



INDIANAPOLIS COLTS VS. LOS ANGELES CHARGERS
MONDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2022
POSTGAME QUOTES



COLTS INTERIM HEAD COACH JEFF SATURDAY

Opening Statement:

“All right. Quick deal on injuries. Ash (Ashton Dulin), obviously, out with the concussion. He's in evaluation. And Isaiah (Rodgers Sr.) with a knee. So don't really have any more information on any of those guys. I don't think either of them returned. So getting them looked at. You know, pretty simple – can't turn it over. Got to convert on third downs offensively, get them off the field and, you know, can't leave the defense on the field. And when they are, they've got to get off on third downs. So didn't do enough to get it done. And, unfortunately, that's the way it turns out.”

Do you guys have any answers on offense with two games left?

“I mean, you keep doing what you're doing. You know, we – again, we started out – I thought we had some shots early. Obviously, the turnovers hurt you. And they kind of dissuade you from continuing to challenge it. And then, as they played that, holding the ball, not seeing it, then you're getting behind the chains. We ran the ball well, but when you're – you know, when it's second-and-14, it's hard to stay in those things. So just kind of the flow of the game. We just – again, we say it every week, but self-inflicted wounds. You get behind the chains, it's hard to catch back up. I thought, again, we ran it effectively. But couldn't stick with it because, again, we were hurting ourselves in different plays.”

Did you consider making a quarterback change from Nick Foles to Sam Ehlinger?

“Nah. I mean, no, it was – I mean, you know, from the way we had practiced and the way Nick (Foles) had been moving the football, you still had a chance. We got down there on the fourth down, fourth-and-short inside the red zone. You've got to convert there. Looking for a touchdown because we hadn't moved it. You try to get some kind of spark. And, no – going to somebody else wasn't the answer right there.”

Is that the plan moving forward to keep Nick Foles at quarterback?

“Yeah, yeah, yeah. I don't have any – yeah, I don't have any reservations about that right now.”

You mentioned you were going to have a rotation at running back. It seemed like Zack Moss got 90 percent of the snaps.

“He was toting it. You know, like I said, it's a competition, right? So, he was out there, he was running that thing hard in between the tackles, breaking tackles. Did a really good job. So, you know, I mean, Scottie (Montgomery) does a great job of rotating them. But if he feels like one guy is rolling, he's going to keep them in. So, I don't get too involved in how he's going to separate them. But I know every time I looked up, Zack (Moss) was breaking tackles and moving the pile. That's kind of how that went.”

Was that Scottie Montgomery's decision to stick with Zack Moss?

“Yeah, he does a rotation on guys. Yeah, he picks and chooses when to make those rotations. I think he does a good job with it. But I thought Zack (Moss) did a really good job running hard and extending plays.”

You said you were going to stick with Nick Foles because he's moving the ball down the field.

“No, no, no. I just said I didn't think a change was going to – I didn't think a change was going to help us move the ball any more effectively. Not just because of how he played. But I said the way he practiced and just trying to find the rhythm with the offense, I don't think making another change at this moment's going to do much to spark it.”

We all have seen what all these quarterbacks can do. Why not start Sam Ehlinger?

“Well, I mean, Sam (Ehlinger) has had his shot, as well. I wasn't here when that happened. But, you know, as we look through there, we're trying to find the spark. As Nick (Foles) was practicing, we felt like he gave us the best opportunity. Unfortunately, it wasn't his night tonight.”

You have 13 days left with these guys. What motivates this group these last two weeks?



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"Yeah, I told them, man, just the pride and effort. These guys lay it out there. I mean, I can't tell you – I mean, I told them how grateful I am. The defense battling, that's tough. It's tough sledding man. Nothing – you know, nothing to play for, down, offense isn't moving the ball. Them guys, they're still laying hat, playing hard. I take a lot of pride in that. And I tell them, man, I'm so grateful and appreciative of how hard they do try to play. And, again, when all things are stacked against you, it shows you a lot about yourself. I think those guys, they are proving to themselves what they are as professional football players. And that's true pros. And I'm grateful for what they're doing."

On fourth-and-1 for the second week in a row you went for it with a quarterback sneak and didn't get it. Was that the play call?

"Yeah, it was play one – fourth and inside a yard. At that point, that was the call. I mean, we can go back and second-guess it again. We had converted whatever it was when I was here, five-of-five before, and we've lost – we've missed the last two. But I felt like, again, you know, that was going to give us the best the opportunity to get it. We don't get it. And, you know, to be fair to the referees, it's forward motion for those guys. So, it wasn't where he stretches the ball, it's not where he gets the ball past. It's all those things. It's, 'Hey, this is where we thought he was down, even though he's laying on top of bodies.' And that's why they pulled the challenge flag. They said, 'We know he's across. That's not going to be how it's going to be played out.' He's on bodies. But we're trying to protect the QB. So, it is what it is."

Aside from two wins, what do you try to get out of these last two weeks?

"Just consistency. Yeah, I want to see these guys play a consistent, full game, right? We've had 50-some odd minutes in different games where we're playing close, but we're not quite finishing. Showing these guys how to finish. What it looks like when you start a game and finish a game in completion, and we just haven't put one together yet. So, obviously, wins make everything better. Every one of them are going for it. But when you're trying to get a team in the habits of what does it look like each and every series. And, again, we'll talk about this one as situational football. When you look at it third down they convert, we don't. They continue to drive, sustain, keep you on the field, fatigue you, we do the opposite. We keep our defense. So, we'll talk about all those things and how you have to play together to ultimately pull these games out. And, unfortunately, the Chargers played better than we did in that area."

You guys gave up 7.0 sacks tonight. I know you need to watch the tape, but what do you think was the biggest issue in pass protection?

"I'm going to look at it. I mean, I think the last one was pretty quick. But the other ones, a lot of them were coverage. You see them, you know, holding the ball, looking down, pulling down, looking for his next progression. And again, as these guys are figuring each other out, how long you're holding it, when the ball is coming out, where the routes are going to be and all of those things, it takes time. And again, we just weren't efficient at it. And so it's either going to go turnover, incompleteness or sack. And it's going to turn that away. And, unfortunately, we gave up more turnovers than sacks than we would like."

COLTS QUARTERBACK NICK FOLES

What was the challenge of stepping in tonight for your first start of the season?

"Yeah, I mean, any time there's change, you step in, and you try to get acclimated as soon as you can and, you know, get the timing down and everything. We had a really good week of practice. Obviously, the execution wasn't at the level that we needed to win this game and that's unfortunate. This would have been – we haven't done a good enough job this year and this one was a tough one. You know, the guys are fighting every single play, giving everything they have and we just fell short."

What happened on the first interception? It seemed like there might have been a miscommunication.

"Yeah, it was one of those things where the guy sort of fell off a route, sort of a double-move. And, you know, I felt like they were holding our guy. But at the end of the day, I've got to be smart when I see that and just check it down so that's on me."



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What were the conversations like on the sideline as you were trying to get things going as an offense? Why wasn't it able to get going?

"I mean, I think you see – you just keep chiseling away at what's going on. You keep believing, you keep talking through the different looks we're seeing, different plays that we're seeing, how guys are playing. And, you know, we were doing that all game. We just could never get anything going."

Did you ever feel comfortable tonight?

"I mean, I think we never got into a rhythm as an offense. I think the points show. I mean, three points, I mean, that's never going to be good enough. So, we never got into a rhythm as an offense that really got going. And that starts with the quarterback and we have to make sure we do a good job throughout the course of the game to try to find a rhythm."

With two weeks left, how much can change in that period of time?

"I mean, we'll find out. I think we just sort of take it in the present moment. You know, right now, you know, dealing with a loss, moving forward, getting ready for the Giants, you just sort of chisel away at the week. You stay in the present moment, do what you can, prepare like you can, practice like you can and you keep, you know, going. I mean, this year for this organization has been very, very unique for everyone involved. And I think the big thing in that locker room is guys keep playing, keep showing up to practice, keep grinding, keep working and keep fighting. The outcome wasn't what we wanted and that's unfortunate. And this is the NFL. And I – it's not the first time I've seen this. And it's tough. But I also know through these moments this is where you really create the real relationships and you also see what relationships aren't real. And this game has both. And those ones that are real, those are life relationships. That's what this game is about. Because at some point, all of us will be done with this game and we'll move on and we won't even think about this loss. We'll think about the bright spots, the relationships, the people that were there for you when you're in your toughest time. And, this team, unfortunately, has had a lot of tough times this year. But those relationships are real. So if there's one silver lining, there's that. But at the end of the day, we need to win games."

Jeff Saturday was saying that the effort was pretty good despite the result. Is that what you saw, as well?

"I mean, guys at this level, this is what – you know, there are so many kids out there that dream about playing at this level, and you want to believe that guys are going to give it everything they have every day. Because this is something you look forward to as a kid. And it's just unfortunate sometimes you can give it everything you have and the outcome is not what you thought. And that's the hard part of this game. But there's also the time where you give everything you have and you win games and then you keep winning. And then you win a lot of games and then you make the playoffs. And I'm just fortunate I've seen both of them. And the biggest thing is, you know, you can be fighting every single down and lose a game like we did. But I've also been on some teams where we fought and we win. So, it's just a unique game. That's why we keep playing. It's hard. It's a very difficult game. But you learn a lot about yourself and the people you play with."

Jeff Saturday said that he felt like a lot of the sacks tonight were coverage sacks. Were the Chargers doing a good job with their coverages?

"They did a nice job covering. They were mixing up coverages. They were doing a good job with taking away a bunch of reads. And, you know, taking away leverage. And early on, you know, they made some good plays. Two of the picks, I felt good about the throws, just one guy fell off and had a nice play coming in. Did not expect him to do that based on the technique they were playing. And then, you know, the other one, three, (Derwin) James (Jr.) – he's a good player, he went up and got that thing. I mean, I was amazed that he got that. I haven't seen a play like that. So the guy is a tremendous player. But at the end of the day, those are on me. I have to, you know, know that and make better decisions."

What have you learned about yourself individually going through this season in your role?



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"Yeah, I mean, the role has been unique. I think you just realize that no matter what, like, you can always be there with guys in the locker room and talk about life, what's going on outside of football. You know, kids, significant others, whatever it may be, you can talk about life. It's not always ball. And you get to know people. At the end of the day, we're people, too. So, I think that's the part of the game that sometimes gets lost with all the fantasy football and everything. Like, they're human beings. I know I've had neighbors before that, you know, they're with me through a season and they're football fans, and by the end of it, they're like, 'We don't look at football the same. You're just a person. Like, you're just like us.' And that's the thing, we have an opportunity to be role models up here. And that's why we do it, too. Because there are a lot of kids that are looking at us and want to do this and we want to set a good example. And that's why I keep playing. That's why, you know, the young guys in the locker room, you can share wisdom with and help them along the way. I mean, you learn a lot through the tough times. When you win, it's easy. It's super easy. When you lose, it's hard. And when you lose a lot, it becomes very difficult. But you just learn what's deep down in your soul and that's the positive."

How much were you chomping at the bit to play both tonight and throughout the rest of the season?

"I mean, when I came here, this was Matt Ryan's team. And I still think Matt is a tremendous player. And I think the world of Matt. And I still think, you know – so the answer is no. I was there to support Matt. I believe in Matt. I love Matt. He's been there for me. Sam (Ehlinger) – the QB room is strong here. It hasn't been an easy year, but we've always stuck together and that's been really special. And I've gotten to see Sam and Matt, who they really are. And those guys are real. And I'm just grateful to be here with them. But, no, I was never chomping at the bit because I was there to support Matt. And I wanted Matt to succeed. And, you know, we've been fighting for each other, we've been leaning on each other. And, you know, the biggest thing after this game, is you get in the locker room and it's Sam and Matt and you know what, we know that it's a brotherhood that's very special and unique this year. And we know that we have each other's backs. And that's something that you don't always see every day."

COLTS CENTER RYAN KELLY

The offense gave up seven sacks tonight. What did you see out there?

"I mean we'll look at the film. We'll just look at the film and figure it out. There's some new moving pieces in there. Obviously, we have to do better up front, and it starts with running the ball. I thought we ran the ball pretty well at times. I don't know what our average per carry was, but I thought that was something we could really build on. The game was kind of getting away from us, so – we'll watch the film and dive into it pretty deep and analyze everything and check it all out, but it was a tough game."

We understand it was a very long week for Nick Foles trying to get ready for this moment on short notice. How did it feel in there? How was the communication? What do you take away on that end?

"I hadn't taken a rep with Nick (Foles) until this week, which is kind of crazy to think about, but I thought he did a great job all week at being composed, being clear in the huddle of what his expectations are of us and also just keeping everyone even-keeled. I think a lot of times you have big personalities and guys are upset that the season has gone the way it has, and I thought he did a great job just being in there, being calm under the situation and obviously, looking forward to his chance to go out there and play. It was not the game we all wanted to have."

You're one of the few players in this locker room that was on the 2017 team that really struggled down the stretch. What would you tell 95 percent of the guys in here who haven't been a part of a month like this in the National Football League?

"It's tough. As a competitor, as person that this is all I've ever done my whole life – and everybody else is the same way in this locker room. It's your profession, it's your job. You can go two ways. You can throw the hat in or you can play for the guy next to you, play for your career. It has to mean something to you. Just going out there and (expletive) the bed, that can't be OK. We didn't execute, we didn't put enough



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points up, but one thing you can't take away from this team is that we're not going to lay down. Every single guy is going to play through the very end, which in the grand scheme of things in a loss like that on *Monday Night Football* is pretty tough to hang your hat on, but that's what we got."

COLTS LINEBACKER BOBBY OKEREKE

What is keeping this unit together on a more deep level when you look at the defense?

"Really just love and respect. We're a very tight group. Positionally, d-line is close, linebackers are close, DBs are close. I think Gus (Bradley) does a great job of keeping it a unit-focused group. We just play and pull for one another."

There have been games where it's felt momentum is almost impossible. How would you describe what it felt like tonight?

"Yeah, it's tough. I don't feel like momentum ever really swung our way, but we kept fighting, and we're fighting for that chance – offense gets a spark, goes down, puts up some points and we're right there in the game. But that's our job as a defense, when a turnover happens and (there's) sudden change, keep them to a field goal instead of a touchdown. We tried to do that today."

Five straight losses. You have not been a part of a Colts team that's went through something like that. What does that leave you with tonight?

"Perspective. Gus (Bradley) talked about it earlier today. You have to find a way to dance in the rain, and that's what we are trying to do as a defense."



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CHARGERS HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

What does it mean to make the playoffs for the first time as a head coach?

"I think it's just the beginning. It's just the beginning. This is not our final goal. We expected to be at this point. I'm really proud of how this season has gone for our football team and what we've been able to demonstrate in order to make it into the postseason. That's probably what I'm most proud of. Not just being in it, but how we made it, what it took for us to get in. But, you know, this is just the beginning for us."

What does it say about what you are building here that you have reached this point after everything you've been through as a team this year?

"I think the reason why we're here is because of the men on our football team, coaches, players. We've got the makeup to withstand the type of season that we've had, and I think that we would not be here today if it were not for the toughness of our football team, the makeup of our football team. And I think for far too long people have talked about the talent of this football team and the organization, and that's ultimately not what gets you where you want to go. You have to prove your toughness, and that's what we've proven so far this year is that we have a tough enough football team mentally and physically to be where we are right now, which is in the tournament. But our season is not over. We have two more games against really, really good teams, and we need to search to play our best football so we can not only get into the playoffs but make a run to a Super Bowl championship, which is what our goal is. So, we've got a lot of work to do, but I'm certainly proud of everybody in that locker room because today was a great day for our team."

What did you think about the defense?

"Just have a unit that's really connected out there, a team that's playing extremely hard, playing extremely disciplined, doing all the things that you need to do to put a dominant effort like that. You know, that's certainly what our expectations are in the run game and the pass game, pass-rush, got to have it situations, third down, fourth down. It was a complete performance. It was a dominant performance, and certainly one that we expect. But I'm really proud of the guys because they've come together and made it happen, and our players deserve all the credit."

Do you think you are playing your best football, or is this football that just gets you where you want to go?

"I think it's probably somewhere in between that. I don't think we've played our best as a team yet. I think that that's still out there for us, but I think that we're exhibiting a lot of the toughness, doing a lot of the things that you need in order to be successful. Taking the football away, you know, being good on third down on defense, keeping the explosive, keeping a roof on the coverage, tackling well. On offense I thought the second half was a little bit more like us. I thought we did a good job at the end of the half there finishing with the ball, and I thought we ran the football better in the second half. But we still can score the ball a lot better than what we're doing, and I thought our special teams were solid tonight. You know, we won the take-away battle 3-2, which was huge in the game. And if you count the fourth down stops, even more than that. We still have work to do, but I like where we're going."

Did you agree with Derwin James Jr. being ejected from the game?

"No, I did not because I know Derwin's (James Jr.) intent. You know, you would have to establish intent. I thought that he tried to lead with the shoulder. It's a play where they obviously laid the guy out in a tough position, which is their fault, not ours, and Derwin made an aggressive play. And I know that we all know Derwin is not going to try to do that to anybody. So, we'll have to look at it. I know what Derwin's intentions are. I've seen him make a lot of tackles on plays just like that, and I know that his target was not above the neck. I know that."

How is Derwin James Jr. physically?

"He is in the protocol right now, but he is having a heck of a time in that locker room right now."



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How did you build toughness with this team?

"We onboarded it. We have a lot of toughness that we've onboarded in two years here, and then we've built off the guys that were here before that have it. You know, that's what you have to do. You can't just instill toughness in someone. They either have it or they don't, so what you have to do is you have to join up with the right guys. You have to join up with Khalil Mack, Kyle Van Noy, Morgan Fox, Bryce Callahan, you know, Sebastian Joseph-Day, Troy Reeder, Gerald Everett, Corey Linsley, Matt Feiler. You have to join up with it. You have to go buy it and then you have to draft it. Jamaree Salyer. All these guys. You have to go get it. That's our mission is to join up with tough football players. Mike Williams is a tough football player. Justin Herbert is a tough football player. Austin Ekeler is a tough football player, and we're going to keep getting as many of them in our program as possible because that's what it takes and that's why we're here is because of the toughness of on you are football team."

How does the offense continue to improve going into the playoffs?

"We've got to stay away from penalties. We have a lot of penalties that definitely inhibited our progress today. You know, you get the explosive to DP (Donald Parham Jr.). There were a couple of procedure penalty where we had good plays up, but we just have to be more consistent overall. I thought we were good on third down. We had 18 of them, which I don't like, but I thought we were good on third down. And I thought that we did run the ball in the second half the way we wanted to, but it's just bringing it all together and being a clean operation with all 11 guys. I think that we're still trying to find that rhythm. I liked how we were able to locate Keenan (Allen) today. He had 11 receptions. Mike (Williams) had four big catches. We need to get more to Mike because we know what happens when Mike gets the football for us. But I like the way those two guys played, and I thought that Josh (Kelley) and Austin (Ekeler) ran hard, but we just have to put that rhythm together for four quarters, and I think penalties have a lot to do with it."

CHARGERS WIDE RECEIVER KEENAN ALLEN

On making the playoffs:

"Sounds amazing. Everything we worked for, everything we were here for. We are in the fight. All the details and everything will mean a little more here these last two weeks and hopefully we can keep getting better."

Is it sweeter for you considering how long it's been since the last time you were in playoffs and also, everything you have been through this season with the hamstring and all the time missed.

"I have been here long enough to know when it comes, it's a great feeling. I don't really do well when we don't and how long we don't do it for. I just take it for what it is this year. Congrats to the team, to the coaches and everybody in the organization. The season starts tomorrow."

CHARGERS RUNNING BACK AUSTIN EKELER

Do you agree that the toughness of this team is the reason you guys are here?

"I would 100-percent say so. The reason I say so is because of the ups and downs we've dealt with and the games we've been in. It's not really been like this today, where we have a couple score leads, even though we should have had a bigger lead in my opinion. Our turnovers, I didn't really play as tough as I would've liked too today, the physicality and my running weren't where I wanted it to be. About this team-it's been the ups and downs, but we still continue to find ways to get wins to give ourselves an opportunity here at the end so that's where the toughness comes from."

How does it feel for this to be the first playoffs this team has made since 2018?

"The last time we were going to playoffs I remember I was in a neck brace, Melvin Gordon was in a double knee brace. We were banged up and no linebackers. So, I know we have two more games left. I'm looking forward to putting the team together. Offensively, we have to get it together, defensively we have to keep playing with the caliber they're playing and I'm excited for us."



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Does making the playoffs feel even better with all the adversity this team has overcome?

"I would say so. Especially because of last year too, we were right there. Right there. We had a solid team, we had a lot of guys, it was probably one of the healthiest seasons I've had here. We were right there and so now it's like 'Hey, we have another opportunity to come back again this year'. A lot of the same guys back offensively and we got ourselves to a point where it wasn't pretty, but that's football for you. It's not always the most beautiful thing, but we got ourselves an opportunity."

CHARGERS QUARTERBACK JUSTIN HERBERT

How does it feel to be in the playoffs?

"I think it's a great sign for all the hard work that we've put in this year and we've definitely dealt with our adversity our fair share. The story of the day was the defense stepping up big-time and getting those stops. There's plenty of room for improvement for our offense, but, you know, it's a good sign for us of things to come."

Head Coach Brandon Staley said that this season has been about toughness, and that's why this team is here. Do you agree with that?

"Yeah, you know, I think we've lost plenty of guys to injuries and things like that, and they battled back, and they're doing everything they can to be out on the field. You know, whenever you lose a guy like Joey Bosa or Rashawn (Slater), Mike (Williams), Keenan (Allen), it's tough to replace those guys, but the guys that stepped up, we found out a lot about those guys. Josh Palmer and DeAndre Carter, you know, they've done an incredible job all year. To have everyone back and being able to perform like that, you know, there's still plenty of room for improvement, but we will get on that."

Do you think you guys have played your best football?

"I don't think we played our best football yet. You know, I think the defense has done an incredible job these past couple of weeks. I think offensively we can do better. We can limit turnovers and that starts with me. We can limit penalties. Just being able to convert on third down and things like that, but we're definitely going to be watching film after it one and learn from it."

What do you think you need to clean up?

"There's a lot that goes into it. I think it's penalties, turnovers, being able to convert on third down. When you are able to do all of that, you are able to move the ball. At times we've been able to show that, but, you know, we need to be more consistent, and it starts with our offense. It's a great opportunity for us to get better."

Is this moment sweeter for you considering what you've been through in your career?

"It for sure does. It's such a tough way to lose last year to the Raiders there at the end. You know, we had some games that went not our way last year. We were able to fix that this year and learn from that. You know, I think those guys in that locker room, they deserve that. They worked so hard this year, and they've earned it. Just to be a part of it, I think the Chargers organization has done such a great job these past couple of years. It didn't go our way the past two years, but they stuck with it, and they're doing everything they can, so it's an honor to be a part of it."

How excited are you to play in the playoffs?

"It will be a lot of fun. Just excited to be in that atmosphere and to have that opportunity to keep playing football."