

POSTGAME TRANSCRIPTS

Los Angeles Chargers vs. Chicago Bears

Sunday, October 29, 2023 ⚡ SoFi Stadium ⚡ Inglewood, Calif.

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

On tonight's 'convincing' win:

"I was really excited for the guys. I thought that we had our best week of practice. I thought that our guys really came out fresh and focused. I thought that we played like it today and we need to build off of it."

On 'not being in a nailbiter' in the fourth quarter:

"We've been in search for a game like this. I felt like our guys really earned it in all three phases. From the first practice of the week to the last whistle, I thought that our guys really played together and played the right way that gets you a win like that."

On QB Justin Herbert's performance in the first half:

"I saw really good rhythm and timing. I thought that he was decisive. When he is playing like that, he is going to have numbers like that; 31-of-40 for 300 [yards], three touchdowns and no interceptions. I just thought that his feet and his eyes were working together and that is when he is at his best. Our guys did a good job of protecting the passer and our receivers, tight ends and backs really did a good job. I thought that [Herbert] was able to check it down a couple of times and keep drives moving. On third down, I thought that we were pretty good. A big-time performance by him tonight."

On RB Austin Ekeler's contributing in the passing game:

"It was a big point of emphasis. He's such a complete player. That's when he's most dangerous, when he's running the football, catching the football in the screen game. To get him going in the screen game, I thought was really big in the game. He's such a weapon for us. He had a lot of time off with that ankle, so you can see that he's getting his rhythm and timing back. We need him to play like that in order for us to have a game like this."

On if 'momentum was carrying over' from the defense to the offense and the offense to the defense:

"I thought that we really fed off each other today. The defense had two takeaways, had to fourth-down stops. I felt like you could see, in the first half, especially us feeding off each other — we gave up the touchdown drive, we kind of finished the two-minute before the half with a big-time score, then came out in that middle-eight portion and had a seven-minute drive. I know it finished in a field goal, but that 10-nothing in the middle-eight was important in this game. I just thought that our guys played fresh and I felt like they played with energy, and it was in all three phases."

On 'taking a cushion into the second half':

"Huge, huge in the game, because you give up a touchdown like that — there were four third downs on that drive — definitely, that took some air out of us. Then, for our offense to respond right away, go down there and DP [TE Donald Parham Jr.] had a great run after the catch. It was just a surgical drive. I thought that we did a good job of using our timeouts and giving us enough room. Justin [Herbert] was just really, really accurate the whole way down there. 24-7 was a lot better than 17-7."

On if tonight was the team's 'most complete performance' of the season thus far:

"I think so. I think it was. It was our most complete week of practice, too. I thought that that was what we were in search of, is to feel that complete game where you're feeding off each other and your level is high the whole way. There are going to be some things that we need to improve on, for sure. It wasn't like it was this perfect performance, but I liked the level of play. I thought the level of play, the style of play, was much more of what we're capable of."

On the defense's performance tonight and their ability to 'stop the run':

"That's a really good running football team. I think that [Bears RB D'Onta] Foreman is a really, really good back, as is [Bears RB] Roschon Johnson. They do a great job of running the ball. For two years, they've done it. I think that gave us a lot more opportunities to rush and play the coverages that we wanted to play. I thought that allowed us to keep a roof in the passing game. We had the one play, the first play of the game and then after that, we kept the football in front of us. We need to build off of it. I think the story for us this season is that when we stop the run like that, it helps our whole defense out."

On CB Asante Samuel Jr.:

"Zont [Asante Samuel Jr.] has been close. He is going to be upset that he let a couple get away from him tonight, but he is always around the ball. He's improving as a player. He's a competitor. We really need our corners to come through for us in order to play at the level that we're capable of playing. He had a good week of practice and he played like he practiced tonight."

On WR Quentin Johnston and 'if there was a point of emphasis to get him involved tonight':

"Yeah, we wanted to get him going. I felt like we had a lot of good plays in the plan for him. He made plays tonight, a lot of different types of plays. That third down conversion on the back shoulder was huge. Got a couple of shallow crosses. The more he plays, the more he improves. I've told you guys that all season with him. I think you're seeing that. The more that he figures out how to play, you're going to see the production because he is certainly capable. I'm proud of how hard he's worked. You can see that he's earning the trust of the quarterback more and more. He just needs to stay on track."

On if the offense's second-half performance 'is becoming a concerning trend':

"When we say concerning trend, I don't want to overstate it, but I don't think that we finished the game playing like we can. I think that we can get two or three touchdowns there and make that kind of a monster game. But again, that's why you go back to work. You have to give credit to Chicago. In the second half, I thought that Chicago did a nice job of stopping the run. We need to build off of that first-half performance and put that second-half performance together where we feel like that was a clean game."

On Parham Jr.'s performance:

"I really felt [Parham Jr.] tonight. You guys would have covered the team, this was a lot closer to that 2021 version of Donald Parham, who's a difference maker. You saw the run-after-catch, he did that all of 2021. He's just continuing to improve. Justin [Herbert] really trusts him. He's a weapon out there because he can beat you vertical, he's really good in the red zone, and then he's giving us that run-after-catch that he was giving us in 2021. That gives us a different dimension on offense."

On OLB Joey Bosa's performance tonight:

"You saw the fourth down stop. He was electric in the run game. It's just good to see him healthy. He was battling through a bunch those first three, four weeks. Now, he's been able to put three consecutive weeks of practice together, where he feels like he has his legs and his gas tank full. Then, you're going to see the playmaking, you're going to see the sack production, you're going to see the run game stuffs. I'm just happy that he's healthy because we know how he's going to play when he's healthy. I thought that those four edge guys tonight rotated in. We were refresh. That's what it's going to take for us to be a complete defense."

On building off of tonight's win:

"We just need to put one foot in front of the other. You just have to go one day at a time here. That's what we did last week and that's what I think led to us being fresh and focused. We just weren't looking too far out into the future. I thought we did a really good job of taking care of the practice field, taking care of our meetings and creating the confidence that you need to come out here and play like we did tonight. This is a really tight group. Hopefully, we saw, when you put a week like that together, how you play on Sunday."

On if the first half was 'the best half of football that the team has played this year':

"I think so. For what you mentioned, I thought that it was clean football. There were no turnovers, no sacks, no penalties — outside of the first DPI. Then, you get the result, you get a 24-7 lead. I thought that we were really good in the run game on defense. I thought that we put a roof on the coverages. I thought our kicking game was sound. No penalties, no turnovers in that phase. Then, you get a result like that. That's what you're after, is to play clean football. When you play like that, you're not going to lose very many."

On how the team can 'bottle that and do it more often':

"One practice at a time. Tomorrow, we have to learn from it. A couple of things happened in that second half where we can play a little bit cleaner. Just keep continuing to build off the practice field and see where that gets us. I like us, as a fresh and focused team. I thought that we really responded. Two tough losses and our guys responded the right way this week. That's what you have to be able to show in the NFL."

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS QUARTERBACK JUSTIN HERBERT

On tonight's performance:

"I thought that we had a great plan. I thought that our coaches did a great job of putting us in a position to win. We went out there and executed. I thought that we moved the ball all four quarters. As a team victory, it was all three phases. I was proud of the guys today."

On RB Austin Ekeler's performance:

"It was awesome. He stepped up big time. In these big games, you need your top players to play like that. He did a great job at practice all week long. We're not surprised by all of the success that he has. He is such a good player, so versatile — whether it's in the backfield or whether he is running routes, he is making plays. It was great to see from him."

On WR Quentin Johnston and 'how important it was to get him involved tonight':

"Huge. He is one of those guys that you have to get involved. He's a special player, a special athlete. We've had some injuries and he stepped up big time. To have a guy like that be able to step up and handle that spotlight, handle that three-by-one type of receiver and go make a play like that, it's a great thing for our offense."

On WR Simi Fehoko's touchdown:

"It's just another man route, a little mesh. He did a great job of just running through it, beating man coverage. I kind of looked him off a little too early, came back to him and he caught and made a great play. I was glad that he was looking at me."

On if he was 'more comfortable tonight without the glove' on his finger:

"Every week, it's getting better. It worked out, didn't have any issues with the glove falling off today. Whatever the trainers did, I thought it worked out well today."

On what tonight's win 'can do for the team's confidence':

"It really is just one week at a time. This is the most important game of the year for us just because it was the next one. We played a really good team and we went out there and had a victory of all three phases. For us to be able to put that on tape, put that out there, we have a lot to look forward to. Have another tough one on Monday next week."

On completing each of his first 15 pass attempts:

"It was awesome. Kind of like I said earlier, I thought we had a great plan. We went out there executed, knew exactly what we were going to do. We had a great week of practice. I'm not surprised that we had great success moving the ball. We have the players and we had the plan, so it worked out well today."

On the protection tonight by the offensive line:

"They did a great job of battling. We had a great protection plan, talked about that all week. We had a good week of practice and really dialed in that protection plan. It was awesome from those guys. Got the ball out quick, had time to be able to get the ball off, so it was good to see."

On if he 'feels better about himself' after 'getting a dominant win as opposed to squeaking one out':

"I think every win is important. By this one, we saw all three phases get after if — special teams, offense, defense. I think that's what we needed. That gives us the confidence going forward. A win like that is huge. We understand that we have a day off. We'll get after the film and we'll keep getting better. There is a lot to improve, but a lot to look forward to."

On the touchdown drive before the end of the first half:

"Any time you're able to get points right before the half, I think that's huge for a team. We executed a very good two-minute drill right there. Guys made plays all the way down the field. For us to be able to go down the field, get some points like that right before half, I think that sets you up nicely for the second half."

On the first drive of the second half:

"A long drive right there, but you'd love to score a touchdown. Those are one of those things that we'll look back at the film and see what went wrong, what we can do better so that we're able to get those points, touchdowns in the red zone. I thought we did a good job of moving the ball all day, but there are definitely things that we could look back and correct going forward."

On if he is 'comfortable in the uncomfortable' with his finger:

"I think it's just part of playing in the NFL. There are going to be tough situations and you're not always going to feel like your best, but you have to go out there and you have to give your best effort, and you have to give it to those guys in that locker room who would do the same for you. It's not my first time going through an injury like this. You have the experiences and the understanding of the trainers looking out for you, everyone is looking out for you. You're going to be safe out there, but just give your best effort."

On Johnston's development:

"He's a stellar athlete. He's one of those guys that whenever you get the ball to him, something special is going to happen. I knew that it hadn't gone our way, connecting with him, the first couple of games, but I knew if we were patient, we were going to get him the ball and something good is going to happen. He stepped up big-time today and we're expecting big things from him."

On TE Donald Parham Jr.'s performance tonight:

"I think he did a great job him — him, [TE] Stone [Smartt], [TE] Tre' [McKitty]. They filled that void. It's always tough losing a guy like [TE] Gerald [Everett]. He's a dynamic player who is able to run, catch, do all of those great things that tight ends do. DP has stepped up big time, made some big plays — so did Stone Smartt, as well."

On Oregon's win last night and if tonight's win warrants a 'Victory Brisket':

"It was awesome to see the Ducks play. It was a great win. We'll see what's cooking [*laughter*]. I haven't thought too far ahead with that."

CHICAGO BEARS HEAD COACH MATT EBERFLUS

Opening statement:

"All right, just talking about the game here real quick. Obviously, the start we had today was not what we wanted. Offensively, we went punt, punt, interception, then we went, touchdown, touchdown, field goal, touchdown on defense. The glaring things that stood out to me, and what my message was at halftime for the players was we had a lot of penalties that set us back, our drives back on offense and the operation wasn't as clean as it needed to be. Then on defense, it was really simply about fundamentals. It was about basics, it was about covering the ball, it was about having forced pursuit apex about our tackling, our angles. We need to do a better job of that. That's where they got their big plays, and that's where they got their scoring opportunities. So that was a message there. I thought the guys came out in the second half did a solid job of that. At that point we were down and defensively that first drive to come out in the second half, we needed to get that stop right away and give ourselves a chance to get a scoring opportunity there. They ended up getting a few first downs, we didn't get off to a third down. So that was that. Again, we didn't play complimentary football, as we have last week and the last couple of weeks, where we played complimentary football together. Our last two victories with takeaways and being on the positive side of that, we were minus one today that also attributed to that. Situationally, early was not what we wanted it to be third downs, offense and defense. Again that was on their favor. I give the Chargers the credit, they had a nice game plan today. Did a nice job today."

On the opening drives and 'frustration':

"Yeah, that's exactly what I'm talking about. You get a big explosive play, and we don't and we don't take advantage of that. Take that opportunity and create a scoring opportunity, at least a field goal. We got behind the sticks there. And again, that's kind of the operation we had a little bit in the first half."

On 'an explanation' involving WR Darnell Mooney and potential scoring play:

"They did say that. I told [Bears WR Darnell] Mooney that he has to get up and be convincing. When he gets up, go. That's what I told Mooney afterward, he just needs to get up and go and go house the thing and then let them make the decision. Don't have any indecision there. Made a heck of a catch for sure and really good play. But again, I don't know what the outcome of that in terms of what they said."

On 'avoidable errors':

"It's been good the last three weeks our tackling has been really good. They've been in the fives, which is elite. Last week, I think we had eight or nine, which is OK. But again, today wasn't what I wanted to be. We've been working our tail off on it in practice. We're working on our angles. We're working on that exact thing and it's been paying off for us. Today, it did not. We have to go back and look at the tape, and we have to get better at that fundamental skill. I thought we did a better job in the second half, covering the ball and keeping explosives down. But again, when you're playing a team like that, you got to do a really good job with their skill and they have some good scoring."

On 'why errors were an issue':

"It always comes down to fundamentals to me. It's fundamentals. It's about being in there and having the right mindset and understanding how to attack the football. Once I got them in the in the locker room there, they were good the second half."

On 'frustrations' for the defense:

"You have to work the player. You have to work them in that situation. How many times did we do that? Drop them back there and firing the ball right at him, maybe a couple. We have to do it more. He has to be able to see that, hands got to come up together, I have to look at the catch. It certainly was a good opportunity for us to be able to take that all the way right there. But again we have to get better."

On the pass rush tonight:

"It was solid when we had some pressure. In terms of cold pressure, I know that [Bears LB] T.J. [Edwards] had a really nice hit on that one in the second half. I thought that was good. I'm always going to say it needs to be more. We just have to keep going on there."

On Bears QB Tyson Bagent:

"I thought it was solid. I thought that, we were passing the ball when we ran out of possessions at the very end. We were going for it on all the four downs, we had to because we only had so many possessions left. He was in at two minute mode. I thought he operated well there. I thought because they have some good rushers and they have some way to pressure with their front four. I thought he did a good job checking it down to the back at times and working it to [TE] Cole [Kmet]. I think Cole [Kmet] was 10-for-10 today. I thought he did a nice job there. Then the interception, that he threw the [WR Darnell] Mooney, I thought that was a good strike right there and the other one on the side pocket there that they overturned. I think we just have to come back to the ball there a little bit better. But, again, it's what I saw."

On Bears CB Jaylon Johnson and 'why he wasn't matched with best receivers':

"[CB] Jaylon Johnson can certainly do that. We were given help with whoever was there, we were trying to. A lot of times what they do is they put [WR] Keenan [Allen] on the move a lot, and they do a good job with it and they have to because that's their player. We try to get out as much as we can with two guys, but sometimes you can't do it."

On Moore 'only having one target in the second half':

"I'm going to have to go back and look at where the ball was, what they were doing to him. I have to look at the coverages. It could have been over top of him with a guy underneath him. Which you get off the guy right away. I didn't know how many times that happened, I knew it happened some. I saw it a few times, but I don't know how many times."

CHICAGO BEARS QUARTERBACK TYSON BAGENT

On the deep pass on the opening snap:

"I think, obviously, nobody likes to lose. We're very disappointed that we couldn't build off of that, especially on that drive. As far as what we were looking to do in that first play, we accomplished. I thought [Bears WR Darnell] Mooney made a great catch."

On his first interception:

"They went invert two. A little miscommunication between me and him [Bears WR DJ Moore]. That's completely on me. I just have to get off of it and continue to go through my progressions."

On 'self-inflicted wounds' by the offense:

"Yeah 100 percent, especially early. Penalties are never good. You want to try to play clean as much as possible. Besides that, I can't make it worse. No bad plays, just neutral plays or good plays. I have to take that into next week, continue to get ready and do a better job taking care of the ball."

On not targeting Moore as much in the second half:

"That's never a good thing. You know it's all about how the game flows. I think there are a couple that I can think about off the top of my head where I could've given him the ball a little bit more. I'll have to go back and look at the film and check a lot of those things out."

On taking 'risks' when you're behind:

"Just trying to play the next play. It's always one play at a time, so taking the play that's given to me and operating it to the best of my ability. You never want to get down early but when you do it's part of it. Can't think about it in the fact of needing to force things, but taking advantage to the maximum extent every play that I get."

On if he 'felt like' he forced plays:

"I feel like I did. I feel like there were a lot of plays where I'm getting through my reads and making the correct plays. There are a couple where — I haven't watched the film yet, but I think off the top of my head, where I did maybe force the issue a little bit. I have to do a better job of that going forward."

On the deep ball to Bears WR Velus Jones Jr:

"I felt good about it. Always have to trust the guys that are out there. I have full faith in Velus. I've seen him make plays like that a million times. If that happens again next week and the week after that, I'm still going to make it a point to get him the ball."

On if he was surprised that OLB Khalil Mack stayed in coverage of him when WR Darnell Mooney was looking to pass the ball:

"No, I think that he's one of the greatest, when you think about players in this league. High IQ. It's a good thing he did or that would've been a touchdown."

On if Mack didn't allow him any space to get open on the play:

"Yeah he was [right on me]."

On learning more from a win or a loss:

"I try to take things from every game that I play in. This is all still new. I try to take things from every game. I took a lot from last week, I'm going to take a lot from this week. I'll take a lot from next week and the week after that. Whether I'm starting or not, I'm always taking things away from every time we step on the field."

On processing the game:

"We have to be more consistent. When you sign up to play in this league, you're signing up for ebbs and flows and highs and lows. It happens to every team every year. We have to do a good job of honing in this week. Focusing in, locking in on the details and taking care of the ball."

On working around the coverage:

"You always have to take what they give you. There's check downs on every play. There's shorter routes on every play. We just need to take advantage of that and march our way down the field. When you're forced with situations like that, you have to really put a focus on taking care of the ball because it's going to be longer play drives."

On the fourth-and-two play:

"I have to have better timing, have to get the ball out a little quicker. What I saw — all out look with space out there. Had a hitch within the concept to [Bears RB] Darrynton [Evans] and they doubled [Bears WR] DJ [Moore] in the slant. Catch-and-throw to Darrynton, just need better timing and get the ball out of there quicker."

On if he would start next week:

"It's nothing for me to figure out that's out of my control. I'm going to attack the week the same way I always do. Everything stays the same."

On his emotions:

"I don't get too high or too low. When we win, I don't get too ecstatic and when we lose, I don't get too low. I just try to stay level-headed. I feel like that puts me in the best headspace to be able to have a more effective week the next week. Once again, emotionally, I don't necessarily live in that world. Just keep it all in reality. Get better at what we need to get better at and build on the things that we are doing well in order to give ourselves the best chance going forward."

On what he needs to improve on:

"I'll say it again. I'll be a mirror when it goes bad and a window when it goes well. I have to do a better job of taking care of the ball. That's about the extent of it."