



**Los Angeles Rams vs. Los Angeles Chargers**  
**Transcripts - Rams Head Coach Sean McVay,**  
**Rams QB Stetson Bennett, Chargers Head**  
**Coach Brandon Staley, Chargers QB Easton**  
**Stick - Saturday, August 12, 2023**

**Rams Head Coach Sean McVay**

**(Opening remarks)**

“A lot of things that we can learn from, a lot of young guys getting their feet wet for the first time. That’s exactly what we expected. I thought there was some positives. I thought there were some things that are very correctable that we can clean up, but when you got that many new things and really there’s a good chance for us to be able to get our ducks in a row as far as our operation on game day and just some of the different things that come up. We’ll look at the film, we’ll clean it up and we’ll continue to keep it moving.”

**(On how QB Stetson Bennett played)**

“I thought he did a nice job. There were some tough situations. You could see the athleticism where he escaped. I thought the one scoring drive where [RB] Royce [Freeman] ended up punching it in, I thought he was able to get into a rhythm. I thought [offensive coordinator] Mike [LaFleur] did a good job, some

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early down completions. He got [WR] [Austin] Trammell involved, got [WR] Tyler Johnson involved. I thought he did a good job of being able to exhaust some of his progressions. I think I saw him lean over to me and gimme the money sign after he hit [WR] [Austin] Trammell on one of them, you guys will have to ask him about that, but you could see it was a step in the right direction. Then there were a couple of decisions where, a couple plays before he ends up doing a great job hitting [WR] Puka [Nacua] on the touchdown. We got away with one where you kind of making an errant throw over the middle, and those are where and in real games a lot of times they make you pay and you don't get another opportunity to be able to finish that drive off. But I thought there was a lot of good opportunities for him to be able to learn from and you could see some of the things that excite us about him.”

**(On his thoughts on stopping the run game)**

“I think especially in the run game there's a couple times where you give some vertical seams up, you lose some edges or you might have a movement and it just takes one guy to be able to get out of a gap. So especially some of the stuff early on, it felt like they were getting some good surges. I felt like we could use our hands overall better. We talk about trying to be able to gap and a half play with some violence up front and didn't feel like we played the way that we were capable of, but I think the film does always give you a better opportunity. Some of the late ones that they hit, we just lost the integrity on the edge of our defense was kind of the main culprit there. But some of the early ones, I kind of felt the same thing that you're echoing and articulating and I'm looking forward to going back and really looking at it closely when you can kind of see it from a clear lens.”

**(On his thoughts on Puka Nacua's performance)**

“He did a good job. I thought on the one early third down, he just kind of missed tracked it when [QB] Brett [Rypien] kind of gave him an opportunity on that fade

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from the number two spot but I liked the way he responded. [He] ended up making that catch on the slant, did a really good job of running after the catch. You can see he's a physical tough, no fear... he's a guy that has great aggressive hands. And then the touchdown catch, contested play right on the red area, bang, bang. I thought [the] offensive line did a great job allowing Stetson to kind of be able to hitch in place, maintain the integrity of the pocket, and those two did a good job connecting. The only thing I'll give him a hard time on is his fair catch. I think he had a little bit more space on that one on the punt return. But no, he's doing a great job. I'm a huge fan of him."

**(On the difference between the first and second half)**

"I think we were able to get some early success and you're able to kind of just be able to get some momentum on some early downs. It feels like when you're not converting on those third downs and then they were able to sustain some pretty good long possessions on two of their first three drives. Just felt like the offense was kind of...you're sitting there and they've got almost 30 plays and you're sitting there, you don't even have ten yet. It was hard to really get into a rhythm because of some of the third down stops that they had. They did a good job. They brought a couple different pressures, [head coach] Brandon [Staley] always does a nice job with some designers. Then we missed a couple pickups with our young guys towards the end of the game that we can certainly learn from. I did think that when we were able to settle in, string together a couple plays, they were able to get some removal and it was a good balance. I thought [offensive coordinator] Mike [LaFleur] did a nice job of being able to kind of balance it up and got a little bit tilted towards the pass at the end when we went behind. There were definitely some good things to take away."

**(On what led to the decision to rest OT Joe Noteboom)**

"Just coming off the Achilles, he's done a really good job. I think Joe's had an excellent camp. We'll get an opportunity against the Raiders to get two

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competitive practices. We'll get two more against the Broncos and if we feel like Joe's gotten the amount of work that's necessary to start the season and be ready to go, he's going to be an important part of this team. So if we feel like that's going to be best for Joe to get some of those snaps in that game setting, then we'll do that. But I think he's gotten a lot of really good work in practice and he's played a lot of snaps. So, [I've] really been proud of Joe. I couldn't be more impressed with his ability to be able to show great ability at tackle [and] at guard. I've been really pleased with just his recovery and just the way that he's played snap in and snap out in practice, but ultimately, if he said, you know, long-winded answer, it was really kind of part of that injury and just feeling like that was the best approach for him tonight."

**(On if he would like to hone OT Joe Noteboom in at right guard versus moving him around with and if there is an expectation he could potentially start there)**

"Yeah I think what you don't take for granted is if you can figure out, 'Alright, what is that five and what does that puzzle look like?,' The sooner that you can get that together and allow them to gel, the better. Now, what I do think has been good about this camp for us that you've seen, is the competition. I think that brings out the best in guys. He's certainly a guy that I've mentioned. I think he could start at tackle or guard for us. And he's done that for us in years past. But the answer is yes, we would like to be able to figure that out but we also want to continue to make sure that we're doing a thorough job of the evaluation process. And then, as we know, if there's anything that we learned from last year, we got to do a great job of not exclusively just developing the top five, but the depth and figuring out, 'Alright, at some point, what are those contingency plans?' Hopefully you stay as healthy as possible, but that's a big part of it. Those are things that are kind of ongoing conversations that we have all the time. In an ideal situation in a scenario, you figure out what that five looks like sooner than later and allow them to be able to gel over the next month before

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we open up against Seattle."

**(On how he thought DB Tre Tomlinson played)**

"Exactly what you said. Some of the stuff that made him a Thorpe Award winner, the competitiveness. He's a tough competitor that doesn't have any fear and he's not afraid to get up and challenge guys. [I] thought he did a good job in a couple of those situations too of being able to get his eyes back, play the ball true, and had a nice breakup against his former teammate down that sideline on the Chargers side. He's just got a nice swagger about himself. I was happy for Tre making a couple of those plays tonight."

**Rams Quarterback Stetson Bennett**

**(On if he felt himself get into a groove)**

"Yeah, I mean it's the first...I know it's a preseason game, but it's the first NFL game that you're playing in. You're going to come in and be a little nervous, try to make a play when sometimes plays aren't there, but then as (we) started (to get in) a groove, we started calling plays and you start to settle in once you get hit first, honestly, it's just like everything I'm taught, almost."

**(On how he would evaluate his first NFL game)**

"I thought it was alright, I thought there were some boneheaded plays that I made. I thought there were some good plays that I made. I thought we bounced back a few times from some lost yardage plays. I thought we did pretty good on third downs, didn't turn the ball over, even though I tried to a few times, so got to clean that up a little bit, but I thought it was alright. It's hard to say without watching the tape."

**(On what was going through his head after his two near picks)**

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“I just don't think about it. Thank you for not catching that and we're onto the next one now.”

**(On the offensive line giving him time to look down the field)**

“Yeah, a thousand percent. I remember especially on the touchdown pass, it was like it just all opened up and I could see (WR) Puka (Nacua) real good and thought I had time all night. Most of the time I got in trouble was on play fakes. They had wide d(efensive) ends and they're coming up and not really respecting the run, which we gashed them a few times there, but overall, I thought we played really well up front.”

**(On problem solving and working with Offensive Coordinator Mike LaFleur, Quarterbacks Coach/Pass Game Coordinator Zac Robinson, and Head Coach Sean McVay)**

“You know, I'll leave that to them, maybe a little bit better sell, maybe a little bit more depth coming out of it. I remember one time on one of the sacks right before we hit the slant to (WR) Tyler (Johnson), I thought he got around him and then I kind of let up, and I guess I forgot that he could still chase me after I got around him and he grabbed me...but just little things, expecting that, being ready for it. I thought we got a few good down flats there, but sometimes they're going to try to take that away with me and sometimes it'll be there, but when it's not, you got to be ready to adjust and hit those down flats, hit those flats. And on the first one that I almost threw a pick on, I just didn't throw the flat route when you should just throw the flat route if it's open.”

**(On how he would describe his first NFL game)**

“It was cool, it was fun. It was fun to finally get out there and honestly get hit, you know? I'm not going to win with many of those, but it's good to, I don't know, feel like a football player again and it's fun to get out there and compete. It didn't happen the way we wanted it... there's a few things to...I wish we

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would've scored on that drive when it was, I think we were down 10 and we started inside our own 10 and we went three and out. I wish we would've gotten that one and then maybe it's a different game. But you live and you learn, and I thought we executed pretty well in some situations and I thought we didn't in some."

**(On how comfortable he is with how much McVay has thrown at him in such a short period of time)**

"I mean I'm comfortable with what I'm comfortable with, I guess. Mike (LaFleur) was calling them tonight and he did a really good job just getting me through the play calls, calling them, and I thought the communication and tempo getting in and out of the huddles was better than it had been in practice and maybe there's some more urgency when there's fans in the seats and maybe we don't need that because maybe we should practice like that all the time, but I thought it was really good. I thought everything went smooth. I got more comfortable as the game went on. You start to play football and they started bringing a little bit more stuff than I thought maybe they would after we were throwing it a little bit better than maybe they thought we would, but I thought o-line and backs picked it up well and there's some things to fix, but there's some things that we can be proud of too."

**(On giving McVay the money sign)**

"No, don't start that (laughs). No, I didn't. I might have just pointed or something, I don't know. I did not give him the money sign, no (laughs)."

**Chargers Head Coach Brandon Staley**

**(On rushing for 215 yards and (OC) Kellen Moore's first time calling plays)**

"I thought the offensive unit came to play. I thought the o-line, the tight ends,

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and the receivers really blocked their front well, and I thought our running backs did a nice job of making one cut and being really decisive. I thought we broke a couple tackles and I thought if (RB) Isaiah's (Spiller) run had counted it would have been even a bigger night so I think it was a good start for us.

**(On how he felt about the tackling)**

"Thought for the first game, it was pretty good."

**(On (WR) Derius (Davis) 81-yard punt return)**

"Yeah, I thought that he was ball secure. I thought he was decisive. He set it up the way we wanted to, and then he finished it. I think you saw that elite speed that he has and that's why we did draft him for that game breaking speed. But he still has to earn our trust. Did not take any big hits tonight, so that will be the challenge for him is when he really takes those NFL hits, but today was obviously a good start for him."

**(On his thoughts on Quentin Johnson's performance)**

"I love the way he got open on the long one. You could really feel the separation. That was a tough one that didn't go down. I thought Easton (Stick) threw a really good pass on that one. But for him to bounce back at the end of the half...that two-minute drill at the end of the half was a really good drive for us. For him to get that matchup in the slot, you've seen that throughout camp, he can make that guy miss, he can create that separation, he's got that back line target zone that we can really feature down there. I thought it was a memorable first game for him. There's going to be a lot to improve on, but I think you see the ability for sure."

**(On his thoughts on (QB) Easton Stick during the two-minute drill)**

"Yeah, I thought Easton's experience really showed in the two-minute drill. He really managed the clock well. He made a couple big plays with his legs. He

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found the back a couple times where that can be really friendly to you in two-minute because we had two timeouts and then I think for him to throw that ball to (WR) 'Q' (Quentin Johnson) on time, on target to finish it with a touchdown, we really talk about the middle eight and that was a big swing for us”

**(On how much QB Easton Stick has improved during his tenure)**

“I think his balance and his and his body position is leading to more accuracy, more consistent throwing. And then I think what he's done a nice job of in this camp, he's throwing the deep ball well. As you guys have seen in practice, he's hit a couple plus 40-yard plays outside the red line and I think he's locating the deep ball a lot better too. So on third down there was a basic over the middle that he found that I really liked, where you really saw his feet and his eyes working together and good accuracy. So like I said, he's improving. He's improving and this was a good start for him.”

**(On Stick's pocket poise and if that comes with experience)**

“A lot of experience, but I think you see the playmaking ability, which was why he was such an outstanding college player. He's got really good instincts in the pocket. He can really feel when to slide and move and then when, 'Hey I have to run.' So I thought you saw him use his legs both ways, to slide and move to throw and then also his legs to create first downs running it to. So it was a good start for him. There's going to be some thing that he'd like to have back too but I just like the fact that he got a full half and to finish that two-minute drive I thought was really important for him.”

**(On how S JT Woods played)**

“I thought our secondary was pretty solid all night. I thought we put a roof on the coverage for the most part outside of that one second-and- long slant where we missed the tackle coming out of the top. That was the one play that I didn't like, but I thought overall, they played really hard and I thought we tackled

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pretty well. We were connected. There were a couple penalties that we don't like that we're going to learn from in the secondary. But overall, I thought that group really competed and I liked the play style of the group tonight."

**(On message to JT Woods after sportsmanship penalty)**

"Yeah, I mean that drive was a learning experience for everybody that was on the field because the two penalties kept that drive alive. One was illegal contact, the other was the personal foul. And then we dropped two intersections on that drive, one that probably would have gone for a touchdown. So those are the things in the NFL, if you make mistakes against a good team, they are going to capitalize. And that is what the Rams did tonight. We made a couple mistakes and they capitalized."

**(On what he liked from OLB Chris Rumph II and OLB Tuli Tuipulotu)**

"Chris' rush early on was big. It was powerful. Good get off and to collapse the pocket, that was a quick win for him. But those two guys really played well I thought tonight. And the young guys, (OLB) Andrew Farmer, (OLB) Brevin Allen, (OLB) Ty Shelby, (OLB) Carlo Kemp, those guys I thought played with a lot of energy and physicality as well."

**(On the sideline's excitement for (DL) CJ Okoye's sack)**

"It's a historic performance. This guy, as you guys know, his story is remarkable. You know, the International Pathway Program, this guy has never played in a game. For him to go in his first NFL game to have a sack, our guys said that if he was going get a sack, they were going to get a 15 yarder. So we prepared to take one there, but I think you just saw that sideline and that's what the NFL's about is great stories like that and game ball for CJ and it's going to be a memorable moment for our whole team."

**(On what he saw from (RB) Elijah's Dotson's two touchdown runs in the**

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#### **4th quarter)**

“Well, he's a great dude, number one. He's kind of one of these guys that's just the gym rat, really trying his best on special teams to add value, and at running back, there's a lot to learn from the past protection and the pass route receiving-type role, but he's trying to improve in all ways. I thought what you saw tonight is kind of what we have seen since rookie minicamp, is that he does have a burst. He is decisive and we think he can finish runs, so even for a stature, he runs powerful. It was a good night for him and I'm happy for him because he practices the way you should practice as a rookie.”

#### **Chargers Quarterback Easton Stick**

##### **(On the touchdown pass to QR Quentin Johnson)**

“It was huge, obviously for that point in the game that we were at, where the score was at. We talked about winning the middle eight and getting a chance to get points and then come out and give the defense a chance to get a stop. So it was huge. It was awesome for Q [WR Quentin Johnson] to get one and to get in the end zone. Hopefully that's huge for his confidence because he can be a really good player in this league and in this offense. It was a lot of fun.”

##### **(On connection building with WR Quentin Johnson)**

“He's a really good player so I was trying to get him the ball. I think it was as simple as that. He's just a really good player and it was the first time for him to come out and wear the uniform so I tried to get him going early. He's got a ton of ability so I think it'll stay that way.”

##### **(On the progress with RBs Joshua Kelly and Isaiah Spiller)**

“I think they've both got a lot better since last year. I think Josh really built a ton of confidence a year ago when he was healthy, getting a chance to run it and you can tell that's carried over. You can tell it's his fourth year. Isaiah now I

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think is coming into his own a little bit, just more confident. It's a big transition from college to the NFL and for him, learning protections and everything that comes with it, other than running the ball, you saw what he can do running it on the long one that got called back, but I think it's everything else, the maturity, that's really shown.

**(On the game communication with Offensive Coordinator Kellen Moore)**

"It was a lot of fun. He does such a good job. Obviously him playing the position, I think has a huge part to do with it. He was out there wearing the helmet in these situations so his ability to stay calm, to communicate really well, the calls were in really quick. He sounds really confident giving it to you so it makes you feel confident."

**(On what makes his communication with Kellen Moore fun)**

"Just for the first time being out there, having him call it. We have a ton of fun between him and us in the meeting room, it is a lot of fun. And then going back to when he first gets hired and having conversations with him. You go through OTAs, all these experiences in training camp and now to be out here under the lights and see him call a game for the first time, I think just in general, the experience was a lot of fun."

**(On if he's a more confident player now)**

"I think so. I think every year, obviously I haven't played a ton, but I think just the experiences you have being around, being in the meeting rooms, watching (QB) Justin (Herbert) play, it's my fifth year here and so I think the confidence has certainly grown in that time and I'm grateful to be here."

**(On picking up the side arm from Justin Herbert)**

"Yeah, absolutely. I try to take little things here and there, so it's fun to mess around and sometimes it just sneaks in there."

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**(On his words of encouragement to QB Max Duggan after getting sacked three times)**

“It's tough. It's a huge transition going from playing in college at that position and the way offenses are in college to playing here. It's a huge transition, but I thought he did a really good job. He protected the football. Sometimes you're just put in tough situations. There's a lot of third and longs and those are low percentage downs anyway. He did a really good job protecting the football and when we needed him, he came alive and made some plays. He had the big run to set up the score, so he did a really good job. The hardest part honestly is getting the call, communicating it, getting everybody lined up and running the play and he did that really well. He's having a good camp.”

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