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Chargers Head Coach Brandon Staley Media Availability

Monday, October 30, 2023 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

On an injury update regarding WR Joshua Palmer:

"No update. We'll know more on Thursday for practice."

On CB Asante Samuel 'taking a pretty big hit near the end of the game' and 'if everything is OK with him' regarding his health status:

"Yes, he checked out."

On 'what has led to the improved run defense as of late':

"The guys are playing with good fundamentals and good effort."

On 'the specifics that have led to more consistency' with the run defense:

"Just them doing it consistently."

On S Alohi Gilman's performance last night:

"I thought that Alohi [Gilman] played well in the game. I thought that he communicated well. He had the big pass breakup on the fourth down that led to the interception. He had good respect to the deep part of the field, just commanded well back there. I thought that him, [S] Derwin [James Jr.] and [S] Dean [Marlowe] did a good job of getting us into the right stuff. It was good to have him back."

On QB Justin Herbert 'playing with timing and rhythm last night':

"Well, it takes all 11 people to play with timing and rhythm. It's not an individual sport, so 10 other people have to do their part in establishing that rhythm and timing. It always starts with your O-line play, in terms of how we're protecting the passer, the types of passes that we're activating, in terms of keeping the rush off-balance. Then, the five eligibles [pass-catchers] in the play have to do their part within the progression. I thought that he was decisive. I thought that we were able to get through the progression, whether he was operating quickly — hitting one or two in the progression — or if he was making it all the way through. But, I thought that he threw the ball accurately. I thought there were a couple of big-time throws that we're accustomed to seeing him making; the third down to [WR] Keenan [Allen] on our sideline, the third down to DP [TE Donald Parham Jr.]. Those are signature throws. The pocket is pretty tight. Tight-window throws. I thought that there was good variety. But, one thing I liked about the game was we were able to spread the football around in the passing game, I think eight guys caught passes. I think that's the sign of good operation and good distribution. I thought he played well, thought he played fast and made good decisions and was really accurate."

On the offense's performance in the second half last night:

"The first drive of the second half, I really thought was one of our better drives. Then, the penalty kind of derailed it, the holding call. We were in good shape. Then, we got the holding call that put us into first-and-20. I thought that that really prohibited that drive from being successful. Then, we didn't cash in on the turnover on downs and the takeaways, that part of it was disappointing. We just weren't able to get anything going in the run game in the second half. We didn't have very many positive plays. Then, the third- and fourth-and-short just didn't sit well with us. We have to clean that up. We're trying to shrink the game, but at the same time, activate play calls that are going to keep us going because our goal isn't just to shrink the clock, it is to score the football — possess the ball, and then end with points. We just didn't execute well enough in the second half in that phase. Any specifics, same comments as before, just position group here, position group there. Overall, just not clean enough in the second half."

On 'what can be done to get the run game going in the second half of games':

"We're just a work-in-progress in that phase. I think that we have to continue to explore what the line, the tight ends and the backs to the best, and how the receivers fit into that, too. We're just a work-in-progress in that phase."

On Palmer 'displaying his toughness' last night:

"Receivers, that's a position where you need your wheels to be able to go. There are a lot of receivers where if they don't feel quite right, then they can't make it to the game — they have to feel their best in order to make it — so, he showed real toughness. He has gained a lot of confidence over his first two years in the league. Going into his third season, I think that he really believes in himself, that he can be one of the top receivers in the game. Any time that you get that feeling, you want to be out there on the field to show it. I think that he knows, with [WR] Mike [Williams] being out, that he is a feature part of our offense. He doesn't want to miss a game because he knows that he can impact the game. He has that type of important value for us. Proud of him, and we're going to need his toughness moving forward."

On discussions with Palmer throughout the week when dealing with an injury and who are the main communicators:

"It's all of us, but you start with the medical team, with [Director of Player Health, Wellness and Performance] Marco [Zucconi], [Head Athletic Trainer] Sal [Lopez] and that staff, [Director of Sports Performance [Anthony] Lomando and [Head Strength and Conditioning Coach] Johnathan Brooks and, obviously, our team doctors. You start with them first. Then, there's a process that is undertaken for them to be cleared for the game and to be declared ready for the game. Yesterday was more of a game-time decision. Then, you're talking to [Offensive Coordinator] Kellen [Moore] and [Wide Receivers Coach] Chris [Beatty] about if he is going to make it or he's not going to make it. He felt like he was good enough to go. I thought he gave us good offense last night. Just having them out there makes us a lot more of a complete offense, for sure."

On 'trick plays' and his 'philosophical thought process regarding trick plays and their involvement in a gameplan':

"Philosophically, I'm into the plays that work. Then, I'm into putting pressure on defense's rules. If you can do that in a way that a defense hasn't seen something before — where you can challenge the rules, but it's a look that they haven't seen, that also adds a flair and some flavor to the game — then I'm all for that. I think that that's what makes the game fun, that's what makes the game special. You try to create plays like that. Yesterday's play was a play for a tight end, but you design different plays for different players and make them feel involved. You've seen us run similar plays in the past, it's a Philly Special type of play to Justin [Herbert]. You're trying to run plays that you think are going to work, that challenge people's rules and that can get different players that can do something with the ball. Kellen [Moore] has a really good background with that in Dallas, very prolific at doing so. You're selective when you do it, but you want to make sure that you're tough to defend and that's something that is always on the radar of defenses. As a defensive coach, you always have to cover plays like that. If you're a team that gets known for that, it just adds a dimension to the prep that can be challenging. Last night, it was a good play to DP [TE Donald Parham Jr.]. Not a huge play — we thought that it could have been a big play, but they were in a pressure so it didn't quite hit like we maybe felt like it could. But, a good play, nevertheless."

On if he 'dreads' opponents calling such plays 'as a defensive coach':

"I think that if you follow your rules, defensively, and you're sound, those players generally have a tough time working against you. They tried one last night against us, as you guys know. Of you follow your rules, then good things happen, but you have to have guys like [OLB] Khalil Mack on your team, that are star players that do what they're supposed to do and follow their rules. Last night, I thought, was a good example of us defending what can be a very tough play down there. It was a good play design by them, but we defended it well because our guys followed their rules."

On the 'message' that Mack's 'consistent performance' sends to the team:

"It just establishes the consistency in performance and the discipline within your assignments, and that there's no role too small for any of us. There's nothing beneath anybody on the team. He sets a high standard for everybody and that's why he's one of the greats."

On the performance of the offensive line last night:

"I thought the play style showed up. I thought that our guys played really hard together. It wasn't a perfect performance, but, man, I thought that they played really hard. When you can just play really hard and tough, that's playing O-line, just playing five guys as one. I think that they gave Justin [Herbert] clean enough sightlines for him to operate. You don't go 31-of-40 with a really crowded pocket, where you're getting hit all the time and there's people in the way. Similar to the Minnesota game, they brought a ton of pressure, but he didn't go 40-of-48 because he couldn't see, he was 40-of-48 because the protection was really good. Hats off to those guys. They put in a really good week of practice together. I thought that you saw a good performance in pass protection yesterday."

On OLB Joey Bosa's run defense 'getting overlooked':

"You're not just paying these guys to rush the passer, you're paying them to be complete players. That's why you pay them so much money. You don't just pay them to pass rush, you pay them to make all the plays. That's why you pay them so much money. Those guys take a lot of pride in doing that. The way that our defense is set up, they're the ones that have the angles and the green light to be aggressive. I thought you saw it on that fourth-and-one stop last night. He gets a tight end one-on-one, and Joey is going to win that 10 out of 10 times. I think you just saw a healthy Joey Bosa last night. He has been practicing well. I thought that he rushed well last night. He had one sack, but in terms of his effect on the quarterback and his pass rush win percentage, by our count, he had an outstanding game. I thought that it was probably his best game of the season. And, he's healthy. When him, Khalil [Mack], [OLB] Tuli [Tuipulotu] and [OLB] Chris [Rumph II] are rotating like they did last night, playing fresh, that is going to be a winning edge for us."

On how the team can 'keep the momentum going' into next week's Monday Night Football matchup against the Jets:

"Just focusing on the details of each day. Today, we came in and had good meetings. They had their workouts this morning and flushed it all out. Just taking it one day at a time. That was the message last week for us, just to make the most of the day and keep it simple that way, keep it fresh. Like I said, our guys really had their best week of practice, three days in a row. Now, we get that extra day to get freshened up. It's one of those things where you have to pick up that extra day and get fresh so that we can take the practice field on Thursday ready for the Jets."

On 'playing one over 90 percent of the game last night' and if that was based on Bears QB Tyson Bagent's performance in Week 7:

"Zone would imply that there's a ton of air in the coverage. We play pattern-match zone, which is different than just pure zone. So, you have to be more specific when you're writing an article about that because there's a fundamental difference in zone defense. Zones can play like man, depending on the route distribution, which is what we play, mostly. We don't play a lot of vision zone. I think, with us, what we wanted to do was force [Bagent] to see different coverages, different rotations. We played plenty of pattern-match zone, which plays like man, last night. But, we wanted him to see as much coverage as possible. You have to take advantage of the fact that he hasn't played a lot of football in the league. Our guys mixed it up last night, we had good disguise, and I thought our rush was good. We only had one sack, but we were around him. He had to check it down quickly quite a few times. Our defense played well last night. The best thing we did is, outside of the very first play, we kept the ball in front of us."

On CB Michael Davis' performance in pass coverage last night:

"Solid, room for improvement."

On internal conversations with the trade deadline approaching:

"I think that those conversations will take place between now and then."

On an update regarding C Corey Linsley:

"He is doing well. Really glad that he's with us, really glad that he's with the team. Our players would tell you, our coaches will tell you, he means a lot to our team and our organization. Certainly, since I've been here, he has helped me tremendously. I just can't say enough good things about him."

On Linsley's health:

"He's in a good place. He's in a good place mentally and he's doing a heck of a job helping our team out in a new way."

On WR Simi Fehoko:

"He's fit right in. He's a hard worker. I think he did a good job on special teams when he first got here. Then, he got his opportunity last night. I thought he took advantage of it. That was a good touchdown catch. He's just a guy that's dependable. He has familiarity with [Offensive Coordinator] Kellen [Moore] and [Quarterbacks Coach] Doug [Nussmeier]. He's a good fit for our culture and gives us some depth there at wideout and on special teams."

On players that were motivated for the game:

"I think it was just kind of a collective effort. I just saw the whole team. It wasn't really anyone standing out. I feel like that's what made it a special week. It wasn't just one person. It was kind of everybody taking the field together. That's what I saw last night. It wasn't just one person leading the charge. We have a lot of premium players where their performance is going to stand out, obviously. I really felt like, as a team, we took the field the right way. Again, I think that takes the pressure off everybody, where you don't have just one, two or three people that have to do everything. It's everybody that's committed to doing it the right way."

On if QB Justin Herbert has grown as a player and leader:

"Yeah, definitely. I think your peers on this call would be able to tell you that, as well. I think so much of when you're a young player in the league, especially a quarterback, you're just trying to figure out how to do your job well, you know? You're experiencing everything for the first time all the time. You're just trying to establish yourself as a good quarterback, as a good player, let alone leading the entire football team as a 22, 23, 24 year-old person. That's a big task to just do it all by yourself. I think each year, he's established more and more comfort in front of the group and stuff like that, but leadership is about your actions. It's not about what you say, it's about what you do. That's why Justin has always been a leader for us because his actions speak to the highest form of leadership, in terms of the work that he puts in. No one works at their game more than Justin Herbert does. I think, he's found his voice more and more every year because he's becoming more comfortable with every aspect of the organization. You develop relationships over the course of time. When you just show up somewhere, you don't have those established relationships. Now, when he has more of those, he can affect more people on the team — offense, defense, kicking game, coaches, staff, media. He's just made more. He's got more time with people, more investment in people. The big thing with Justin, man, is that he has a huge heart. He's a fierce competitor and he's a hard worker. As you guys know, he's an accountable person. He can stand up and take the heat because he has the shoulders for it. Last night, he played awesome, but his play-style and his leadership was even better last night."

On Herbert's leadership when 'not playing to his standard':

"I just think that sometimes the NFL is a tough place. The thing about Justin is that he sets this high standard where, like last night, what you saw — 31-of-40 for [298 yards], three touchdowns and no interceptions. That's what people expect from him. Did you know that? But it's not common. It's rare to go 31-of-40 in the NFL. It's rare to go 40-of-48 against six and seven-man pressure for an entire game for 400 yards. Do you know, like, impossible that is? He does it, so everyone assumes that, 'Hey, I'm just going to roll every week.' Then, when he goes, like, 23-of-37 for, like, 260 — now, all of the sudden, he didn't compete to his standard. I think this guy has just set a remarkable standard for himself, rightfully. Trust me, his standards are higher than any of ours combined. I just think that he was playing out there. He was out there playing. That's what I can see. He was just out there playing. He wasn't pressing at all. Just playing his game. I think, when Justin just plays his game — no matter what the stats are, it's going to be a winning performance for us. I think that's the most important thing. No matter what the stat line, if he just plays his game — no matter what type of game it is — it's always going to give us a chance to win. Last night was like a marquis performance for him, but all year long he's been fantastic for us."