

quarterback likes him and has a lot of trust in hi

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KANSAS CITY [Kansas City Chiefs Jerseys 2019](#) , Mo. — The Kansas City Chiefs' defense had heard the chorus of critics all season long, the ones that claimed their sieve-like line and shaky backfield would spoil young superstar Patrick Mahomes and cost them a chance to chase their first Super Bowl appearance in decades. Well, that defense is a big reason why the Chiefs are one step away. With persistent snow turning Arrowhead Stadium into a winter wonderland, the Chiefs successfully shut down Andrew Luck and the potent Indianapolis Colts on Saturday. Mahomes and the rest of their own high-powered offense took care of the rest, rolling to a 31-13 victory in the divisional round to end 25 years of playoff frustration. "We're such a different team," said Mahomes, who threw for 278 yards while running for a score. "We have such young players. We have such confidence we're going to win every single game." Damien Williams ran through snow and muck for 129 yards and another score, and Tyreek Hill had 72 yards receiving and a touchdown run, as the Chiefs beat Indianapolis for the first time in five playoff meetings to earn their first AFC title game appearance since January 1994. The AFC West champions will play the winner of Sunday's game between the division-rival Los Angeles Chargers and the New England Patriots next weekend for a spot in the Super Bowl in Atlanta. "We wanted to light up the city," Chiefs defensive tackle Chris Jones said. "We didn't want to take the road down memory lane." Andrew Luck was held to 203 yards passing for the Colts, while Marlon Mack was a non-factor on the ground. He had 46 yards rushing before leaving late in the fourth quarter with a hip injury. "Was not expecting it to end today," Colts coach Frank Reich said. "We knew we were going up against a very good team, a very well-coached team. It's hard to lose. It's hard to lose when you've come this far with the team that we have and the guys that we have, so credit to the Chiefs. "They outcoached us, they outplayed us," Reich said. "We just gave them too many opportunities." The Chiefs set out to change history from the opening minutes, when they forced a three-and-out and then waltzed right over a Colts defense that nearly shut out the Texans a week ago. Mahomes and Co. scored on their first three possessions, then again just before halftime, to take a 24-7 lead. If there was any question whether this would be Kansas City's day, it was answered when Colts kicker Adam Vinatieri missed a 23-yard field-goal try off the upright just before halftime. It was the first time in 22 postseason attempts that he'd missed from that close. Not that the Chiefs thought they had it wrapped up. They've had bigger playoff meltdowns against the Colts. There was the 10-7 loss in which Lin Elliott missed three field goals when the Chiefs were the No. 1 seed

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, and the loss at Arrowhead Stadium in 2003 in which nobody punted. Five years ago, they blew a 38-10 second-half lead against Luck and the Colts to spoil Andy Reid's first season. Not this time. Not with this Kansas City quarterback. After shattering nearly every franchise passing record, Mahomes picked up right where he left off in his regular-season finale. He led the Chiefs on touchdown drives of 90 and 70 yards to open the game, quickly identified a favorite target in Travis Kelce, and shook off a banged-up knee to scramble for a touchdown late in the first half to give his team a big cushion. Of course, the Chiefs (13-4) didn't need it the way their defense was playing. The Colts (11-7) went three-and-out on their first four possessions, were outgained 185-12 in the first quarter, and Luck didn't complete a pass until he found T.Y. Hilton early in the second. Their lone bright spot came when Zach Paschal recovered a blocked punt for a touchdown. Even when the Colts caught a break and Sammy Watkins fumbled the ball to them late in the third quarter, they were quick to give it back. Dee Ford stripped Luck and fellow linebacker Justin Houston plopped on the ball, ruining another red-zone opportunity. "It seemed like the rushers were getting there all night," Chiefs cornerback Kendall Fuller said. "Guys sticking coverage, playing good technique, good eyes and things like that." The Colts finally scored an offensive touchdown with 5:31 left in the game. But in the perfect summation of their lousy afternoon, their erstwhile star kicker missed the extra point. By that point, the party in the stands already had begun. The Chiefs had lost six straight home playoff games, including heartbreakers to Pittsburgh and Tennessee the past two years. But a proud franchise that won its only Super Bowl title with Len Dawson in 1970, and last played for a spot behind

Joe Montana, is once more one step away. "I'm just happy for these guys in this locker room," Kelce said. "Playoff wins are hard to come by, let alone wins in the NFL. So

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, I mean, it's just exciting for us to be able to play next week."100View Gallery Gallery:View from the sidelines: NFL cheerleaders 2018Raj Mehta-USA TODAY Sports | Raj MehtaSNOWBALL FIGHTReid was summoned to the corner of the stadium during the two-minute warning in the first half to implore fans to stop throwing snowballs on the field. Earlier in the half, one almost hit Colts punter Rigoberto Sanchez while he was kicking.INJURIESColts: Center Ryan Kelly (knee) left late in the fourth quarter. ... FS Malik Hooker (foot) and DE Tyquan Lewis (knee) were inactive, while SS Mike Mitchell (calf) was placed on injured reserve earlier this week. That left the Colts defense without some key pieces.Chiefs: Safety Eric Berry (heel) and running back Spencer Ware (hamstring) were inactive, though Berry — the team's emotional leader — broke down the pregame huddle in the north end zone.UP NEXTChiefs: Await the Chargers-Patriots winner in the AFC title game.Colts: Begin preparing for April's draft. Kansas City lost Mitch Morse and Chris Conley to free agency this offseason, but the Chiefs head coach didn't seem all that worried on Monday."Most fans are well aware the Kansas City Chiefs defense underwent a major overhaul this offseason with coordinator, scheme and personnel changes. The offensive changes—specifically the losses of wide receiver Chris Conley and center Mitch Morse, who had 802 (76.75%) and 678 (64.88%) of 2018's offensive snaps for the Chiefs, respectively—have gone a little under the radar. But not to Chiefs head coach Andy Reid, the man responsible for making sure his No. 1 offense does not skip a beat in 2019."We lost some guys, some guys we've counted on here for a few years," Reid said during his opening offseason press conference Monday. "They're good football players, and we wish them the best, on both sides of the ball, but [Conley and Morse] for sure."The Jacksonville Jaguars signed Conley and the Buffalo Bills signed Morse during free agency."They're going to do a great job," Reid added. "It was good to see Nick [Foles] and Conley get back together (in Jacksonville) and then Mitch went up with a close friend of mine (Bills head coach Sean McDermott). They're all in good hands and they're going to do well." But Reid and the Chiefs are now tasked with finding ample replacements."We have to fill in those [spots]," Reid said. "We were lucky enough to have Austin [Reiter] here to work some at center and did a nice job when he was in there and we got good competition at that spot, so I'm not worried about that."With Morse dealing with a concussion and Jordan Devey on injured reserve (torn pec) during the middle of the 2018 season, the 27-year-old Reiter started four games for the Chiefs and performed well. The Chiefs rewarded Reiter with a contract extension in early December.Whereas you may think finding a receiver to replace Conley could be a different story, Reid sounded especially high on Demarcus Robinson on Monday."D-Rob's grown the last couple of years

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, and it was important that he took that step up this past [season]," Reid said. In his limited role (40 percent of offensive snaps), the 24-year-old Robinson caught 22 passes on 33 targets for 288 yards and four touchdowns. Robinson had a touchdown in each of the Chiefs' final three regular-season games."He and the quarterback (Patrick Mahomes) have kind of a unique chemistry that goes on, and they've had some big plays there," Reid added. "The quarterback likes him and has a lot of trust in him... I can't tell you exactly how it came about, but it came about. The one thing I can tell you—D-Rob will continue the play. There's no pulling up on a play. Sometimes guys will take a breather on the back end if the play's going over here (the other side of the field). D-Rob's 100 miles an hour getting over there. You think about how many plays he made this past year by just that sheer hustle on every play. Our quarterback knows if he gets in trouble, somewhere D-Rob's going to show up. He's developed a little of that trust and chemistry I think."Reid said Robinson fits right in with the team's top two receivers."Keeping Sammy (Watkins) in there working, I think is good, too. He can play anywhere in there, so I think we're good inside, outside, and with Tyreek (Hill), also. I think that's a pretty good corps right there."As of now, the third receiver position appears to be Robinson's job to lose. That is, like anything this time of year in the NFL, subject to change. The draft begins next Thursday night.

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