



QUOTES

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LOS ANGELES CHARGERS OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR KEN WHISENHUNT

On playing Denver for the second time:

"Well, I think it always helps when you play them one time because you get to see some of the things that maybe you weren't sure exactly how they were going to play out. You always change it up. Just like when we go back against them, we change some things we did from the first time just because they're probably not going to work the second time we see them. We obviously know this group pretty well just through the years having played them. They've kept pretty much the same defense philosophically, and they executed well. They're a good group. It's always a challenge."

On the struggles against Baltimore's pass rush:

"Well, I could answer that question by saying that is a big part of it. They're a good defense, the Ravens. They did a nice job on some things and got us a couple times. We didn't play our best game. So I think getting back to work this week and clean up some of the things that we made mistakes on going in. Against Denver, obviously, with those two guys outside with [Broncos OLBs Von Miller and Bradley] Chubb, they're both really great pass-rushers and they do a nice job of putting pressure on us. So big thing for us is we've got to do better technique-wise with what we're doing. I think some of that led to our problems. Some of it was just our identification and how we handled the fronts. You know, when you face a team like Baltimore the first time, a lot of times there are things that you're not a 100 percent sure of, and they do a good job with it. Like I said, we didn't play our best. With Denver, you understand more about how they do things, how they're going to attack you, and hopefully, we can improve on what we did last game."

On if he considered changing the personnel on the offensive line after the game against Baltimore:

"They've been playing the whole season and doing a good job. So, I don't think you consider making that change because it's a game where we didn't play our best — and let's face it, it's easy to point the finger at the O-line, but we had some other places where we didn't play as well as we could have played also. I probably called some plays I wish I could have back. Those are all things that factor into it. I think that we're past that. We've moved on and now we've got to get ready to play Denver."

On countering defensive blitzes from different angles:

"We've had success with that before. I think [QB] Philip [Rivers] is one of the best quarterbacks in the league against the blitz, statistically. We just weren't on. We had some plays early where we had a chance to make them, some big ones down the field, and we didn't do that. That can always change the perspective of the game. I think a lot of times from having been on a team that goes against the quarterback, you're always worried about pressure against a veteran quarterback because they can make you pay for that. We just didn't do that. We had some mistakes. Philip has always done a great job. He's not afraid to hang in the pocket, make the throw at the last second. We're all familiar with that. We know he does that. That's the way we operate, and we've had really good success with that this year up until last week. So we're going to continue to do what we feel like we've done well this year, and just play a little better."

On the impact of Broncos OLB Von Miller's interception in the last matchup:

"Yeah, no kidding [it was an incredible play]. I think the game would have been completely different, obviously, if we had made a play there. The guy's a great player. He made a really good play. You don't see a lot of guys that can make that. He recognized something, took a chance and made a play. We still go back to we did a lot of good things in that game and made a lot of plays. So you can't always dwell on one negative play when you do a lot of good things. Give him credit. He's a tremendous player. He's one of the best players in the league, and he made a good play. Respect him for that, but we'll continue to do things that we've done."

On if the team could rest players in the second half to prevent injury before the postseason:

"Well, that's really not my call on that situation. The way we're looking at this is we still have a chance to get the No. 1 seed. There's still — if Oakland beats Kansas City, then we have a chance. So we have to go in there and win this game. I think that's important for us."

On TE Virgil Green:

"When we lost [TE] Hunter [Henry], you always worry about what are we going to do from a stability point with that issue. Virgil has been really good. He's done a great job with that. He's been an unselfish player. He's a tremendous blocker. He's done a good job in the pass game and worked hard. So it was a tremendous move by [General Manager] Tom [Telesco] and his group to get Virgil signed because that position is always hard to find guys that you think could be as consistent as Virgil has been, and he's been a really good player for us. We were certainly thrilled to have Virgil."

On the possibility of playing a road playoff game:

"We played in Pittsburgh, we played in Seattle, we played in Kansas City — we've played some games in big stadiums against a big crowd. So at least we've had the opportunity to be in a playoff-type atmosphere, so, yeah. We've done that a few times. So hopefully we'll be able to be prepared for that."

On the team's success in hostile environments:

"I think it's just the way our guys have worked. They don't let much bother them. They understand that you're going to be at a little bit of a disadvantage in those games, but you've got to make some plays. Early in games, we've done a good job of making some big plays. I think back to not so much in Pittsburgh, KC — I'm thinking more Seattle where we hit the first run, it was huge. We had a big one on third down and hit [WR] Keenan [Allen] with big plays. It just seems like we've been able to block that out, overcome some of our mistakes that we've made. You're going to have a few of those when you play in an away stadium like those and be able to get in a groove at the end of the game. I think the mental toughness of our guys has really shown, especially at the end of games. That's one of the things that's been big for us this year. You think about Pittsburgh. Certainly you think about Kansas City, just to be able to make the drive at the end of the game and score the points that won the game, in the end are huge. I think it gives you, I don't want to say confidence, but mental toughness that you can do that and hopefully that can help us going forward if we're in the playoffs, but whatever transpires from that standpoint."

On the in-game dynamic between Miller and QB Philip Rivers:

"I think you're always aware of where Von is because he's a tremendous player. You work on those things. That play happens. You see it happen in the league at times. He made a good play in that situation. Let's not disregard the fact that Philip has made his share of plays and he made his share of plays in that game. I think you're always aware of a tremendous player like Von, but you've still got to be able to go out there and do the things that you do to be successful."

On his experience as a coach for Pittsburgh that won a Super Bowl as a wild card team:

"To be honest, I think it's been done since then. I think there are a couple other teams that have done it, too. It's not easy. I think there is a mentality with the team, a toughness that you have to have to do that. There's also got to be a closeness — a group of guys that really like each other and play well together, from the standpoint of I sense a lot of that with our team. Like I said, I don't want to bring it back up again, but to go into a place like Seattle and go into Pittsburgh, to go into Kansas City and win tough games there, that didn't just happen. There was a reason that did, and that was because of the way our guys worked and the way they believe in each other. They played good, complementary football. Those are the kind of things that you can build on and know that if you get into a situation early in the playoff game and things maybe don't go quite your way, you know you can recover and make some plays. So I think that can help you. It's not easy. It's not easy to do what you said, but I certainly think that this team has been able to do some good things this year."

On WR Keenan Allen:

"He can do so many things. I think the characteristic of the group that plays wide receiver for us has been really special. We have so many guys that sacrifice so that other players can have success. Keenan has benefited from that a little bit because we've put him in spots where he can make some plays, but there's been a lot of other times where he's had to be a decoy to get some other guys some plays. I think he's been very productive, and kudos for him how hard he worked. He really worked hard in the off-season — but that group, in general, has really good chemistry. We ask them for a lot of different things — and the biggest thing is they block, and then they're unselfish with what's going on. They're very happy for their teammates."

On the AFC not having a seed determined yet:

"Well, I know that probably the TV networks are really excited about it. I think it's awesome. It's awesome for our game that we have this going on because it creates a lot of interest. You've seen over the latter part of the season a lot of games have come down to the end — last plays are really exciting. That's kind of what the NFL is, good football players. You hang in there and have to make plays at the end to win. That's the reason it's like it is, but we're in. We're in the tournament. That's not easy to do, and we're really excited about it."

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR GUS BRADLEY

Opening statement:

"Obviously, we're a couple days into our prep for Denver. You know, when you look at this team and you look at the course of the year, they've been in a lot of close games. Some games they've won, some games they've lost. They've had some injuries to deal with, but the way they go about it and the challenging things they do for us defensively, anyway — [Broncos QB] Case [Keenum], I think he's doing a good job. He had a couple good series when they went up-tempo against Oakland. I know they did a little bit against Cleveland, too. We've just had to prepare for everything with this team. They've got some good skill guys on the perimeter. Anytime you lose a good running back like that but the two guys they have that replaced him — actually — yards-per-attempt against us, anyway, [were better]. So I think we understand what we're dealing with and the challenge that we have in front of us."

On playing against a team with several different skill-position players since the last matchup:

"It is [unique], and that's part of it. We all know there are injuries in the NFL, but they took some hit there's with some really good players. I think what's impressive on tape is just how competitive they are. You see guys that are stepping up in positions. I know we've had that, where a guy went down and another guy stepped up. There are stories that take place throughout the year with guys and how well they do, and I think there are stories like that [for them]. They're finding some other guys that are stepping up and doing some really good things for them."

On S Derwin James:

"Well, all the things we've asked him to do, I would have never guessed in the beginning of the year. I thought he was very talented, could understand his position, and would do very well for us — but all the things we've asked him to do and the challenges we've put on his plate and how he's responded, there are weeks we've asked him to be a guy that we're going to pressure a lot on first, second, and third down. There are times we've had them play the middle third. We've added him as extra rusher. There are just different things with him. So what he's brought to the table for us just as a skillset and the flexibility it offers us, I mean, I can't say enough about it. Now, as a person, and I'm talking about a person on our team, the spirit that he has, and what he brings to our whole unit — that energy he brings to our unit, I think you could tell when he first came in he had that about him, but I mean, it's every day. Every day he brings that. I mean, this guy genuinely loves the game and has a passion for it. I think that filters to our players as well."

On evaluating a player's spirit in the draft process:

"Well, you hear things about it, but until you have him and work with him on a day-to-day basis [it's hard]. I think they talked about his energy, his fear, his love for the game, but I'd be lying if I said I thought it was to this level."

On the team's success in hostile environments:

"There is a certain belief in them, and you get that belief when you win big games like that. You go into environments and you find a way to win. It's a very close group. I know that's it, too, but I think as far as close, they really trust each other on the field. They know where everybody's going to be. They know the challenges everybody faces on the field, and at times they help each other. It may not look like the coverage we put in at times, but I think they're starting to know it so well and some of the issues that we face that the conversations that take place. So I think they're a pretty close-knit group as far as trust aspect, and they've had some success in those environments, so they believe."

On James' versatility:

"Well, I think that as far as — this league is full of matchups. Although we don't play a lot of man-coverage, some of our things turn into man. Some of our zone principles turn into man, and then it becomes about matchups. So I think when you're facing big tight ends that are in the league, I think that you look at that and you say, 'Alright, it's a matchup that we're okay with.' We like our chances with him. So I think that you look at other matchups across the board with our defense, and he's brought that part of it so where you say, 'Alright, if we position him here, we like that matchup.' Now let's look at everybody else and how [we] position them. I think it's just more of a matchup in some of the things he does. He's got length, so he can cover downfield. Explosive, you know, so when he does come on pressures, he at times looks like a defensive end. So I think it's our job to utilize each and every member of our defense, their skillset, and he's just got a wide variety of them."

On Denver's offensive success at the end of the previous matchup:

"Yeah, you know what, they did a good job. I think a couple route concepts that they ran, we didn't exactly play as precise as we needed to. They made us pay for it. I think that's going into it and it was up-tempo. I think the last session was a two-minute where we felt like we made a couple plays and they've got two big plays — and that was it. I think it stressed the importance of some good learning lessons for our defense about how every play matters, every play counts. Although it was a loss, I think that helped us in further games down the line about how every play matters. The two-point play, the last play against Tennessee, and the plays that happened to show up in other games where every play counts. We just didn't execute on those plays. That's what I think with [Broncos QB] Case Keenum, he'll make you pay. He's that talented and he's got enough talent around him, talented players where they can make you pay. We know we have to be on it this week."

On CB Michael Davis:

"He's done a good job for us. He's one of those guys when he was first in there we had — we were watching out of the corner of our eyes just how was he going to do? We knew that he had the speed and the length, but to perform in those environments, I think, were some of the things that we had in question. I think now over time he's shown that he can perform in those environments. Now we expect him to finish some of those plays. You know, opportunities to turn those [pass breakups] into picks or interceptions and be more of a ball-hawking type — but with him, he can't go after the ball. He's just got to utilize his technique, trust it and make plays. So I think that's the next step for him."

On the speed of the defense at this stage of the season:

"Yeah, well, I think that's a credit to them. The coaches do a good job. I think the whole thing with the defense is where they can play with some freedom, and they have enough confidence that they know the abilities that they can play fast. I think they're at that level. I think the way we're built now with some of the injuries taking place and how we shuffle around, we probably have more speed on the field. So whenever you have more speed, it's going to appear faster, too, but we put a lot of strain on our defensive line now. When you have two lighter linebackers that are playing for us like we have now, you have to stress somebody. I think the D-line is that we put a lot of stress on them because of it. Some of the techniques that we asked them to play, just to slow down some of the run game that we've been seeing. So it's been a team effort, but I do like the way they're practicing, the way they show up on game day."

On DE Melvin Ingram III playing nearly every defensive snap against Baltimore:

"Yeah, at that position, what we asked him to do, we felt like — you know, we move our defensive ends around quite a bit — where [DE] Joey [Bosa] and where Melvin are going to play sometimes is just like Derwin [James]. Put them in position to where we think certain schemes or certain personnel will be attacked and put them in those positions. So I think with Melvin — [LB] Uchenna [Nwosu] could have played some. He's got that skillset too, but we just trust Melvin. Great respect for his play."

On the Baltimore offense:

"Well, I'll give you a standard answer, we're not worried about playing them again [because we play Denver this week], but I will answer your question — I know that's important. Yeah, they are unique. They are unique. I think when you look at some of the things they do, you know, I think that sometimes you look at them and say, 'Oh, it's all triple-option, and three guys can touch the ball any time.' They do a lot of things that are similar to NFL teams around the league, but they have a package added on to it, and the threat. Anytime the quarterback can run. It's like [Seahawks QB] Russell Wilson, he drops back to pass like other teams, but it's different because of his skill set. So after we played him, I think our respect for him grew even more."