



QUOTES

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LOS ANGELES CHARGERS OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR KEN WHISENHUNT

On preparing to play Baltimore again:

"Obviously, when you play an opponent you haven't really seen — I know we had a little bit of time, but you just make some adjustments and go into the next game. I think what [QB] Philip [Rivers] said yesterday is probably true. It's really kind of like halftime right now. We're adjusting some things and we'll see how they play out Sunday."

On getting the ball out on passing plays before the Baltimore pass rush gets to QB Philip Rivers:

"We talk about a lot of things. Not to make it too simple, but he's probably one of the best in the business at knowing when to get rid of the ball and holding on to it until the last second — and he does a good job with that. I think there is a fine line between trying to tell him to do something and letting him play as a quarterback. I think we have a better feel for them now, and especially how they're going to play us, just like I said. They'll make some changes, and we'll make some changes, but hopefully we'll do a better job than what we did last time. That's what our goal is."

On the Baltimore pass rush:

"They've got good players. They're well-schemed and they have good players. They understand how they do things. It's a little like protection of an offensive line. If you have a group that's worked together and you understand how to communicate to pick things up, a lot of it is non-verbal and routine, so you can be successful with that. I can't speak for them, but I would guess that's a little bit like that. They do a good job of communicating. You can tell watching the tape how they communicate with each other and how they can respond to that communication quickly. So I think that's a big part of the reason why they're such a good defense. They've got good players. They're a physical group, and it's always a challenge when you play them. So we'll have to be on our game for sure."

On interceptions on the opening drive for each of the past three games:

"You know what, when you go back and look at that, it's always one thing or another. It's probably a couple of different things. It's unfortunate. It's something that we've got to stop. We can't have those kind of situations. We've had tremendous success earlier in the season. You think back to the London game, first play was a touchdown — and in some of those games when we got into those situations, you can't just say it's always just the quarterback. It's a little bit in different situations on different guys. We've got to be able to make those plays. If you think back to the first game against Baltimore a couple weeks ago — and I know it wasn't that long ago — the very first play was an interception. You know, and yeah, the ball is a little bit underthrown, but we didn't do the greatest job in protection, and the receiver has to come back and break those things up. When you talk about doing those things and making those plays, there is always criteria that you stress with your team about, 'Look, if we're going to do this, we can't turn the ball over — and this, this, and this has got to happen if this doesn't go right.' So, like I said, you want to say, well, being over aggressive or it's really more about you've got to understand what you're trying to do, and everybody has to execute what they're supposed to do. Very seldom does it ever work out perfect, exactly the way you want to. We've got enough good players that they can make adjustments, and we can't let that happen. So, it's something we've talked about and it's definitely something that we can't afford to do, and that's what our goal is going into this game."

On the challenge of pass protection in this era of football:

"Well, it's always a chess match, that's for sure. We do a thing here where we show older clips of players who played in years past. It's funny when you go back, like you said. You go back and look at it, the two backs in the backfield, protection was a little bit different. More like what you said as well, those guys that are coming are a lot different, and the schemes of the teams that are doing it are a lot different. So a lot of it is depending on your group, how they can communicate and how they're doing things. It's always a risk-reward type thing when you do it for the defense and the offense. If they do some things like at the end of the Cleveland game where they went zero and they said something about it, yeah, it was effective — but if you hit a throw in the right spot, you make a play and it can be a big play the other way. So, protection is always a challenge in this league, and that's one of the things that — when you have a good center that can help control that, which [C Mike] Pouncey does for us, and a quarterback that's seen a lot of things, it's really, more than anything, about being on the same page with the group. There are times when, physically, you're going to get beat, just like you're going to be successful physically sometimes — but the different moving pieces are tough, and one of the things that you try to do is give them different looks, give them different formations. Sometimes you're in max protection. Sometimes you're getting guys out with the quick throw. It's always a little bit of a chess match."

On getting young running backs ready to protect in an NFL offense:

"I think because the NFL is such a different game, there are a lot of things that are hard for a lot of different players, just from the standpoint of what they do. I'm not an expert and I'm certainly not trying to make a statement about college football, but they're going fast, and they simplify things in college a lot. Then you come to this level, because of the ability of some of the athletes to do different things, you know, you've got to put a lot more on the players to recognize and react to it. So I think young players coming in the league, especially if it's a running back in protection or a quarterback trying to understand those protections, those are always things that are tough — but look, it's tough to play in this league. That's why it's such a privilege to be a part of it. You've just got to work to try to continue to get a group that can communicate and handle this."

On RB Austin Ekeler being available in this matchup with Baltimore:

"I've seen a couple things where people said, we're definitely aware of Austin. So from our perspective, it's tremendous. You just look at the game last week against Denver in the fourth quarter where he had that run, and it was big for us. [RB] Melvin [Gordon III] has had a great year, and so has Austin. When you have two good players that can split the load and play different points for you, yeah, it helps, it helps a lot. It's exciting to have Austin back for sure."

On the importance of a balanced offense in the postseason:

"You know, I think I've heard that before. A lot of times people say because of the weather conditions and those kinds of things, it's harder to throw the ball in the playoffs. I think back to our second game in 2013 when we were up in Denver. It was really windy and hard to throw the ball. So yes, it's an advantage to run the football, but every game is different, especially when you have run-pass checks and sometimes they're not giving you the run. If you think you can just run the ball in this league anytime you want, that's hard to do. Sometimes you have to throw it. Every game is different and I think the game has evolved, too. It's changing every year with what defenses are doing, and their flexibility to do some things. So it's always about — you just look at us. Some games this year, we were really good running the football. In other games, we weren't so much running it — but if you look at it in total at the end of the year where they stand, it was a pretty good year for us running the football, and we won 12 games. So, yes, being able to run the football is important and it does help, but there are going to be games where you can't always rely on that. It's going to be a game where you have to throw for a lot and maybe not run it as much. So, it's always different, and you always try to keep that balance. One of the things [Head] Coach [Anthony] Lynn has stressed here is run efficiency and being able to do that. Our guys have done a good job with that, so we try to do it, but sometimes the game dictates that."

On making an early impact with Baltimore's offensive philosophy:

"Well, you know, you always want to do that, especially when you're on the road in a playoff game. I think the most important thing for us, which we didn't do as good a job of in the last game, is make our plays. There were three first downs where we made the conversion, and you know, those would have been big for us. [Two] of them were in scoring territory, and we would have gotten points out of it. If you think back to the game, that would have made a huge difference. I think one of the things we haven't talked about is turnovers. We were really good earlier in the season, and we've had a couple the last few weeks. Part of those have been interceptions. So we've got to cut those out. When you play a team like this, and if your possessions are going to be limited, then you've got to take advantage of those possessions."

On Baltimore preparing for the possibility that TE Hunter Henry would play:

"I don't know if it helps anything with the Ravens. I don't know. I'm not in their building and understand what they're doing. Do I know for us, yes. For us, he's a good player. Even after not having played the whole season seeing him on the field, making some plays, he's a good football player, and you want to have as many of those guys as you can."

On if Henry would be worked back in slowly:

"Yeah, we're not just going to roll the ball out there and say, 'Hey, go.' Right? It's a little bit of working him back into it. To his credit, he's worked very hard. He's been on the field the last couple of weeks working back into it, so that's always a good thing."

On the energy around playoff football:

"I think you always rely on players that have been in the playoffs to help the other guys, but you can talk about it all you want. But it's a different animal. It's awesome that we're in it. Our guys are excited about it. We've had good energy all year, and I think that's why we've had such a successful regular season. But it's different in the playoffs. It's a new world for some of them, but it's exciting. It's good to have some veterans that have been in it, that can talk to the young guys and that certainly can help."

On expectations if Henry does play:

"You know, I don't know. I think some of it is how he feels. You'll have a certain number of package plays that you'll use him for. You know, I think you kind of go from there."

On Baltimore changing offensive schemes midseason:

"[Ravens Head] Coach [John] Harbaugh's a good football coach. I knew him back in the day when I was in Philadelphia. They do a good job and they've done that, so credit to them for what they've done. They're a good football team. Defensively, they do a tremendous job. So we've got our work cut out for us, but we're excited. We're excited to play them. It's the playoffs. That hasn't happened around here in a few years, so we're looking forward to it."

On high interception numbers during the end of the season:

"Well, if I knew a lot of things it would make it a lot easier, but I think Philip [Rivers] had a tremendous regular season. He played really well and did a lot of good things for us. This isn't his first rodeo, per se, going into the playoffs. Philip's a tremendous player. He'll do just fine."

On the challenge of potentially three road playoff games to a Super Bowl:

"Well, how many teams have done it since [Pittsburgh]? Maybe one other. It's not easy. One thing I will say for us, and this doesn't mean anything about this game, but we went on the road this year a lot in some pretty tough places and our guys handled it. So does that mean it's going to be that way in Baltimore? I don't know, but I know this — our guys are hardened to a certain degree about playing in tough spots, in Seattle, in Kansas City, in Pittsburgh. Being down, being able to come back and win those games, that can help, I guess, as much as anything to prepare you for it."

On if the games in Pittsburgh and Kansas City had playoff atmospheres:

"Absolutely. That's what we said, it feels that way, you know. Just from the standpoint of all the people. In Pittsburgh, it seemed like 1,000 people down there, but that's what it's going to feel like Sunday at Baltimore, so, yeah. From that standpoint, it does."

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR GUS BRADLEY**Opening statement:**

"Good afternoon, everybody. You know, here, a like opponent, we just faced these Ravens a couple weeks ago, but [it's still] very challenging. I think everybody understands that. This team has put together enough games now in the last six or seven games with [Ravens QB Lamar] Jackson at quarterback that I think everybody has an understanding of the style that they want to play. So with that, it's unique, challenging, and you know it will be a good week for us to get some prep done."

On if it helps having played the Baltimore offense recently:

"I think it probably works both ways. I think that they understand us too. I think that was just a couple weeks ago. Some of the things, obviously, you look at changing game plans and doing some different things, but there are some new things that we have to do defensively. Just the style of the running backs, the style of the quarterbacks, the style of the receivers, the offensive line, you know, the style they want to play, that is pretty fresh in our guy's minds."

On the depth at linebacker:

"I think each week what we do is we look at all of our players, and like [S] Jahleel [Addae] and [S] Derwin James, they're interchangeable. At linebacker we moved [S Adrian] AP [Phillips] there, but guys like [LB] Kyle Emanuel and [LB] Hayes Pullard, they have to step up. Last week they did. Hayes had to go in and play linebacker for us and he did a good job for us. We'll have to take a look. The next guy has to come up and play at a high level and I think it was a good experience for those guys last week. So I look to Hayes, and Kyle, and those guys getting more opportunities."

On Ravens TE Mark Andrews:

"Yeah, he is. I think he's the one that when it was all said and done really jumped out at us. His athleticism. He's playing at a high level. Between him and [Lamar] Jackson, there is a consistency and a trust with those two. So they're just playing at a high level right now. I think they've got so many threats. Their tight end group is very good, very talented. They utilize all of them and we're going to have to have great awareness where those guys are."

On Andrews' touchdown in the last matchup:

"Yeah, we just didn't execute. We were a little bit late on recognition, and they had a big play."

On CB Casey Hayward Jr.:

"I think stats-wise, probably interceptions and things like that, that's not showing up. I know we went through the personnel again this week with all of our players, and we feel like he's playing at a high level."

On S Derwin James' conditioning for a rookie playing in the postseason:

"He's pretty good. I've been impressed by all of our rookies. At times you see where the wall hits — but his spirit, his energy, it's unbelievable, and it continues. Now we're into the second season [and he has] great energy level."

On if there is a higher level of excitement for the defense in the playoffs:

"Well, I think they've been pretty focused throughout the year, but there does seem a little bit more attention to detail and being on it. They've really been a group that communicates well together, even in practice. So those parts I'm seeing are pretty consistent."

On preparing for a player that may not play:

"I think there are some unknowns. So you have to go back and look at when he did play and how they utilized him. Was the offense changed? You know, he's a different type of player, so I can only go off of another team that had that situation — we'd go back and watch film, and see how they utilized them, and see if there's anything different that shows up."

On blitzing against the Baltimore offensive line:

"Yeah, I think the threat of blitzing with a team like this is because of the silent offense they have. Sometimes you have to bring pressure to make some big plays, but you see it on tape where teams bring pressure and next thing you know, there is a long run. So I think you've got to pick and choose your times, but yeah, you need to get pressure on them — push the pocket because if he can extend the play or if he gets out of the pocket and his yardage is up, that's a bad thing for us."

On the importance of defenders staying in their rush lane:

"Yeah, that's showed up [for them] every week. I think whenever you're facing a quarterback like this, that's a big emphasis in the room."

On if NT Brandon Mebane is practicing today:

"No, he's not."

On the challenges of the weapons on Baltimore's rushing attack:

"It's challenging because the running backs are very good and anytime you have the quarterback with the ability to keep it, it creates an extra gap. So it's like, okay, what do we do? Take the middle third safety out of the hole, take both safeties out of the hole? How do we combat this? That is the challenge with their offense and what we've seen since we've played them the past two weeks or so, the number of quarterback runs has gone up. There were some things like that to the tailback, but the numbers that he's carrying the ball has jumped up. So we anticipate a little bit more of that probably in the playoffs as well."

On defenders breaking down when approaching Lamar Jackson in the pocket:

"You know what, I think there is such a thing as a good missed tackle, as long as you go fast with proper leverage. You know, sometimes there is a place for that, rather than breaking down, sitting in a chair, and letting them having a two-way go on you. So we try to play fast. We don't want missed tackles, but if they show up with the right leverage, and it's more of that mindset with him that we have to play fast with them and try to eat up the grass."

On playoff teams not blitzing as much:

"It's an interesting stat. I did not know that. I think it really depends on what your front is. We feel pretty good about our front. [DE] Joey [Bosa], [DE] Melvin [III] and [NT Damion] D Square, and those guys, we feel like there are times we can get pressure with them if the quarterback allows us or the style of pass allows us. So I think based on that, there are times I think earlier in the season we brought more pressure in games. Ideally, if you can get pressure with four, that's ideal."