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POSTGAME TRANSCRIPTS

Los Angeles Chargers vs. Buffalo Bills

Saturday, December 23, 2023 ⚡ SoFi Stadium ⚡ Inglewood, Calif.

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS INTERIM HEAD COACH GIFF SMITH

On QB Easton Stick's performance tonight:

"I'll tell you, he really battled. He's a tough guy. I wish that he would've slid on the one. Although, it did create a little energy for the team. He definitely showed that he's an NFL quarterback. We were proud of the way he played and we'll continue to move forward with him."

On the defense's gameplan entering tonight's game:

"I think that [Defensive Coordinator] Derrick [Ansley] and the staff put a great plan together. We wanted to keep DJ [S Derwin James Jr.] close to the line [of scrimmage], keep it clean on that end. We felt like, inside, that our guys played well and stopped the run. We tried to be a little aggressive on some different downs. Probably, it was a little bit different, but it was a nice, clean package and they were able to execute."

On the performance of the defense tonight:

"I thought that they played well. [Bills QB] Josh Allen is good. He can extend plays with his feet. He was able to hit the one early, and then the one down the sideline. That's what he does. We [cover] zero'd him at the end of the game, which I think was a great call. He lobbed one up and had a little confusion off the stack and left the guy uncovered. More times than not, that's a pick and it's a walk off win."

On James Jr.'s role tonight:

"Going into the game, we really thought that it wouldn't be that much base [personnel]. We haven't played much base, didn't see it becoming much base, but you saw the pony looks with the two backs and it created more of that. We really wanted him close to the line and playing fast. He played really well. he really did. He played a good game. Sometimes it goes that way. If we would have known that, we would have maybe done some things a little different. But that was the plan moving in, so that he could be close to the line, and we needed him. He played physical."

On if arranging James Jr. 'close to the line of scrimmage' was due to the Bills' offensive tendencies:

"Yeah, we thought it was a really good for our matchup out of their 11 personnel in the run game, having a physical guy like that. I think it did help us."

On if electing to kick field goals on fourth down 'is a different approach':

"We went into this game thinking that it was going to be a heavyweight fight and we wanted to have a chance at the end for the knockout. So, we were going to play it a little close to the vest. The team knew that. Get points on the board and give ourselves a chance to win. That's the way it went. Came up a little short."

On if he 'considered letting the Bills score' on their final offensive drive to get the ball back on offense:

"We talked about it. When they reviewed the call, there was a part of me that was hoping they were going to say he wasn't down, let them score, so that we'd have more time. [Bills Head] Coach [Sean McDermott] over there does a great job. They would have slid if we were to try to let them free way. But, yeah, we did have that discussion. They had enough time to talk to their players and the situation at hand, so we went with what we did."

On K Cameron Dicker's performance tonight:

"Him and [P] JK Scott, we have two of the best. We rode them today, fellas. We really did. That was the plan going in, that we were going to use him. Dicker, he's a cool cat. Kickers are different, but we sure are glad that we have him."

On his first game as head coach:

"I think once you get on the field, then it's a lot more comfortable than all the other stuff. The staff, everybody did a great job. I think the team responded to the message that the organization and the staff had. There are no moral victories in any of this, but they really achieved fighting for each other and knowing what that feels like. I thought they did that."

On the 'message going into the game':

"Going into the game, we wanted to keep it close and have a chance to win it at the end. But, we wanted every play to fight for each other, no matter what. If there was ever a guy that wasn't going to do it, we were going to pull them out. But, we didn't have any of that. They fought, they fought every play."

On if the team was 'rejuvenated by the fresh start':

"Going into the game, I truly felt like they played hard. I really did. My question, going into the game, was how would they react the first time Buffalo punches you in the face? We go up, and then Buffalo scores, 14 to 10, that could be where you crash and burn, and they rallied and they fought. That's a step in the right direction."

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS QUARTERBACK EASTON STICK

On his performance tonight and how tonight 'felt' compared to his first career start last week:

"The more that you play, hopefully, the better you get. Definitely felt comfortable. I felt comfortable with the plan. [Offensive Coordinator] Kellen [Moore] did a really good job, and [Interim Head Coach] Giff [Smith], too, just getting this thing going in the right direction this week. I thought that we prepared well, just the execution in some critical situations, obviously, is why we're sitting here feeling the way that we're feeling."

On the performance of the receiving corps tonight:

"It's a credit to those guys, it's a credit to Kellen [Moore], to [Wide Receivers] Coach [Chris] Beatty in just finding ways to get everybody involved. We have a diverse room, guys with a lot of skillsets, so trying to find ways to let everybody touch the ball and impact it in a positive way, I thought that we did that tonight in a lot of different ways."

On Interim Head Coach Giff Smith's 'message to the team':

"He was awesome all week. He told us that was the plan going into it, let's get this thing to the fourth quarter and find a way to win it. Obviously, came up a little bit short. But, the way that he rallied the guys this week, and you saw how hard we played, that's a credit to Giff [Smith] and that's a credit to the guys in the locker room. He did an unbelievable job this week."

On scoring on two of the offense's first three possessions:

"It's a big part of it. Obviously, you want to play from in front, play with a lead. The defense did a really good job, got us a short field. Special teams got us a short field. We were able to get the ball into the end zone and take the lead, that's the way that you want to play it. We just have to consistently execute better so that we feel better at the end."

On 'managing this week with all of the transition':

"It's just part of it. At the end of the day, this is our job. It's a blessing to do this every day, and you understand that it's not going to last forever. Just trying to stay in the moment and be a part of this locker room and enjoy the guys as much as possible, and go out there and play as well as we can play. The opportunity means the world to me, to get a chance to go out there and play with the guys."

BUFFALO BILLS HEAD COACH SEAN McDERMOTT

Opening Statement:

"First of all, glory to God and Merry Christmas to everyone out there. Happy holidays. Tough game, tough game. A gritty performance by our guys, they hung in there. We knew it was going to be tough coming out here. Give credit to the Chargers, they were ready to play. Our guys stuck with it, good to see [Bills RB] James [Cook] break 1,000 yards, I think first time by one of our backs since 2017 when [former Bills RB LeSean McCoy] Shady got it. [Bills DT] Ed Oliver had two sacks, the last one was huge obviously for us, running the clock down. Five sacks overall, that were all big for us and in big moments of the game. [Bills QB] Josh [Allen] the play to secure the third down on the game winning drive. I know it's Allen's – I think 18th game winning drive. Just an incredible, incredible accomplishment. Overall, a resilient win. Proud of the guys."

On Bills WR Khalil Shakir's touchdown being called back:

"Listen, we've been in those this year where you're defending a field goal and it's two minutes but it's not really two minutes. Had [Khalil] Shakir been ruled a touchdown, it would have been defending a little bit more than the field goal. It's two minutes but it's not two minutes. There is potentially a timeout left at that point. Everything happens for a reason."

On the defense 'working with short fields':

"The turnovers we have to continue to work on that and get that cleaned up. You can't turn the ball over three times. The numbers, it's hard to win when you do that. Especially when the turnover differential is three-to-zero, minus three in this case. We have to do a better job of that, overall, as a team – taking the ball away on defense and special teams and protecting the football better on offense and special teams. They were doing some things that they hadn't shown, obviously they came in well prepared. I thought our guys settled in and responded. We did a good job in the red zone, third down as well and had some big plays on those third downs as well to help us out."

On the defense's performance tonight:

"I didn't think we were rushing well on early downs. I think they were doing a good job of getting their hands on us early. When we needed it, some critical third downs we had some big-time sacks. [Bills DT] Ed [Oliver] had two of them, obviously the last one was huge just to burn so much time off the clock cause it really put them in a – pretty much they could only do one or two things right there. When they have a little bit more time left or if that's an incomplete, they can still do some things. They have a really good field goal kicker so really, we only had about 20-25 yards to play with right there and give because he's hit one from, I think, 55 yards already. He's probably good from 60 to 60-plus from a game winning standpoint. Real proud of the guys."

On Bills WR Gabe Davis:

"When you do things the right way and you keep it about the team, which [Bills WR] Gabe [Davis] has. He hasn't had the touches caught over the last couple of weeks but he's blocked well, he's been in the right spots and he just stayed with it and the ball finds you when you do things the right way. I'm extremely proud of him for it. It's a credit to him, a credit to his week-to-week approach."

On 'having conversations' when he's not getting those touches:

"For any wide receiver it's touchpoints like, 'Hey man, we're good. Just do what you're doing and the ball will find you.' It gets hard for those guys, they're human and they want the ball, they want to produce and factor into the wins. I think overall – again his unselfish nature is much appreciated."

On Bills K Tyler Bass making the game winning field goal:

"It was real good. The execution, you can't ever take those for granted. From the snap to the hold, reading [P] Sam [Martin] and [Bills K] Tyler [Bass] takes so much pride in that and their work. They execute at a very high level, it's good to see those guys and the confidence that comes with that."

On the decision to execute a squib kick following the game-leading field goal:

"Just trying to burn more time off the clock. Trying to get it all the way through, it came up just short of getting all the way through but ideally you can get it all the way through. I wanted to take as much time off the clock as we could. Where they got it, like I said about 20-25 yards, they have a good field goal kicker."

On Bills DT Ed Oliver 'responding after his new contract':

"Sometimes, you think most players go like this, but it's unique to the individual, and Ed has gone the other way. He's taken it, and these are my words, but he's taken it like, 'Hey I'm going to show you grateful I am for it and I'm going to play up to that level.' That just really says a lot about who he is as a person and how much pride he takes in his work and the job he does."

On if Bills WR Stefon Diggs had 'residual effects from the first play of the game':

"Not that I'm aware of. I haven't discussed that with [Head Athletic Trainer] Nate [Breske], not that I'm aware of. But I understand that he was in and out maybe more than normal."

On Bills QB Josh Allen and Diggs 'working together on the final drive':

"It's big. Those two have a lot of trust and confidence in one another. Josh [Allen] knows where Stef [Diggs] is going to be most of the time. I thought that [Bills Interim Offensive Coordinator] Joe Brady did a great job, we had some open receivers on that drive right there. I think it started with [Bills TE] Dawson [Knox] early on there and then Diggs and then [WR Khalil] Shakir as well. Some great plays. You have to have the protection to get it done and the o-line did a good job."

On 30 rushing attempts to 21 pass attempts:

"It's just the feel that Joe [Brady] has for the game, really more than anything. I think that we'll go back and evaluate the film and maybe there were some more opportunities for us to go to the air with it. I know Brady will do that. We'll continue to try and get better every week."

On 'not taking out' Bills RB James Cook and Bills WR Deonte Harty after fumbling:

"Well, I have confidence in those guys to being with. Secondly, I would say it's late in the year at this point – early in the year or you're new and you need to learn as lesson then maybe, yeah. In this case Deonte [Harty] has fielded a lot of punts, carried the ball a lot, and so has James [Cook]. I have confidence in those guys and we're at the point in the season where you put your best players out there."

On being in postseason contention:

"I'm extremely grateful. The guys have done a heck of a job. We are blessed in so many ways. Ownership number one, they've been extremely supportive for years of what we've done and how we try to do things. Supportive of the players and we'll see where things go and just continue to take it one week at a time."

On the Chargers' performance tonight following their loss last week:

"Well, it's the NFL. It is, it's the NFL and obviously they made some moves that are part of the business of the NFL and players usually respond when those moves are made as hard as that is. [Interim Head] Coach Giff [Smith] is well-respected around the league and knowing of him for a number of years in this profession, I figured he would get a response out of the players and the team, and he did. We didn't come out here thinking anything other than that quite honestly. The way that the game went, they played 10 days ago or whatever it was, most teams in the NFL, if not all teams, would respond just on that alone let alone the coaching change."

On 'how closely he will watch the Sunday slate of games':

"We'll be paying attention to it. I'm looking forward to getting a little bit of rest, it's been a short week for us and then traveling out west here. Get the guys some rest themselves and enjoy Christmas and get ourselves ready for the Patriots."

On if he 'takes the defense aside at all' after committing a turnover offensively:

"The quick answer is no. What we try to do, if you have the time, but you don't always have time because you don't know if you're going into a TV timeout. In the fourth quarter, they didn't have as many this week in this week's game, I guess due to time. You try to give them a short message before they go take the field and usually [Bills Linebackers Coach] Bobby Babich, one of our defensive coaches rounds them up and gives them a quick encouraging message there. I think to come away from those drives with either three or no point was huge for us."

BUFFALO BILLS QUARTERBACK JOSH ALLEN

On tonight's win 'taking some work':

"It did."

On tonight's win:

"Give credit where it's due. That's a team with a coaching change — obviously, their quarterback was out — but they came out and they played hard. They had a really good gameplan. It's tough because when you're playing a team with nothing to lose, that's a dangerous team, and that was a dangerous team that we played today. We gutted it out and we found a way."

On the Chargers 'bouncing back' from last week's loss:

"That's the NFL. These are the highest level of professional athletes in the world, each and every week that we're playing. It's not easy to win. It's not easy to win by a lot. I'm just fortunate that we found a way. Our defense made a stop there at the end. [Bills DT] Ed Oliver with the sack. I think he hit his incentive there, too, so that's probably a pretty good feeling for him right now [laughter]. That's the name of the game right now. This is our playoffs. It didn't matter how we get them done, just get them done."

On the 57-yard touchdown pass to WR Gabe Davis:

"I just extend the play a little bit. I peeked at their boundary safety. [Bills WR] Kahlil [Shakir] was coming over the middle of the field, his eyes were on him. Gabe [Davis] did a good job of just trusting it and going deep. It's something that we practice a lot and something that we haven't really done all that much this year, so it was good to get that one on the field."

On if Shakir's touchdown getting reversed 'was a good thing':

"Analytically, probably, yes. Now, as an offense, we want to score a touchdown and put them in an even more difficult situation. Obviously, not scoring there allowed us to wind the clock down a little bit, they wasted their third and final timeout. If you want a three versus a seven-point lead, obviously, they would have one timeout there with that touchdown."

On Davis' performance tonight:

"He was just doing his job. In the last few games, sometimes it just didn't pan out for him to get the ball, whether it was coverage, whether it was concept. The mental toughness on that kid to not get down and not let that beat him down, it's very impressive. He works hard. He doesn't complain. He just keeps doing his job. Opportunity finds him. I thought all of our receivers made plays tonight. You talked about Kahlil [Shakir], obviously, that last one, but that third down, I threw it behind him and he made a heck of a catch. [Bills WR] Stefon Diggs coming up on some third downs, huge, especially that last one, that little out route for the field. We've worked on that in practice a few different times and it was good to get that in the game. Just trusting the feet, trusting where he's going to be. That's where we went to on third down, our number 14."

On 'leaning on the experience of playing in big games to manage the ebbs and flows of a game like tonight':

"It's just understanding what's going on, the flow of the game. Obviously, going down, I think we were 10 to nothing right away, things weren't clicking. Just continue to stay patient. We got that one play to Gabe [Davis] and kind of felt ourselves getting into a groove. But, again, still a lot to learn from. We're going to look at this film. Obviously, I made some bonehead decisions. If I set up and just threw it deep to Stef [Diggs], it might be a completely different game. But, again, just find a way."

On 'why it wasn't clicking the first three drives':

"I think that we were just hurting ourselves a little bit, putting ourselves behind the sticks — and second and longs, a couple of penalties that didn't help."

On 'coming through with the season on the line':

"I told this to him in the locker room — season and game on-line, 14 is going to be our go-to target. He knows that. I think everybody in the world knows that. For him to just, again, put his head down, he's been working hard. It was the biggest play of the game, in my opinion."

On if he will 'sit back and see what happens around the league while watching the games' tomorrow:

"Absolutely. I'll turn on [NFL] RedZone. But, I'm in a joyful mood, we might open gifts tomorrow [laughter]. We'll see."

On the impact of the last three wins:

"Huge. Backs are against the wall. But, again, there's still some season left and we have to finish it on our own terms and just try to find a way to get in [to the playoffs]."