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## LOS ANGELES CHARGERS vs. DENVER BRONCOS POSTGAME TRANSCRIPTS

Sunday, January 2, 2022 ⚡ SoFi Stadium ⚡ Inglewood, Calif.

### LOS ANGELES CHARGERS HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

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

"It felt great to play with our starting secondary for one of the few times this season. I think our run defense directly impacted our third-down defense. We were able to play the way that we started out this season playing. I'm just excited about the way our group competed today. I thought our coaching staff prepared our players extremely well. Then, those guys came to play today. I think our secondary performed at a high level, with [S] Derwin [James Jr.] leading the way. I felt like, in the run front, you can't say enough about our front seven and our secondary and the way we attacked the run front today. We tackled extremely well, set edges. I think that had a direct impact on the way we played on third down."

#### **On 'the difference' with the run defense today:**

"I thought just a lot more penetration. I felt like we were playing on the other side of the line of scrimmage. I felt like our edges were a lot more physical. Then, I felt like, in the secondary, we tackled a lot better and fit at the second level at linebacker a lot more decisively. To play good run defense — you've heard me talk about it — you have to play team run defense. It's not just the front; it's all 11 guys. I really felt like it was a team operation today. You know how much respect I have for both of those runners. They're really, really good. It was a good performance by us today."

#### **On T Trey Pipkins III starting at LT, rather than T Storm Norton:**

"Coming off of [Reserve/] COVID[-19], he was here in an emergency only today. Trey was able to hold the rope for us. Everybody's coming off this COVID list a little bit differently, as you guys are becoming aware of. We just want to make sure that our guys' health and safety is the top priority for us. Trey did a nice job filling in today. I'm really proud of him."

#### **On C Corey Linsley's injury status:**

"Corey's back just tightened up in the game. He was not able to return. We will know more, I think, tomorrow. I just saw the guy, he seems to be doing well. We'll have more information about his back tomorrow."

#### **On WR Andre Roberts' impact on the return units:**

"This guy's one of those in-season acquisitions that you're really fortunate to come upon. We've had two of them with him and [K] Dustin [Hopkins]. This guy, besides the production as a returner, he has just brought a level of professionalism to our team with a really young special teams unit. His level of professionalism, and what he's been able to create from a culture standpoint, and then, the production on the field — you guys saw a couple of weeks ago against Kansas City what he did for us, you saw today, opening up the game, and then, obviously, being able to finish one later — it's been a huge lift for our football team. He's one of us. He's the type of guy that you love seeing every single day. I'm really proud of him. He got a game ball today."

**On Roberts:**

"I kind of just touched on it. This guy has an impact beyond just the production on the field. He's been an outstanding teammate. He's been able to come right into our culture, our way of doing things, and just fit right in. Then, really, take these younger special teams guys and really help bring them along with our coaching staff. He's like having another coach on the field. He's seen a lot. He's lived through a lot. This guy's been a Pro Bowl-caliber player. He's meant a lot to me. I'm just really proud of him. Game ball to him today; he was fantastic."

**On 'a potential in-game conversation with the officiating staff to take away CB Asante Samuel Jr.'s pass interference penalty':**

"I was trying. I don't think I needed to. The back judge actually did an outstanding job; he had a really good vantage point of what happened with [Broncos WR] Courtland [Sutton] and Asante there. We were able to get it as a double foul, offsetting. I did not feel, like in my opinion, that Asante fouled him. The back judge did, I felt, an outstanding job of running the show there and making the appropriate call."

**On DL Jerry Tillery:**

"I think we've talked about it during the week. I think he's just a work-in-progress as a player. We're committed to him. He's going to continue to improve because it means a lot to him. I think that transition, for us, it's taking some time — he has played well this season. I want to make that very clear; he has played well for us this season. The challenge for him is to continue to do it to his standard every single time he goes out there. I think that he's one of these guys that is a young player. He's improving. I know his coach, [Defensive Line Coach Giff] Smith and he are working really hard together. I felt like his teammates helped pick him up today, too; [DL] Justin Jones, [DL] Linval [Joseph], [DL] Christian [Covington], [DL] Joey G. [Gaziano] — that group really came together. I thought they brought out the best in one another today."

**On 'how he saw Derwin James' roughing the passer penalty':**

"Similarly."

**On 'being in control of the team's playoff fate':**

"I was just pleased with the way that we performed this week, the entire week; not just here at the game, I felt like we practiced well, we prepared well, and then at the game, felt like we brought the right type of energy, the right type of focus and had the right level of execution today, at the game, against a quality team. For me, it was about this week. It was about our response. I felt like our guys answered in a big way today. I'm really proud of our players, proud of our coaching staff. Today, we needed to play like this. I felt like we really showed what we're made of today, as a team."

**On attempting a field goal on fourth-and-goal from the Broncos' two-yard line, rather than going for it:**

"I just felt like it was going to be a possession game. I really wanted to make sure that we came away with points and really forced them to move the field against us and score three times to beat us. I wanted to make sure that it turned into a possession game. It felt like our defense was playing at a really high level. I didn't want to come up empty there and wanted to make sure that we extended our lead and really forced them to execute in order to beat us."

**On 'avoiding penalties until the end of the third quarter':**

"Playing clean football today, to your point, the penalties — as well as zero turnovers — that was a huge storyline in the game. Playing clean football allowed us to play a clean game. Generally, when you play like that, you perform like that — you have 35 runs, 22 completions, no turnovers, you get a special teams takeaway, and then you score on special teams — that's generally a good recipe."

**On the Broncos running the ‘Philly Special Trick Play’ on fourth-and-goal:**

“We’ve played well on the goal line all season long. As you guys know, we’ve played well down there. I think how you play down there says a lot about the competitive character of your team. I felt like our guys really, really sold out down there. Certainly, they had a play that’s kind of designed against that sort of circumstance, but sometimes your effort and how hard you play make up for an imperfect sort of coverage situation. Down in there, when you’re in kind of in a goal line, [Cover] O-stick coverage, the guy that you don’t account for is the quarterback. We have to do a better job of making sure that we account for that guy. Sometimes, when you play the game the way that [S] Nasir [Adderley] and [OLB] Joey [Bosa] and the other nine guys played, sometimes that can make up for any type of coverage mistake that you make.”

**On QB Justin Herbert setting the franchise’s all-time single-season passing touchdown record:**

“If you’re a fan of history, it’s not just any record because of the quality of the quarterbacks that have played for this football team, when you’re talking about [Pro Football Hall of Fame QB] Dan Fouts, a Hall of Famer, you’re talking about [former Chargers QBs] Stan Humphries, you’re talking about Drew Brees, you’re talking about Philip Rivers — Drew Brees and Philip Rivers are going to be first-ballot Hall of Famers. Stan Humphries is a Super Bowl quarterback. When you think about the caliber of players that have played for this franchise, I think it says an awful lot. Justin has worked extremely hard to earn that record. It’s not a coincidence that these records are happening for him; it’s because of the type of person he is, the type of competitor he is and the type of player that he is.”

**On his message to the team leading into next week’s season finale against the Raiders, based on playoff implications:**

“Each week has a life of its own in the NFL; it’s had a life of its own since the beginning. That’s the way we need to treat things around here. The longer that we’re here, the more people will realize that every week is going to feel like this coming week. When you have that type of intensity, that type of focus to treat each week like it has a life of its own, and you pour your full energy into that week, then you can be proud of what goes down. This week was a similar week, and next week, obviously, there’s a lot at stake. We’re excited to compete. We’re going to have to rest up and learn from this tape; there will be plenty to learn from. Then, we have to keep it moving to the Raiders.”

**On Herbert’s week-to-week development:**

“Advancing, improving and competing in all ways. I feel like he has really developed as a passer. There were a couple of things that happened today where he was able to find the back on a couple of bursts — we were progressing to number five in the progression — it’s just real quarterbacking against one of the top defenses in the league. The red zone touchdown before the half, he managed that sequence beautifully, both with his arm and his legs. His touchdown at the end of the half was, again, a full progression, hitting five in the progression. It’s just real quarterbacking stuff. I think that the guy is improving in all aspects as a player. As a leader, I think this guy is really finding his way within our team. The example, the impact that he has on our team, that he has on me, he really does a tremendous job of setting the example every single day and that’s very, very important within a football team, within an organization. We are really proud of him and, certainly, happy for his record.”

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

### **On 'hiding from the camera after the record-setting touchdown':**

"The defense was still out there, so I wanted to give them all of the attention. I think it is a huge accomplishment, but it doesn't get done without my teammates; the receivers, tight ends and especially the offensive line that has done an incredible job of protecting me all year."

### **On 'joining the quarterback legacy' of the Chargers:**

"I think it's special because I was a Chargers fan growing up. I knew about all of those guys. I watched them all. They're football legends. To be able to be even in the same conversation with them is a huge honor. We're not done yet. We still have a big game coming up on Sunday. We're going to need to have a good week of practice heading into it."

### **On the impact of today's win:**

"Everything is still in front of us. Kind of like I said out there on the field, we believe in each other. The offense, the defense, the special teams, they all came to play today. That's a team victory. To have the defense step up and get some turnovers, get some big stops like that, it was really good to see."

### **On next week's game against the Raiders:**

"The NFL is a really tough league. You have to put your best out there each week. Unfortunately, we lost a couple [of games], but I love the way that everyone responded. We had a great week of practice; everyone was dialed in, focused for that week of preparation. That's exactly what we're going to need heading into this next game."

### **On his confidence in C Scott Quessenberry:**

"It's always tough losing a guy like [C] Corey [Linsley] with how special he is at center, but I think the great thing about Scott Quessenberry is that he steps up. He treats every day of practice like he's the starter and he's prepared. He knows what he's doing. He can play center in this league. It's great to have him out there as well because he helps our offense a ton."

### **On 'if he thought about the achievement as he accomplished it today':**

"No, I never quite did. I was a huge fan of the Chargers and [Pro Football Hall of Fame RB] LaDainian Tomlinson, [former Chargers QB] Philip Rivers, [former Chargers TE] Antonio Gates, all of them; just to be here is a huge honor. I'm thankful every day for it. We have another week of football, another week of opportunities. I couldn't be more thankful for it."

### **On the record-breaking TD pass to WR Mike Williams:**

"I thought it was just a big play for us, especially at that time during the game. The corner kind of sat on him, Mike released inside on him, got to his landmark, got enough width on it, and made a great catch. For us to be able to go down there and score as quickly as we did, I thought it was huge for our team."

### **On the team's mindset heading into next week:**

"We have to have a good week of preparation. It starts tomorrow. It starts with watching this film and getting better from it and working toward a protection plan of a run game, pass game, everything that goes into it. Everyone has to be focused, dialed in this entire week because, like you said, it is a big game. The Raiders are a really good team. They're playing really good football right now."

## **DENVER BRONCOS HEAD COACH VIC FANGIO**

### **On the performance of the Broncos' special teams units:**

“Obviously, we need to cover them better. The kick on the second one put us at a deficit early, but we need to find out how to not let it go the whole way. No excuses, we need to play with what we got. We need to figure out how to cover kicks better.”

### **On the offense's red zone efficiency today:**

“On the second one, we lined up in an illegal formation and that killed the one touchdown. On the first trip down there, they did a good job. We tried a special play, it was open, but there was disruption. We need to find a way to punch that in, obviously.”

### **On Broncos QB Drew Lock:**

“I thought he had some good throws and made some good reads. We cannot seem to find a rhythm and a consistency in our offense to keep our drives sustained, or make first downs to eventually get us touchdowns.”

### **On the team's mentality heading into the season finale:**

“We still have another game to play and we are going to get ready. Hopefully, another normal week of practice and put our best foot forward next week to compete and try to win that game.”

### **On players 'stepping up' today:**

“I think some of them did well. Obviously, I need to see the tape to give you a better answer, but [Broncos DL DeShawn] Williams made a play in the passing game, which I thought he wouldn't. I thought [Broncos ILB] Micah Kiser came in and played pretty damn good, from what I can tell. I am sure there were others, too.”

### **On WR Diontae Spencer's muffed punt return:**

“That was a big point in the game there, it was 10-3 at the time. It gave them short field. They had to run a lot of plays to get in, but they got it in. I am surprised because he is usually very sure-handed back there.”

### **On 'the decline in performance' as the season's progressed:**

“It is very disappointing. We had three difficult losses prior to this one, all tight games against good teams. It is disappointing.”

## **DENVER BRONCOS QUARTERBACK DREW LOCK**

### **On the 'Philly Special Trick Play' on fourth-and-goal:**

"It was special. I thought, from my perspective, [WR Kendall] Hinton did a heck of a job just being able to get the ball out. When they're bringing two guys off that edge, they had a good call against it. We were hoping just to have an end and act like a zone read and pull it off. We had a couple of guys coming off the edge, hoping we would get it out, and try to punch it in after we catch it. Good call by them. Good defense by them."

### **On how often the team has practiced that play:**

"A couple of times. Never full speed this week; we didn't really have practice. We worked on it a couple times, hit it a couple of times."

### **On if the injury to his right shoulder 'impacted' him today:**

"I would say the second drive was the most I felt it. I felt a little funny. I'd had it happen to me before. I got a little shot in it and come back out. No way was I going to stand on that sideline. Shoot it up, and ready to go."

### **On being eliminated from the playoffs:**

"Obviously, you're upset. You want to be playing for the playoffs. Like I've said many times before, we're professionals, too. It's our job to prepare like it's your last game ever, every single week. Prepare your butt off, come out and represent this team, represent yourself, the coaches, Colorado, whatever it may be, to the best of your ability. It doesn't happen unless you keep a good spirit that week, push out the negative stuff. We're not playing for the playoffs now, but there's still a football game to be played on Sunday, and it's our job to play it."

### **On the offense's rhythm:**

"I thought we had a pretty decent rhythm all game. We moved the ball really well. We had a couple of 70-plus-yard drives. Maybe the rhythm comes in the red zone, maybe we do need to look at certain things we're doing when we get a little closer to the red zone, but I was proud of the way the guys were playing. Maybe even some of them, for the first time. [Broncos G] Dalton [Risner] gets hurt, [Broncos G Netane] Muti has to come in, [Broncos T] Cam Fleming is playing right tackle. I was proud of the guys that came in. Maybe there was a little bit of a lack of rhythm, but we also got like five, six guys that normally aren't in the flow of the game. They're normally coming off the bench or not even dressing. I was proud of the way the guys that were in there fought their butts off until the end. We just have to figure out how to finish the drives."

### **On his injury:**

"It just surprised me for a second. I didn't really feel it at first. I went to the sideline after that drive. It just stung a little bit. After that, I was like, 'Alright, let's go look at it. Just get a shot in it and come back out. Hopefully, miss a minimum of one drive.' Sure enough, that's what we did."

### **On 'if not making the playoffs is necessarily a bad season':**

"Yeah. That would be like any sport. In the NBA, you play to get in the playoffs. In MLB, you play to get in the playoffs. In the NFL, all that matters is the playoffs. Yeah, it's disappointing. You can do really good things throughout the year, sure, but your main goal is to make it to the playoffs, so, technically, we didn't do what we wanted to do this year."

### **On the Chargers' run defense today:**

"I'll have to look at the film and see that 100 percent, but credit to that defense. They have been banged up, injured, had a couple guys out; they were full-throttle today. They had all of their guys back. I thought our guys up front fought their butts off. I'll have to watch the film to see exactly how they played us."

### **On his personal improvement:**

"Me, personally, I feel like mine and everyone's goals are to win football games. Taking care of the ball and not winning a football game, there's really not much that not winning the game gets you. I feel like my play has gotten better. I've shown strides in certain areas that I needed to show strides in, but it doesn't mean much to me if we're not winning football games."

**On 'developing team chemistry while losing':**

"It does it make it harder because of the chemistry we have in there. We're all extremely close, we all fight for each other, we all wanted a super-successful season for us. When that exactly didn't happen. It hurts. It doesn't necessarily hurt for you, it hurts for [Broncos S] Kareem Jackson, it hurts when I look at [Broncos S] Justin Simmons, it hurts when you look at [Broncos C] Lloyd Cushenberry [III], who missed his first half this season because of COVID. He's been busting his butt for this team. There are a lot of guys that I hold close to my heart and wanted good things to happen for them this year. When it doesn't, especially as a quarterback, it hurts, for sure."

**On his message to Broncos fans:**

"If there's one thing that I can give back to them in advice, it's that bad things happen. There's adversity that you have to go through. I think if you attack it with full spirit and with the ones that you love, like I said, a couple of those guys being Lloyd Cushenberry and Kareem Jackson, as long as you have people you love around you, there's a little extra courage. Keep your loved ones close, keep this team close. For me, personally, take care of the people around me."

**On if his shoulder injury will impact him next week:**

"We'll see. It's pretty numb right now. We'll find out."

**On if he thought about audibling out of the 'Philly Special' on fourth-and-goal:**

"That was a personnel that we don't necessarily run out of very often. No."