



QUOTES

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LOS ANGELES CHARGERS OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR KEN WHISENHUNT

On Freddie Kitchens being named Cleveland Browns Head Coach:

"Good for Freddie. I think he did a great job when they put him in the role as a coordinator. He's been working at it a long time. He was a good player as a quarterback at Alabama, and he's was certainly good on our staff when we were in Arizona. Gosh, just wish him the best."

On the New England defense:

"Well, they're obviously a very well-coached unit and they've got some veteran players that communicate very well. So they can make adjustments. They understand what teams are trying to do to them. They respond quickly. They're a good defensive team. We know from going up there last year that it's a tough place to play, especially since this is a playoff game. So, you know, we're just trying to work to be the best prepared as we can, knowing that those guys do a really good job."

On TE Hunter Henry:

"Well, it's been good to see him in practice. He's been working in there and getting some reps. So it's hard to say. People are always going to put a number on it, but I don't know that you can do that. Obviously, if Hunter can go, his contributions will help. Whenever you've got a really good player that's coming back, that can help. So we'll just have to look at how the game's going."

On if Henry could produce like he did last season:

"I don't know that you can say after having been off for this whole time that you can go right into a game and say same old Hunter — but if it was somebody that could do that, you know, he could be the guy. I tell you what, you just have so much respect for how hard he's worked to get back. You can tell and you can see it out there on the practice field. He loves the game. So, whatever happens, I hope for him because how hard he's worked, he gets the opportunity to do it."

On how the Patriots defense has changed with Linebackers Coach Brian Flores calling plays:

"I see a good defense with both guys calling it [Flores and former Defensive Coordinator Matt Patricia]. So you can see different players, but their scheme is very sound and very well executed. I mean, it's a credit, obviously, to [Patriots Head] Coach [Bill] Belichick, but certainly his assistants who do all that work. They do a nice job."

On the New England pass rush:

"Well, I think the way they're pushing the pocket, the different looks that they give you, how they run some of their stunts. You know, I think that from a perspective of having watched them on tape over the years, they've had the same guys there or a number of the same guys, coaches, players in that system. They're able to adapt, communicate and get things done. So just because you're studying for weeks and think this is what they're going to do, they have the flexibility to do different things. You know, that's always difficult to prepare for. So just really, the value for us is we've got a veteran quarterback that has been through a lot of the things, different things that people do. Hopefully we can adapt quickly."

On the team being familiar with Gillette Stadium due to last season's contest:

"Well, it certainly helps from that standpoint. You know, I think we can all say playoff football is different. So the environment will be a little bit different. You could see that last week in Baltimore between the regular-season game and the playoff game. We understand the stakes that are there, but having been there, understanding — silly as it may sound — what the locker room is like, what the facilities are like. A lot of those things, even though they seem minor, they can help you. Now is it going to help us play better in the game? I sure hope so. I think we understand the mechanics of it, and the ways and the problems that you have there, having to be able to communicate, what you have to do to adapt to that. Then essentially when you kick it off, it just becomes football. I think anytime you're going into — like, for instance, going into Baltimore last week, a little bit of an unknown. The team hadn't been there in a number of years. A lot of the guys on this team hadn't been there. That environment, playoff football, you know, it's a little bit different. Now, this is the second week, and we're going into a place where we are a little bit more familiar with. So any little bit of extra help that we can get, we certainly appreciate. I think maybe that can help us."

On players fighting for extra yards without risking a turnover:

"I don't think you ever want to say give up yards to go down, but to your point, they are very good at doing that. They make dedicated efforts to get the ball out and they're successful with it, especially at home. Their statistics there are pretty high. So, yes, you have to be aware of it. We do our thing every week. I said once before, a lot of this is because [Head] Coach [Anthony] Lynn and his culture, and being a former running back and running back coach, he understands the value of that. We work at it every week. We do a presentation about it every week. We talk about it. We've been a lot better about that this year. The one with [TE] Virgil [Green last week], the ball got out just a little bit, and they knocked it out — to their credit. So we've got to be diligent in protecting the football. Not necessarily going down, you know, but when you get into those situations, you've got to make sure you have it wrapped up."

On if the coaching staff makes adjustments in the playoffs:

"Not so much. I guess it's more of a been-there mentality than it is making adjustments. It's a normal week. I think you try to keep your schedule as normal as you can. You just understand if you don't win, you're not playing. So the stress level is a little bit higher, but we've been together. I think what's helped us, I know I sound like a broken record, but we've been together for a little bit. I think, really, going on the road and being successful like we have been on the road this season — it doesn't guarantee a win, but dealing with that adversity and being able to handle it to some degree will help us. It helps you in that because you're a little bit — you're a little bit toughened against some of the things that can distract you. So hopefully that can help. We've been in a pretty good routine. I think anytime you win 12 or now 13 games, you get into a pretty good routine. Once again, that doesn't guarantee anything. Once you get in the playoffs, it all starts over, but our guys have been good about sticking with their routine and preparing, you know. So maybe that can help."

On RB Melvin Gordon III not practicing on Wednesday:

"You know what? I don't even know what the reason for that is. I would let Coach Lynn speak to that."

On monitoring Gordon's health on game day:

"Well, the training staff does a great job of communicating with us about that. Ultimately, they talk to Coach Lynn about what's going on, but if there's going to be a period where he's going to be out, he'll let us know. Fortunately for us, we have a number of guys that have stepped up and gone in and been in the rotation, so that certainly helps."

On if RBs Justin Jackson and Detrez Newsome have had more carries in practice:

"Well, they got a whole bunch in Kansas City when we played there. These guys, it's been a little bit of a blessing that they were forced in there and able to play. So I think to your credit, to your point, if this was their first game going in where they had to play — if they do, you know, a playoff game in New England is tough, but these guys have played. They've gotten reps. They've both done well when they've been in there — talking about Detrez and [Justin] JJ [Jackson] — and Austin seems like he's back to his old self. So that certainly helps that we have some guys that have at least been in there."

On if WR Keenan Allen could be used as a decoy if shadowed by Patriots CB Stephon Gilmore:

"Yeah, please, don't — I would never say I'd use Keenan as a decoy. He'd get mad at me. The one thing [is] we've got a number of guys that the quarterback's comfortable giving the ball to. A lot of the things that we do when we go against opponents is not geared toward one guy. It's geared toward what they give you. I've said this multiple times with our receiving corps — they're all so unselfish. There are times when you ask them to run down the field or the chance of not being involved is great, or they do it because they know there are going to be ones that come for them. It's never easy as a receiver when that happens because you want the ball. That's what it's all about, but we've got a number of guys that have contributed at different times if you think about it. You go back to — I mentioned Kansas City — [WR] Travis Benjamin had some huge contributions in that game. [WR] Tyrell [Williams] has had his game contributions. One week it's [WR] Mike [Williams], one week it's [TE] Antonio [Gates]. It just seems that's the way it plays out. We work at our best, it's a lot of these different guys are making plays. So hopefully we can get some of that going Sunday?"

On if the offensive production can be better against a team for the first time this season:

"I hope so. I hope so. Those are pretty good defenses we've been going against the last three weeks. That was kind of a grind, but for us — even in those situations — we have had opportunities where we play the end of the game. With the Ravens, we got them on the blitz and got called back because of a penalty. It's not so much been the defenses that we've played against — which give them credit, I have a lot of respect for them, they're good. It's been more about us and our mistakes that we've made. So we've got to be able to clean some of those up, and, you know, hopefully get better and put a few more points on the board."

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR GUS BRADLEY

Opening Statement:

"Good work week this week. Obviously, we all understand we're up against a very talented team. Very talented at all the skill positions. Very efficient on offense. They put up a lot of points, explosive plays. So we know we have our work cut out for us, but it's a good challenge for us right now."

On Patriots QB Tom Brady"

"I think every week that's the job, to try to affect the quarterback somehow. He's so good at reading coverages, extending plays in his own way. The way he handles the offense, he's been in that style of offense for many years, so they're on the same page. I think when you look at it — I mentioned this before as a defense, what we strive to be is a precision league. Well, their offense operates with precision, and they're all on the same page. As you watch it, you can see it all come together for them."

On the Patriots running backs:

"Well, I think our No. 1 objective is to somehow keep the points down. As we look at a team, you're right. Their running backs are very effective. They really have three running backs, and they all are — they'll show up in empty sets and they're very effective. They'll have explosive plays themselves. So we always go into each game, stop the run — and then No. 2, eliminate explosive plays and somehow we've got to affect the quarterback. You know, to give him those throws to running backs, it's our style of defense that we play, and we go about it that way, and we try to put our guys in the best position to play those things."

On the defensive strategy:

"Well, I think every week is different. I learned through Larry Coyer when I was in Tampa about the importance of personnel placement. We talk about personnel placement every week. I think for that game, that was more of a decision we made for that game and every week is different."

On moving DEs Joey Bosa and Melvin Ingram III around to different spots:

"I think that's another situation that we talk about every week. Is it left and right? Is it how do we position those guys, even on first and second down, it's a conversation that we have — and obviously on third down as well. So, you know, hopefully across the course of the year, they've been in different places, you know. I think we try to do that just so teams can't look where they're going to be, but that's game-by-game how we're going to position them."

On Patriots TE Rob Gronkowski:

"Very challenging. Yeah, I think you have to have great awareness of where he is, but even if you have awareness where he is, he still makes plays. His length, his catch radius. He's been doing it for a long time. He's one of those players that they're on the same page. He's a go-to guy for them in critical situations. So a lot of tight ends you have awareness where they are. We really have to hone in on where he is."

On the different running styles of the Patriots running backs:

"They all have different running styles and in the passing game how they utilize them, and they all play equally. You've got to be ready for them all. So that just adds to our preparation."

On S Derwin James having covered tight ends this season:

"Well, every tight end is different. You know, that's another thing that we look at too is their skill set, but you're right. At times we do, in our man coverage situations, we'll match them up. Other times we'll put him on backs. Other times we'll put him on slot receivers. So, again, it's by-week, how we utilize him. There's been times when he's been back in the middle third. Based on what we're seeing styles that we see, and again, we just put our personnel in there."

On how the defense has progressed this season:

"We've got some very good players. I think the biggest thing we tell them, it's not the calls. The players bring the calls to life. So, you say, hey, in the Baltimore game you did some good things. Well, it really wasn't the calls. The players brought the calls to life. I think they really have taken ownership of that. Each one of them personally, and then as a position group and then as a unit. I think that's cool to see. To see them have ownership of it and try to take it to whatever level they see fit."

On the defensive strategy against Baltimore:

"You know what? The meeting with [Head] Coach [Anthony] Lynn when we presented it as a defensive staff, he understood the situations pertaining to the scheme. So we talked to him just about the game plan and he was great. To the unit, when we explained it to them, we just went in and said, 'This is our plan, this is how we're going to do it.' I think they had great faith in each other. I don't know about the coaching staff, but I know they have great faith in each other. So wherever the guys are positioned, they believe that player has a chance to be successful."

On the flexibility of the defense:

"Well, I think when you look at tape, we are who we are as far as how we play our coverages. The personnel grouping, no, that we put in there. It could be there's been times we thought about going base to three wides. We go dime to 21 personnel. You know, to try to match it up. So I think that part of it each week you look at it and say how do we match-up and how do we go about it? But our principles are the same."

On NT Brandon Mebane:

"You know, it's a difficult time for him and his family, but I think being around the guys and this environment is somewhat healing. I don't know how much, how fast that healing. It's tough. It's a difficult time, but I've got great respect [for him]. I've been with Brandon for quite a few years off and on, and the respect I have for him as a man and as a leader of his family, and how he handles things is off the charts."