

# Brady ready for cold weather, LA Chargers on Sunday

By MIKE SHALIN  
Associated Press

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. — His coach downplays it. Tom Brady does not.

Brady knows the cold-weather New England Patriots should have an advantage when they host the warm-weather Los Angeles Chargers in Sunday's AFC divisional-round game.

Hours before, Bill Belichick said, "We're playing the Chargers. We're not playing the weather — whatever it is, it is. We're going to be on the same field" when asked about having no advantage. His quarterback made it clear this team is quite comfortable in the expected chilly conditions.

New England will apparently dodge the snowstorm that's making its way to the East Coast, but it will be cold. It's the kind of cold the Patriots, who are seeking their eighth straight trip to the AFC title game and a sixth Super Bowl title in the Brady era, know all too well.

"I just think the ability to practice in it," Brady told his regular Friday media session. "Like today, it's very similar to what we're going to get on Sunday, so just knowing how many layers you have to put on, and kind of how you're going to



AP Photo/Charles Krupa, File

**In this Dec. 31, 2017, file photo, New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady keeps limber on the sideline in the cold weather during the first half of an NFL football game against the New York Jets in Foxborough, Mass.**

feel when you have the nice, warm, heated benches out there like we will on Sunday.

"It's cold and that's just this part of this time of year. But it's good to be playing when it's cold out, it's good to be playing this time of year in Foxborough."

Thursday provided the home team with much of what this area has to offer in early January.

"The weather changed a little bit yesterday," Brady

said. "It snowed at the start, then got sunny, then got cloudy, then got windy, then got sunny and it was just a bunch of different things. Just to practice in it, we're prepared for it, and hopefully we can use some of the things that we've learned to our advantage."

Brady has reached the AFC title game 12 times in 16 seasons as a starter. He will play in his record 38th postseason game and comes

in 27-10. He's 41 years old and hasn't had the greatest season of his stellar career, but still gets, well, chills about playing in the cold.

"It's a good time of year," he said. "I think everyone's excited to be out there. It's just a great environment of football."

Brady and counterpart Philip Rivers (37) combine to be the oldest pair of quarterbacks to face each other in a postseason game, break-

ing the mark Brady had with Peyton Manning.

"That's pretty cool," Brady said of the age record. "It's just fun to be around; I'm out there today practicing and it's whatever degrees out: 10 degrees, 15 degrees with the real feel. And I'm sitting here just playing with my friends, throwing the football around. So it's just a great blessing to be able to do it, do it here for this team, which I have loved to do. Philip's been on the same team — it means a lot.

"We all work hard to get to this point. These things aren't guaranteed, very tough to get to this point in the season. Every team four months ago thought they'd be playing in these games. The reality is that's not the way the NFL is. We're very fortunate and we have to go out and try and take advantage of it."

Brady is 7-0 head to head with Rivers. The only time Rivers has beaten New England was in 2008 when Brady was injured and Matt Cassel was at QB.

But Rivers has had a terrific season, and the Chargers (13-4) won at Baltimore in the wild-card round. LA is 8-1 on the road, while New England is 8-0 at home this season.

"He's a great player,"

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Foxboro, Mass., TV: CBS

Brady said. "They've had a lot of great teams in San Diego over the years, led by him. He's a great passer, tough, very accurate. He's a great leader. So when I think of that team it's just he's an emotional leader and he always gets those guys going. They always have a good offense ... it's a good team, obviously they're good in all three phases, they've won a lot of games this year, gone on the road a bunch, so they're very mentally tough. It's going to take our best to win."

Led by Rivers, Brady notes the Chargers' ability to come back in games, something that has been a Brady trademark over the years.

"They were down 14 to KC with four minutes left, down a bunch to the Steelers," Brady said. "You just can't count them out."

# NFL launches social justice initiative, stressing education

By BARRY WILNER  
AP Pro Football Writer

NEW YORK — The NFL is launching a social justice platform, with an emphasis on education, economic development and community and police relations.

The platform is called Inspire Change and includes the funding of grass-roots organizations, such as Big Brothers Big Sisters of America and Operation HOPE. It also will establish a digital learning curriculum for African-American history in 175 underserved high schools.

The league announced the initiative Friday in connection with its 32 teams and the Players Coalition, a group of players that works for social justice.

Inspire Change is the latest step for the league and the players after they established a working relationship in October 2017 following player demonstrations for social justice during the national anthem — a topic that drew attention from the White House.

"This launch involves new grants, new African-American history education programs in schools,

grants with organizations we have not worked with before and who are doing the work on the ground, and PSAs on broadcasts beginning with this weekend's playoff games," says Anna Isaacson, the NFL's senior vice president of social responsibility.

"You have to really take the time to understand the topic, you can't just dive in. We really took the time to meet with and talk to advocates and community leaders and to decide the most important aspects to focus on under the broad social justice umbrella."

The league's financial

commitment in 2018 was \$8.5 million, plus an additional \$2 million for NFL Foundation grants for clubs, former players and active players. For the 2019 fiscal year, that will increase to \$12 million overall. But those figures don't include the funds raised collaboratively by clubs and players as part of the social justice matching funds program each club has established.

Former player and players association president Troy Vincent, now the league's pro football operations chief, emphasizes how much work has been done

and continues to be done by the players. This week, he was told by Players Coalition co-founder Anquan Boldin that the NFL is still "on point" with its initiatives.

Vincent, who grew up outside Philadelphia, didn't understand the complexities of the incarceration rate and the bail system. He notes how opening of communication between the league office and teams and communities has helped steer the social justice movement.

"What we learned is that every community knew the grass roots organizations in their respective neighbor-

hoods that were doing the work, the daily hands-on work," Vincent said. "Working with the larger organizations gave us a national view."

Two of those larger groups, BBBSA and Operation HOPE, will receive grants. Operation HOPE will use the funds to support its nationwide work within underserved communities to equip young people and adults with financial tools and education.

For Big Brothers Big Sisters, it's all about mentoring, and many players already serve in such a capacity.

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