

POSTGAME TRANSCRIPTS

Los Angeles Chargers vs. Kansas City Chiefs

Saturday, January 7, 2024 ⚡ SoFi Stadium ⚡ Inglewood, Calif.

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS INTERIM HEAD COACH GIFF SMITH

On his evaluation of the last three games:

"I told the team after the game that we made a pact — after the Raiders game, where we were put in this situation — that we were going to fight and we were going to compete, we were going to make this organization proud, and I do think they did that. We didn't get the wins like we wanted to, but as far as what we were trying to accomplish, coming off of a difficult loss in Las Vegas, the character of these guys, I really think they rallied together and really fought for three games, I really do."

On if he 'wants to be considered for a head coaching position':

"I think that anybody that has been in the profession thinks of it, but I'll be honest, these three weeks, all I wanted to do was give my all to these players for these three games. Whatever happens, we'll move forward. I haven't really thought about it."

On his takeaways from the experience as interim head coach:

"Being grateful. I've been very blessed in my life. This was a great opportunity to give back to these young men, so I'm extremely grateful for that."

On what he learned during this experience:

"I think you never stop learning. Every game, every year, I learn something new all the time. I think that if you don't, you die. There's plenty to learn. But, it's been a great experience."

On what 'stands out' from the last three weeks:

"Honestly, not right now. I just hurt for [the players] right now. I guess that's the only thing I can tell you right now."

On progressing forward and 'wrapping this up the right way':

"When you're in this profession, these situations arise. They're difficult because they're difficult for not just the individual, but the family. There's an uncertainty, but that's in any profession throughout the country. It just comes with the territory. Everybody will rally and it'll work out."

On if the staff will conduct exit interviews with the players:

"We'll do a team meeting tomorrow morning, after their exit physicals. We'll have a team meeting, then that will be it right there. But, I will be visiting with anybody that would like to."

On the defense's performance today:

"I thought that they played really well the whole game. Two-minute drill, gave up the two scrambles. That's the difference in that drive, getting the points. But, I thought that they really played hard. [Chiefs QB] Blaine [Gabbert] is a veteran quarterback. I thought he did a good job. We didn't make the stop at the very end, like we would have liked to, but I thought that they played really well. That's why we kicked the field goal at the end, they hadn't done much against their defense all day, so that's why we did it."

On 'what prepared him' for the role of interim head coach:

"I think just being in different roles throughout your career, college or pro. Leadership. That's really what it comes down to, leadership. Whether it's just your unit or whatever, you're in a leadership role, so you just gain more guys, I guess."

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS QUARTERBACK EASTON STICK

On how he would encapsulate the last three weeks:

"I think the word that comes to mind is grateful. Just really grateful to the Spanos family, this organization, a couple of coaching staffs that stuck with me and, ultimately, gave me an opportunity to go out there and compete with the guys. It's been tough. It's really frustrating when you don't win. You play to win. But, I'm incredibly grateful to be a part of this organization and to have their support."

On what he can 'take away' from his time playing this season:

"That I can play. I think I knew that, but until you go out there and actually do it, that's a huge part of it. It had been a long time. I realized how much I missed playing and getting to compete. I'm just really grateful that I had the opportunity."

On how he would 'describe' this upcoming offseason and if it 'will be any different than previous offseasons':

"I'm just not there yet, I'm really not. But, I understand the question."

On what 'went through his mind' as he was departing the field following the game:

"You're frustrated, you're really upset that you lost. We had a chance to win, and we didn't do it, again. It's frustrating. Then, you look around the locker room, and you're grateful. There are a lot of really great people in there. Ultimately, when you go through a season like this that's really tough — a lot of tough losses, it ended up nowhere near where we thought we would be at the start — that's the stuff that you realize is important, and you're thankful for. Like I said, grateful, I think, is the word right now."

On what he is 'most proud of' with his play and his 'biggest selling point':

"I don't know. I'm not there yet, I'm really not, as far as putting a bow on it and talking about what happens next. I'm really not. It's a tough feeling right now. Like I said, I'm thankful for [Interim Head Coach] Giff [Smith] for putting a plan together, giving us a chance to go out there and try to win the last three weeks. It just didn't happen and that's frustrating."

On if there was a 'moment or realization' where he 'knew' that he 'could play':

"I think when I went in against Denver, after [QB] Justin's [Herbert] deal, I felt like I saw it and was like, 'OK, I can do this.' That was probably the first time. [Offensive Coordinator] Kellen [Moore] does such a good job of putting us in a position, Justin and I, to go out there and play well and just play clear and play fast. I'm appreciative of Kellen, for Nuss [Quarterbacks Coach Doug Nussmeier], for building confidence in that room, even when it was going tough for a while. Those two guys, especially, I think had a huge part in it."

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS HEAD COACH ANDY REID

Opening Statement:

"As far as injuries go, [Chiefs OL] Wanya Morris banged his head and is in concussion protocol. [Chiefs WR] Justyn Ross came out with a hamstring and [Chiefs CB] Jaylen Watson got kneed in the calf. I think, for the most part, we came out relatively healthy. Thank you to the fans for showing up and doing a nice job. What a game, on both sides. [Interim Head Coach] Giff [Smith] rallying these guys to play like they are, really shows the character of the team and what they can do. I was really proud of our young guys for the job that they did. [Chiefs QB] Blaine Gabbert with the long runs — who would have thought that he did a great job with it. [Chiefs RB La'Mical] Perine and [Chiefs WR] Mecole [Hardman], these guys they did a nice job. The offensive line was kind of makeshift in there and we were able to get some young guys reps. It was great to get [Chiefs DT] Chris [Jones] that sack, the one sack — took him a little bit, I think he had eight hurries getting there. He really played a good game, it just took him a while to get an actual sack. [Chiefs S] Mike Edwards with a touchdown off of [Chiefs DE] Charles' [Omenihu] big hit. [Chiefs DE] Malik [Herring] and the other young guys I thought just finished the game off well. The stand down in the red zone there, goal line area to make that kick a field goal, I thought that was big."

On Chiefs DT Chris Jones' sack and 'what it sack to the team':

"You can see by the response of the players that it meant a bunch, not only to him, but to the guys. They were all on board pulling for him. That's kind of the neat thing about that. That's a couple cheeseburgers right there that he made [laughter]."

On his decision to play Jones:

"Well first of all, he wanted the opportunity, so gave him the opportunity. It started off with third downs and as it went on he played a couple first and second downs. He wanted to get that done."

On the decision not to play Chiefs TE Travis Kelce:

"Travis [Kelce] is a humble, humble guy. It's different because of the financial part of it with Chris [Jones]. He didn't want to be selfish or come across as selfish — everyone, all the players wanted him to play but he just goes, 'You know what I don't like the way it feels.' He's not into that and so he chose not to play. I completely understand it but that's him, most guys would have gone out a probably done it but he said, 'I've had a lot of records and this one here, I'm not going to do it this way.'"

On if he would have 'allowed' Kelce to play if Kelce 'wanted to get' the yardage required to reach 1,000 receiving yards on the season:

"You bet."

On Chiefs WR Mecole Hardman:

"I thought he did a nice job out there, a couple things he can work on. He played hard and it was a good experience for him to get out there. Kind of getting back into that football shape play after play after play. We'll see where it goes from there. We know Mecole [Hardman] and we know what he can do. I think that getting out and playing was the biggest thing for him. He hadn't had a chance to do that."

On the offensive line:

"[Chiefs OL Mike] Caliendo and [Chiefs G Nick] Allegretti, both those two were rotating in there. We had the three starters, the inside three — they would rotate at guard. We had the injury, [Chiefs G] Joe [Thuney] went outside for a little bit — did that. We had guys all over the place but they all can play, that is what [Chiefs Offensive Line Coach] Andy [Heck] trains the guys, they all know all the positions and can jump in and go."

On the win 'helping the mentality' in preparation for the postseason':

"It's good to get the win, for sure. We came 2,000 miles to get a win. I think it uplifts you, especially for those young guys who don't have a chance to play. To say, 'Hey, listen, I got in, and not only did I get it, we won the game.' I think that's positive."

On the defense holding the Chargers to a field goal on the Chargers' 18-play offensive drive in the second half:

"I thought that was great, that was a nice job by our defense. The coordinators had simplified things down so that the guys could play fast and that's what they did. That was good, that was a good thing."

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS QUARTERBACK BLAINE GABBERT

On today's game:

"There are always going to be ups and downs in a football game, but at the end of the day, you play to win the football game. Fortunately for us, we had a chance at the end to give [Chiefs K] Harrison [Butker], [Chiefs LS] James [Winchester] and [Chiefs P] Tommy [Townsend] to go out there and execute a field goal and they pulled that one off."

On if he 'expected' to have two 'long' runs on the final drive:

"They were playing kind of a [pattern] match defense and they weren't accounting for me by rushing five [defensive players]. I saw a lane both times and figured that I might as well run it at that point."

On 'joking about being tired' following his second run:

"I fell pretty hard [*laughter*]. Their defense was making comments that I can still run. I told them that you can run when you're running scared [*laughter*]. Third-and-four, that's what you do a lot of. It was a lot of fun back there. We won the game, so that's all that matters."

On being in a situation where the offense could 'win the game at the end':

"Those are the situations that you want to be in. When it matters most, no matter what happened to that point in time, you have to execute at a high level and go win a football game. Fortunately, our defense played great all day and we had an opportunity there to go win it and we executed when it mattered the most."

On if he 'had to knock a little rust off early':

"There's always going to be a little rust after not playing in a while. But, the biggest thing I wanted to see today was that we had a lot of young guys playing, a lot of guys making their first starts, and that as a special moment for those guys so I don't want to take anything away from that. It was a lot of fun to be out there and kind of be part of that moment. I've played in a lot of games in the NFL and just to see the joy that these younger guys had to play a lot of football, in a meaningful game for them, was a lot of fun."

On having the opportunity to start a regular season game in advance of 'possibly being called upon to play in the postseason':

"It was great. It's invaluable for myself and for a lot of the young guys that were playing, and playing against a starting defense, they were playing to win the game. That's what we're here for. Just happy that we could pull it out."