



POSTGAME TRANSCRIPTS

Los Angeles Chargers vs. Las Vegas Raiders

Sunday, September 8, 2024 ⚡ SoFi Stadium ⚡ Inglewood, Calif.

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS HEAD COACH JIM HARBAUGH

On the defense's performance:

"It was a great performance, an inspired performance. The run wall right from the beginning – the third-and-one, to the fourth-and-a yard-and-a-quarter, maybe. To stop that was huge. The turnovers were real incredible. The one backward pass, I think it was [CB] Kristian [Fulton] who scooped it up, but then [OLB] Khalil [Mack] got it. Man, he was like a wrecking ball as a runner, that was huge. [OLB] Joey Bosa played lights out in this game. He caused the other fumble that was huge. [DL] Poona Ford, incredible play by him. I thought the linebackers did a great job. [LB] Denzel Perryman, [LB] Daiyan Henley – they were thumping. Coverage was really good, minus the one play where we gave up a touchdown. I thought it was lights out really, really great defense by our guys. I'm just super happy about it, the whole team was inspired by the defensive play. When we had to be our best, we were our best. 'Being at your best when your best is needed most,' John Wooden, coach Wooden there. I thought that it really put the flavor on this game, that's what it felt like to me. Offensively in the second half when we needed it, [RB] JK Dobbins had an incredible game breaking those two long runs and just the tough yards he and [RB] Gus Edwards were getting. No turnovers offensively. I thought our line did a really great job against really one of the tougher defensive front sevens. I guess I can't really say that because I haven't seen many defensive front sevens, but they're darn good. A lot to get better on, a lot to work on for us. There's no excuse for the penalties we had early – we're going to work on that. Going from Week 1 to Week 2, I think that's where you can make the most amount of progress across the entire season in a one-week period. So, we'll be really focused, laser focused on getting better this week."

On the commitment to running the ball:

"Yeah, there was great commitment running the ball. We've got a lot of confidence in our offensive line. As you saw, we feel like they're the tip of the spear. We feel like we can attack with that group and they were outstanding. [LT] Rashawn Slater played a great game, [LG] Zion Johnson, we just love them. [C Bradley] Bozeman played really well, and so did [RG Trey Pipkins III] 'Pip.' I mean, what a great story – one of the finest tackles in pro football and moved to guard, I thought he was outstanding. [RT] Joe [Alt], he played really good, super happy for Joe. Yeah, we were at our best when our best was needed most."

On the difference between an NFL win and a college win:

"They're hard to get, these are hard to get. Everybody in that locker room knows it, as do I. It is really hard to win a game in the NFL. I take my hat off to really everybody in the organization, especially those that have been here doing the dirty work. [QB] Justin [Herbert], [S] Derwin [James Jr.], [OLB] Joey Bosa, [OLB] Khalil Mack – those guys. [RG Trey Pipkins III] 'Pip', [G] Zion [Johnson], [T] Rashawn [Slater], [S] Alohi [Gilman], they just have so much dedication in leading this team."

[DL] Morgan Fox and [FB] Scotty [Scott] Matlock, you could just go through the roster – [K] Cameron Dicker is amazing, [P] JK Scott, [LS] Josh Harris and the Spanos family. I just say this on behalf of all the new guys that joined the organization this year, we are the lucky ones. It's just a tremendous job that this entire organization and these players have been doing and I think you saw that today. That kind of leadership that comes from those that have been here and been doing it. I stepped into it and feel really lucky and fortunate.”

On the Raiders punting on fourth-and-one:

“No, I wasn't surprised or anything. The stop that we got early on in the game might have played into that. Their punter was doing a really good job of punting us down in there. I'm sure that they felt like our offense wasn't moving the ball and we had a lot of three-and-outs in this game. But when we needed to not have a three-and-out the most and take the ball 92, 80 yards in the second half, those were our game winning drives. Offense was really good when we needed the offense to be good the most.”

On the performance of the wide receivers:

“Really good. [WR] Ladd [McConkey] was great. To score a touchdown in your first game as a NFL player and rookie, that's huge. I'm so happy for him. [WR] Josh [Joshua] Palmer, who's a gritty great player also got us one of our first third down pickups after we were 0 for 1 don't even know how many on third down up until that point. That was huge. [WR] Quentin Johnston made some really tough catches, just plucking the ball out of the air and ran with it really well. He got us those three points early in the game. I thought that was one of the big plays of the game. We were third-and-18 and we got 13 or 15 of it back and got it to where [K] Cameron Dicker could put it through the uprights, that was huge and there were some tough, contested catches. [TE] Hayden Hurst had that big one that was wide open. I felt really good about the contested catches and tough catches and the really good running after catch – that really surfaced today. We'll build on those things and then work on just everything. Try to get better at it this week, important week coming up for us for the Chargers.”

On instilling a culture in the team:

“The culture is already here. Me and all the new guys have just stepped into it, we're the lucky ones. This is a great bunch of guys and the culture here is work. They ask no quarter, they give no quarter. They're everything you want. The team is important. [QB] Justin Herbert threw for, he didn't care. [S] Derwin James [Jr.] just wants to win. [OLB] Khalil Mack just wants to win. These guys are winners. That was being done here before, I feel like I am the lucky one stepping into this kind of culture. Those guys, [OLB] Joey Bosa. If I could just tell you, he was out there about an hour before the game today doing the same workout routine that he does before every practice, which is about 50 minutes to an hour before every practice, going through the same routine. The guy is in incredible shape, he's a beast. It was great to see him have that kind of a game, but that isn't something that yours truly instilled. These guys have been doing it and I feel really lucky.”

On running into the field during the brawl:

“I was just trying to get our guys back and get them separated. Keep the rest of the guys from coming, try to break it up.”

On if the team talked after:

“We didn't talk about it after, we went straight back to work.”

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS QUARTERBACK JUSTIN HERBERT

On second half run game:

"I thought it was awesome. [QB Easton] Stick and I kind of talked about where we have been the past couple of years – where we go three-and-out, we punt the ball and things go a different way. To be able to drive the ball down like that, put it in the end zone and then have the defense come up with a big stop – I thought that was awesome to see."

On the gritty win:

"I think it is a testament to those guys in that locker room. It definitely didn't go our way in the first half. I think it was nine points, you said, in the first half or whatever we were at. But to go out there in the second half and put together a drive and answer. For the defense to get some turnovers like that – great team ball."

On team culture:

"I think it's just a great energy from the guys. You know, it's always about improvement and experience and getting better. The guys that we've brought in and the guys that have been here – all we're doing is our best. And to have a guy the charge like that and the locker room that buys in and follows him – it's a special day for him as well to get his first win."

On WR Ladd McConkey's athleticism:

"Yeah, that's what we expect from him – he's going to make plays like that and that's what makes him so special. That's why we think so highly of him. You just have to give him a shot and get the ball to those guys. Like I said, being a point guard and something special happened and he did."

On Raiders' defensive performance:

"I thought they played really well. You know, we got a lot of respect for those guys and they get after the passer. They did a great job mixing up their looks, bringing pressure from side to side and you know, they're really well coached. I know that we'll see them again this year, but they're a great defense."

On adjustments made for the second half:

"Just being patient. You know, just knowing that we got our stuff, we got the right guys out there – we had to settle in. A few too many penalties in the first half, but I thought guys once they settled in, got the ball moving – I thought it was better. For us to just go out there, play with confidence, to play fast – that's what we have to do."

On persistence of run game:

"We believe in our offensive line. We believe in those running backs that we are giving the ball to. It changes the game being able to run the ball like that and switching it up with the pass game. I think seeing those big runs there, it is just a testament to those guys up front. They blocked really hard. [RB] J.K. [Dobbins] made some good moves. It's big for our offense."

On J.K Robbins touchdown:

"I think it's just one of those things that you watch and you have that belief that every play could be a big play like that. And as he starts running, I'm looking up at the jumbotron watching, seeing where those guys are so I'm ready to get the next play in. It was awesome to see from him."

On experienced running backs:

"I think the big thing too, is their jobs in protection. They both have done such a great job in protection – picking up those linebackers when they blitz, they're on their stuff. They're really, really good running backs. They're smart, great teammates. We have complete faith in them whether they're running the ball, catching the ball or blocking."

On facing the raiders coming off last season's performance:

"It's a new season. We were looking forward to this matchup. It's always a great opportunity against a great opponent."

On TE depth chart:

"To have a group like that, it's awesome. Whether we're asking them to run block, catch passes. They have done such a great job of being interchangeable, of communicating and working together. Knowing that you've got a threat at tight end for sure."

On feel of the team:

"I think it's always exciting. It is the first game of the year, so guys are going to be hyped up and energized. It's our job to take that week by week, focus on our next opponent, watch the film on this past one and keep getting better."

On improving offensive performance in second half:

"Just staying patient. Understanding that we've got the right strategy out there, we got the right guys – we just have to go execute. It didn't go our way in the first half, too many penalties, shooting ourselves in the foot. But the way the guys responded, reacted and kept with it – I thought that was awesome to see."

On the fourth-quarter finishers manifesting in the game:

"It's a credit to those guys leading the charge in the weight room. Being able to stay strong in the fourth quarter, especially with the heat as tough as it was, those guys didn't feel it. The defense stepped up big time with some big stops and got a couple turnovers. For the offense to be able to keep running the ball late in the fourth quarter, it's big for us."

On the what is helping finish drives:

"I don't think that anything's different. I think we've been able to do that in the past. It's just, there have been times where we've relied on the defense or we've relied on the offense. But to have a, a complete team win like that where the offense takes it down, defense comes a big stop. I thought it was awesome to see."

On Raiders choice to punt in the fourth quarter:

"I think the big fourth down stop early on in the game was huge for us. I'm not one to really judge what they do offensively, whether it's punting or – I'm just sitting on the sideline, watching the defense and rooting for the best. So to be able to get the ball back, I thought it was huge but I'm not qualified to make the decision."

On RT JOE ALT:

"[T] Joe [Alt] was solid. He's a true ball player out there and he wasn't phased at all. He's a tough player, knows his stuff and we've got complete faith in him."

On locker room atmosphere after the game:

"It was awesome. It's an exciting time and winning these games in the NFL is tough. So any one that you can win, whether it's by a bunch or by a little. Those are hard-fought wins and we'll take as many as we can."

On playing his first game of season:

"It's been a while since I've played as well. To go out there and have a win, whether it was a team victory like that, I thought that was awesome. Special teams, offense, defense. Those guys are excited in the locker room. It means a lot to everyone whether it's a staff member, whether it's the front office or whether it's the players. You can tell how much this means to everyone and that's exactly where we want to be."

LAS VEGAS RAIDERS HEAD COACH ANTONIO PIERCE

On punting on fourth down:

"Field position, defensively, punter. We got what we wanted – we got them backed up, we got three timeouts there, played good football, get the ball back at half court as we called offense, mid-field mostly. They broke off the long run and that was the end of it."

On stopping the run game:

"For the most part, pretty solid. When the game is on the line and we got to fit up the run correctly, guys got to get off blocks. Second level defenders got to fit up, we did a poor job with that but hats off to them. They stayed consistent with their game. They didn't beat themselves."

On what to fix offensively:

"A lot. The run game was poor. The passing game was off and then turnovers – you can't have three turnovers on the road and expect to win."

On his concerns for check downs:

"That didn't. I have to look at the film before I answer that one."

On game management deciding when to punt:

"We considered going for it as a long one. We got stopped earlier in the game, the momentum. The punter did a good job pinning those guys back. I think we had two or three points inside the 20. Again, defense was the strength for the most part of the game. Keep them backed up with three timeouts."

On what factors into going for it on fourth down:

"A lot of things factor into not going for it on fourth-and-one."

On learning from this game:

"We got to do a better job of composure, ours and myself and the coaching staff. What happened at the end of the game was inexcusable, it's not going to be tolerated. At the end of the day, we can't be selfish. We play team football and we talked about it – winning the line of scrimmage, which we didn't do on either side of the ball and take care of the football."

On the fourth quarter end zone fight:

"I just addressed it, it's undisciplined."

On an example of being selfish:

"End of the game. It's not worth it. They scored, the kid passed and they scored. Let it go."

On following a game plan:

"It's something we harped on, we talked about for two weeks. I thought for the most part, preseason, we did a decent job of that. But we had two explosive runs. Had another explosive run but fumbled the ball. It seems like right when we got to midfield, there was something going on. Either just pushing us back or we couldn't figure it out. The players, coaches, all of us will obviously look at it. It's not good enough. There's plenty of opportunities for us to put points on the board. I thought we had it and are you going to play the game and go for it on every fourth down? No. You got an All-Pro punter there, you got a defense that's playing well for the majority of the game – you play football. The style of play, the way we play, our identity did not show up today."

On starting the season on the road:

"I just hit on it – you can't turn the ball over, you got to be better in the red zone. We weren't, we were one-for-three, they were two-for-four and then stopping the run and being able to run the ball. I thought we did a good job early in the game on third down with [QB Justin] Herbert and those guys, really good job early on defensively. But again, as the

game goes on, that's where it comes to just keep playing team ball. Don't nobody think that they need to make a play, just do your job. That's something we'll learn from."

On QB Gardner Minshew II:

"I really have to look at it before I give an honest opinion."

On DE Tyree Wilson injury:

"I know it's a leg injury. Obviously, I got to give our medical staff a see. But we were already down one, down another one. A little tough sledding, but next-man-up mentality. No excuses."

LAS VEGAS RAIDERS QUARTERBACK GARDNER MINSHEW II

On offensive check downs:

"Maybe so, anytime you have a team playing a majority of two-high defense you are going to have a lot of that. They did a good job keeping a roof on things for the most part. We got guys that can really stretch the field and go get it, so we want to find ways to do more of that."

On the decision to not go for it on fourth-and-one:

"That's a coach's decision. But I think anybody that's any type of ball player wants the ball in their hands with the opportunity to help the team."

On the passing game getting away from it in the fourth quarter"

"Yeah, maybe so. Going to have to look at the film. I think we are going to see some positive stuff on tape, a lot to clean up. I feel like we beat ourselves a lot of the game. Hats off to them, they played a great game, played hard. Like I said, kept a roof on things but, I think we still have very high expectations of what we can do as an offense, that execution was not up to our standard."

On his Raider debut:

"I don't know man, I'm going to have to watch the film. But we didn't win, so it's not good enough."

On the team beating themselves:

"It was frustrating, but it's also encouraging. I think we still have a lot of juice on offense, we have a lot of dudes. Once it clicks it's going to click. I think we have to keep pressing, keep moving forward and we are going to be fine."

On what he learned Week 1:

"They had a good game plan. They made us really earn it, moved the ball down the field and then times we were not good enough at doing that, being consistent. That's probably the biggest takeaway."

On his guys and the chemistry:

"Yeah, I thought it was good. Obviously, you know we had some tough drives, tough stops, plays we want back. I feel like our overall demeanor – we were in it till the end, we were going to try to figure out a way to get it in there even down two scores. I felt good about our guys. Every time we step in the huddle we are expecting to win that play to win the game."

On the missed throw:

"Yeah, a little bit. It was a little bit of miscommunication on my part. Tried to pull it back, didn't work. It's totally on me."

On starting the season with two road games:

"I think it's our first time as an offense on the big stage, figuring out what we are about and how it operates. On the road with a little noise, communication always gets stressed. I feel like there is going to be a lot to build on, a lot to feel positive about. Obviously, today was not good enough but I still have a lot of high hopes for our team."

On his message to the team as a leader:

"Yes absolutely, I think you have to balance it. There is obviously stuff we are going to practice and clean up. Anytime you lose, you are going to figure out a way to win next time. You got to work on things. Whatever we did, didn't work so we are going to figure it out and move on to next week."

On the offense not being in sync:

"I don't know man, that's hard to say. It felt like a lot of different little things. Just wasn't quite tight enough, didn't execute in general. I think that's going to come with time, I think we are going to get everybody on the same page. Everybody wants to get back to work, everybody is going to be in the building tomorrow. I feel good about our chances to get it right."