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POSTGAME TRANSCRIPTS

Los Angeles Chargers vs. Baltimore Ravens

Sunday, November 26, 2023 ⚡ SoFi Stadium ⚡ Inglewood, Calif.

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

On the impact of turnovers tonight:

"That was certainly the difference in the game, and it usually is in the NFL. When you turn the ball over three times and don't get any, your chances of winning aren't very good, especially when you're playing a team like Baltimore, it's going to be really tough. We hung in there about as well as you could, turning it over like that, one of them in the red area. Just didn't play well enough, clean enough, to win tonight."

On tonight's loss:

"We lost as a team tonight. In a game like that where it's low scoring, where it turns into a defensive game, you have to get one more stop. That's what we needed to do at the end of the game was just get one more stop, give [QB] Justin [Herbert] one more opportunity, and we weren't able to do it. I thought that our defense really competed tonight. I thought we were ready for the challenge. I thought our guys really played at a high level for most of the game. But, we didn't get it done, as a team. We didn't go get the ball tonight, and that's what we needed to do on defense to win it. Offensively, we didn't take care enough of the ball to win tonight."

On the 'challenges' that the Ravens' pass rush presented:

"They have a lot of known rushers. They have DBs and linebackers who can rush. They have interior pass rush, edge rush. They're a very complete unit. They played the way that they have played all season, so there weren't any surprises out there. We just didn't execute well enough tonight."

On the hit Herbert took on the sideline on the offense's opening drive and 'if it was late':

"No comment."

On an injury update regarding WR Quentin Johnston:

"He had an issue with his ribs and didn't go back into the game."

On why Johnston didn't return to the game:

"It just didn't happen. He didn't go back into the game."

On if he was 'comfortable with the defensive personnel changes' tonight:

"Yeah, I thought that our guys played at a high level. That team had scored 30 points for five or six games in a row and the had 13 points there until the very end. Our guys played at a high level tonight. They were up for the challenge. We need to build off of this. But, again, when it becomes a defensive game, you have to get one more stop, and we didn't do that. We played well, but it wasn't good enough. I think that us turning the ball over tonight was the story on defense. We weren't able to get one that would give us the momentum and get us another possession. That was the story."

On the rationale behind Johnston not returning to the game:

"It wasn't that he couldn't go back into the game, it's just that we didn't feel like — through the flow of the game, with where he was — that it was the right thing to go back into the game."

On Ravens WR Zay Flowers' end-around rushing touchdown in the fourth quarter:

"We were in a get-the-ball-back defense and they cut back on our guy. We knew that [Ravens QB] Lamar [Jackson] was going to be involved in the run game, we took away that aspect of it. Just got beat, man-on-man, on the cutback."

On the fourth-and-sixth in the fourth quarter that led to an intentional grounding and what the Ravens' defense presented:

"They brought a zero [blitz], which is what they do. We didn't pick it up well enough and make the right timing with the route and the quarterback. Credit to Baltimore, they made the winning plays tonight."

On tonight was 'the defense's best performance of the season':

"No, you're not going to say that the defense played well when you lose. Not good enough for us tonight."

On the postseason outlook and the mindset of the team in that regard:

"Our focus is on beating New England. That's what our focus needs to be. The AFC is wide open. It will be to the end, like it has been. The only way that we're going to have a shot is if we beat New England, and that's where our focus needs to go right now."

On if there were elements of the offense's performance tonight that he 'liked what he saw':

"Yeah, there was some good things, but just not consistent enough tonight. I think that it really starts with the turnovers. That's the story of the game. When you turn the ball over three times against a team like that, a team that is the number one team in the AFC, it's going to be really tough for you to win. We hung tough, and I love that about our guys, and I felt like we were in it to the end, but that's not the way that you need to play in a big game."

On the play call on third-and-six in the fourth quarter before the intentional grounding on the ensuing play and if that play 'was schemed for' RB Austin Ekeler:

"There was a concept frontside, and then kind of a relief for pressure or the right look. It was a bang-bang play. If he catches it, it's probably a first down."

On 'if the offense was hamstrung at all in the second half' due to injuries:

"You have to adjust when guys aren't out there, but that's what the NFL is about. You have to make the adjustments."

On the Ravens' defense and their 'versatility':

"They have a very complete unit, and [Ravens CB] Marlon Humphrey wasn't even out there tonight. A very complete unit, front seven and back seven. We were right there in the fourth quarter with a chance to win, despite three turnovers. That's where our season's been. It's been tight, and we just haven't been able to finish some of these games. That's what we need to keep working at. We need to keep working in all three phases in order to close these games out as a team. It's not going to be one phase doing it, we have to make sure that when it gets tight that we come alive and make the winning plays. That's going to be where our focus is."

On 'if it stings more being 4-7 considering how tight the games have been':

"Every time it stings more, because it means a lot to these guys. I feel like our guys know the quality that we have. We just have to hang tough. It's not the popular answer, but it's the right answer. You have to hang tough. We have to keep working at our game in all three phases. If we do that, then you're going to see good football from this team. Like I said, we're going to have to put this one behind us after tomorrow and get on to New England."

On the 'key adjustments' to the team in advance of playing the Patriots next week:

"It would start with taking care of the football."

On 'why the killer mindset hasn't materialized':

"It hasn't happened here. It's, obviously, a fair question. I think that we have the players who have the makeup and the mindset, it just hasn't come together as a football team yet. It, obviously, starts with me. I'm fully responsible. But, we need to hang in there. As long as we keep after it the way that we have, coming to the practice field, coming to the meetings the right way, then we'll get the quality that we're after. All we can do is focus on New England and put this one behind us. This was a tough one tonight. This football team, I've really enjoyed coaching because every time we've had a tough loss, we've come back and we've competed, and that's what I expect. I expect us to come back to the practice field on Wednesday, compete and get ready to go to New England. If we do that, then we'll have a chance to play a good game and try to get ourselves back in the hunt."

On if he 'still feels like his messaging is hitting with team':

"Yea, otherwise, you would get blown out of the stadium. In one of these games, you'd get blown out of the stadium, and that hasn't happened. We've been tight with the best in the league. The way that we've practiced, you would know, and the way that our guys compete in the game. We're going to have to continue to make adjustments to close these games out and play a cleaner game in all three phases, but this is a close locker room, and they have a lot of pride. We're going to be tested, moving forward. That's a fact."

On Herbert's performance tonight:

"Any time that you turn the ball over three times, as an offense, I don't think anybody played well enough. I thought, as usual, he competes in the game. His legs gave us a big chance. I thought that he hung in there. There was a lot of pressure and he was able to hang tough, but we just weren't able to get the job done today. It was a collective group, all three phases, but he gave us a chance to win tonight."

On 'measuring' Herbert's 'toughness':

"You watch it. You're watching the same movie I am. His ability to hang in there, hang tough in the pocket, overcome mistakes and still make big plays. We always believe, with Justin [Herbert], that we have a chance in the game, all the way to the end. He's one of those rare players that gives you that belief. He just needs to stay with it because he's going to lead us to a ton of these big games, and that's part of playing quarterback in the league. There are going to be ones that you knock down, there are going to be ones that you don't. When you don't knock them down, everyone's going to be on you. That's part of the job. But, there's no one that we would rather have with the ball in their hands late in the game than Justin Herbert."

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS QUARTERBACK JUSTIN HERBERT

On the Ravens' pass rush:

"I thought that they did a good job. Unfortunately, I don't think that we executed the way that we would have liked to have. I have to be able to get the ball out quicker. I have to make some checks. It wasn't good enough on our part today."

On the offense's game plan in preparation for the Ravens' defense:

"I thought that we had a good plan. It's up to us to execute, and we didn't today. I have to do a better job up front, at the line of scrimmage, of making those checks and correcting the protections. I didn't do that today and it cost us."

On the fourth-and-six on the final offensive possession:

"I think that we had an option route to [WR] Keenan [Allen]. I kind of told him pre-snap to get it out quick, to be able to run it. The nickel came and I didn't do a good enough of moving, getting off the spot and creating a lane to throw. We had kind of seen it, we knew that they were going to bring it, and we just didn't execute."

On if he could have changed the protection pre-snap on that play:

"I could have changed the protection. In hindsight, I would have loved to have blocked up with seven guys and get everyone in there and blocking. I thought I had time, it was a six-yard route. I have to do a better job of creating space and getting the ball out."

On close losses:

"It's awfully tough. The defense played really well today. It's up to us, as an offense, to go out there and execute and perform in those two-minute drills. We haven't done that, and that's on us. The thing is you can't let the last one affect your next one. We're going to get a shot at a really good opponent next week. If we get that moment, we have to go out there and execute. We're not going to let this one affect our next one. We're going to watch the film and we're going to have to get better because of it. We haven't been executing. It's tough because the defense goes out and get some big stops like that and it's up to us to go out there and do something about it."

On the outlook for the postseason:

"We're just focused on one week at a time."

On his 'level of frustration' following turnovers:

"It's tough to win football games when you turn the ball over that many times. We have to do a better job, as an offense, and I have to do a better job of protecting the ball, not turning the ball over like that. It's really tough to win games like that."

On if the hit he sustained along the sideline near the end of the opening offensive drive was 'late':

"I'm not sure, I'd have to take a look at it. I don't think, in the time, that it was."

On going to the medical tent during the game:

"I think that the red hat called down. I was told to go in there."

On how he is feeling:

"Good enough."

On the 'zero blitz' that the Ravens presented on the offense's final play from scrimmage:

"I think that they had brought it once before. It's on me to be able to drop back and get that ball off. Keenan [Allen] ran a good route. We had seen it, we knew that that is kind of what they bring in that situation. We did a poor job of executing."

On his connection and 'level of success' with WR Keenan Allen:

"Well, we didn't do a good job of that today. Offensively, we have to be able to limit the turnovers, we have to score in the red zone, we have create explosives plays, and we didn't do that today. I thought the defense did a great job of battling, getting us the ball back. It's up to us, as an offense, and me, as a quarterback, to be able to perform and complete footballs."

BALTIMORE RAVENS HEAD COACH JOHN HARBAUGH

Opening Statement:

“[It was a] tough game, obviously. The Chargers are a very good football team. I thought they played really well. [They are a] very well-coached team, and it’s a big win for us. You can tell, we’re really, really happy with this win. This is a challenging place to play. It’s loud. This team we’re playing is really good, and I thought our guys just played a great football game to come out here on Sunday Night Football and win the game. I’m just proud of the players [and] the way they played. I thought the fourth quarter was a statement. We put an exclamation point on the fourth quarter. Defense [was] getting the stops, and offense [was] finishing it at the end there. [I’m] just proud of the guys. So many guys deserve credit. I’m sure we’ll get to them as we answer the questions, but defensively, I think [the unit] deserves an extra, extra shout. That’s a really good offense. The pressure, the coverage and the turnovers were big. Then, Broderick Washington getting a sack at the end was really special. OK. What questions do you have?”

After WR Zay Flowers scored that one touchdown in London, you kept saying, ‘Oh, I can envision many more.’ Were these kind of the couple of touchdowns that you could have envisioned? (Jamison Hensley)

“Yes. Right. I didn’t think about that. That’s an interesting tie together there, but Zay [Flowers] is electric [with] the ball in his hands. We have a lot of guys like that. It starts with our quarterback, Lamar Jackson, who just set the all-time record [for fastest to rush for 5,000 yards] for a quarterback in NFL history. That’s a historic statement for him, but he’s just playing the game out there and competing. Odell [Beckham Jr.] came out, especially in the first half and had a bunch of plays. I could name guy after guy who made plays when plays had to be made: Gus [Edwards] running the ball downhill, Keaton Mitchell with his speed on his outside and inside stuff, so [there were] a lot of players doing what they had to do.”

Given some of the questions you were asked about the fourth quarter earlier this year, how important is it to go into the bye week kind of changing that narrative a little bit and winning a close game in the fourth quarter? (Jeff Zrebiec)

“The narrative is not something we really care about. It’s the fact that the guys stepped up and won the game. We’ve won nine games, and all of those games had to be closed out in the fourth quarter one way or another. A couple of them were closed out in the third quarter. Three of them weren’t. We want the three back, but we got the one tonight, and I’m proud of the guys for that.”

I know you said last week that it would take a lot of guys to fill TE Mark Andrews’ shoes. Given what WR Zay Flowers has already showed you, does it feel like with his ability, he needs to be one of those guys to really take a headlining role in this offense? (Kyle Goon)

“Yes. Zay Flowers is ... Yes, sure. He is in a headlining role. He already was. I just think all of those guys together – I stand by that – all those guys together are headliners. Every single one of those guys ... You have to give Isaiah Likely a lot of credit. He made some really athletic plays out there. Lamar [Jackson] found him [for] catch-and-run plays that were just really special.”

You talked about the defense’s ability to not only create turnovers, but getting to the quarterback in so many different ways. It seems like you never know when this defense might make a big play. (Cliff Brown)

“Every single guy comes up and makes a play. Every single play, somebody has to put a period on the play. Somebody on defense has got to make a stop, make a tackle. You have to bat a ball down. You have to do something to make the play or it’s going to run into the end zone, and the sooner the better, obviously, on any given play. There were a couple plays that we’ll learn from and want back, but overall, the defensive effort was just tremendous. Guys were on point, locked in, doing their job, playing as hard as they could, fundamentally sound, tackling people, keeping the quarterback in the pocket – believe it or not, all but one play, really – and that’s a big challenge with [Justin] Herbert. So, [I] feel good about that.”

When did you know that your defense would be a special unit? (Reporter)

“These guys will tell you. I’ve been saying it since last summer, that we had a chance to be this kind of unit, and we’ve got five more regular season games and whatever comes after that to really determine what the final chapters are going to be in the story of our defense. [I’m] pretty proud of those guys.”

Did you consider challenging the spot on the QB Lamar Jackson run, that preceded the fourth-and-1 that you didn't get? And the one with WR Nelson Agholor, that preceded the fourth down you did get? (Jeff Zrebiec)

"I'll say this; we had trouble with the down and distance and what the spots were pretty much the whole game, just understanding what it was going to be. The Lamar [Jackson] run, I'd say no. We could see that one. It did look short to us. The [Nelson] Agholor one, we thought was a first down, in all honesty. We thought it was ruled first down, and we thought it was a first down. It wasn't until after the next play that we realized it was short. That was the challenge that we had pretty much four or five times during the game."

How do you feel heading into the bye, 9-3, and you're atop the AFC right now? (Jamison Hensley)

"Well, we were going to this point until we had an opportunity to get a bye, and we wanted to be the very best team we could be. I think we're becoming what we're capable of becoming, but it's not over yet. We have a lot of work to do. Guys are going to get a little time [off], a little spirit, a little mind, a little body [rest], take care of their families, and then get back next Monday, and we'll be ready to come out of the gates for the final part of the season."

The challenge flag that you did throw on their lateral play, was there something that you saw or heard that caused you to throw that flag? (Kyle Goon)

"Any time they have a play like that – where they kind of have a forward pass lateral on the run – those are hard to execute and not be down field. So, no, we didn't see it. We didn't get a good look on TV. They certainly didn't show it on the board, because we were on the road. We thought it was a big enough play, and there was a chance – a really good chance – that it was going to be a forward pass. It turned out to be dead even. It was about as close as it could have been and still been legal. If we'd have seen that, we wouldn't have thrown the flag, but it was definitely worth the shot."

What was the decision at the end of the first half with eight seconds left, fourth-and-whatever, and you go for it? What was the thought process behind that? (Jamison Hensley)

"The chances of us converting a fourth-and-15, or whatever it was, and having a chance to kick the field goal – we had a timeout – were better than them completing a Hail Mary going back the other way, we thought. So, that [was] an analytic decision. We feel like our odds ... It helped us to take a shot, especially with Lamar [Jackson] playing quarterback, we think we have a chance to possibly get that ball in there for a field goal."

On the second to last Chargers' drive where you got off the field, I think it was CB Arthur Maulet on the blitz. How much did you appreciate defensive coordinator Mike Macdonald's aggressiveness there? (Jeff Zrebiec)

"I appreciated it. I did appreciate it, and I appreciated Arthur Maulet making the play, and the timing of the thing. I think our guys – this is what I'm talking about – execution and the timing of those things ... It's one thing to call them [and] it's another thing to execute them. But [defensive coordinator] Mike [Macdonald] was aggressive, and he mixed it up. It wasn't just that. There were times when I wanted pressure in my mind, and he played coverage, and it worked out. There were times when I wanted coverage, and he wanted pressure. I'm not saying a word. I'm just saying in my mind, [I'm] thinking, 'Maybe I'd do the other thing,' and I thought Mike was just tremendous in this game. He called a fabulous game, and you can't call a better game than he did tonight."

Did you appreciate any more the decision to be exotic and have NT Michael Pierce drop into the zone coverage? (Kyle Goon)

"Did that happen?" *(laughter)* "Hey, you know what ... The more you can do. That's what we say."

When they started forcing more turnovers, how big was it to hold the Chargers to no points after a 19-play drive? (Reporter)

"That was probably the turning point in the game, honestly. The four turnovers ... We talked about that. This is not an easy team to [force to] turnover [the ball]. They haven't turned it over much, and that was going to be a key in the game. Then, us not turning it over, that was just as important, and our guys were about that all week in practice. It starts with our quarterback [and goes] right through the rest of the offense. I thought that was the other part of the turnover equation."

They started to make a DT Justin Madubuike announcement in the press box, and they never finished it. Do you have an update on him? (Jeff Zrebiec)

"Yes. [Justin Madubuike] is going to be in the concussion protocol, so we'll see where that goes."

Do you have any explanation for why you were so good in your territory moving the ball, but then when you crossed midfield, you kind of got bogged down a little bit? (*Jonas Shaffer*)

“We’ll look at all that, definitely. It’s just play by play. There are certain things I’m sure that we can improve on for sure.”

BALTIMORE RAVENS QUARTERBACK LAMAR JACKSON

On what he thought about WR Zay Flowers' touchdowns in tonight's game:

"It was awesome. We need a lot more, if anything. I've been waiting on him to score multiple times in a game, but having that last one with the run, that was a nice run."

On if he saw WR Zay Flowers' touchdown celebrations:

"The first one was horrible – I told him. I didn't know what was going on, so I was just standing there like, 'Alright, come along with it.' When I saw what happened, I was like, yes that was [bad]. I told him." *(laughter)* "My fault, my fault. I told him that; that was the worst celebration I've ever seen. *(laughter)* But he scored, so I'm good [and] I was still happy."

On if the touchdown that WR Zay Flowers scored was a run-pass option:

"Yes, it was an option, but we kind of ran two similar plays back-to-back. So, my read was Khalil Mack, and I saw him squeeze on the rush and I just let Zay [Flowers] do his thing and he did."

On the impact WR Zay Flowers has had on the team:

"How I would describe the impact he's had is right on time. You notice every time he did something, it was right on time. It was perfect situations where he scored [and] made the touchdown catch on that run, like I just said, and he just needs to keep doing it. [He needs] to keep getting the ball in his hand, not just him, but all of our receivers – 'Bate' [Rashod Bateman] is a great receiver [and] 'OB' [Odell Beckham Jr.] and 'Nelly' [Nelson Agholor], we have to get everybody involved, because those guys catch the ball and make magic."

On what it meant for the offense to close out the game in the fourth quarter:

"It meant a lot, because our defense was playing lights out all night and we weren't doing what we usually do [which is] putting points on the board for those guys. But I'm grateful that we have a great defense, because without them, I don't know how this game would have went."

On what it means to him to have a 9-3 record entering the bye week:

"Let's take a breath, step away, [and] re-group, because there's still a lot of the season left."

On if the offense was missing TE Mark Andrews on third down in tonight's game:

"We're going to miss Mark [Andrews] regardless, but I believe we can get it done still because we have great guys who stepped up when our brother went down."

On how effective the running game was tonight:

"Very effective. [It was] very effective. Gus [Edwards] had great runs and Keaton [Mitchell] had great runs and Justice [Hill]. The guys just do a great job. They're doing their job at that. Our offensive line had great push, so just keep our offense balanced and I feel like we'll put points on the board."

On what it means to see WR's Odell Beckham Jr. and Zay Flowers play through injuries:

"We have tough guys. We have guys who want to win. They're going to put their heart on the line. Blood, sweat and tears – that's part of football and the Ravens [are] known for being a tough team and those guys showed it."

On if finishing first in the AFC is a goal of his or just getting into the playoffs:

"Getting to the Super Bowl is the goal, but we're just going to take it a week at a time. That's all we can do. We can't worry about the No.1 seed or anything like that. It's the NFL, anything can happen any given Sunday, Thursday, whenever you play, Monday. We just have to keep focusing [and] keep trying to win these games because it's a tough league."

On if it feels good going into the bye week winning a close game in the fourth quarter:

"It's a plus for us, but we try not to be in those situations. But I believe tonight was like a playoff atmosphere game – going back and forth, a close game, having success on the drive, getting stopped. That was like playoff football, and I believe not having a turnover, it helped us out as well."

On his scramble before the fourth-and-one:

"I thought I got the first down when I almost fell – or when I did fall." *(Reporter: Was there poor communication, not from your side, but the officials to you on what was happening?)* "I didn't say that. You said that. Don't try to put that on me." *(laughter)* "But it's a part of the game. Things will happen fast, so sometimes it is what it is, but hopefully we get the first down next time and make it easier on the refs if anything."

On his throw to WR Nelson Agholor and if he came to the sideline and said it was a first down:

"They're trying to get me right now." *(laughter)* "Yes, I did say that. I thought it was a first down, but it is what it is. [We] live to fight another day."

On what it means to him reaching 5,000 yards rushing in his career:

"Cool." *(laughter)*