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LOS ANGELES CHARGERS DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR GUS BRADLEY

Opening statement:

“Just to recap the game last week, the second half was very disappointing for us. Just the long drives. We had two 10-plus play drives. That’s our job, to get off the field, get the offense as many possessions as we can. I know when you look at the yards-per-attempt, it was in the threes in the rushing game — which, overall, you look at and say, ‘Pretty solid effort,’ but not in those situations. In those situations, we have to get into second-and-long, third-and-long, win on third down, get off the field. We didn’t do a very good job at that in those situations. It came back — when the offense doesn’t have a lot of possessions, it’s tough to score and get back to where you want to be with a chance to win the game.”

“As far as the Chiefs, you guys know a lot about them just like we do. They’re very explosive. I think they’re really playing well right now. They’re firing on all cylinders. They have all of their threats — multiple receiving threats, the running backs do a good job with the ball. It really is a challenge with the run and the passing game. They’re doing some more sprint-out passes or movement passes with [Chiefs QB Patrick] Mahomes, getting him out of the pocket some. He has been effective there. It’s a great challenge for us with the speed that they have in the field and their scheme.”

On facing the Chiefs a second time:

“When you look, it really comes back to fundamentals. It comes back to tackling in space, playing our coverage principles right, being on the details. With this team, there’s never where you can take a play off. You really cannot take a play off with this team. It doesn’t matter if it’s third-and-20, they have the ability to score from any down-and-distance from anywhere on the field. It’s that focus that you have to play with on every play. That’s what we need to see this weekend.”

On adjustments affecting defensive playcalling:

“I don’t know if it changes that so much. Obviously, you have to have wrinkles in each game. We have that. I think it just creates a bigger package. It wasn’t, ‘Alright, they’re a dropback team, they like the quick-game and have a little bit of movement passes.’ Now, they have dropback, quick-game, movement passes, screens — it just adds onto their ability. I think, what they’ve done a good job of, sometimes with a younger quarterback — and he’s not so young anymore because he plays — but sometimes coaches, after a first year where they have success, they go, ‘Let’s put a lot on his plate.’ Sometimes, you can see that in teams when they do that. They’ve done a great job with him. I have all the respect for [Chiefs Head Coach Andy] Reid and that offensive staff because it looks like they keep adding some stuff to it, but they never get too far. They never push it too far where you feel like they’re not executing. They have a fine line right there. It’s challenging.”



On S Derwin James Jr.:

“He is playing fast. I think some of the things that you’re seeing — we’re getting there quicker when he’s on the field. Some of the things that maybe weren’t there earlier in the year, our tackling wasn’t as good — sometimes when a back or a receiver catches it in space and has a chance to eye-up the defender, that’s awfully tough to make those tackles in open space. I think his speed really eats up the grass and gives him a chance to make some plays like the tackle he had last week. He brings that. We brought him a couple more times, he blitzed two times last week — but those two times we gave up some explosive plays. If you’re going to do that, be more aggressive with him with pressure and your other guys pressure, we really have to lock into our coverage with that. We didn’t do a good job of that last week.”

“I think, with Derwin, the more he plays, the more plays you see. It’s not like you look back and say, ‘Look at all of these games, all of the plays he’s made.’ He’s played a limited amount of plays. We see it as a coaching staff, some of the plays he made. Back to the Jacksonville plays, there were a couple of third down-and-shorts or a fourth down where he made the plays. If he played the whole season, I think those would add up. He’s definitely added — to us to where we feel like some guys can help dictate the outcome of a game, defensively. He’s one of those guys that, if we use him right, he has that ability.”

“There is a lot of growth [potential] for him because I think he’s created a standard. I think as he keeps going, that standard will increase. I think there are areas that he is driven not to be satisfied where he is and nor are we. He’s playing multiple positions for us now. He’s playing defensive end, he has played linebacker, so we have a lot on his plate. I think that, as we look at him more and more — we had quite a bit going into the season. We’ve calmed that down now, but I could see us getting back to more of that, especially in the offseason.”

“I don’t like to compare guys. He’s unique because he has the speed of a corner, he has the athleticism to make plays in space. He can play in the box. He’s a good rusher. He has a combination of all of those things. Like, I remember [former Seahawks S] Kam Chancellor. Kam Chancellor played in the box and was a really physical player, and had really good instincts. I see some of those traits in DJ. I see a guy that can cover a lot of field, like an [Ravens S] Earl Thomas [III] can cover a lot of ground. I see bits and pieces of that. The challenge for DJ is that he does have those skillsets — like you asked, how high can he take each one of those skillsets? That’s where I think he has a lot of room for improvement.”

On DE Joey Bosa:

“I think Joey has made his biggest growth in the mental aspects of the game. Joey can have a tendency when he’s rolling, he’s on fire. When he’s struggling a little bit, maybe he’s not feeling like he’s adding as much to the team as he would like. Sometimes, that part of it, he gets a little frustrated. I don’t see that part of Joey as much anymore. I see a guy that’s just more consistent week-in and week-out, play-in and play-out. It wasn’t like he was inconsistent, but I think he has just shown that. I think that’s where it’s paying off for him and for us.”

On the message for this week to carry momentum into the offseason:

“We challenge our guys that every game we need to see improvement. It doesn’t matter where we are on the scoreboard or our record. We had that mentality last year. We need consistent improvement. That’s what I’m hoping that we see. We’ve done some good things, but we’ve played with some inconsistency. I think that we need to go out there and play a complete game where we tackle well. Like I said, this game is really going to come back to getting off blocks, tackling in space and playing with coverage principles. That’s what we need to see from this group. I think we made really good strides, in that when we play as one, we’re playing pretty well.”

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR SHANE STEICHEN**On the Kansas City defense:**

“I think they’re playing with a lot more passion, I guess you could say that, but really, they’re just coming together. They’re really starting to gel with [Chiefs Defensive Coordinator Steve] Spagnuolo being around his first year, now they’re starting to really mesh. You can just see it on tape, how they’re playing together and communicating. They’re playing at a high level.”

“I think they’re still doing a lot of the same things. Like I said, I think it’s just after you’re together for that long, starting to get the momentum of things and pick it up, then you start really gelling.”

On the message for this week to carry momentum into the offseason:

“I think, I just want the guys in general — all of us, the whole team, to just play with some good energy going in there. It’s going to be an electric atmosphere, obviously, playing in Kansas City. Just to keep moving the football, scoring points, being efficient in the red zone and having fun. More than anything, just go out there and have fun, play football.”



On the potential of having three 1,000-yard receivers:

“Those guys are special, all three of those guys. Obviously, it would be special for those other two to get to 1,000, obviously, within the game plan. If it happens, it happens. That would be great for them. All three of those guys — [RB] Austin [Ekeler], [WR] Keenan [Allen] and [WR] Mike [Williams] — they do a heck of a job week-in and week-out. It’s a special group.”

On RB Austin Ekeler:

“He’s so versatile. Just starting to put him out wide, running the routes that he’s been able to run on the route tree. Obviously, making guys miss in the open field, that’s one of his strong points. He has done that all year. Hopefully, he’ll continue to do that on Sunday.

“No, [it hasn’t been surprising] at all. He works so hard. He’s a strong, powerful guy that can run fast. He has good quickness in the open field to make guys miss.”

On taking over as offensive coordinator:

“The first transition, the first week, obviously started off good with Green Bay. Then, we had some lulls there. It’s been good. The staff, everyone has come together. It’s been a good transition. Each week gets better as you prepare for opponents and it gets smoother and smoother.”

On takeaways from the first matchup with the Chiefs:

“I think the big thing is that we have to score touchdowns in the red zone. A team like that, they’re an explosive offense. When you score nine points in the first half when you could have had 21, that’s a big focal point going into this game. Once we get down to the red zone, we have to score against these guys.”

