



Denver Broncos Postgame Quotes & Notes

Denver Broncos vs. San Diego Chargers • INVESCO Field at Mile High • Sunday, Sept. 26, 2004

DENVER BRONCOS HEAD COACH MIKE SHANAHAN

General opening comments:

"I'll talk about our defense first. I was really pleased with our overall effort. Anytime you've got a couple starters out, with Trevor Pryce and Lenny Walls and play defense the way they did, it's really a credit to a bunch of guys working together. Special teams – I was really pleased with that area. I thought our returns, we really stepped up from last week. Offensively we had our chances. They really stepped up and did a great job taking away the run. We had our chances. We put some points on the scoreboard but we just couldn't get it done on third down and in the red zone, and that's a credit to them. It was a good team effort and it's always nice to win."

On being concerned with the running game

"You always have emphasis anytime you play like we did. Last week, we knew they were an excellent run defensive team and moved the football. I'm more concerned about our red zone and third-down effort than the running game. To move the football like we did, you need to come up with plays. We didn't come up with plays and we need to come up with more plays in the end zone. They played extremely hard."

On if Quentin Griffin fumbling the ball is a problem that needs to be addressed

"You do the same thing you always do. You emphasize it in practice. It looks like the fumbles that he had (weren't the same). One of the fumbles was a bad quarterback exchange, like we talked about before. This last one was pretty similar to what I thought happened on the goal line in Kansas City. He relaxed a little bit after he caught the ball and all of a sudden it got knocked out. Whether he's catching a pass or carrying the ball into the end zone, he's got to secure the ball."

On the difference between this season and last season in Ashley Lelie's play

"It's early. He was very productive last year. He had one of his best games against San Diego last year and made some big-time catches. It's like the way he practices and through the offseason program and the way he handles himself during the preseason games and in practice. He's got a lot more confidence and I think he's a lot more comfortable this year."

On if Ashley Lelie was the main receiver on the touchdown catch

"No, he wasn't. It was the inside guy."

On the thought process behind going for it on fourth and nine

"I just felt like if we missed that field goal that the momentum would go the other way. On third down I felt like we had somebody open so we ran the same play. We didn't go with the first receiver. Jake (Plummer) ran right and made a big time throw and a big time play. It doesn't always happen that way and it doesn't always work out. I'm glad they bailed me out."

On how close was Tatum Bell to being active to play in the game

"It was close. But not good enough for a young guy who didn't have a lot of reps during the week."

On if he thinks that Jake Plummer played his most complete game of the year so far

"Anytime you take the running game out, you're going to ask your quarterback to make some plays. We did some good things in that first half, we just got shorted a bit in that red zone. But, we got the win and that's the bottom line."

On if he's shocked that the Kansas City Chiefs are now 0-3 to start the season

"In the National Football League, nothing's shocking. You have to be ready every week and there are a lot of great teams out there. It's not who you play but how you play them that makes the difference."



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DENVER BRONCOS PLAYERS

QB Jake Plummer

General

"Unfortunately, we weren't able to run the ball well. Offensively, we had to go through the air, and those guys were getting open for me. The offensive line was giving me good time, and the receivers made some good catches for me. Defensively, we have to tip our hats to them, to hold those guys to thirteen points. [San Diego] has been doing a good job all year against the run. They've given up just a few yards average per game. We didn't give up on the run, obviously we kept trying to run the ball. We knew we might have to change up our plan a little bit, and then we ended up throwing the ball really well. Like I said, the line gave me time, and the receivers made big plays."

On the Running Game

"That's one bad day in the long line of over many, many good days. No, I am not concerned about the running game, and we will get back to work on that, and make sure we don't have any more 29 [total yards rushing] days. I'm going to tell [RB Quentin] Griffin not to listen to you guys completely. I think we need to let him be the guy who he is. He is a high-character great kid, good working kid. He has got no problems. I don't think he has one issue. Obviously, he's got to take care of the ball for us, and focus on that. We can't do anything; we have just got to let him go about [his business]."

TE Jeb Putzier

On the Passing Game

"Showing what we can do in the air is going to open the run game even more. On offense though, we can be better. We have to work on those short-yardage situations and punching the ball in the endzone. Things like that make you a complete offense, so we need to get that down before we move further along."

On his Performance

"Hopefully, more teams will have to look at me and guys like [WR] Darius Watts, who also had a big game. Hopefully, that will open up a lot of things for guys like [WR] Rod [Smith], [WR] Ashlie [Lelie], and Q [Quentin Griffin]. The important thing here is that we got a win. I have a lot to learn from this game, as does the rest of the team, but it's good to get a win coming off a game like last week."

DT Monsanto Pope

On Stopping the Run

"We did a good job keeping [RB LaDainian Tomlinson] contained. In the past he's had his way with us. Obviously he's got a great offensive line and he knows how to pick his holes."

On the Denver Offense

"We've got confidence in our offense. [The score] might have been close, but they stayed ahead throughout the game. The important thing is that they made big plays when we had to, and that's something that will always keep a defense happy and confident."

LB Donnie Spragan

General

"It was a tough game, and a fight down to the end. Right now I am happy that the defense is playing really well this year. We knew that on every snap, we had to bring it to LT [Tomlinson]. They had a hard time stopping some of our plays. We mixed up our schemes a little bit, and tried to bring some different looks. That might have affected them. That's what happens in the NFL though – games come down to the end. That's when you have to show your true character. I think we showed our character today, and a lot of people are going to take notice of that."

DE Reggie Hayward

On the Defensive Line

"It's a lot of pressure on you when you don't have [DE] Trevor Pryce in there. You've got to work pretty hard to pick up where he left off, and get those sacks. We just have to keep it up for as long as he is out."

On Stopping San Diego's Offense

"All we knew was that [QB] Drew Brees had a slight concussion. We knew that he might be a little funky at times during this game, but we also want to make sure that we contained LT [Tomlinson]. Fortunately, I think we were about to do that."



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DENVER BRONCOS PLAYERS CONTINUED

RB Reuben Droughns

On Kick Returns

"I'm close [to breaking one], but it just seems like I don't have that giddy-up anymore. But you have to look at those guys in front of me. They are the ones who make it all happen. They are doing a great job, and all I can do is follow them. But if I can make some plays or some moves, then I will."

On Leading the AFC West Standings after Three Games

"If that's the case, we have to keep plugging away in practice and getting better each day. If we are the team to beat, then we have a big bullseye on our chests, and teams are constantly going to be shooting for us. Three games aren't anything. I don't think we are a force to be reckoned with yet, but I do think we can get there. You have to remember that this division is part of the NFL, and that anybody can beat anyone on any given Sunday."

CB Champ Bailey

On DE Marco Coleman

"I played with him my rookie year [in Washington], so I've known what he can do for a long time. The guy is a competitor. He works harder than anybody on this team. What he brings to the defense is outstanding. I mean, what can you ask more of out of veteran like that [Broncos' tackle-leader on the day]?"

On DE Trevor Pryce

"We all know that Trevor is a big part of our defense, but everybody also knows that when anybody on this team goes down, you have to step it up all the way across the board. That's the mentality that you have to have, and that's something that I am proud of because I think we did it today."

SAN DIEGO CHARGERS HEAD COACH MARTY SCHOTTENHEIMER

General opening comments:

"We fought our tails off but it wasn't good enough. What you see is a number of missed opportunities that we had and failed to capitalize on. We knew it was going to be handful coming in here, and our guys went to work with the idea we were going to find a way to win. We did some things that were pretty good. Our third-down efficiency offensively was much improved. We had some opportunities to pound the ball inside the 10 and we were not able to get it done. We came in with one idea and that was to come in and play to win. We were not going to stand around and be a punching bag like we've been in the past. I think our guys met that challenge today. They played their tails off."

On the roughing the punter penalty

"We had a block called. It was 4th and 10. We felt we had an opportunity to block it. We ended up roughing the guy and they ultimately scored."

On Drew Brees

"I thought he did OK. I'll have to look at the tape. There were a couple of throws that he missed but there were also a couple of pretty good throws."

On the Denver running defense

"They're one of the best running defenses in football and they proved it again today."

On the Chargers' kickoff return coverage

"That was a big disappointment because we knew what type of runner (Reuben Droughns) was. He's a guy that's going to ricochet off of people. If memory serves me right, they had two or three starts at the 40 or beyond. You can't do that."



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SAN DIEGO PLAYERS

WR KASSIM OSGOOD

ON THE ROUGHING THE PUNTER CALL: "I just barely caught his leg. You can't leave your feet going at the feet of the punter, and I've got to know that. I was just trying to make a big play after I got busted wide open. I didn't miss the ball by that much; if my hands were a little lower, I would have got it. Unfortunately, it became a game-changer. I was just trying to come up with the big play. When I was going at the punter, I was thinking, 'Don't hit him.' I turned to avoid him, but he landed on top of me. It was a good call."

LB BEN LEBER

ON THE SD DEFENSE: "Honestly, after we figured out the crossing route that kept killing us, I felt as though the defense played pretty well. It seemed like we kept getting put in tough field situations, but overall, we played pretty well."

ON STARTING 1-2: "Obviously, this is a tough loss in the conference, but we know things we can do to improve. One thing we know that we shouldn't do is put our head down because we'll pull through."

ON STOPPING DENVER RUNNING GAME: "It seems like we did a good job of watching film and knowing what was going on. The front seven did a great job filling their gaps, because they try to make you run right past them. From day one, we've been trying to get the second and third guys to go to the ball, and we did that pretty well today."

WR RECHE CALDWELL

GENERAL: "I feel we should have played better on offense. There were tons of opportunities out there and we didn't capitalize. You get a few good opportunities in a game, and if you don't capitalize on them, that's the difference between winning and losing in this league."

FB LORENZO NEAL

GENERAL: "We're shooting ourselves in the foot. It's the things that we're doing and not anything that they're doing. We have to learn to capitalize on mistakes. They were a good team, and we understand that, but we keep having opportunities to win the game and we keep squandering those away. We keep putting ourselves behind the 8-ball. We have to come in, play defense, and get some plays early so that we start strong."

OT ROMAN OBEN

GENERAL: "We'll see them again, which is a good thing, and hopefully we'll catch them on a day when they don't play as well as they did today. Historically, we haven't played well in this stadium, but our defense played well today and we had our chances. I think the Denver Broncos will be able to say they respect us, because we played hard and we played physical today."

ON GETTING THE SD RUNNING GAME GOING: "We'll put L.T. on any safety any day of the week. Today, we had three or four times where he went eight to 10 yards and he had a chance, so there's still a lot of optimism."

QB DREW BREES

GENERAL: "Looking back on it there were just a couple plays here and there that would have given us the win. It's disappointing. They're a good football team. This is a tough place to play but all in all we definitely had a chance to win the game."

RB LaDAINIAN TOMLINSON

GENERAL: "Overall I just felt like we had this game. We had our opportunities. It gets harder and harder to swallow. The Denver defense does a good job of attacking and closing the running lanes."



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POSTGAME NOTES

- With today's 23-13 win, Denver now leads the San Diego series by 50-38, the first team that the Broncos have defeated **50 times** in their history. The win guarantees Denver at least a split of the season series with the Chargers for the **22nd** consecutive season; the Broncos have eight sweeps and 13 splits in the last 21 years since S.D. last defeated Denver twice in the same season in 1982.
 - It was the fifth straight win by the Broncos over the Chargers (and the ninth in the last 10 games) in Denver.
 - Denver had outscored San Diego **73-0** in the first half in Denver, dating back to November 19, 2000 until Nate Kaeding's 23-yard field goal late in the first quarter. Denver led last year 27-0 at the half, in 2002 by 19-0, and in 2001 by 20-0.
 - Denver is now 2-1 or better for the ninth time under Mike Shanahan (lone exception was 0-3 in 1999, Denver has never opened 1-2 under him).
 - Denver has now won six straight September home games, and is 7-1 in September home games at INVESCO Field at Mile High. The Broncos are **18-3** in September at home during the Mike Shanahan Era (19-3 including an August 31 game in 1997).
 - Denver has now allowed just 708 yards in three games this season (**236.0 per**), and are allowing just 4.29 yards per play. Denver held the opponent under 100 yards rushing for the second straight week (30 attempts for 85 yards by the Chargers).
 - **WR Rod Smith.** Smith caught a pass for his **79th** consecutive game, including his **53rd** career touchdown reception. He now trails Denver's all-time leader, Shannon Sharpe, by two scores (Sharpe had 55 in his career).
 - **QB Jake Plummer.** Plummer cracked the Bronco top 10 list in all-time passing yards, as he now has 3,085 in a Denver uniform, passing John McCormick (2,791). His **294** yards were his high in a Bronco uniform (topping 277 against Detroit last year), and was the eighth highest total of his career, the most since he threw for 334, also against Detroit, as a member of the Arizona Cardinals in 2001. His 25 completions matched his Bronco high, also against the Lions last year.
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