

Patriots coach Bill Belichick's Jan. 22 statement about the accusations that his team deflated the footballs used in Sunday's AFC Championship Game against the Colts.

The statement was transcribed in full by NBC Sports' Pro Football Talk:

"When I came in Monday morning I was shocked to learn of the news reports about the footballs. I had no knowledge whatsoever of this situation until Monday morning. I've learned a lot more about this process in the last three days than I knew — or had talked about — in the last 40 years that I've coached in this league. I had no knowledge of the various steps involved in the game balls, the process that happened between when they were prepared and went to the officials and went to the game, so I've learned a lot about that. Obviously, I understand that each team has the opportunity to prepare the balls the way they want, give them to the officials, and the game officials either approve or disapprove the balls, and that really was the end of it for me, until I learned a little bit more about it the last couple days.

"Let me just say that my personal coaching philosophy, my mentality, has always been to make things as difficult as possible for players in practice, and so with regard to footballs, I'm sure that any current or past player of mine would tell you that the balls we practice with are as bad as they can be. Wet, sticky, cold, slippery, whatever. However bad we can make them, I make them. And any time that players complain about the quality of the footballs, I make them worse, and that stops the complaining. So we never use the condition of the footballs as an excuse. We play with whatever, or kick with whatever we have to use, and that's the way it is. That has never been a priority for me, and I want the players to deal with a harder situation in practice

than they'll ever have to deal with in a game. And maybe that's part of our whole ball security philosophy.

"I'm trying to coach the team and that's what I want to do. I think we all know that quarterbacks, kickers, specialists have certain preferences on the footballs. They know a lot more than I do. They're a lot more sensitive to it than I am. I hear them comment on it from time to time, but I can tell you and they will tell you that there's never any sympathy whatsoever from me on that subject. Zero. Tom's personal preferences on his footballs are something that he can talk about in much better detail and information than I could possibly provide.

"I can tell you that in my entire coaching career I have never talked to any player, staff member about football air pressure. That is not a subject that I have ever brought up. To me, the footballs are approved by the league and game officials pre-game, and we play with what's out there. And that's the only way that I have ever thought about that.

"I've learned about the inflation range situation, obviously, with our footballs being inflated to the twelve and a half pound range, any deflation would then take us under that specification limit. Knowing that now, in the future we will certainly inflate the footballs above that low level to account for any possible change during the game. So as an example, if a ball deflated from 13.2 to 12.9, it wouldn't matter, but if it deflated from 12.5 to 12.3, it would — as an example. So we will take steps in the future to make sure that we don't put ourselves in that type of potential situation again.

"The National Football League is investigating the situation. We have cooperated fully, quickly and completely with every request that they have made, continue to be cooperative in any way that we can. I have no explanation for what

happened, and that's what they're looking into, so I can't comment on what they're doing. That's something that you should talk to them about. Again, my overall knowledge of football specifications, the overall process that happens on game day with the footballs, is very limited. I would say that during the course of the game, I honestly never — it probably has happened on an incomplete pass or something, but I've never touched a game ball. That's not something that I have any familiarity with on that. And again, I was completely and totally unaware of any of this that we're talking about in the last couple days, until Monday morning. Based on what I knew Sunday night, thinking back on this, which I've done several times, I can't think of anything that I would have done differently, based on what I knew then, based on what I know now. I've told you the one change we would make on the initial start level of the football pressure, but that's really about it.

“It's unfortunate that this is a story coming off two great playoff victories by our football team and our players, but again we've been cooperative with the NFL investigation. We'll continue to do so, and we'll turn all our attention, focus on the Seattle Seahawks, a very well-coached, talented, tough football team. We've spent the last four days, three days, with our preparations and so forth for the trip. Those are coming to a conclusion, we're wrapping that up, and we're starting our preparations today for the Seahawks and practicing through the weekend so we'll have a good, solid opportunity to get ourselves ready to go before we head down there.

“Again, I have no further comment on the NFL investigation, and I've told you all I know about the subject from my perspective. So that's where we are.”