you my hat goes off to Travis (Kelce). We've seen him grow right in front of us here and become what he is. He's tough to stop. Another one who loves playing the game. Tyreek (Hill) comes out every day and does just what he does here. It's fast, you guys have been there, the media, you've seen how he goes about it. Everything he does is fast, he never stops. I've never seen a guy with that kind of speed have that kind of endurance. I told him he's got the nickname the cheetah, one chase and they're out of gas. This guy keeps going so we might have to give him a new nickname."

Q: What was the reasoning behind rotating Cam Erving and Jeff Allen tonight?

REID: “Jeff has been doing a good job, we just kind of went with the hot hand there. Cam (Erving) has had a phenomenal year for us. The other guy stepped in and did a good job and so Cam was all in on that. Cam had an opportunity to play today, which was great getting it rolling.”

Q: Do you feel good going into a bye week about getting Sammy Watkins, Spencer Ware, Eric Berry and maybe Laurent Duvernay-Tardif being ready to play in the playoffs?

REID: “I think so. Larry (Laurent Duvernay-Tardif) had a good week. The other guys really, (Sammy) Watkins had a good week. The other guys have all been out there and going through practice, or at least parts of it. I think the week off will help us get healthy and where we need to be.”

Q: The road to the Super Bowl runs through Arrowhead, as a head coach, how exciting is that for you?

REID: “It’s exciting because we have great fans. There’s nothing like playing at Arrowhead. I know they are going to load this place up. It was standing-room only today, and that fires me up.”

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Chiefs Quarterback Patrick Mahomes



Q: When the fans start chanting M-V-P, what's that do for you?

MAHOMES: "It's special. This place, Arrowhead, this community and this team. For me, it's awesome to be a part of it and I'm excited for the future ahead."

Q: Can you walk us through what you saw on the touchdown to Demarcus Robinson?

MAHOMES: "Yeah, the play was designed for Tyreek (Hill) and they had kind of double covered him, maybe even triple covered him. Don't really tell anybody, but Demarcus was supposed to run a stop route, but he beat him so well off the line that he just kept running. He threw that hand up so I just put it out there and he made a great play and scored on it."

Q: You and Mitchell Schwartz were hugging each other after the game. What were you two saying to each other?

MAHOMES: "He just congratulated me. I wasn't thinking about it at the time, but he congratulated me. This team, we love each other, we root for each other and that's why we've had such success so far."

Q: What kind of incentive was it to get the first-round bye and play all of your playoff games here?

MAHOMES: "It's always an advantage to be in this stadium. For us to be able to get the bye week, get your bodies right and ready for this run and then be able to play in this stadium where we can feed off of this energy, it's special and we're excited for the opportunity to do it."

Q: In the beginning of the game, it was third down and you threw a short pass to Anthony Sherman for the first down. It seems like you guys haven't been able to get those little plays the last few weeks. Did that give you guys a little boost right out of the gate?

MAHOMES: "Definitely, being able to get the chains moving early and score on that first drive gets the momentum in our favor. The defense all night long was getting stop after stop, turnover after turnover and that's championship football. We're excited that they played that way and that the offense stepped up when we needed to and we're going to carry that momentum into the playoffs."

Q: On one of those turnovers, Reggie Ragland got caught from behind by an offensive lineman. Did you guys give him any trouble on the sideline after that?

MAHOMES: “Yeah, but that dude’s pretty fast. He’s from Pitt, so he can run a little bit. I saw him when he played in college. I think he was a tight end at first. I definitely said something to him in the locker room after. I think there was another guy chasing him too that would’ve caught him. That was his excuse.”

Q: You’ve thrown 50 touchdown passes this season. Can you put that into perspective?

MAHOMES: “Not really. When you’re in the moment, you’re not really thinking about it. It’s a credit to my teammates. The offensive line kept me up all season long, guys were making plays on short passes that were scoring touchdowns and it’s a combination of all that with Coach (Andy) Reid calling these great plays.”

Q: Did you make it a point to go grab the ball after Demarcus’ touchdown?

MAHOMES: “Yeah, I grabbed that one and I grabbed Tyreek’s just cause they’re special. To do those things in this league, it doesn’t happen very often. I’ll definitely keep that one, but hopefully I can get a few more as this season ends and at the end of my career.”

Q: How many other footballs have you kept?

MAHOMES: “I kept my first touchdown pass. That’s the only other football I’ve collected.”

Q: There’s a lot of discussion about who’s going to be the M-V-P. Do you feel like you’ve been the most valuable player this season?

MAHOMES: “That’s a hard question. There’s a lot of guys that have played this year that I feel like deserve the M-V-P. It’s not up to me. I just go out there and play my game and try to win football games and let all that stuff handle itself after the season. Hopefully I’m still playing whenever it happens.”

Q: Is it someway enough that the fans consider you their M-V-P?

MAHOMES: “For me, it’s all about playing for my teammates and this community, that’s the biggest thing. No matter what happens on the outside, they know that every time I step on that field I give it everything I have and hopefully we win a lot of football games doing that.”

Q: Travis Kelce and Tyreek set some records today. What have they brought to you?

MAHOMES: “First off, they’ve put in the work. All offseason, they’ve worked with me. They came and visited me so we could get extra routes in. They’ve done all of that stuff and prepared themselves for this situation. They’ve executed and capitalized every single game. I’m excited that I have them for the foreseeable future and that we can keep building that chemistry this season and next.”

Q: You’ve used the word “trust” a lot when referring to your pass-catchers and offensive lineman. How crucial has that been to what you’ve done?

MAHOMES: "It's everything. Being able to know that the guy's going to be in the right spot and that he's going to win his battle and get open is huge. Being able to sit in the pocket and know that the offensive line is going to give me the time needed is what you need to have in order to have a great team and a great offense."

Q: Speaking about fans, what did you think of the fan who has gotten you tattooed on his back?

MAHOMES: "It's crazy. I saw it on my Twitter. It's special that that's how this community is."

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Chiefs Players



C MITCH MORSE

Q: Can you talk about what Patrick Mahomes accomplished this year and what it means for the offense as a whole?

MORSE: "I think it's kudos to the way he plays. Not only his talent which is uncanny, but the way he prepares, the way he conducts himself in the huddle and then the guy has got a swagger about him that's infectious. Kudos to him and kudos to all those guys who set records today, but it's going to be a lot sweeter when we're able to capitalize these next few weeks. We're going to enjoy this one for sure, but our focus is going to be on the next one."

Q: How great does it feel to have a bye next week?

MORSE: "Yeah, to take a nap. That's going to be great."

T MITCHELL SCHWARTZ

Q: People around the league were saying, what's wrong with the Chiefs. How did you guys fight through that?

SCHWARTZ: "It's execution at the end of the day. It's cliché and probably not what you want to hear, but it all goes back to practice. We learned this last year with a 5 out of 6 games skid. You just got to attack in practice throughout the week. You don't win by showing up Sunday, you win by practicing hard Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. The mental aspect of things, staying on top of it on a day like today for instance. That's a great defensive coordinator, I went against him in Cincinnati, and that defense has pretty much everything that they can throw at you. You just don't know what to expect so you got to be mentally prepared and be on it and not take anything for granted. They disguised some things really well in the first half, some tendency breakers and things like that. It's a credit to all the guys, (Anthony Sherman) for the third down conversion to really spark things. To Tyreek (Hill) to catch the touchdown. Just things like that if you don't stay on top of things throughout the week then maybe Patrick (Mahomes) doesn't find his hot read in (Sherman), Sherman doesn't get a first down. That's a good example of preparation."

Q: Can you tell us what those big plays do for an offense?

SCHWARTZ: "It's huge. It's keeping the chains alive. You don't really want to be in those third and long situations, unfortunately we put ourselves a few times in those today. It's a different feeling with the quarterback that we have and the receivers that we

have. It's not like, 'Oh man, it's third and ten.' It feels like we convert a not normal amount of those long third downs, sometimes in spectacular fashion which is really cool, and it fires everybody up. It gives us a little juice for the rest of the series."

TE TRAVIS KELCE

Q: What does it mean to get the record and to secure the top spot in the AFC?

KELCE: "The individual accolades in this game alone I think are a bit overrated. It's an ultimate team game. We've got 11 guys out there trying to push for one goal and sure enough we achieved that today as a team. I'm ecstatic to finally get home field advantage for the playoffs, bring everyone to Arrowhead, first round bye. That's what these fans deserve."

Q: Is three straight division championships enough for this team?

KELCE: "No, obviously not. We've been in this situation before and we've learned from it and we'll go out there and sure enough we'll make sure we give these fans and this crowd and this city everything we've got."

Q: What did it feel like when Patrick Mahomes embraced you after your accomplishment was recognized on the big screen?

KELCE: "I'm just appreciative of him. Him and Coach Reid and the offensive staff, everyone on our offensive line, the receivers. Like I said, this is the ultimate team game. For me to be able to be accountable up to that standard means a lot to me."

LB REGGIE RAGLAND

Q: What happened on the interception return when you got caught from behind?

RAGLAND: "The reason I got caught was I was slowing down so (Patrick Mahomes) could break the record a little faster. That's what it was."

Q: How rare is an interception for you because you only had one at Alabama?

RAGLAND: "I caught that one, I was trying to do a stunt and I just jumped in the air and caught it at the line of scrimmage. In high school I had one, so not a lot of people say they got one at each level of playing. I'm excited."

Q: What does a game like this do for you guys after the criticism of this defense?

RAGLAND: "First off, let me say criticism we don't care about. It comes with the territory of the game, even if you're doing good they are going to talk regardless. I'm excited to be in this locker room with these guys. I'd go to war with these guys any day of the week. For us to come out here and play like that, it's just momentum going in to the playoffs. Criticism, we don't care. It is what is. It ain't about how you start, it's all about how you finish, so we've got to keep going out there and playing."

DL CHRIS JONES

Q: Can you talk about this defense?

JONES: “Hell of a game to those guys. I know I’m talking in third person, but hell of a game. Three points? You can’t beat that. Thanks to Bob (Sutton). We had the scheme ready, players ready. We knew we get a bye after this. I think it is more so everybody is ready to get home.”

Q: What is it like for this defense having this momentum going into the playoffs?

JONES: “We know what we are capable of. We kind of fell short the past two games so we knew we had to make a statement this game.”

Q: What was the week like coming off of those two losses?

JONES: “It was tough. It was tough because they are games we know we should have won. We had a chance to win and we put that on the defense if we lose. It was tough, but we knew we had to bounce back.”

Q: How important was it to have the bye week?

JONES: “It was more so important to get the homefield advantage to make sure we host the playoffs through. That was the main focus. Instead of getting the bye week, that was the main focus, making sure we stay at Arrowhead.”

WR TYREEK HILL

Q: How does the number one seed feel?

HILL: “It feels great, man. But we just have to keep at it. Keep balling and keep doing what we have been doing all year.”

Q: The record for you, the record for Patrick Mahomes, the record for Travis Kelce, what does that mean to you guys?

HILL: “It was amazing, but I feel like none of that means anything to us. We are all trying to reach a goal, and that is the Super Bowl. Head down, we are all focused. Like I said, it feels great, but right now I just want to win a Super Bowl.”

Q: What was it like to bounce back tonight after the last couple weeks?

HILL: “It is great, man. Everybody is happy, man. It is always good to see everybody smiling, especially Coach Reid.”

WR DEMARCUS ROBINSON

Q: Does the significance of your catch being the 50th touchdown and breaking 5,000 yards resonate with you?

ROBINSON: “I didn’t even know he got over 5,000 yards. I was just playing ball. He just made a great throw to me and I ended up in the end zone with it.”

Q: What did you do with that football?

ROBINSON: “I gave it to him. I let him keep it.”

Q: Can you walk us through your touchdown?

ROBINSON: “I saw the safety was kind of low. I was going to break it in, but I saw the safety was kind of low, so I was like, ‘I’m just going to take it over the top.’”

Q: How do you feel playing with a quarterback with 5,000 yards and 50 touchdowns?

ROBINSON: “We are definitely lucky to have a guy as great as he is. We just have to keep coming out. It is a team effort. He couldn’t do that without the offensive line or the receivers. We just go out every day and try to compete and make it easier on him.”

S DANIEL SORENSEN

Q: Can you talk about the great plays by the defense to forge this victory?

SORENSEN: “We were able to force a lot of turnovers, give our offense the ball and take the ball out of their hands. I was fortunate enough to get one of them. Maybe a missed communication on their part and I was able to take advantage of it.”

Q: How sweet is that moment getting that pick six?

SORENSEN: “It’s pretty fun. One of those that you cherish.”

Q: What does this AFC West Champions hat mean to you?

SORENSEN: “It means everything. Third time that we have been able to put on that hat and shirt. Biggest thing is we will be here for the next two playoff games in Kansas City.”

Q: How much more comfortable does it make you guys to know you don’t have to travel?

SORENSEN: “Oh, that’s huge. We get to be here in front of our fans in Arrowhead. We play well here. It means everything.”

LB JUSTIN HOUSTON

Q: How do you feel the defense played today?

HOUSTON: “We just have to keep it rolling. I think it’s a great time for us to play like this. We were firing on all cylinders from the front to the back end. We just have to build off it.”

Q: What was practice like this week?

HOUSTON: “I think we had a great week of practice and preparation. Everyone was flying to the ball. We had a lot of energy at practice. Like I said, we just have to build on it and continue to get better.”

Q: From a defensive perspective, what can you say about Patrick Mahomes and what he has meant to this team?

HOUSTON: “He means a lot. His numbers speak for themselves. He made history today. Any quarterback that can come into the game and put up that many touchdowns, it gives the defense some breathing room and put us in a position to do what we like to do as defensive lineman and outside linebackers. We like to rush the passer. Anytime you are ahead going into the fourth quarter you can pin your ears back and go.”

Q: Is the way he can break a defense something you can appreciate?

HOUSTON: “I definitely do. He’s a playmaker. He can make play after play. I am glad he’s on my team.”

Q: Have you ever been in a stadium where the fans are chanting MVP like today?

HOUSTON: “First time. I am pretty sure it won’t be the last time with that guy.”

Q: How does it feel when you hear the crowd chanting like that for your teammate?

HOUSTON: “It means a lot. If you talk to Pat (Mahomes), we have bigger goals than that in mind. Right now we are just focused on the next game. We want to put this behind us.”

Q: The second half the defense seemed to improve at stopping the run, did you feel like you made adjustments at halftime to fix that?

HOUSTON: “We did. We made some adjustments and figured out how they wanted to attack us, so we switched it up on the sideline.”

Q: You all have played better defense at home than on the road, why is that?

HOUSTON: “Honestly, I think the crowd helped. Anytime you have the offensive line jumping offsides or not sure when the ball is being snapped it gives the defense time to attack. That’s big for us.”

Q: Can you sum up how it feels now compared to having the bye week a few years ago and what the state of mind is now?

HOUSTON: “Like I told everyone in the locker room, it means nothing if we don’t take advantage of this opportunity. We have one game coming up. That’s our focus. We need to do what we have to do to attack this game. One game at a time. We only have one game.”

Q: What lessons do you feel this team has learned from last year’s playoff loss?

HOUSTON: “That’s behind us. That’s old news. You don’t focus on the past. Don’t let the past poison your future. We are focused on the future now and we are getting ready for whoever we have to play. We are going to take advantage of this opportunity.”

Q: Can you walk us through your sack and fumble recovery?

HOUSTON: “When I come from the blind side it’s easier to go for the ball than to go for a big hit. Any time I can cause that or get a good shot on the ball that’s what I go for.”

Q: How much pride do you all take in being able to swing momentum the way the defense was able to do in the first quarter?

HOUSTON: “We take a lot of pride in it because we know if we can get the ball in Pat’s (Mahomes) hands, we’ve seen what he can do when we have the ball, so we just want to keep the ball in our offenses hands because they can make plays at any time.”