

## LOS ANGELES CHARGERS vs. DENVER BRONCOS POSTGAME TRANSCRIPTS

Monday, October 17, 2022 ⚡ SoFi Stadium ⚡ Inglewood, Calif.

### LOS ANGELES CHARGERS HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

#### **On tonight's win:**

"Where to begin [*laughter*]? This is a complete team win. It was a tough, rugged game. They have an outstanding defense over there. It was tough sledding in every way for all four quarters and overtime. It was just a tough and rugged game. It took everybody in Powder Blue to win it."

#### **On K Dustin Hopkins' injury and his performance tonight while dealing with the injury:**

"He had a hamstring cramp/strain. It just didn't feel right. You can't say enough about him hanging in there. Then, you can't say enough about [P] JK Scott coming in and kicking off, and doing an outstanding job kicking off for us so that Dustin [Hopkins] can save himself for field goals and PATs. Early in the third quarter, we were going to be careful with his line because it wasn't feeling good. That's why we went for it the first time because we just wanted to make sure he was OK. It kind of loosened up a little bit. Then, at the end, we had no choice, we were kicking that no matter what. It just says so much about him as a competitor. It says so much about our special teams unit — [LS] Josh Harris kind of keeping that thing glued together. Then, you saw us today, not only finish it with a game-winning kick, but then the takeaway on special teams, which we have been searching for. Our two rookies, [DB] Ja'Sir Taylor and [DB] Deane Leonard, doing a great job. Very excited about that."

#### **On advancing to a 4-2 record despite injuries:**

"It's just part of the NFL. I think you just need to be ready for it. You don't need to make too big of a deal about it. This is why you build a team, for times like this. Like I said, we needed everybody in order to win this game. That's a good team over there. Every one of their games this season has been down to the wire, all of them, and that's what it was today. The fact that we're able to show our resilience in all three phases, and then be able to finish that game on our home field in front of our fans, I'm really proud of our group today."

#### **On the muffed punt recovery and the game-winning field goal:**

"My reaction, initially, is that this is a great hang [time] when [Scott] hit it. I was like, 'OK, that's up there, it's going to give us a chance.' [Broncos WR Montrell Washington] had bobbled one earlier, if you remember. We kind of knew that going into the ballgame. I think our gunners did an outstanding job populating it. Ja'Sir [Taylor] and Deane [Leonard] were able to get down there and make something happen. The fact that you go beat your man, and then you go do the right thing when you get close to the returner, those are young guys, so for them to make that type of impact for our football team says a lot about [Special Teams Coordinator] Ryan Ficken and [Assistant Special Teams Coach] Chris Gould. Hopefully, those guys continue to improve."

**On the defense's performance tonight:**

"In the second half, punt-punt-punt, field goal after a takeaway, three-and-out, punt-punt-punt. Our defense came to play tonight."

**On the final offensive drive in regulation:**

"We wanted to finish with the ball, for sure. We wanted to make something happen. It was tight. We wanted to get that third-and-short, in order to give ourselves an opportunity to take a timeout there, and then proceed, but it just didn't work that way. It was tough out there. The protection was tight, there wasn't a lot of room, so we just wanted to make sure that we finished the game with the football and that they didn't get another crack at it. After we didn't make that third-and-one, the thinking was let's take a timeout at one [second remaining and see if we can make a Hail Mary there at the end of the game.]"

**On his thought process behind not challenging the pass attempt to WR Mike Williams down the near sideline in overtime:**

"I was pretty close to it. I didn't feel like it happened as much as I would have wanted it to, so didn't throw [the challenge flag]."

**On his response to Hopkins' injury:**

"Ready for anything. My first reaction was, 'Are we going to be OK with PATs?' Then, OK, [QB] Chase [Daniel] has to hold. Are we good there? Your mind goes to, 'What's next?' Situationally, with [Offensive Coordinator] Joe [Lombardi], we're going to have to call this game different because of the field goal aspect of it. Just going into full strategy mode and making sure that people are on the same page. He was able to hang in there and give us the indication that he was going to be OK, that he just kind of had to work through it. Fortunately, JK [Scott] was able to do the kickoff duties, which could kind of keep Dustin [Hopkins] loosening up and being ready to kick PATs and field goals."

**On if he 'knows' what Hopkins' 'sideline compression device is':**

"No, sir."

**On the muffed punt recovery and Scott's contribution with the hang time:**

"It's one of the stories of the first six games of the year: our punt operation. I think that JK [Scott] is doing a great job. I think that our core unit — the core, the interior — is doing an outstanding job. I think [LB] Nick Niemann and [LS] Josh Harris are doing a great job of leading that group. We're getting quality gunner play. We have to continue to improve, and we need it. When you play in a rugged, tough game like that, your punter has to become a weapon for you because there are going to be a lot of punts when you're playing a defensive-type game. You have to be able to exchange field position, and then, hopefully, do what we did tonight, which is create a takeaway."

**On Scott's ability to consistently record long hang times on punts:**

"I think that it changes the math of the gunner position. I think the less the hang [time], the more stress you put on the gunner position. Then, based on the matchup, are they doubled? Are they singled? That can be really tough on them. I think that JK [Scott] has to continue to improve timing, accuracy, all of those things, and we have to continue to develop our core group, and then, our gunners. So far, I think it's been a strength of our football team."

**On CB Michael Davis lining up at cornerback in the second half rather than CB J.C. Jackson:**

"I thought Mike [Davis] gave us a chance in the second half. I liked the way that he played. He was ready. Proud of him. Proud of his teammates for helping him along, his coaches. It just wasn't good enough in the first half and we felt like we needed to make a change."

**On Broncos WR KJ Hamler's long reception near the end of the first half and if Jackson 'had help over the top':**

"No."

**On Broncos TE Greg Dulcich's receiving touchdown and if the defense was 'playing Cover 3':**

"Yeah."

## **LOS ANGELES CHARGERS QUARTERBACK JUSTIN HERBERT**

### **On K Dustin Hopkins' game-winning field goal:**

"We have so much respect for him. We know that he is hurting. That's the great part about the NFL is those guys, they are committed to our team. He's tough. That's all you can say about him. For him to go out there and play and put up with some pain like that, it's great to see from him."

### **On celebrating with Hopkins on the field after the game-winning field goal:**

"It's just a lot of excitement. We got that big turnover when we needed it the most. The defense came up with some big stops all day. It's all about who ended the game with the ball, and fortunately, that was us today."

### **On winning the game in overtime:**

"It's huge. Like you mentioned, two years ago, maybe that's a different story. For us to go out and close and finish, getting that turnover on special teams like that is huge. To stay in the fight, come back from 10-0 early on, it says a lot about our team."

### **On the emotions of playing in an overtime game:**

"It's tough. You want to be able to go down and score. That's an incredible defense that we were going up against. We kind of shot ourselves in the foot, a couple of penalties here and there, second-and-long, third-and-long. It's tough like that. You put the defense back out there and you know that they're going to come up with some big stops. Those guys played great all day. To have a guy like that and when special teams come alive, too, it's great for us."

### **On the Broncos' defense:**

"They have a great defense and they are really well-coached. That's kind of the game that we knew we were going into, it's going to be a battle. They could easily be 5-0 prior to this game. We had to just take what they gave us. It's obviously not pretty, not the way we want to win, but a win is a win and we love to take it."

### **On WR Mike Williams:**

"I would love to be able to get Mike [Williams] the ball a ton more. He deserves everything. He's such a hard worker and a great teammate. He's a guy that you can trust. Second and third down, he's going to go up and get the ball."

### **On if he thought there was a 'tug' on WR DeAndre Carter on fourth down in the fourth quarter:**

"I'd have to take a look at it. DeAndre [Carter] is a guy that you definitely have to be aware of out on the field. He's a special playmaker. It didn't go our way, unfortunately, but I'd have to take a look at it."

### **On what the Broncos presented defensively:**

"A lot of shell [coverage]. They were sitting on a lot of the routes. When things are covered downfield, the running backs, the check downs, they have to come alive. [RB Austin Ekeler] Ek, [RB] Sony [Michel], a couple of the tight ends caught a bunch of passes. They are not pretty passes, three or four yards, but they move the chains and they get the ball going. We would love to be able to push the ball downfield, but we had to be smart. We tried to do our best to limit turnovers. I can't be more complimentary of the defense for coming up with some big stops today."

### **On TE Donald Parham Jr.:**

"I have so much respect for [Donald] Parham [Jr.], especially what he's fought through for the past couple of years. He's a tough guy. He's a great team guy. It's great to see him go out there and catch a couple of passes like that. It's great to have him back."

### **On the 15-play touchdown drive in the second quarter:**

"The average yards-per-play was pretty low on that drive. For us to be able to put a drive like that together, I thought the offensive line did a great job moving the ball. Ek [Austin Ekeler] and Sony [Michel] ran the ball great all day. To be able to convert on some of those third downs, it's huge for our offense."

**On the Broncos' four pass interference penalties:**

"I think that's something that maybe you address during the game. The receivers come back to you and say, 'I think they are tugging on me, pulling on me.' If the refs are calling it, you have to be open to that because if the defender isn't looking and you're able to throw the ball downfield, the odds are good for your receivers. It's definitely something you take a look at during the game."

**On the pass interference penalty on WR Joshua Palmer in the first drive of the game:**

"That's just a play that we wanted to take a shot. Josh Palmer down the sideline, you try to give him a shot. I think the ball was a little wide, but he got tugged. It was good to be able to move the ball like that."

**On if there will be a 'Victory Brisket' this week:**

"We'll see. It's a quick week. We'll have to watch the film tomorrow and get after it. If there is time."

**On advancing to 4-2:**

"I thought 4-2 has been a big step up for us, especially where we were at with 1-2. For us to answer back and to win three games in a row like that, I think it says a lot about our team, our defense, our special teams, because they have stepped up big time. It's been awesome to see from them."

## **DENVER BRONCOS HEAD COACH NATHANIEL HACKETT**

### **Opening statement:**

“Quick on the injuries. [Broncos CB] Essang [Bassey] had a hamstring and didn’t finish. [Broncos OLB] Aaron Patrick had a knee and [Broncos QB] Russell Wilson had a hamstring.”

### **On what he saw on WR Montrell Washington’s muffed punt in overtime:**

“It was a short punt from what it looked like. I need to see the tape to be able to get a clear picture. It was a short punt and we, obviously, need to make a call to be able to let [Broncos Safety P.J. Locke] know that he has to move. P.J. [Locke] went to engage into a block, and then, unfortunately, got pushed back into Montrell [Washington].”

### **On his overview of the game:**

“This is very disappointing. We need to have a lot more urgency across the board. It starts with me as a coach, going to all of our other coaches, and then to the players. The players need to be more urgent. We had some opportunities there, and we have to execute at a higher level. We have to come up with some better plays.”

### **On the offense’s second-half performance:**

“I will have to look at the tape on that one. That’s what we will do now on our trip back. We have a short week. We have to clean that stuff up and see how many opportunities we had, if there was something else we could have gotten to. I felt like we had a good plan and in the end, it just did not come together.”

### **On the decision to ‘rely on the run game for offensive production’:**

“Early, it seemed like we were not doing as well. The pass game was a little bit better. We started to get the run game going a little bit in the second half, but then had to convert on some third downs. I think the third down thing is very frustrating also. I do not think we were very good. I have not seen the stats yet, but we definitely were not continuing those drives. We have to keep our defense off. I know with time of possession, we did not have the ball enough. We have to be better on offense. As a coaching staff, we are going to put our head down. We are going to keep working on this short week.”

### **On the frequency of penalties:**

“I am going to have to go back and look at those and see where they came from; how they happened and how we can hopefully prevent more of those. We have been harping on that quite a bit. I think both teams had a lot of penalties in this game. Last I heard, I think we had ten. I don’t know if they had ten or nine or something like that. We just need to play cleaner football across the board.”

### **On ‘the lack of offensive progression’:**

“First and foremost, it starts with me. I feel like I can do more and continually work to try to find the best schemes for our players. We will have to look at this game and see where some of those things broke down, but we have to come up with better plays for the guys and the guys got to be better at executing them. So it is a combination of all of us working together, coming together and making sure we are doing all the right stuff.”

### **On RB Latavius Murray’s performance:**

“I thought he did a good job. It looked like he went in there and was running very hard, running downhill. He was making contact and falling forward, so that was really good to see. I will have to look at the tape to see how the other two guys did, but he definitely got into a rhythm.”

### **On the lineup change along the offensive front:**

“We had planned originally that we wanted to get [Broncos OL] Billy [Turner] in there and let him have a little run. He came in there, he was playing at a high level, and then we decided to move [T] Cam [Fleming] over to the left side. I will be able to look at the tape a little closer and see where we will move forward with that.”

### **On if RB Melvin Gordon was injured in tonight’s game:**

“Not that I know of, no.”

**On takeaways from tonight's game:**

"It is very disappointing. I think all those guys know that. They are disappointed, I am disappointed. We have to look from within. Every single person has to look at themselves, how we can all get better. Whether it is the penalties, or whether it is the self-inflicted wounds, what we can correct to be able to move forward. There is still a lot of football left and we have to grow. We have to be better as a team all around. It starts with me and the offense. We have to keep the defense off the field. Special teams has to be better. So many different things. We're always hard on ourselves. We will be sure to correct those things and make sure we move forward and get better."

## **DENVER BRONCOS QUARTERBACK RUSSELL WILSON**

### **On the offense's performance in the second half:**

"I thought we started off great. Everyone was catching the ball and guys were making plays. We were looking the way I thought our guys should look. We kept our tempo up and everything else. [Broncos WR Greg] Dulcich had a great touchdown and the energy was high early on. We got the ball right at the end of the half and went down the field, Dulcich almost made another great catch, and that would have been a huge touchdown there, but we settled for a field goal. When we came out in the second half, they stopped us, I think, three-and-out. We could have been cleaner in the second half. I think the reality is that, that is not good enough, and we have to be better. We have to play sharper, find ways to make plays and find a way to make plays get first downs and touchdowns. That was a good football team out there, but we are just as good, if not better. We have to answer the call, adversity is definitely challenging us right now, but the only way I know to get through it is to continue to work hard and to believe. I felt like we should have won that game tonight. We have to look at the film and see what we can do better."

### **On 'trying to prevent division in the locker room':**

"We don't have division in our locker room. You guys saw how hard we played for each other. It didn't go our way, but everyone is fighting their butts off every day. The line, the receivers, the running backs, the defense, the defensive line, the linebackers, and our safeties and corners, everybody was playing for each other and we felt like we could have won the game. We had that fluke play at the end, but right before that play, we still felt like we could have won the game. It didn't work out, but everyone is still together, and we still believe in everything we can do. We must find ways to continue making plays and score touchdowns and do that. The end of the first quarter and the second quarter to get all the way down there. That's us. We have to bring that every time, and it can't be anything less."

### **On the offense's performance in the second half:**

"They didn't do too much different. We just have to find ways. I thought, in the first quarter, in particular, we have the ball out. We had some quick things. I thought the ball was diversified across the board, and guys were making plays. I scrambled a few times, and they played a better game than we did in the second half. It was still a close game, I thought they were struggling a little bit, too, and I thought we should have won that game."

### **On 'having a better sense of urgency' on offense:**

"I definitely think we had that sense of urgency coming into this week. I thought we had that sense of urgency playing early on in this game, and I still think we had it throughout the game, but once again, in these tough matchups, you have to have that knockout punch. You have to have that one or two plays, and we didn't have that tonight. We had opportunities and a couple of plays here and there, and it just didn't go our way. I think our sense of urgency has to go up now, even that much more every day. The season is not over, there is a lot more to do and we still have that belief. Ultimately, there are a lot of things we have to fix. There are a lot of things that we have to keep doing, too. We are in a tough situation, and we can come out of it if we have a tough mindset and a good work ethic."

### **On 'getting back to winning':**

"I think the only thing that matters is us winning, and I'm not going to sugarcoat it. What matters is us winning and finding a way. I have been through tough times before, and I know we can come out on the other side. We have too many good football players and guys that work their butts off every day, so we have to make that happen. There is no excuse for it; we just have to find a way. As I said, I thought we did some really good things, but we should have tightened up and gotten better. What I am focused on is finding a way to keep doing the good things that we were doing. Tonight was unfortunate, but we have to find a way to keep going."