



REGULAR SEASON - WEEK ONE
WASHINGTON FOOTBALL TEAM vs. LOS ANGELES CHARGERS

Sunday, Sept. 12 | 1:00 p.m. ET
FedExField | Landover, Md.



Los Angeles Head Coach Brandon Staley

On the importance of situational football and what he thought of the Chargers final drive:

“That’s an outstanding defense. So to be able to do that against that defense makes it particularly exciting. You got a lot of respect for that football team. They’re extremely well-coached, and they’re going to have a fantastic season. I really thought the story of the game was the way we played on third down. We were 14-of-19 and on that last drive, we complete four third-down conversions, and finish the game with the ball. I thought we managed the clock extremely well. I felt like we mixed it run and pass so that they had to force it and it forced them to burn their timeouts. And then we had that big conversion there at the end to [WR] Keenan [Allen] and we’re able to finish the game with the ball and that’s what you’re hoping for. So really proud of our operation offensively, [offensive assistant] Dan Shamash really helping us out up in the box today. It was a really good first time out.”

On the offensive line’s performance:

“I thought one of the stories in the game was how good of shape we were in. I felt like we played our best in the fourth quarter. Felt like our O-line – I think the running totals against that team, the fact that we were able to run the football a little bit against that team, we had 29 [rushing attempts] for 90 [yards], but we had some really timely runs too. I felt like we were able to run it enough to keep those guys off and honest, keep those rushers off balance and then I thought our protection plan was outstanding. I thought that Justin did a great job of avoiding pressure when there was pressure. But you can’t say enough about our O-line playing together. Our backs and tight ends were an extension of the O-line and I thought that [T] Storm Norton coming in for [T] Bryan Bulaga was outstanding in the second half. It was a really good team win offensively for us.”

On QB Justin Herbert’s improvements on third down:

“I think third down is so much about keeping yourself protected in this league, understanding your protection plan, and then knowing the coverages that you’re going to face. And when it does get tight, where am I going with the football? I felt like we had a really good third down plan. We’ve got tough receivers to defend on third down. You have [WR] Mike Williams, [WR] Keenan Allen, [TE] Jared Cook, a back like [RB] Austin [Ekeler]. [WR] Josh Palmer and [WR] Jalen Guyton thought were outstanding. I think when you have weapons it allows you to play better on third down because third down in the NFL is tough. And I think that that blend offensively and then an O-line group that just played I felt like fantastic for their first time out there together, I just can’t say enough about our offense.”

On what changed after the injury to QB Ryan Fitzpatrick:

“Yeah I mean, we knew this [QB] Taylor Heinicke guy is a really good player. All you got to do is watch the Tampa playoff game and all you got to do really is listen to the crowd when he came in the game. I mean, they have a lot of belief in this player and there’s good reason for it. We knew that the mobility was going to change. He did make a couple plays with his legs, we’ve got to make sure that our rush plan is more secure. But I felt like we did put a roof over the coverages for the most part and I felt like that gave us a chance in the game.”

On if he has an injury update on Bulaga:

“Just has a lower back. Day-to-day. Just didn’t feel good enough to come back in that second half.”

On if Bulaga's injury was related to the back issue he dealt with last season:

"I'm not sure yet."

On the fumble that went into the end zone and resulted in a touchback:

"We thought we had a good look at that and look up in the box and then New York phoned in and said that it was a fumble. We kind of felt like it was really close. Justin felt like it was really close. From my vantage point, I felt like it was close. But New York made that ruling and we had to live with it. I'm so proud of the way our offense responded because we kind of had two red area turnovers – that one and then the interception or else I think this is a different looking movie. But I really love the way we responded and we just really hung tough in that fourth quarter and played as a team to finish the game."

On if he felt like the offense had an rust:

"I felt like our guys were – I mean, that first draft was executed about as well as you could execute. I think against that defense very first time out, there's always gonna be first-time things you do no matter how much you've played or haven't played. I think it's a good point. I think that we had some first-time stuff on both sides of the ball. I know defensively we'll play a lot better next time. But I felt like if we didn't have the drops in this football game, I mean this guy throwing the football would have had a spectacular day. We had a couple of drops that really hurt us. But what I loved about it is, the way he is at quarterback, he ignites you when you have a drop. He's going right back to you and that's what happened with Mike Williams. He kept going back to Mike and Mike ended up making a bunch of big plays for us. So I felt like that was a big story in the game was how resilient we were for some of those first-time mistakes on both sides of the ball and in the kicking game, I felt like we were able to hang tight, hang tough and finish the game plan."

On if he got explanations on the two roughing the passer penalties on DE Joey Bosa:

"The second one I thought was pretty questionable. The first one, we got to do a better job and regardless of the circumstance, we got to make sure that that's not part of who we are, as a team. We had six penalties and they were big ones. You have a pass interference penalty, illegal contact, we had a couple roughing the passers and you can't play like that against the best people that we're going to play, certainly not on the road. But we were able to hang tight and kind of overcome it. I was really proud of the way we played defensively in that fourth quarter, kind of overcoming some of those penalties, and kind of finishing those drives to get the ball back to our offense. You can't say enough about [CB] Asante [Samuels Jr.] forcing that fumble backed up. That's exactly what we needed, they turn the ball over and it's a sudden change, they're backed up. Asante with an incredible crack replace, you can't play good run defense if your corners can't tackle and there's no greater illustration of that than Asante. And we gave up a run in the first quarter where we didn't support the run we missed the crack replace on the first series where Gibson had like the 25-yard run, so it would be good for us to learn from that. But we just played team football there in the fourth quarter and proud of our guys."

On if he has an injury update on DL Justin Jones:

"Justin Jones had some cramps. It was one of those deals that he couldn't come back from it. It was just so tight and it never loosened up."

On what it feels like coming out of the opener with a win:

"I mean you've got to be able to win on the road in this league. In the history of the NFL, there have been three teams to make the Super Bowl that have a losing record on the road. So if you want to do anything in this league worth anything, you've got to be able to win away from home. I think the West Coast to East Coast thing is an illusion, it's what you make of it. We came here to play and whenever they tell us to play is when we're going to play. I'm proud of the way we were ready to play, I'm proud of the way we finished the game. I think it showed that our team is in good shape, that we had a good training camp. Shoutout to our sports performance department for getting these guys ready to play. I felt like we finished the game with a lot of energy."

On getting his first career win on the same day as his mother's birthday:

“Yeah, it is a big day. It was a big day for our country yesterday. This weekend means so much to so many people. I think yesterday brings everybody together, 20 years for September 11th. I know it affected this city as much as anywhere. When you're on the East Coast you know what happened that day in DC, Pennsylvania and in New York City. I think this weekend is an amazing reminder of the humanity and how it all brings us together when things like this happen as a country. So, it was good to kind of have that historical talk yesterday to our guys because everybody remembers where they were on September 11, 2001. We had a good talk about that and I think what that does is it gives you the balance that you need as a competitor to know that there is something bigger than yourself out there. Then as it relates to today, it is my mother's birthday. I know she would be happy, but not satisfied because we did not play our best today. She would expect me to get on the plane and love the guys but make sure we get going because we've got to play better for us to be able to win. But, I miss her a lot and I'm proud to get this win. I love her and miss her dearly and I'm really glad that we're leaving here on the positive side of things because this plane ride home is going to mean a lot. It is going to be special.”

On what his message was to the players:

“I just felt like we're a fourth quarter team. Our big goal during training camp was to become a team of team's where it is not a collection of pieces. So often I think people talk about what pieces you have and you have all this talent and all these players and when are they going to talk about you as a team? That was our big mission statement during camp was to become a team. That is the way we won this game today. We won this game as a team in all three phases of the game. It was a fourth quarter game, which is where – when you play the best teams that you're going to play and I think that that is one of them then it is going to be a fourth quarter game. I felt like that was the exciting part for us was to get out of here with a win and now we have to go back and watch this tape on the way home because there is much that we have to fix.”

On WR Mike Williams:

“Yeah, he was huge. He's been playing really well in practice. He has come on strong and you can see that he is such a weapon in the deep part of the field, but he is also a weapon in the short part of the field intermediate too because he is such a big target. I know that he can play better, but you can just see the value. The red zone touchdown, you guys know analytically and statistics they say that red zone fades are low percentage. What they don't tell you is when you throw them to the right people, with the right matchup they are real high percentage. When you throw it to Mike Williams that is a different statistical movie and you can just see the value there. Then he had a bunch of in-breaks today that I thought were really big catches and we missed him on the sluggo and he wants to have that one back. I think it is exciting for him because he knows that there is more production out there. I think it is exciting. But I felt like we had a lot of balance today. Jared [Cook] had five for 56, Jalen [Guyton] had three for 49. [WR] KJ [Hill Jr.] came in a couple times and had three for 30. Josh [Palmer] had a big catch for 17. I felt like we had a good balance today and that is what you need against a team like that.”

On how impressive it was that CB Asante Samuel Jr. bounced back with a big play:

“Great observation. They're going to come at you and they're going to test you when you're a rookie. I was a little disappointed – the coverage and the way it expressed itself on the pass interference was he was expecting there to be a post player there and [S] Nasir [Adderley] had a poor read and then DJ [S Derwin James] kind of made up for Nasir. So, Asante was kind of playing the right leverage and then as that down kind of got extended, I don't put that completely on him. But, what he did to your point was he responded in the game and had a couple big tackles like that empty kind of throw to the flat where he made the big tackle and I think they missed the field goal after that big third down. That was a lonely tackle now. He was able to finish that tackle, which was outstanding and then to show his toughness. The thing about the guy is he can get you the ball and that is what he did at the end of the game, he went and got us the football. He's got real toughness and now what he's got to do is he's got to keep learning how the NFL is going to keep attacking him because they're coming for him.”

On how he felt S Nasir Adderley played:

“I felt like he was a little up and down. I feel like he can play better, but I liked his energy out there. I feel like from a communication standpoint, he was on it. I think that some of the first game stuff from him from a tackling standpoint and just from a full speed, I think that kind of showed itself a bit. He’ll continue to improve.”

QB Justin Herbert

On the Week 1 win:

“It always feels great to walk away with a win, especially on the road and that is what good teams have to do. That is what Coach Staley has talked about all season long. There were a lot of things that need to be cleaned up, but there were a lot of good things out there today.”

On how it feels to convert four third downs on the final drive to close the game out:

“It’s huge. I was just talking to Coach Staley about our 3rd down efficiency and 14-of-19 is unheard of. For us to be that efficient and find those guys in [WR] Keenan [Allen] and [TE] Jared Cook, all of them made huge third down catches. That’s big for our offense and holds the defense off the field and gives them a break.”

On what he learned from last season:

“It’s all experience. Whether you win or you lose, you learn from it. Unfortunately, we lost too many last year and we had to learn from that. I really believe in the guys that we have here. We went out and we executed. We had a great plan. [Offensive Coordinator] Coach Joe Lombardi put in a great plan for third down. We nudged and chipped the guys on the edge and got the ball out quickly. I think they really did a great job.”

On the performance of the offensive line against Washington’s pass rush:

“Those are some real guys they have on the front seven, they are fast and some of the toughest in the league and I thought our offensive line did an incredible job. The first half I was kept clean and even [T] Storm Norman came in and did a great job. On one of the balls that I got stripped sacked I could have got the ball out quicker, but I thought the offensive line did a great job.”

On the strip sack being a fumble:

“I felt like I threw it, but I will have to take a look at it. It was a tough call, but the defense came up big with a stop. I was glad to get the ball back and go score.”

On getting WR Mike Williams more involved in the short and intermediate areas:

“That’s a great point that you brought up, and I think that he is an incredible receiver. He is one of those guys that will turn a 50/50 ball into a 75/25 ball and he showed up today and is a trust worthy guy. When you get [TE] Jared Cook, [WR] Keenan Allen, Mike Williams, and [WR] Jaylen Guyton going, there are a lot of options for us.

On RB Austin Ekeler not being more involved in the passing game:

“It’s always the plan to get the ball downfield, but with those reads when everyone is pushed up under the receivers you check down to the running backs to make sure you can get some yards, but the guys ran incredible routes today and got open. The offensive line did a god job holding me upright, so I had the time to make the throws downfield.”

WR Keenan Allen

On the momentum of a Week 1 win:

“It’s a great deal, man. You never know what’s gonna happen with the shape of the season, but obviously we wanted it to go this way. We wanted to win and we got it. So just take it for what it is and keep going and keep working.”

On WR Mike Williams:

“Big time, big time. Once again, you know, Mike 50/50 ball, he’s gonna come down with it. He’s mad at himself right now because he didn’t come down with one in the end zone. So that’s just how we are and that’s just how we compete and he’ll make the plays next week. I had a couple drops. We’ll go back to work and fix it.”

On if they offense ran smoothly today:

“I think it felt smooth just as far as us being out there, driving down the field, doing what we want to do, getting the looks that we wanted, that felt smooth. As far as the execution part, we just have to be better.”

On QB Justin Herbert’s improvement from last season:

“It lets you know where you don’t want to be, being in those areas, losing those games. It lets you know the feeling that you don’t want to have. So in the huddle on that last drive, we’re telling each other we gotta make all the plays that we need to make, do whatever we need to do so that we can go back home happy. That’s what it’s gonna come down to. [QB] [Justin] Herbert has put all the work in the offseason, camaraderie with the teammates. We all feel great with each other.”

RB Austin Ekeler

On message to fantasy football owners concerned about his status:

“Yeah, hey, we made it, fantasy football owners we made it to week one made it through so hopefully I got some points for y’all and I look forward to week two. When people first found out that I was questionable, they were like: “Hey man what’s going on?” People tweeting at me, DM’ing me, like literally after that practically got like 57 text messages so thanks for letting them know.”

On testing out the hamstring post injury:

“It was pretty good. Yeah, it was just more precautionary just in the beginning of the week kind of just slipped up a little bit and it didn’t feel as right as I would like it to and that was the same thing going into last year too. So we’ll keep an eye on it throughout the rest of the year but yeah, it’s the left one and it felt really good today we made sure you know, before the game that I went out there and ran around and It was good to go.”

On the final drive:

“That’s one of those drives where it’s like, hey, they know we’re going to run the ball, we know we’re going to run the ball, let’s run the ball. You know, we ended up chunking it down the field, threw a couple of passes in there and you know, just had some big time guys, step up and make big plays with [TE] Jared [Cook] and then [WR] Keenan [Allen] coming in there and just actually doing what those guys usually do. Right. Jared, you know, was first time playing with him. So it was good to see him out there making plays and then Keenan just doing what he usually does making plays getting open.”

On going 14-for-19 in 3rd down conversions:

“The fact that we had nineteen third downs is crazy. But it shows that we can move the ball and the fact that we can convert those, hey, that’s what its going to come down to. Continuing to move the sticks, continuing to have that time of possession, that’s what it comes down to.”