



POSTGAME TRANSCRIPTS

Los Angeles Chargers vs. Denver Broncos

Thursday, December 19, 2024 ⚡ SoFi Stadium ⚡ Inglewood, Calif.

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS HEAD COACH JIM HARBAUGH

On the second half:

“Just a total team effort by everybody. Defense, offense, special teams. The guys. Just pull it down. It was phenomenal. Talking about it the other day, it’s a test, it’s a challenge. It’s how you’ve got to respond. I knew how our guys would respond and they did, but that was the guys. They just went back to work and stayed the course. Used that for the entire week, the entire short week. Coming out of the second half applies to just everything. Just a special win, a special group of guys. I just love our guys.”

On the two-point conversion:

“That was just textbook by [WR] Joshua Palmer. Making that catch, ripping it down, protecting the ball, getting both feet in bounds, clearly. Just so many great things. It must have been tough for the Thursday Night [Football] crew to pick out somebody. Who did they actually pick out to go on the set after the game? I don’t know either. That would’ve been a tough one. It’s 10 guys, 15 guys you could’ve picked from. They’d be saying ‘Well, pick one! Which one? Who? Flip a coin!’ It was just so many guys. [QB] Justin [Herbert], [S] Derwin [James Jr.], [OLB] Joey [Bosa] came back. Opportunity squad guys. [S] Kendall Williamson coming out and responding. [S] Tony [Jefferson]. [CB] Dicaprio Bootle, one of the great names in football. But so many guys. Just resilient, stayed the course. That was all of our players. That was all of our guys. How about those Chargers?”

On players going to Thursday Night Football set:

“[S] Derwin [James Jr.] and [WR] Ladd [McConkey]. Two great ones. But it could’ve been 15 or 20 other guys. So many just stepped up in such an awesome way. It felt like the guys were enjoying it. Big game, great football game. I thought they were really enjoying the competition.”

On the fair catch kick:

“It’s my favorite rule in football. Just been trying to get one of those every game. It’s the first one we’ve made. We tried one with the 49ers. I think it was like a 70-yarder. 71, thanks. Mr. [K Phil] Dawson. Probably a little long. I wanted it so bad that I tried a 71-yarder, but it is my favorite rule. [K Cameron Dicker] stepped up and nailed it. I thought that was huge for momentum. Got the momentum back going into halftime and coming out. [S] Derwin [James Jr.] was great in the locker room at halftime. ‘Derwin, talk to these guys.’ And he did. It was great. The energy was high right from the beginning and it never wavered. Our guys never wavered at all. It was fantastic. I thank the good Lord. Felt like his hands were on this one as well.”

On the decision to attempt a fair catch kick:

"I was really happy too because [Special Teams Coach Ryan] Ficken had gone over it this week. He doesn't go over it every week, but this week they had gone over that. Had to take a timeout and get things completely dialed in. I tried to do the math in my head 'Where's the flag? It's going to be on their side of the 50 [yard line]. This is our chance, this is our moment.' I think the other option is a Hail Mary on an untimed down, but we've got [K] Cameron Dicker. That's our guy."

On trying a kick from a longer distance:

"I wanted to try it from 65 [yards]."

On the idea to attempt the fair catch kick:

"[Special Teams Coach Ryan] Ficken knows the rules inside and out. He's great. Situational sense that he is. I thought it was cool. I thought it was really cool. The good thing about the free kick is you don't have to go back 8 yards from the snap either. You get it right at the spot. It's great."

On WR Derius Davis:

"They could've had him at the podium. I hope you talked to him. Everybody loves D.D. It was a great play by him, just staying with it. Great job by [QB] Justin [Herbert] keeping his eyes downfield, rolled to his left and made the perfect strike. The greatness of Justin Herbert. Just so happy. [RB] Hassan Haskins, good old H2. [RB] Gus [Edwards]' big run, too. The whole drive, coming off the 10-yard-line. Just spectacular."

On attempting a drop kick:

"I don't get as excited about the drop kick. It's not even in the same ballpark as the free kick. Unless we had a guy who has really good at drop kicking."

On being 9-6:

"We have to grind. This is going to be a chance to get some guys healthy. A mini bye. I think we really, really need that. Everybody is going to continue to do anything and everything they can do to play in these games. It just showed up with so many guys. They're all working through something. So, get some rest, recovery and then we have to attack. We still have games to win. Nine wins can get you in the playoffs, but you need help. 10 wins most years can. This year, I think it would. But 11 usually gets you in, for sure."

On Defensive Coordinator Jesse Minter:

"Tremendous coach. Our guys really just stayed the course coming out of halftime. We just wanted to tighten some things up. Tackle better, which our guys did. But that was great by [Defensive Coordinator] Jesse [Minter], staying with the plan. Staying on course, on track and our players doing the same thing. There was no panic. It was just, 'Let's do it a little bit better, play the coverages a little bit tighter and tackle better' Which we did."

On the offense:

"The play action was really good. It was good all game. I thought our offense played really good right out of the gate. Really put together four quarters of good football, offensively. They scored first and we responded with a touchdown. They scored a touchdown and we came back and had a drive and a field goal. I thought [Offensive Coordinator] Greg Roman called a heck of a great game. Same thing with the offense. That's one of the best pressure teams, or the best, one of the best in the [National Football League]. I thought our offensive line did a great job of staying the course, too. Just every unit. Just staying the course and just giving it everything they have. That's all you can ask as a coach, just that everybody gives it their very best."

On QB Justin Herbert stepping up:

"I would not disagree with that at all. He's back running and the throws, the arm, the coolness, the poise. I learned something pregame, I was talking to [QB] Justin [Herbert] and [S] Derwin [James Jr.] and my thing to them was 'Maybe the weight of the world seems like it's on our shoulders, it's not. Go enjoy it.' Justin said 'It's like pickup basketball, coach.' I was like, 'That's our guy.' That was his mindset."

On Christmas:

"It's my favorite holiday. Great memories. It's 'Faith. Family. Football' personified. Next would be Thanksgiving, but Christmas is my favorite. A lot of great memories. My birthday is close to Christmas, too. It's good to get both."

On players' resilience:

"I love these guys. Everything about them. Especially the way they're just about their business. They work so hard, but they have fun doing it. It's awesome. Anything you can say about our guys, I just love them for it. I can probably think of a couple other things, but I'm just so darn excited right now about this win. Enjoy this one and then we'll get ready for the Patriots."

On S Derwin James Jr.'s message to the team:

"It was the same as it was pregame when he was on the field, he was encouraging everybody. Just 'Everything you've got. Pour everything you've got into this game. That's all we're asking, is for everything you've got,' and that was the message at halftime as well."

On QB Justin Herbert's touchdown pass to WR Derius Davis being his best of the season:

"I wouldn't argue with that. I would not only not argue, I would agree."

On the short turnaround from last game:

"I thought it would be. [QB] Justin Herbert's ankle was pretty sore at the beginning of the week, so I was kind of worried that that wouldn't be a benefit. He has the strength of ten men. I know I've said that before, but I truly believe it. The comment earlier, he's definitely one of those guys that willed us to victory. It's incredible, what he's able to do. It's greatness."

On rest after the game and rejuvenating:

"I think it will. I think it comes at a good time for us. I don't know. I know our guys, a lot of times when they have a day off they come in anyway and just do anything and everything they can to get themselves ready for the next game."

On the second half today and the rest of the season:

"It's just good. It's good. Really proud of our guys. Like I said before, just the response. It was a test. Short week, big challenge, playing a team that was hot, coming in with a lot of confidence. Our guys muscled their way to a win."

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS QUARTERBACK JUSTIN HERBERT

On his touchdown pass to WR Derius Davis:

"It was an unreal play by him. We kind of had him on a little bubble out of the backfield and I scrambled out, saw the pressure and he just turned up field. He made an incredible play. I didn't really get to see him catch it, but it's one of those plays that I'm going to watch the film and just be in awe of the playmaking skill he has to be able to do that."

On the throw to WR Derius Davis:

"It was just an awesome experience to go out there and make a big play like that, that's what we dream of, especially in that time too. [WR] Derius [Davis] coming through with that. I think that might've been his first receiving touchdown, but he just makes plays and we got to find ways to get him the ball. For him to go up like that, it was awesome to see."

On the fair catch kick:

"I know it's a rule. I can't say that I was prepared for that. I was expecting to go out there and throw a Hail Mary. That's why we have coaches and people up in the box making that call. For [K Cameron Dicker] to go out there and nail that kick like that is a huge moment for us."

On extending plays:

"I think we're at our best when we're able to attack at all these different angles, whether that's on the ground, through the air or whether that's me scrambling. You got to find a way to convert on those third downs. I thought we did a great job of extending those drives and just making us line up for another play and giving us a shot to go down there and score. I think that's what we've been searching for these past few games, just that consistency and that fight. That fight's always been there and for us to go up and execute like that, it was really good to see."

On finding out WR Derius Davis scored:

"Probably when everybody celebrated because I was down on the ground and I think I was facing the other way. I threw it and had hopes that he was going to be able to come down with it. I didn't really see where I put it, so hopefully I didn't make it too hard on him, but it might have been a tough catch. It's one of those plays, you don't script those. For him to go up and make a play like that, it gives me confidence and ways to get him the ball, so it was really good to see."

On knowing the team scored:

"The reaction is big. Especially the teammates. The offensive line will come up and if they see it's a touchdown, they will come celebrate. As soon as I see them celebrating, I know it was a good thing."

On late season wins:

"We talked about it all week, how important these games are, especially in December and January and we knew the implications of it. We emphasized all week, 'Hey this is a playoff game to us.' It's the environment, it's the team. [The Broncos are] obviously a very talented and incredible team, so for us to be able to pull away with one there, I thought it was awesome for us."

On the 2-point-conversion:

"I wish I would've gotten [WR Joshua Palmer] the ball a little bit quicker. That window tightened up pretty quickly, but for him to be able to track that ball and get two feet in, that's why he does what he does. He makes plays like that and we trust him on those two point conversions. That's why I'm going to throw him the ball because he's trustworthy. I'm not quite sure how he made it, but he found a way."

On his mindset and the offense:

"I think it's one of those things where you just go out there and you want to make every play. You treat that as if it's the last play. You're never worried about the previous drive where if I throw an interception, I never want to let that affect my next throw. If that lives in my head, I'm doing a disservice to my team. So for us to be able to put that behind us, move on and say, 'Hey, this is the drive where we're going to go get it done.' I think that's what we did today. We continued to fight. We've been fighting all year and that has never left us. For us to go out and execute the game plan, really put it in, I thought it was awesome."

On the second half:

"It really starts in that locker room. Every single guy in that locker room gives their all. So it's my responsibility to give my all. We really play for each other, we play for the Chargers organization and we care about each other. When you're in that environment, it's easy to go out there and give it your all. I know that I'm in great condition, I'm safe to be out there and we just got it done tonight."

On all three phases:

"I think that's when we're at our best, when we're all three phases going. Us as an offense, me especially, we got to do a better job of not turning the ball over and not putting our defense in that position. We know that we've got complete trust in them and the ability for them to hold to a stop and then send out our special teams and kick a super long field goal that puts us back in the game."

On his new ankle brace:

"It was good. I'd been practicing all week with it, so just getting used to it and getting those reps with it, feeling comfortable. As long as you feel good in practice and you go out there on gameday and you got the adrenaline pumping in, I felt safe and secure out there."

On the offensive line:

"We had some huge runs today and it starts up front. I had plenty of time to get the ball off and they just continue to fight. They've done such a great job communicating all year and giving me plenty of time to be able to throw the ball. As long as that's happening, and we're able to run the ball too and we're at our best."

On what keeps him focused:

"Just the goal of winning, doing whatever we can, whatever we have to do to win the game. You never want to turn the ball over and I felt horrible about that, especially in the red zone. That's one of those things that I have to be better at that. I have a lot of pride in not turning the ball over like that, but for our defense to come up with some big stops, get us the ball back and then special teams going out there and dominating as well, I think that's when we're our best."

On chatting with Head Coach Jim Harbaugh pregame:

"I think it's just an opportunity to go out there and play. It's what we always dreamed of to have these bright lights and especially on Thursday Night Football, a playoff-type game. We had a very good opponent here and as long as we're playing loose, free, fearless and going out there and just playing ball and doing what we do, I think we're at our best then."

On WR Derius Davis' touchdown reception:

"It was an awesome play. For him to be able to make a play, I talked a little bit earlier, we had him on a bubble and that's just him making a play. Seeing that the pocket broke down, running up field and we know how fast he is and how special he is when he gets the ball. So all I had to do was lay it to him, he would go up and get it and it was awesome to see for him."

DENVER BRONCOS HEAD COACH SEAN PAYTON

On the game:

“Obviously, a disappointing loss. It was disappointing because there was a lot at stake and we know that. We had a fast start, I was encouraged by that. Then uncharacteristically this season, we didn't finish or play nearly well enough in the second half, both offensively and defensively. Time of possession, the third down numbers, our rushing numbers fell off in the second half. Credit Los Angeles for fighting their way back in and we didn't make enough plays in the end, so we go from there. Any questions?”

On the end of the first half:

“Look, I think 40 or 41 seconds to start the drive. We try to see, typically, you'd be pretty conservative. We were going to have the ball. We ran a screen and then when the clock got low enough, we didn't get any momentum going there. We just ran the ball and punted it. A penalty puts them in a position and then basically anytime you catch a punt, you have the ability to place it right there and get a free kick. Doesn't happen much. We practice it all the time. Well, in that situation the penalty put them in field goal position, so it's disappointing.”

On the running game:

“Well look, I mean we had some attempts, maybe the execution. I'll see the film. The first drive was the rhythm we wanted, the tempo we wanted. In the second half, we get some pressure looks when they're playing from behind. We just didn't sustain it enough and certainly I got to look at each series, ‘Hey, with some of these looks, what are the sum of the runs?’ We had plenty of work on the run game going into the game. I thought the young backs did a good job. We'll keep working those guys.”

On punting on 4th-and-5:

“Yeah but the timeouts, all the percentages, field position. We just couldn't get them to stop.”

On penalties:

“That obviously cost us. That final go-ahead drive, what were there three? There were three penalties in that final drive and look, it keeps continuing. So, we've got to do a better job of coaching because it's not like it's new and it'll cost you in games.”

On QB Bo Nix:

“Listen, he's competing, playing well, preparing. He's a fighter, made some plays like he does each week with his feet and puts us in a good position to win. So, he's doing really good.”

On WR Ladd McConkey:

“We dropped coverage. We dropped coverage tonight five different times.”

On dropping coverage:

“Look, on a short week we've got to look closely at why are these things happening? But five different times, we had free runners, and you can't have one of their top receivers not covered.”

On the message to the team:

“I'll give you the message when we have a message, but right now, we got to make the corrections in this game and then we get back to getting ready to play Cincinnati. So, we've got to find a way to get the tenth win. We know that. I wouldn't worry about messages after that game in the locker room.”

On the best things he sees from the team:

“They're fighting. I think we're playing hard, but we've got to be smarter and we've got to be smarter as coaches as well.”

On the drive starting the third quarter:

“That was an important drive. At the end of the half, you know as a coach, you're starting with the ball. So, 41 seconds though, we're going to throw a screen, we're going to see if we can get a little momentum maybe and then run the clock down. The penalty wasn't real smart.”

On CB Kris Abrams-Draine:

“Overall, he's been a pleasant surprise watching him. I'm encouraged that he's getting to play. Some of these young guys are getting to play. [RB] Audric [Estime] the same way, so we'll keep playing those guys.”

On the defense on the 34-yard touchdown by RB Hassan Haskins:

“It wasn't good. It wasn't good.”

DENVER BRONCOS QUARTERBACK BO NIX

On the second half:

“Well, we didn't come out and execute like we did in the first half and didn't get as many yards and touchdowns.”

On the running game:

“Maybe so. I just think we didn't have as good of first down success and then got in more third and longs.”

On preparing for next week:

“Well, the good thing is my role is going to be pretty simple because everybody in that locker room wants to already play next week. I think at this point, we're all competitively frustrated and I think we're excited for this opportunity. We know, this next one's the most important and we just want to, I think go out next week and not feel this way again.”

On having ten days off:

“I don't know, I think the rest will be good. Playing on a three day break this week was tough, so it's good to have a few days to rest and then get going again for next week.”

On the run game in both halves:

“No, I think we got the same defense. Just, for whatever reason couldn't get going. A few drives sputtered, but it's no excuse. We've got to move the ball better and we had opportunities. Our defense got us the ball back several times and there was just a few short drives.”

On aggressiveness going into half:

“Well, we had about 45 seconds and two timeouts and I think every offense in the league is trying to go score.”

On preparing for the next few games:

“Now is an important time to take care of your body even more. Fortunately for me, I'm healthy going into Week 17 at this point in season. It's tough and it's a grind during the season. But we prepare off season for this and this is where you go out there and compete. This is the most important part of the season, the ending. So, got to find ways to win games and being healthy is a huge part of that.”

On getting used to playing in the NFL:

“Well it's kind of, to tell you the truth, it's kind of Groundhog Day. You got another game the next week, so you do what you got to do to prepare. Same rhythm, same routine. I think by the end of the season when you don't have a game, when you get in the offseason, it's going to feel a little weird. You're out of a rhythm. For right now, we got this next one in Cincinnati.”

On how the offense performed:

“Good and bad. We left some opportunities out there. First three drives, 21 points and then just kind of stalled. Only three the rest of the game. So we got to look at why that was the case. Got to look back at the film and watch and be critical for ourselves, but some good and bad things. Just pretty much like any other game.”

On feeling frustrated:

“About the same, just frustrated. The difference in our two games with them has been seven points. Just got to find a way to get the ball in the endzone one more time. That's the frustrating part is the difference, the margin of error is one touchdown. I mean, we should be able to find a way to get one touchdown. Fortunately we got another part of the season. You've got to go out there and do it again. I mean we kind of found ways to almost beat ourselves tonight. We just had many opportunities and just didn't capitalize.”

On RB Blake Watson and RB Audric Estime:

“They played really well in the first half. Gave us a spark, especially on the first drive. They both had a few good runs and it's just good to see those guys. They got their opportunity. We've seen it from [RB] Audric [Estime] and with [RB] Blake [Watson]. He's been practicing really well, so he got his opportunity and ran the ball really well. I think that's going to be good for us going forward.”