

POSTGAME TRANSCRIPTS

Los Angeles Chargers vs. Las Vegas Raiders

Sunday, October 1, 2023 ⚡ SoFi Stadium ⚡ Inglewood, Calif.

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

On QB Justin Herbert's deep pass to WR Joshua Palmer to 'seal the game':

“Wanted to give [QB] Justin [Herbert] a chance to compete. I felt like we'd have a matchup in one of three places. It was just a really outstanding route by Josh [Palmer] and an even better throw by Justin [Herbert]. The protection was solid. We were able to ice the game.”

On 'how many quarterbacks can make that throw':

“You guys saw Justin's toughness today – not that we needed to show anybody how tough he is. He's a clutch player. He has always played his best in the clutch. No matter what type of game it is, at the end of the game, he's always going to be there and that throw is a great example of it. Just kind of hung tough the whole game. But, then, when you throw a dime like that to finish it, it's just one of those signature plays that help you win a game like this.

On the decision to go for it on fourth down on the second-to-last offensive possession:

“It was less than a yard — in that range, where we felt like we had the right play. They had a timeout and the two-minute [warning], but it would really put us in good position to finish the game and put them in a really tough situation. We felt like our defense was playing at a high level. We didn't get the job done, but I'm really proud of our defense — the way that they played the whole game, but certainly in that circumstance, two weeks in a row. We were outstanding and those guys deserve a lot of credit.”

On what went into the decision that was made to go for it:

“Every decision has a life of its own, and I've said that for three years now. We're going to do what we feel like gives us the best chance to win. The storyline is the way our defense played — the way we played in the first half, offensively, but our defense carried us today. It was a really, really tough performance with a bunch of guys out. We had a lot of premium players out in the game, and the storyline was about the toughness of our team and the way it played in a tough game against the division opponent. Our guys had their best at the end.”

On Herbert's finger:

“He returned to play. No update in terms of prognosis or anything, but he was able to go back in the game.”

On Herbert's 'competitiveness':

"He wasn't coming out. It was one of those things where he was going back in, and he has that look, 'I'm going back in' I'm good.' Just to show that toughness to the team, we really talked about that going into this game, being a division game, and he surely showed it. When your franchise quarterback embodies all of that, everyone else jumps along."

On 'the most impressive part' of OLB Khalil Mack's performance today:

"He had been [pass] rushing at a high level for three games. We do this thing — he taught me back in Chicago, — close, he had been close the whole year, to having three monster games. He was close. Today, he put it all together. This guy is one of the best edge players of a generation and he is still that guy, he is still that guy — he just showed everybody, 'I'm still that guy.' He's one of our leaders. One of those maestro performances, similar to [WR] Keenan [Allen] last week. He's one of the elite players in the game. He always has been and he always will be as long as he is playing."

On the offense's performance in the second half:

"I just felt like we never got into a rhythm. I thought that we ran the ball decent at times, but it was pretty inconsistent. In the pass protection, just didn't have a great day. There was a lot of pressure on Justin [Herbert]. He was able to avoid a lot of it, but just didn't really get into a sequencing in that second half, where, in the first half, I really felt like we were in rhythm, I felt like we had a good mixture of run and the pass, and we were scoring the ball. Just have to do better. Obviously, our defense, in the second half, carried us. There are going to be game like that. There are going to be games where your offense carries it, there are going to be games where your defense carries it, but you have to win it as a team, and that's what happened today."

On if he 'feels fortunate to be 2-2':

"We could be 4-0. I would definitely err on the other way. We lost the first one in a thriller to a really good team, and then we lost, in overtime, to another good team — you guys saw today what they did. We could easily be 4-0. Some people could say that we could be 1-3. Right now, we're 2-2. That's what we are, we are a 2-2 football team and we're a team that is improving. We've improved in every game this season, from game one to game two, from game two to game three, from game three to game four. We've gotten better. That's where my focus is, as the head coach."

On the growth of the defense:

"We've improved every game. Today, we had to play without a lot of premium players. Just big time performances by [S] Dean Marlowe and [S] Raheem Layne coming in at safety. I thought those guys were fantastic in the game. Any time you play without [OLB] Joey [Bosa], we had to step up around him. I thought [OLB] Tuli [Tuipulotu], [OLB] Chris [Rumph II], [OLB] Andrew Farmer [II], on top of Khalil's big performance, I thought we did a really good job. Our D-line, they had 76 yards rushing on 23 carries. You can't say enough about the whole group and how we played because it was third-down defense, red zone defense, it was the takeaways. All of it was a very complete performance."

On if he 'wanted' CB Asante Samuel Jr. to slide after his interception:

"That's one that we're going to learn from. You know the answer to that. Any time we don't put, 'No mas,' on a situation, then you're going. It's a learning opportunity for him."

On if he has already 'talked' with Samuel Jr. regarding the play near the end of the game:

"We just got done with the game. We'll have plenty of teachable moments tomorrow and I assure you that it will be addressed, if you haven't already addressed it with him [*laughter*]."

On 'complementary football' displayed in the second quarter:

"I thought that that was exactly what happened. I really felt like, at the end of the second quarter, we finished playing at a high level in all three phases of the game. That's why we were able to separate. You don't separate unless you're playing at a high level in all three phases, and we needed that separation because, obviously, it got tight in the second half. That second quarter, I think we were at our best. Obviously, the two takeaways were critical, really put us in good field position. Offensively, we scored the ball. I liked the way that we ended the half. Our special teams wasn't nearly good enough today, just was a poor performance by us. We lost a lot of field position today because of it. We're going to have to improve in that area. Again, that second quarter was big for us."

On if he was 'aware' of the sequence of events on Raiders WR Davante Adams' 'questionable catch' on the sideline:

"You have no idea how aware I was [*laughter*]. My awareness was at an all-time high. I was hoping that I could get an angle. I was begging for just the little bit, but I didn't get that. Obviously, it was close. Just didn't feel like it would be worth burning [a challenge], based on the situation and what could potentially happen if we didn't get it, we wanted to have all of our timeouts."

On if the report that Raiders QB Aidan O'Connell would start the game 'changed the gameplan':

"We were ready. This guy had a fantastic preseason. We expected him to be the quarterback, if [Raiders QB] Jimmy [Garoppolo] didn't go. We were prepared for him. If you watched the preseason, this guy had a really effective preseason. There's a reason why they put him out there. He's going to be a good player. He does a lot of good things out. It was a tough game for him, but he's going to be a good player."

On the growth of the team 'on display in late-game situations':

"We practice them a lot. Our guys, we have a lot of experience with guys who have played for us for three years, and then we've onboarded some guys, like [LB] Eric Kendricks, who was huge today in the game. Our team is comfortable in those situations. We talk about the NFL and the way it is. Through four weeks, I think 70 percent of the games are [decided by] less than a touchdown. That's the NFL. You have to be good when you have to have it. You have to be comfortable in those spaces. Our guys have thrived in that the last couple of weeks. I think that, especially defensively, the way we've played, you can see that that's a connected unit. We've made a lot of plays to win us the game."

On an update regarding TE Donald Parham Jr.:

"No update, just a wrist. We'll know more tomorrow."

On 'the way that the team responded' on the sideline following the hit by Raiders DT Jerry Tillery:

"I love all that. I'm here for all of that. I love when my team looks like that. That's their quarterback. That's a sign of a good team. That was an igniter for us. Justin [Herbert] looks at you know us and just gives us a wink because that hit doesn't hurt Justin Herbert. It helped fuel our guys. Our guys were up for the challenge. They were going to go defend their guy. That's what competition is about, competition is about that. You have to make sure that cooler heads prevail, but in a moment like that, yeah, you want it turned up."

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS QUARTERBACK JUSTIN HERBERT

On his finger:

"'Tis but a scratch, just a flesh wound [laughter]. Got it stuck in the helmet. Thankful for all the doctors and all of the trainers out there that helped me get through that."

On 'deciding to finish out the game':

"There was never really a question. Get it fixed up, get it taped up and head back out there."

On further details pertaining to the finger:

"We'll probably wait for more details. I don't have all of that information right now. It was good enough to go back out there. Thankful for all the trainers and doctors out there to help me get out there."

On the end of the game:

"I thought there were some good things that we did offensively. A lot of room for improvement and things that we could have cleaned up. I felt like we didn't necessarily have to have been in that situation there at the end to put it away. I thought it was a great play by [WR] Josh Palmer to go up and get that ball."

On 'if it is actually a flesh wound' or if he was 'just quoting Monty Python':

"It was just a quote [laughter]. I don't have all the details right now."

On his pain level:

"It's not bad, it was good enough to go back out there. It's just one of those things that you have to monitor over the next couple of days, see how it goes. We'll wait for more details."

On if he 'expects to miss any time':

"I'm not sure. I think that I don't have all the information right now. If I was able to go back out there, and the doctors and trainers felt like it was safe, I'm sure it's up to their hands. I've always felt really safe and comfortable with them working out. We'll see what they have to say."

On if he will need an x-ray on his hand:

"I'm not sure. I think that's something that we look forward to in the next couple of days."

On Raiders DT Jerry Tillery's late hit:

"Football is an emotional game. Whether it was late or whether it was before the play, we have a lot of respect for that team. I have a lot of respect for Jerry [Tillery] as a former teammate. It was an unfortunate hit, but I thought it was cool the way our team reacted. It is what it is. It's football, so it's no hard feelings."

On his thoughts when he notices the team's reaction:

"It's to go capitalize off that. We got down there, in the red zone, and we needed to go score a touchdown. I think that's what we did. I think it was really cool to be able to bring that team together like that and to see that reaction. At the same time, we have a job to do on the next play."

On the defense:

"I thought it was huge for our defense. They came up with some big stops. Offensively, we have to be better in the second half. We have to go down and score the ball and move the ball a little bit better. Some things that we'll clean up, looking forward to watching the film. The defense came up with some big stops. Special teams played well. All three phases, I thought, it was good for our team."

On the 'knock-out blow' pass to Palmer:

"I thought it was a great play by Josh [Palmer]. We trust him in those situations. It was third-and-long, felt like we were protected up and wanted to take a shot. I put the ball down and he did a great job coming up with it. I thought that was huge for us to be able to convert and put away the game."

On the fourth-down quarterback sneak:

"We didn't get it."

On having a 2-2 record and 'if it felt like the sky was falling at 0-2':

"To be honest, I never felt like we were off track. Football is a long season, there are a lot of football games. If two games are going to affect our next 15 or so, you're not going to be very good. I thought our team did a great job of looking at the film, being rational and understanding that we have a lot of football left. Everything is still out in front of us. I thought our answer to those two losses was great. Everyone came to practice, they gave their best effort. It's a group of professionals out there. I really appreciate that locker room."

On C Corey Linsley:

"It's tough to replace a guy like Corey [Linsley], a veteran like that who has had so much success in the league and is as smart as he is. He's an incredible leader. To have him in the locker room means the world to us. Losing a guy like that is definitely tough."

On Tillery hit:

"It's part of football. Jerry [Tillery] is a good friend, he's been a great teammate. I wish him nothing but the best. It is what it is, it's football. You can't expect to be treated perfect and not have everyone hit you and come after you. I understand the situation. I was trying to get out of bounds. I have no hard feelings about it."

On 'winking after the hit':

"I don't remember doing that [*laughter*]. I don't think so. I'm not one to wink, so I don't think that was me [*laughter*]."

On 'if the bye week is coming at a good time':

I think it does -- for our team, as well. There are a lot of guys down today. I thought a lot of guys stepped up and battled today. To have that bye week and to have some time off and get our bodies back underneath us, I think it did come at a good time."

On if his injury impacted his ability to grip the football:

"Didn't end up going under center for a couple plays. When we took the knee at the end, we just went in the pistol. That's kind of what I did at Oregon, so it was kind of second nature to me. I told [C] Will [Clapp] that I was going to be in the pistol, got that situated. I thought it was good by our guys to handle that situation."

On the running game:

"I thought those guys ran the ball really well today. The inclusion of Derius [Davis], Josh Kelley, they fight. They fight for every yard and to have an offensive line like we do, you have to take advantage of the run game. Those guys are pushing up front. I thought it was really good to see the run game go today."

On his ability to run:

"I think it's part of playing quarterback. If the opportunity is there, you have to take it. If everything is covered downfield, it's better than throwing the ball away, it's better than taking a sack. If you can scramble, get a couple of yards, I think that makes it really tough on a defense."

On if his speed no is comparable to his 40-yard-dash time at the Combine:

"I haven't been training for the 40 [-yard-dash] quite like that [*laughter*], but I feel like I'm in good shape. Our training team has done a great job of taking care of us, as athletes. I feel like I'm in good shape."

On OLB Khalil Mack's performance:

"He's about as good as it gets. I'm super thankful that he's on our team. I'm not surprised by it at all. We see it in practice every day. The way that he goes about it, he is a true professional. He's an incredible leader of our team, an incredible player. He is definitely one of those guys that is fun to watch out there."

On Raiders DE Maxx Crosby:

"He's very good. Like we mentioned earlier, you have to be aware of him when he is out on the field. Whether he is on the right side, left side, they move him around a bunch. He's an incredible player. He made some big plays today. But, I thought that we did a good job of doing our best to try and protect him, get two guys on him. You definitely have to be aware of him."

On the adjustments made defensively by the Raiders from the first half to second half:

"They were playing a little bit more split-safety, kind of dropping out for the pass. I think that we did a good job of running the ball in the first half. I thought that we could have done better -- I could've completed more passes, gone through my reads. There's still a lot of room for improvement. That's on us, as an offense, and especially me, as a quarterback. We have to be better in the second half."

On 'concern over failing to close out teams':

"No, I thought that it was a big play by [WR] Josh Palmer to go up and close that game out. I thought that the defense came up with a big stop. To have those types of deals go on, I thought that was big for our team."

On the usage of WR Derius Davis:

"He's an incredible athlete, whether it's running the ball, catching the ball -- you have to find ways to get him the ball. I thought that he did a great job out of the backfield, as well. That is definitely something that we will keep looking forward to."

On watching the defense 'put the game away':

"I think that it's awesome. They've done such a great job of battling. It's definitely a tough position. I'm glad that I'm on the offensive side of things. It's tough, and they keep battling. They make them line up and run another play. For them to get that interception and get those stops and all of those sacks, I thought that they did an incredible job. It gives us, as an offense, confidence, that we have them to go out there and make some big plays. I thought that was big for us."

On if this season's 2-2 record 'feels any different than last season at 2-2':

"It is what it is. We have to take it for what it is and continue to build and develop and go forward from here. We have a bye week heading up, so a lot of us will get our bodies back and get ready to go. A really good opponent coming here in two weeks."

On his plans for the bye week and if he 'plans to get away':

"That's kind of the plan. I think that there are some days that we have off during the bye week. It's nice to get away from football for a little bit, but don't lose focus on the goal at hand."

On if 'going under center' is 'going to be an issue moving forward':

"That's probably going to be something that we will wait and see over the next couple of days and get an idea for that. I thought that we did a good job in the pistol today. Whether it is under center or whether it is in the gun, I know that our team will adapt and we will find a way to get after it."

On his 'level of pain right now':

"Right now, it's pretty low. It feels fine."

LAS VEGAS RAIDERS HEAD COACH JOSH McDANIELS

Opening Statement:

“We want to congratulate them. Obviously, they made a couple more plays than we did. We did a lot of things that we would like to clean up, we put ourselves in a hole here. I thought our team fought hard and fought back and all the rest of it, but we're going to have to clean up some of the things that we're doing to put us in those situations so that we don't have to feverishly scramble back at the end and try to win at the very last second. I thought the defense really hung in there. I think we ate some things up early in the game, but I thought they really fought and held him in check in the second half to give ourselves an opportunity. I thought [Raiders QB] Aiden [O'Connell] kind of settled in as the game went on. You can tell there was obviously an acclamation period there to a regular season game, but I thought he hung in there, I thought our guys hung in there around him. At the end of the day, we just didn't make enough plays to win. Lot of things we got to do better; a lot of cleaning up to do and it starts, and it starts with me.”

On the decision to start O'Connell:

“We're getting ready for any situation because you don't really know, relative to the [concussion] protocol. I said this before when we finished the preseason., if you go into a regular season game and a rookie has no opportunity to practice at all, it's a different conversation. If I put them in there and they have no repetitions during the week, it could be a little tough, which is why we went with [Raiders QB] Brian [Hoyer] in that role. Lo and behold, I think Brian played like the fifth or sixth play of the season. This week was different, so we had an opportunity to take reps every day and had an opportunity to go out there and do some of the things we were going to do in the game plan, and because of that, we just felt like, keep Brian in the role that he's in and go head and give Aiden a shot.”

On the penalties:

“The big penalties, they're big for a reason they hurt you, and whether it be a close play on the sideline or I think we had one of the turnovers. Where we had the block on the interception return that cost us some field position there, I thought we had one where we went in there to crack the safety. I don't know. I think they called cracking them in the back, but those they're obviously killers. The best thing we can do is coach the right technique and fundamentals, and when each man is faced with one of those situations in the game, they got to try to make a good decision for the team. Some of those are very close. They're bang-bang plays, and that's what the officials get paid to call, so we'll try to work hard at eliminating them.”

On Chargers OLB Khalil Mack:

“He's a great player. There were a number of snaps where there were multiple people assigned to him and him only, and to be able to do some of the things that he did, I mean, give him credit. Before I comment on what we did or didn't do, I'd have to see it on the film specifically, but he kept playing. He has a great motor. We jammed him, chipped him, hit him in the ribs; we did everything we could try to do to disrupt him with another player, and then we had a tackle, obviously, assigned to him, as well. He had a great day. We were trying to put people over there on the right side for the most part, where he was, and he did better than we did. Clearly.”

On the offense 'struggling':

“It's fundamentals, its details, its execution. Offensive football is never about one person. It can't be. We can have a lot of good plays where seven or eight guys do the right thing, and it doesn't matter; you need 11. Those are hard lessons to learn because it doesn't feel good when you're going through it. We have a group that understands when we are doing things well, and we do them as a group, and we do them the right way. We do them with physicality, toughness, and detail; we have some success. We got to do it more, and we got to do it more often, and we got to do it earlier in the game, so we can play from in front. There is not one specific solution; we all got to do better, and again, I'll look at everything we're doing to try and see if there's something that we should do differently.”

On the interception late in the fourth quarter:

"I think they played some type of man-to-man coverage, and [CB Asante] Samuel [Jr.] dropped the one and played the other; it's a common situation down there. Just trying to give ourselves an opportunity versus a pretty thick front up there, and we're trying to make sure that we didn't go backwards. It's kind of one of those ones where we'll either score, throw it out of bounds, and go to the next play. Samuel combo'd the route and they executed it better than we did."

On O'Connell's overall performance:

"I think he'll be the first one to understand the things that he could do better. Playing quarterback in our league starts with taking care of the football, and whether that be hanging on to it in the pocket, or making good decisions in the passing game, and also understanding the timing and that element of playing within the pocket in the NFL. It's not always the same week-to-week; it depends on the rush, who you're dealing with, and how they play. The coverage structures force us to do some other things, and then you got to speed up your read a little bit and get to the outlet, and I thought he did better as the game wore on. He dumped the ball down to JJ [Raiders RB Josh Jacobs], I don't know how many times, but a number of times when they were trying to run out of there. I thought he adapted to the game a little bit as it went on. We'll take every opportunity to learn from the mistakes that we made as a team, and I'm sure he will also as a quarterback and try to get better from it."

On Jacobs:

"I thought he played really hard. You can see that he's ready to contribute in every area that he can. I thought he did some decent things in the Blitz pickup. I thought he ran the ball hard. I thought he found some lanes there. We didn't want to try to go away from that; with it being a two-score game, we felt like we could still hand him the ball, which I think is the right thing to do when he got a player like him. He made himself available in the passing game. He fought hard for some critical plays on the sideline to get the first downs and scored a touchdown down there to make it a one-score game. He always plays like that; he's a warrior. He gave everything he had today to help us to try to make a push there late. We just got to do more to help put ourselves in a better situation."

On Raiders DT Jerry Tillery's hit and ejection:

"They said it came from New York, so it is what it is in that regard. All I saw was what I saw in real-time. Then, I looked up and got to see it. It was a little bit of a different angle. Again, I didn't get total clarification on what it was. I didn't think he hit him the head, but I didn't know that, so they made the call."

On 'the tackling issues':

"That got better as the game went on, we had a few, especially early in the game, where we overran some of their guys and gave him some cutback opportunities. They do a decent job with the football and try to do some of those things in the open field, and we settled down a little bit and got them on the ground as the game went on. Tackling against this team is always a focal point, and I don't think we started the game particularly well in that area."

On 'not following through on tackles because of fears of penalties':

"We had a conversation about that. [Referee] John [Hussey] was great today, in terms of communicating, because I asked this specific question about that because, obviously, he's a big guy. When you get him wrapped up, you don't want to pick them up and throw him to the ground because we know that's not legal. We don't want to get called for a foul. I don't want to make any excuses. Our guys have to finish the play period, point blank. There is always some of that element with a bigger guy where you are being told, and we have the videos and all the rest of it about not taking them to the ground, falling with him on your weight in the shoulder, and all the rest of that stuff. We have to complete the sack, so we're going to have to keep him wrapped up. We're going to have to take him to the ground until the whistle is blown."

LAS VEGAS RAIDERS QUARTERBACK AIDAN O'CONNELL

On if he 'feels like he earned the starting position':

"I am not too worried about that right now. I think I have a lot to correct from this film. Just made too many mistakes. I just didn't do enough at my position, didn't do enough things right. I'm not really looking forward to that right now. Just kind of trying to learn from this film."

On the difference between preseason and regular season play:

"Obviously, different players out there. Kudos to the Chargers, they did a good job of mixing things up a little bit and disguising things a little bit. I think I just have to do my job better. I think I just have to lock in on each play, focus a little bit more and trust myself with my timing and whatever else the play needs and go from there. I definitely think that I have to do a better job."

On 'settling in' during the game:

"The guys just did a good job around me, kept encouraging me. Obviously, we went down in the first half. I think our defense did a really good job of keeping us in the game, especially in the second half and the guys around me are really good playmakers, so just try to get them the ball and make plays. Like I said, just a lot to correct. We're going to do that this week."

On his interception:

"The last interception, I think it just was a bad decision. They played man coverage, they combo'd it and read it as I let it go. I knew it was a bad decision. It was a look that I saw in practice. The coaches did a good job of preparing me. I just have to do a better job executing."

On ball security:

"I think I just have to play with better timing. I think just holding the ball a little bit too long. I have to move through my reads faster and do a better job of doing that quickly to get the ball in my hands. It was those are my mistakes that I have to clean up."

On takeaways from the game:

"I think it's, unfortunately, a combination of both things that I have to do better. Just like I said, the magnitude of each play is really what I'm learning. What I learned today is how important each play is, how important each drive is and having to just do my job on each play, even if it's a little bit harder, one play versus the other. I need to focus and can't look ahead, can't look behind, just each play one play at a time."

On the 4th-and-10 on the final offensive possession:

"We had slam protection, I had a little more time. I'm just going right to left on my read and just came back to the left and [Raiders WR] Davante [Adams] ran a really good route. I put the ball a little bit too high in behind and he made a really good catch. It was great protection by the offensive line and a really good job by Davante."

On what he learned throughout the game:

"I think I just keep repeating it, but just doing my job every play and not worrying about what had happened or what was going to happen in the future. I think we did a really good job of running the ball in the second half. Like I said, our defense played really well. The guys around me put me in good situations to try and be successful. I think it's the guys around me really, really doing a good job of helping me."