

# Indianapolis Colts Media Conference

Monday, December 26, 2022  
Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

## Head Coach Brandon Staley

Visitors Postgame Press Conference



Chargers 20, Colts 3

### **Q. What does it mean to make the playoffs for the first time as a head coach?**

BRANDON STALEY: I think it's just the beginning. It's just the beginning. This is not our final goal. We expected to be at this point.

I'm really proud of how this season has gone for our football team and what we've been able to demonstrate in order to make it into the postseason. That's probably what I'm most proud of. Not just being in it, but how we made it, what it took for us to get in. But, you know, this is just the beginning for us.

### **Q. What does it say about what you are building here that you have reached this point after everything you've been through as a team this year?**

BRANDON STALEY: I think the reason why we're here is because of the men on our football team, coaches, players. We've got the makeup to withstand the type of season that we've had, and I think that we would not be here today if it were not for the toughness of our football team, the makeup of our football team.

And I think for far too long people have talked about the talent of this football team and the organization, and that's ultimately not what gets you where you want to go. You have to prove your toughness, and that's what we've proven so far this year is that we have a tough enough football team mentally and physically to be where we are right now, which is in the tournament.

But our season is not over. We have two more games against really, really good teams, and we need to search to play our best football so we can not only get into the playoffs but make a run to a Super Bowl championship, which is what our goal is.

So we've got a lot of work to do, but I'm certainly proud of everybody in that locker room because today was a great day for our team.

### **Q. What did you think about the defense?**

BRANDON STALEY: Just have a unit that's really connected out there, a team that's playing extremely hard, playing extremely disciplined, doing all the things that you need to do to put a dominant effort like that. You know, that's certainly what our expectations are in the run game and the pass game, pass-rush. Got to have in situations, third down, fourth down.

It was a complete performance. It was a dominant performance, and certainly one that we expect. But I'm really proud of the guys because they've come together and made it happen, and our players deserve all the credit.

### **Q. Do you think you are playing your best football, or is this football that just gets you where you want to go?**

BRANDON STALEY: I think it's probably somewhere in between that. I don't think we've played our best as a team yet. I think that that's still out there for us, but I think that we're exhibiting a lot of the toughness, doing a lot of the things that you need in order to be successful. Taking the football away, you know, being good on third down on defense, keeping the explosive, keeping a roof on the coverage, tackling well.

On offense I thought the second half was a little bit more like us. I thought we did a good job at the end of the half there finishing with the ball, and I thought we ran the football better in the second half.

But we still can score the ball a lot better than what we're doing, and I thought our special teams were solid tonight. You know, we won the take-away battle 3-2, which was huge in the game. And if you count the fourth down stops, even more. We still have work to do, but I like where we're going.

**Q. Did you agree with Derwin James Jr. being ejected from the game?**

BRANDON STALEY: No, I did not because I know Derwin's intent. You know, you would have to establish intent. I thought that he tried to lead with the shoulder.

It's a play where they obviously laid the guy out in a tough position, which is their fault, not ours, and Derwin made an aggressive play. And I know that we all know Derwin is not going to try to do that to anybody.

So we'll have to look at it. I know what Derwin's intentions are. I've seen him make a lot of tackles on plays just like that, and I know that his target was not above the neck. I know that.

**Q. How is James physically?**

BRANDON STALEY: He is in the protocol right now, but he is having a heck of a time in that locker room right now.

**Q. How did you build toughness with this team?**

BRANDON STALEY: We onboarded it. We have a lot of toughness that we've onboarded in two years here, and then we've built off the guys that were here before that have it. You know, that's what you have to do.

You can't just instill toughness in someone. They either have it or they don't, so what you have to do is you have to join up with the right guys. You have to join up with Khalil Mack, Kyle Van Noy, Morgan Fox, Bryce Callahan, you know, Sebastian Joseph-day, Troy Reeder, Gerald Everett, Corey Linsley, Matt Feiler.

You have to join up with it. You have to go buy it and then you have to draft it. Jamaree Salyer. All these guys. You have to go get it. That's our mission is to join up with tough football players.

Mike Williams is a tough football player. Justin Herbert is a tough football player. Austin Ekeler is a tough football player, and we're going to keep getting as many of them in our program as possible because that's what it takes and that's why we're here is because of the toughness of on you are football team.

**Q. How does the offense continue to improve going into the playoffs?**

BRANDON STALEY: We've got to stay away from penalties. We have a lot of penalties that definitely inhibited our progress today.

You know, you get the explosive to DP. There were a couple of procedure penalty where we had good plays up, but we just have to be more consistent overall.

I thought we were good on third down. We had 18 of them, which I don't like, but I thought we were good on third down. And I thought that we did run the ball in the second half the way we wanted to, but it's just bringing it all together and being a clean operation with all 11 guys.

I think that we're still trying to find that rhythm. I liked how we were able to locate Keenan today. He had 11 receptions. Mike had four big catches. We need to get more to Mike because we know what happens when Mike gets the football for us.

But I like the way those two guys played, and I thought that Josh and Austin ran hard, but we just have to put that rhythm together for four quarters, and I think penalties have a lot to do with it.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports