

Josh.Rupprecht@chargers.nfl.com ⚡ Jennifer.Rojas@chargers.nfl.com ⚡ Jamaal.LaFrance@chargers.nfl.com  
Brock.Anderson@chargers.nfl.com ⚡ Lauren.Meyer@chargers.nfl.com ⚡ Danny.Markino@chargers.nfl.com

## LOS ANGELES CHARGERS vs. NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS POSTGAME TRANSCRIPTS

Sunday, October 31, 2021 ⚡ SoFi Stadium ⚡ Inglewood, Calif.

### LOS ANGELES CHARGERS HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

#### **On today's game:**

"I loved the way that we started the football game, but I don't think that we established any rhythm after that. That second quarter was tough for us. We didn't establish anything in the second quarter. I felt like we didn't establish that rhythm early in the game. They were down some guys and did a good job disguising what they were doing. We knew they were going to mask their coverages and end up playing zone, but we just didn't get any of those completions on early downs that would really get us in a good position to be successful. We didn't get the explosions when they were available, and just weren't quite able to put it together today. You have to give credit to New England. They played well. They had a good plan. I thought we had some good stretches. I really liked the way we ran the football. I felt that we could do that, and it was a highlight today for us. But in the passing game, we weren't good enough today. We didn't protect the passer well enough at all. We had far too many drops. We didn't play with great timing at times because of those things. We just have to play better in the passing game against that team, offensively, in order to win. Certainly, the two turnovers were really big."

#### **On the offense's performance:**

"We had some protection issues with those guys getting sped up. We were doing everything we can to help those guys, but what we have to do is stay out of known passing downs, do a better job of staying out of those designer looks where they are setting their third-down defense up to engineer their stuff against your protection scheme. That's what we have to do a better job of on early downs, getting in rhythm, staying on schedule, getting the explosive plays, mix in the run and the pass, move in the pocket. If we can do that, we can be a dangerous offensive football team. They have a good defense. Third down is a place you don't want to be in the NFL. You don't want to live like that. We just have to do a better job in the passing game. We are capable of more and we'll be better moving forward."

#### **On avoiding third-and-long circumstances:**

"We missed some plays today that were available. We had a second-and-one, a quick gain. We had [WR] Keenan [Allen] open on a stick [route], scrambled, took a sack. You're in second-and-one and that became third-and-six, which became a punt. There were a lot of things like that in the plan today that happened out there. The drops, we had a couple of third downs where you create some momentum, and we weren't able to do that. There were some good things today that I liked, in terms of how we ran the football, but it was an uneven performance."

**On 'inconsistencies' offensively:**

"We played a good defense today. That happens in the NFL. I'm not concerned. I wish we would have performed better today. We have to do a better job coaching moving forward. We have to do a better job playing. But, when you play against good teams, you're going to have games like this. What we have to be able to do is execute our offense better. If we execute our offense better, it'll look like it did on the first drive. We have to be able to sustain our offensive execution over time. You can't just have a quick drive or two. We have to stay in rhythm, then we'll be better, and we'll have a lot more production moving forward."

**On QB Justin Herbert:**

"I thought he did a really nice job of checking the ball down. In the play-action pass game, we knew that they were going to play a ton of zone; line up like man, play zone. What we liked about the play-action game is if you get the vertical stretch of the zone underneath, then there's going to be checkdowns available, which there where. There were a ton of things like that available in the plan. I thought he did a nice job of that. But, that was the type of game it was going to be. They were going to bleed a little bit in the run game, and then in the passing game, they were going to try to take you out of the deep part of the field. What you have to do is be patient and disciplined. There are a lot of yards available. That's going to be the formula against that defense. That's the way you have to play against them when they're set up like they were today with some of their corners being down. They were going to play the game that way. That's what we'll learn; what it takes when they have a situation like that. I know we'll be better moving forward."

**On Herbert's interception that was returned for a touchdown:**

"It was a check to the flat. It was a miscommunication between the two of them. It was a double-nudge protection where the half back and the tight end are in the flat off their nudges."

**On the run game:**

"I was pleased with our production. I thought [RB] Justin [Jones], with the 75-yard run, had practiced well this week. I was really happy about that. I thought [RB] Austin [Ekeler] ran the football well. [RB] Larry [Rountree III] had a couple of good runs. We felt like in order to play the best offensive football today, we were going to have to run the ball. We really wanted to run it in the red zone, too. That showed up a little bit, as well. We have to make sure we continue to improve in that aspect because as you see, when all you're doing is dropping back to throw, it's hard to do that consistently in this league. To live in the drop-back game, very few people can protect the passer. Very few people in the National Football League can protect the passer when it's known pass. That's the big takeaway for me from this game."

**On the Patriots' final scoring drive:**

"I saw them run the football and throw some play-action when they felt like we were in there close. We weren't able to knock back enough runs to get them in a passing situation on the last drive. There were a couple of close calls, but we weren't able to get a negative play to keep them out of there. I loved the way our defense competed today. We took a step forward as a group. I felt like we were out there a bunch. We were out there for 35 minutes and 75 plays, which it could've been more than that. We were out there a bunch. I really felt like we answered the call today. I'm proud of those guys for that, but at the end of the game, we have to execute. It's in that four-minute situation where we have to get a three-and-out and create field position for our offense because even if they get a first down or two, now you've lost the field position. That was really an issue for us today, maintaining that field position."

**On DL Jerry Tillery's hit on Patriots QB Mac Jones:**

"I don't see that as a real issue in the game, at all. I thought our guys played between whistles the entire time. There were only, like, seven penalties in the game, so it was just a hard-fought game. Both teams played well, played hard. Two really well-coached teams played today."

**On the injury status of CBs Asante Samuel Jr. and Michael Davis:**

"Asante is in for concussion protocol. Vato had a hamstring, where he was unable to return."

**On if the defense's performance today is comparable to the unit's performance against the Ravens:**

"Not at all the same, they only had 3.5 yards per carry. [Patriots RB] Brandon Bolden had one 14-yard run into a pressure that should've gotten knocked back. Those aren't good run numbers in the NFL. 39-for-140, that's not a lot. That's not what lost us the game today. I felt like our run defense took an incredible step forward today. I thought we tackled extremely well. I thought we were really physical. Getting [DL] Justin Jones back was important. I felt like the way we played on defense today gave us a real chance to win."

**On punt coverage:**

"I saw them beat us decidedly in that phase. [Patriots WR] Gunner [Olszewski] had 20 yards per return. We lost the vertical field position in that area. That second quarter was a good illustration of that because we stopped them fourth down, then we had to punt it. A short field, and we hold them. But, it's a field goal. We did not cover well enough today. I think we got held up today. There were six-man holdups, double-vices out there that we didn't manage enough. When you got a double-vice out there, the interior part of your punt protection has to get down there. They're the ones that have the singles. We didn't do a good enough job of wining inside when they had the vices outside. It hurt us today, and we got a penalty."

**On the second quarter:**

"Coming into halftime. I felt like we were coming very strong about our chances because I felt like, defensively, we were playing really well. We turned the ball over at the end of the half and had a great response; a fourth down stop, short field, field goal. They weren't doing anything in the passing game at all outside of two plays. It just felt very strongly about how we were playing. I felt like we really settled in and really were playing our brand of ball. Then, [S] Derwin [James Jr.] had the big stop in the third quarter. I really felt like the game was ours to be won, for sure. We just, again, we didn't match up offense to defense, defense to offense, and in special teams today. We were a little out of rhythm today in the three phases. Particularly in the second half, we needed to play better in that fourth quarter to win. We've been in seven games now, all seven of them have been fourth-quarter games now, except the Baltimore game. When they're all fourth-quarter type of games, you have to play your best in the quarter. We didn't do that today."

**On his assessment of the offensive play-calling:**

"We are playing to win. Our game plan was engineered for exactly the looks that we were seeing from them. It's a really good defensive team over there. They are dealing with some injuries, but they're extremely well-coached. There's a lot of veteran players over there. I give full credit to New England. I thought they played really well today. We have to execute better. From an execution standpoint, the drops and protection issues really held us back."

**LOS ANGELES CHARGERS QUARTERBACK JUSTIN HERBERT****On offense's performance today:**

"Offensively, it was a tough day out there. I turned the ball over too many times and you can't do that and expect to win in this league, especially with a team like that, they play well on all three phases. I thought the defense did a great job getting us stops today, but it fell on us."

**On the interception in the fourth quarter:**

"Miscommunication. I have to be smarter about that. I have to move on to the next read, but that's one of those plays that you need to just watch and get better from."

**On the 'difficulty' of scoring consistently offensively:**

"I think that is just the NFL. Obviously, we would love to score on every drive, and that is something that we will continue to emphasize. I thought we ran the ball really well today behind those guys up front. The receivers made some plays and it is just on me to not turn the ball over like that. A lot of good film to watch and a lot of things to fix, for sure."

**On what he learned from the game:**

“We saw a lot of Cover 2. That was just one of those things that they did not show all year. That is one of those gameplan things where you go into the game, see and address at halftime. I thought we did a great job at communicating that. We ran the ball really well. [RB] Austin Ekeler, [RB] Justin Jackson, those guys ran the ball really hard. The guys up front did a great job blocking. There is a lot of good, but also a lot that we need to fix.”

**On executing on offense:**

“It is just something that you need to emphasize during practice. It is tough when you are behind the sticks like that. The defense played well and it is up to us to have those opportunities to drive down the field. When they give it to us, we have to take advantage of that.”

**On ‘beating themselves up’ in today’s game:**

“I think there is a lot of things that we need to fix for sure. That is one of the good things about film tomorrow. It is going to sting for a while, but it is on to the next week and we have got another tough competitor next Sunday, so we are going to watch film and get better from it.”

**On playing against the Patriots:**

“It is just the NFL. Every team you are going to play is tough. We would love to win every game, but we just came up short today.”

**On ‘pocket pressure’ in today’s game:**

“That is probably something we have to watch. I felt like they gave me enough time. It is on me to make those throws and to get the ball out quicker. I thought those guys up front did a great job blocking and I feel comfortable behind those guys.”

**On the Patriots defensive scheme:**

“[It was] a lot of disguise. We were expecting a lot of man [coverage], but did not get a whole lot of that today. I think that is a credit to [WR] Mike Williams and [WR] Keenan Allen. Those guys are tough to match up with, but those guys on defense are pretty good, too. It was just a tough day for us, but we are going to have to get better from it.”

**On lessons learned in the pocket in today’s game:**

“Moving on to the check-down [option]. I think that is one of the big things about playing quarterback. If the defense drops everyone out and if there is nothing down the field, you have to find your checkdown, you have to take off and find four to five yards, however you can get it. That is just the tough part about playing quarterback and is something that I need to get better at.”

**On opposing defenses stopping the Chargers offense:**

“I think it is just up to us on offense. I think we need to execute better and we cannot turn over the ball like that. I think we have had three or four turnovers the past two weeks and I think that is a big part of it. The defense has done a great job of coming up with stops, but it is up to us to come up with those opportunities and take the ball down the field.”

**On the Patriots performance on defense:**

“They are a really well-coached team. Like I mentioned earlier, moving onto the checkdown if everyone drops out into coverage, you have to find four or five yards however you can get it. Getting the ball to Austin Ekeler and Justin Jackson out in the flats. That is a big part of our offense and we just need to keep getting better at that.”

## **NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS HEAD COACH BILL BELICHICK**

### **Opening statement:**

“A really good win for our team today. The Chargers are a good football team. Coming here and getting the win is a great feeling. Certainly, there are some things that we could have done better. We left some plays on the field, some penalties and non-penalties. We could have coached better, could have played better. We could have taken advantage of a couple of opportunities that we missed on. Again, all and all, we made the plays that we needed to make in the fourth quarter, which is something that we hadn’t done as well earlier in the year. It’s good to see that. It’s good to come out here and get a win. Looking forward to the big game against Carolina. The team had a good week. It’s a big challenge coming here. Two weeks in a row we’ve had fresh teams coming off the bye. The Chargers had a lot of energy. [Chargers Head] Coach [Brandon] Staley does a good job. We put the ball down the field. I thought we played better in the second half until the last two-minute drive, defensively. Offensively, we moved the ball. We would just like to come out with a few more points. I thought [Patriots K] Nick [Folk] kicked well, like he always does. [Patriots WR] Gunner [Olszewski] had some. The punt return team, not just Gunner, had some good returns to put the offense in good position. Obviously, [Patriots DB Adrian Phillips] AP’s two picks were big differences in the game, really counted for 10 points there. That’s pretty much the story.”

### **On DB Adrian Phillips’ interceptions:**

“He does a good job of seeing the routes, seeing the quarterback, having vision on the ball. Just good awareness. He’s a good football player. He did that when we opened last year against Miami, the first game in the 2020 season where he made the play on the slant route. He makes those plays in practice, too. He knows football and has good hands.”

### **On the team’s ‘growth’ week-to-week:**

“We’re just trying to get better every day.”

### **On Staley’s impact on the Chargers:**

“It was one of those days last year where everything went right for us. There aren’t many days like those in the NFL, but we had one last year. We didn’t really put much stock in that. It’s a new game. It’s not the same players. It’s a totally new offensive line. Some of the key players like [RB Austin] Ekeler and, obviously, [WR Keenan] Allen. [TE Jared] Cook is a good addition. Defensively, [OLB Joey] Bosa. We played against [S Derwin] James [Jr.], he certainly makes a difference. Some of the players are the same, some of them are different, but this is a different team. They are playing with a lot of energy. Coach Staley has them on the right track. You see what they have done already this year. They’re going to be a hard team to deal with throughout the rest of the season. They have a good offense, good defense. I’m sure they’re helping the return game. They addressed some areas and I’m sure that it will make them better.”

### **On the defense’s performance against QB Justin Herbert:**

“We did some good things. We gave up some big plays. We need to coach better and play better more consistently. We did enough things to win, so that’s good. On offense, we ran the ball, we moved the ball, we got enough points to win. There’s certainly a lot of room for improvement and we will work on that this week.”

### **On why the team will stay tonight in Los Angeles:**

“A few things. It’s the best thing to do.”

### **On the ‘improvement’ of Patriots QB Mac Jones:**

“Every game is a new game. Each one is a different experience, different defense, different players, different gameplan. Week by week, he can stack them together. He has done a good job of that. Each week is a challenge. This defense is different than any defense we’ve seen this year. Carolina will be different next week, too. Mac has done a great job. He prepares. He works hard. He definitely knows what to do. Some things he needs to see and experience. There’s really no substitute for that other than getting out there and doing it.”

### **On Phillips’ interception return for a touchdown:**

“I didn’t really see the whole play. I’ll take a look at it on film. It looked like [Jared] Cook wasn’t looking for the ball. Adrian saw it and made a good play on him. You would have to ask somebody, I don’t know.”

**On the Patriots displaying 'resilience' defensively:**

"The same thing on the goal line stop down there. We got stopped on the one and had to punt, then they returned the ball and had good field position on the punt return. Then, we had the fumble and got the ball back after that. I thought our players showed a lot of resilience today, all the way across the board. Not just on defense but in all three phases. The Chargers are a tough team. They put a lot of pressure on it. They are an explosive offense. [Derwin] James and [Joey] Bosa, starting with those two guys, they are really good players on defense. They are centerpieces. Coach Staley obviously is a great defensive coach. He has proved throughout his career, and certainly last year. I thought, as a team, we showed a lot of resilience and toughness. Defensively, it was good after the first drive, settled things down a little bit. We gave up an 80-yard run or whatever it was, but there were some big plays that kind of skewed some of the good plays in there. We did a good job keeping Herbert in the pocket in the second half. That definitely helped us."

**On the offense's final scoring drive:**

"It's always great to see the offense move the ball and score points. I love it."

**NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS QUARTERBACK MAC JONES****On his performance today:**

"I definitely didn't have my best day at all. I think everyone around me had a great day, that's what football is all about. I have to find ways to improve in that aspect of just being consistent and making the throws I know I can make. The offensive line did a great job of keeping me clean. The receivers were getting open, and the backs were running hard and protecting — same thing with the tight ends, they were getting open. You have to watch the film and look at the X's and O's of it. But, I think the overall message is just keep playing. It's not always going to be perfect. For me, sometimes, that's really hard because I want it to be better than that because I feel like it falls on my hands a lot because that's what the quarterback is, which is a good thing. But I can definitely play better, and I'll put that on me. Everyone around me did a great job; special teams, defense played great. I think we just played together and didn't quit. The effort was there. The guys around me played well, so that's all there is to it."

**On the support he received from the run game:**

"It definitely helped me, just being able to feel comfortable with the play-action stuff. That's how it should work. We have to be able to run the ball and pass the ball. I think the line blocked really hard. The [Chargers] defense, they were a little bit different, but we knew what they were going to do, we just had to communicate well. The line played great and opened up those holes. Then, [RB] Damien [Harris], [RB] Rhamondre [Stevenson] and [RB] Brandon [Bolden] ran hard, so it was good by them."

**On if this was the 'chippiest' NFL game he has been a part of:**

"It is what it is. I think there was some stuff here and there, but I do appreciate the offensive line and my team for having my back. I think it was just one of those things that I'm not really sure what happened, but we can't let that affect the next play. With me, I didn't feel tension or anything like that, I just kept playing. I think everyone on our team did. We played hard and we played for 60 minutes, that's all that matters. We didn't play great at times, starting with me, but I think the whole message, like I said earlier, was just finishing strong and playing a four-quarter game and playing all three units together, so that's the main story."

**On 'finishing the game' late in the fourth quarter:**

"I think it's great. I think we've been on the other end of it and being close, but not finishing. We've played well early, and then maybe didn't play as good later on. Today was a little bit of a reverse. We just have to play to the last drive and put our team in a position to win, and let the coaches make all of the decisions. They did a great job of that. When you get a chance to have the ball, you have to put points up. We can do a better job of not even being in that situation by playing better, especially me in certain parts of the game. I'll watch the film and just move on. I think we didn't turn the ball over besides the one fumble, but that was just a bang-bang play. I think the other team did a good job getting it out or whatever, but we kept playing. That's part of the game."

**On the areas in which the Chargers impacted the passing game:**

"I think I'll just have to watch it. Definitely quick on some stuff, and it that's just me. Whatever may have happened, I just got it out too quick. I can improve on that. I'll find ways to know when I need to get it out and know when I don't, so that's just part of it. It just starts with the word patience, just reminding myself to have patience and know when to hold it and know when to get rid of it."

**On the final scoring drive instilling confidence in the offense:**

"I think that's a good point. The second and third quarter were not good enough. We might not have been in that situation, but we were. I think we just didn't look at the scoreboard, we just focused on doing our job, holding onto the ball, staying in bounds, no turnovers, and attacking them a little bit in the run game and with the two play-action passes that we had, so that was good. We finished strong. That's the moral of the story, just finish strong. It feels a lot better to be on the winning side, when not playing as well, than it does to be on the losing side. That's what you have to take from it. We have to just keep moving forward and not be satisfied, just keep working. Next week, we'll be ready to go."