

# **DENVER BRONCOS vs. LOS ANGELES CHARGERS**

## **Empower Field at Mile High • Dec. 31, 2023**

**Postgame Quotes Summary (click links for easy navigation):**

**Broncos Quotes:** [Head Coach Sean Payton](#); QB [Jarrett Stidham](#); OLB [Jonathon Cooper](#); C [Lloyd Cushenberry III](#);  
WR [Lil'Jordan Humphrey](#); RB [Jaleel McLaughlin](#); DL [Mike Purcell](#); S [Justin Simmons](#); ILB [Alex Singleton](#); CB [Pat Surtain II](#);

**Chargers Quotes:** [Interim Head Coach Giff Smith](#); QB [Easton Stick](#)

### **BRONCOS HEAD COACH SEAN PAYTON**

#### **Opening statement**

"Obviously a good win to get, [a] hard-fought win. I thought our defense played extremely well. We had one takeaway. We stopped them on a fake punt. They kind of stopped themselves on a fake punt, but anyway. Offensively, we did enough but the penalties—the two false starts on the one-yard line—we can get that cleaned up. That was frustrating but we made enough plays—third down [conversions]. Obviously we had the explosive play to [WR] Lil'Jordan [Humphrey]. It was a good team win. Any questions?"

#### **On mixed feelings after a win but being eliminated from the postseason**

"It is what it is. I mean, look, we kind of had that opportunity [to win] a week ago and then 'ugh'. I think more importantly than any of that, and that's very important, is our focus heading into next week and getting our ninth win. That'll be a good challenge. Certainly, that's a goal [to make the playoffs] when you start the beginning of the year. It was a goal of ours. Yes, it's disappointing."

#### **On QB Jarrett Stidham's performance**

"I thought he was good. I thought he was collected, calm. I thought he played with really good poise. He felt experienced relative to a guy who hasn't had as many minutes maybe as some others. You certainly didn't feel that during the course of the game. I thought he was efficient in and out of the huddle. I thought he made some good throws for us overall until I see the tape. I thought it went pretty good."

#### **On helping a quarterback succeed who hasn't had as much playing experience**

"Well, I wouldn't say 1-of-4 [passing completions] is shaky in the first half. It was shaky at a period in the first half. Yes, the first drive, got it. Look you're sorting through what you're getting. They played a little bit more zone. They got some pressure looks on third down. We knew that would be the case. We blocked the one up really well. The touchdown came on a third down. I think it's easier sometimes when you're seeing zone defense to say, 'Hey, we'll get started.' When you're playing man-to-man sometimes it can be a little bit more challenging. Getting the run game going. There's a handful of things that help that position. It wasn't perfect and yet, and I'm talking about the run game—he's a veteran player. So we kind of go into a game—we've done this [where] we have a set of drive starters. We know what these guys like and we try to get them those plays early especially if they're fitting the situation."

#### **On this season being compared to the 2022 Detroit Lions and the importance of winning the final game of the season**

"I think it's important to win period. Obviously. The whole time we're learning how to prevent beating ourselves. I think it's extremely important because it's our last opportunity with this team, and getting to that ninth win means something."

### **On WR Lil'Jordan Humphrey's touchdown**

"It's a dig route [with] a couple of ins. 'LJ' (WR Lil'Jordan Humphrey) and then outside I think [WR] Brandon [Johnson], so there's a progression to it. They kind of had this Double-A mug [look] and they brought their really good safety [No.] 3 [Chargers S Derwin James] off the weak slot so we kind of pushed the protection out. If you watch that play and you guys will at some point I hope, watch [FB Michael] Burton in the pickup. There's times when we bring him on just from a physicality standpoint. He does a great job of picking up the A-gap pressure player, and it doesn't seem like a lot, but what it did was allow 'Stiddy' (QB Jarrett Stidham) to have a pocket to kind of climb. If you don't get that pressure while it's in the gap, then it's a lot more difficult and the play doesn't happen. I'd say [FB Michael Burton's] block was important. The [offensive] line did a good job of picking it up. Shoot—the run after the catch. I haven't seen the film, but my understanding is some guys did a good job blocking and usually if you have a big play, there's probably others that are away from the ball that do a good job. I'll be anxious to see that."

### **On injury updates for T Mike McGlinchey and S Delarrin Turner-Yell and how will injuries alter the approach for next week**

"Well look—let me answer your last question. We would approach this injury-wise like it was Week 2 or Week 6. If they're healthy and cleared, we're going to play [them]. That's one is easy. I don't have an update. [T] Mike's [McGlinchey] was [a] ribs and [S Delarrin] Turner's [Yell] was [a] knee. I think Mike's going to be fine. I'm hopeful with 'Turner.' It sounds like it has a chance to be serious, but I don't want to give you the wrong information."

### **On what he thought of QB Russell Wilson's comments on Friday**

"You asked that question on Friday. I think I answered it pretty well. When the season ends, and you have questions specific to all of that—I wasn't privy to the dialogue, but you'll be able to ask the appropriate people. 'Russ' (QB Russell Wilson) has been fantastic this week. Look I think this idea that he and I, or we, don't have a good relationship, or he's not a fit, all of that stuff comes from people further away from our program. You guys are close to it. I think the further away people are from the program, the more they just jump to a narrative. It is what it is, but he's approached this week like we expected—like a pro. That's it. Any other questions?"

### **On WR Lil'Jordan Humphrey's development**

"Good. He's been pretty consistent during the year, quietly. He's that player in Chicago that makes a play. He's big. He's physical. He's strong. I'm a little bit more familiar with him—but the confidence and the consistency. He's had a good season especially as we acquired someone like him. He's done a good job. I'm proud of him."

## **BRONCOS QUARTERBACK JARRETT STIDHAM**

### **On what his emotions leading up to the game and after the win**

"Super excited, obviously, to get another opportunity. This is my third opportunity to start in five years, so it hasn't been much, but obviously was super excited for the opportunity this week. [I] just tried to play with emotion and get a win, and thankfully, we did."

### **On the long touchdown pass to WR Lil'Jordan Humphrey**

"I saw them bring the blitz, and I had a lane to step up and I thought about taking off and running. I just saw him out of the corner of my eye and gave him a ball, and he made an incredible play. At first, I thought he was down on the one-[yard line], so I was kind of bummed, but then I saw that they called a touchdown. So heck of a play by him and the rest of the guys for blocking down field."

### **On his last win being five years ago and what it's like to be back in a winning locker room**

“It’s great. Once I got back to my locker, I texted my wife what a cool feeling it is to get my first NFL win. But with that, it’s not about me, it’s not about a first win, it’s about the team getting the eighth win of the year. I couldn’t be prouder of the guys in the locker room. We thought we played—definitely thought we left some points out there, but defense played phenomenal as usual. Special teams played great. Offensively, we just have to find a way—especially in the red zone—to put the ball in a little bit more. Really good team win, for sure.”

**On practicing with the starting receivers during practice but not having them in the game**

“That’s just kind of the NFL. I mean, they had guys on their defense and their offense that weren’t up this week, and we did as well. Especially late in the year like this, everybody’s dealing with bumps and bruises and different things, so it’s just part of it. We had some guys from the practice squad step up at the receiver position and make some plays. That’s just how it is and how the NFL is.”

**On whether being eliminated from postseason contention changes the feeling of the win**

“No, I mean, look—the objective was to come in here and get our eighth win. We did that. Obviously, it’s disappointing that we can’t continue after next week, but the goal this week is to go get another win. We’re promised seven days. That’s all we have, and we’re going to come in tomorrow and this week and get after it and be ready to go.”

**On if he thinks he brought a spark to the offense**

“I mean, that’s not for me to judge on, I guess. My job is to come in here and move the chains and score points and ultimately, win. Like I said, I thought we did some really good things offensively. I thought the O-line played incredible tonight. Obviously, when we get in the low red [zone], we have to put the ball in. We had a couple chances and didn’t do that, so we have to fix that, for sure. As far as the spark, I’ll let others talk on that.”

**On if he’s been told that he will start the final game and if he wants to leave the impression that he can be the starting quarterback next season**

“I’m just kind of focused on celebrating the win. [I] have a bunch of family and stuff in town, so going to take the night to celebrate that, celebrate the New Year. That’s all I can control for right this second.”

**On if QB Russell Wilson gave him any advice going into the game and how he helped him prepare**

“We had a great talk at the beginning of the week. He said he was there for me—anything I needed. We were communicating on the sideline after drives and stuff. [I] can’t speak highly enough about him—I said that earlier this week. Great teammate, great person. He was super helpful throughout the week.”

**BRONCOS OUTSIDE LINEBACKER JONATHON COOPER**

**On the importance of winning the game today**

“[For] how disappointing the loss was last week, it was super important to get a win this week. We just have to keep going (and) keep stacking (wins). I feel like this defense has been pretty solid all year. We just have to find a way to keep getting better individually and collectively. I’m really just proud of the unit especially how we came out this game compared to what happened last game. We have to win at home and that starts with beating a divisional opponent at home and we did that.”

**On ending the season with a winning record**

“It’s super important. It sucks that we got eliminated from the playoffs obviously but we’re focused on winning this next game. Finishing off the season the right way, 9-8, is super important to us. It is how this season should go and we have to make sure we get that done.”

**On having the most sacks by a Broncos player since 2018**

“It means a lot. I feel like with my teammates and coaches believing in me and the type of player that I am. I feel like my goal for this season was eight or ten [sacks]. I’m trying to get to double digits, trying to get to that ten mark. I’m going to keep rocking. Keep going. I’m really happy for myself but I’m more happy with these wins that we’re getting. Any way I can help the team win is what I’m trying to do.”

## **BRONCOS CENTER LLOYD CUSHENBERRY III**

### **On QB Jarrett Stidham and what he was like in the huddle**

“Very poised. Composed man in the offense. He did a good job stepping up today. I feel like we had his back all day.”

### **On why nine wins is important**

“That’s the main thing, is we want to finish off on a good note at 9-8. We’ve been talking about the Detroit Lions the whole year, whole season. They finished 9-8 last season and look at the position they’re in this year. It would be good momentum moving forward if we can get to 9-8.”

### **On what it was like emotionally learning that the team is eliminated from playoff contention**

“It is what it is. We’re trying to get [to] win number nine now. We’re moving on from it. It’s unfortunate, but we can’t do anything about it. We put ourselves in this situation, so we have to try to get nine wins and try for a winning season.”

## **BRONCOS WIDE RECEIVER LIL’JORDAN HUMPHREY**

### **On his touchdown play during the second quarter**

“Just came up. Saw the look but they dropped out of it. Made a play. I’m just like, ‘Got to make it to the endzone. I want to make a play for the team.’”

### **On the change in quarterbacks**

“It felt the same. Felt like [QB] Russell [Wilson] was out there, honestly like the past 16 weeks. So just came out there and just trying to make plays.”

### **On QB Russell Wilson being supportive**

“[QB] Russell [Wilson] was great. He’s always a great person, a great leader. Great to have him around to support us. He’s a great person and I love him for that.”

## **BRONCOS RUNNING BACK JALEEL MCLAUGHLIN**

### **On having a big impact in the first half**

“That’s what I want to do—to help the team, contribute in a great way, and keep on working hard to do that.”

### **On working with RB Javonte Williams**

“That’s my guy. He comes in and he tells me what to do, tells me even what I do wrong. So to have a brother like that—[a] North Carolina brother by the way—that is able to talk to me like that. I can come to him about anything. I’m definitely proud to be back there with [RB] Samaje [Perine] as well.”

### **On helping QB Jarrett Stidham get his first career win**

“It was awesome. I think that was definitely good, just being there for him. Just pass protect and do whatever I can to help him. Make it easier for him so that was great for him.”

## **BRONCOS DEFENSIVE LINEMAN MIKE PURCELL**

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

"It's tough but we have one more game so this one is about pride. You have to take pride and go out there and play the game."

### **On what it would mean to have a winning season**

"It'd be awesome. It's been a while, so it'd be awesome for sure."

## **BRONCOS SAFETY JUSTIN SIMMONS**

### **On emotions of not going postseason**

"It's tough knowing that we're not going to be going to the postseason. It's why you play, and we were our own enemies in that regard. We had our shots in home games. We had Washington, the Jets, and just recently the Patriots. We lost a tough road game against Houston. We controlled our own destiny for the longest time, and it's tough, but what a big win for us at home. A sweep against the Chargers is huge and a chance for us next week to close out the season on a positive [note], going 9-8."

### **On potentially winning nine games**

"I think it's just finishing the season off on a right note. Nine wins is a good thing. I think I was asked at some point 'does a winning season mean anything?' and I kind of pushed the question off to the side because I really wanted to go to the playoffs and that meant more. But it's not that a winning season doesn't mean anything. I think it means a lot. The way that this season started and then we hit a five-game winning streak, and then the last four is like one and three, whatever it was. I think it will be important to win this on a right note and then have that momentum carry into next season."

### **On how QB Jarrett Stidham handled everything today**

"I think he did great. I know there were no turnovers on the offense side of the ball. No fumbles, no picks. I thought [the offense] did a good job moving the ball. They did a really good job running the ball. I thought our offense did a really good job. I'm just proud of the way the defense battled most of the game. It was a great game."

## **BRONCOS INSIDE LINEBACKER ALEX SINGLETON**

### **On the defensive effort**

"I think we played a pretty sound game. I think we continue to get better, and I think we played a game tonight that we should have played against that team."

### **On next week's game**

"Go beat the [Las Vegas] Raiders. That is pretty much it. To kind of get payback for that first game (of the season) and finish 4-2 in the division is huge for where you want to go and everything you want to do. We want to go play a good game to roll into next year."

### **On balancing winning but being eliminated from playoffs**

"It sucks. You obviously want to play in the playoffs. You have to enjoy them. They are NFL games [and] they are still hard to win no matter what. It still sucks and it is bittersweet."

## **BRONCOS CORNERBACK PAT SURTAIN II**

### **On having turnovers leading to points**

“It’s expected. From our side of the ball, it’s just how we hold ourselves to a high standard. Coming into this game, I feel we somewhat improved as a defense. Last week wasn’t our best output. But we had a plan to come here and dominate and that’s what we did.”

### **On the game next week and getting a winning season**

“It’s something to build off of. Obviously, we know what type of team we are and we just got to keep going. Focus on how we could get better even though next week is our last week. But there is still room to improve. Right now, our main goal is to finish the season off strong and head into next year.”

### **On QB Jarrett Stidham**

“He’s cool. He’s calm in his approach. I feel like he wasn’t phased at all. He was ready to step in. He’s ready to make some plays out there and he did show that today. As a whole, he played a great game and that’s what we expect out of him.”

## **CHARGERS INTERIM HEAD COACH GIFF SMITH**

### **Opening statement**

“It was a disappointing loss, but like I told the team, it is the little things. That goes for players and coaches. We had a situation with a substitution on the fourth-and-1 down on the goal line. We have to be better as coaches and players. We have to do better on the little details throughout the week. But I thought there was a lot of fight by these guys. I think they are continuing to fight for each other. There is a lot of encouraging stuff. We had some young guys that stepped up and made plays. [WR] Keelan Doss did stuff for us, [Jordan] McFadden at guard and [LB] Daiyan [Henley]. There are some positives coming out of the game that were good for us, but obviously we are disappointed with the loss.”

### **On OLB Khalil Mack’s 100th career sack**

“Just think about that, what an incredible number. He has been hunting it for a few weeks and it is tough. It seems like that is always the hardest one to get. I am just so excited for him and his family and grateful to be a part of it.”

### **On rarity of 100 career sacks**

“I think it’s like the pre-steroid era in baseball (with) 500 home runs. I mean, it is a landmark number. If you start doing the basic math, it is crazy. It is a crazy number. I do not know if when I got into coaching that I ever thought I would be a part of [100 sacks], but I am grateful that I got to be part of it.”

### **On OLB Khalil Mack’s career high in season sacks**

“I think coming back from the foot injury. He played probably not-100 percent all last year. To work like he did at his age and the stuff he has accomplished is incredible. The sacks are cool, but the way he plays the run and the amount of snaps that he is having to play since [DE] Joey [Bosa] has been out. The willingness to give everything for this team speaks volumes.”

### **On LB Daiyan Henley**

“We wanted to get him out there some. He had a little bit of a tight groin that we had to wrap up. But it was good to see him get some action out there. Hopefully we can increase that, get some numbers going and let him keep growing in that room. We went into the game rotating with him and [LB] Nick [Niemann] right there. We had some stuff early that he was not playing as good. We tried to keep it calm and keep him out of a difficult

situation. We were able to get him out there and he made some plays for us. I think it is something we can definitely build on.”

#### **On OL Jordan McFadden**

“When you do not hear a guy on the offensive line, it is a good thing. He did well. I think he proved he is an NFL player and obviously a good draft pick for us. We are excited about him. Hopefully we can get [G] Zion [Johnson] back, but definitely with [Jordan] McFadden moving forward we are really pleased.”

#### **On the fake punt**

“Early in the game, we were trying to create another possession. We have not been great on the short yardage in the run game right there. Going into the game that is something we spoke about as a staff, if the opportunity was there for a fake. It did not hit for us, so that is on me.”

#### **On Broncos CB Pat Surtain II shadowing WR Quentin Johnston**

“We thought he would. With the receivers we had up, they normally try to track him. That is why you saw [WR] Alex [Erickson] make some big catches for us and [WR Keelan] Doss make some catches for us. We were really pleased with the way the other guys stepped up. But yes, we anticipated that.”

#### **On WR Quentin Johnston’s performance**

“I think [Broncos CB] Pat [Surtain II] is, if not the best, you are not getting off of one hand. I thought Quentin is making strides. It showed out there with some big catches in the fourth quarter. I think that is the stuff as a rookie that you can build on. That is a tough matchup against Patrick, and I thought he held his own. Heb competed hard and made some catches for us down the stretch.”

#### **On the late field goal**

“We had to get two possessions. We did not have any timeouts left. We had the plan if we could get to the 35-yard line, we were going to clock it, kick the field goal and take the onside kick with a chance to score on a short field. We thought it was the best use of our time.”

## **CHARGERS QUARTERBACK EASTON STICK**

#### **On today’s game**

“Frustrating, obviously. Nine points is never good enough. Just a bunch of little things; it’s kind of been the story, we’ve said it a bunch this year. So frustrating.”

#### **On Broncos CB Pat Surtain II guarding WR Quentin Johnston**

“You’ve seen it on film, that is what he does. He’s a really good player, super long. He makes things tough. So he did a good job today. (Johnson) keeps battling and made some catches at the end of help us. You know going into it that type of game it’s going to be, and he’s a good player.”

#### **On the facing CB Pat Surtain II as a quarterback**

“It just depends on the concept, obviously. [He’s] got ‘A’ stuff. He plays a lot of first man. Especially on third downs, they did a bunch of it. There are certain routes you like versus it, and there are certain routes you don’t. Obviously whatever else is going on, on the concept side. Guys made plays, just not enough of them.”

#### **On if he feels he’s progressing as a quarterback**

“I feel comfortable out there. I think that is credit to [Offensive Coordinator] Kellen [Moore], to ‘Nuss’ (Quarterbacks Coach Doug Nussmeier), to really this locker room. It’s given me a bunch of confidence. I’m just really frustrated, and I think we all are, because we don’t have the results right now; we’re not winning football

games, and that hurts. But [Interim Head Coach] Giff [Smith] said it right, we believe and we have one more shot at this thing, and we're going to go and try and beat Kansas City next week."

**On what is frustrating him the most with his own play**

"Just the inconsistency. I don't think I played very well in the first quarter. And when you start slow—that was the story the last time we played these guys, start slow and they do a good job of running the football, controlling the clock. So you put your defense in a tough spot there early, and it's just tough to play from behind. We got to start faster; I got to start faster—it starts with me. So that's frustrating."

**On his chemistry with WR Alex Erickson during the game**

"Well Alex is a really good player, and I'm really grateful we have him. A veteran in that room; I think he is really good right now obviously with the injuries that we have. He is kind of that stabilizing, calming force, can fix a lot of things. He's seen a lot of football, so I think he's really good for 'Q' (WR Quentin Johnston), for [WR] Keelan [Doss], for 'D.D.' (WR Derius Davis), all these guys that are getting opportunities. Kind of stabilizing things, and like I said, he's a good player, so he made plays."