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Chargers Head Coach Brandon Staley Media Availability

Monday, October 23, 2023 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

On the defense's performance in the first half and 'areas of improvement' for the unit after evaluating the game film:

"I felt that the loose plays by the quarterback were a big contributing factor. On three out of the four big plays in the first half, I think that the initial coverage was good, but then the second part of the play occurred and we didn't match up. On [Chiefs WR Marquez] Valdes-Scantling's 46-yarder, the 28-yarder on the first drive, the first third down, and then, later in the first half, again, Valdes-Scantling on the 28-yarder, I thought that those were all second-play type of big plays, where the initial coverage was good, but then the play broke down. Then, on [Chiefs TE Travis] Kelce's 51-yard catch, we just needed to tackle the catch. You can't gamble in that situation. Those are four big plays in the first half. That was the chunk of it. Hopefully, that answers your question."

On his evaluation of LB Eric Kendricks and LB Kenneth Murray Jr., in pass coverage:

"They played well in the game. There were just a couple of times where, maybe, they could be a little bit more connected in the second level, but [Kelce] is going to manipulate some of your pattern-match zones. So, whether we were in three-deep or quarters [coverage], there is going to be an element of [Kelce] sitting down and being in a place that is hard to find. Those are just catch-tackle — 8, 9, 10 12-yard gains. What you try to do is then go challenge the guy's ball security. But, as much as he is going to get targeted in a game, it's going to be hard to shut him completely down. What you can do is do a better job after the catch. On the 51-yarder, that is going to be a 15-yard play where you are in single-safety, defend the middle-of-the-field defense. It just can't go for 51 yards. The first third down of the game, when you're in a three-deep coverage that is defending the middle of the field, it can't be a 28-yard catch after a loose play. We fell short in that first half. Like I said, I didn't do a good enough job. We executed, obviously, much better in the second half."

On areas in which the offense can improve:

"I didn't think that we ran the football well in the second half. Where, I felt like, in the first half, obviously, we had a bunch of big runs and the consistency of the run game. In the second half, we came up empty in that phase. Then, third downs in the second half, we had a couple of opportunities to stay on the field and weren't able to do so. When you don't run the ball effectively enough, and it's loud, then you're going to have to protect the passer at a high level and really execute at a high level in the passing game, and we weren't able to do that, outside of the first drive of the second half. On the first drive of the second half, we had all of those elements working for it, in terms of the run game, mixture of the run and the pass, and were able to march down the field — we had the big explosion. Then, after that just didn't do those other things well enough."

On the defense's execution on Kelce's touchdown 'reach' and if he 'prefers the defense to do stop him from getting in rather than forcing the ball away':

"I thought that we defended it well. I think that our guys all saw an opportunity to, with him reaching [with the ball], to create a takeaway. It was just that balance. We had K9 [LB Kenneth Murray Jr.] there first. Ideally, you'd like to have one guy continue to knock it back, and then, maybe, punch it out with the second man in, but our guys were straining. We made it tough on him. I thought we executed the defense exactly the way that we wanted it to, just didn't get the result."

On if he 'thought about using a timeout' on the Chiefs' final offensive drive of the first half 'to preserve time for another offensive drive':

"It was. We were trying to see if [Travis] Kelce was going to get back on the field or not, for that play that they ended up scoring on. In that sequence, just didn't end up taking it. But, it was definitely under consideration."

On three consecutive run calls near the end of the third quarter and start of the fourth quarter and if going for it on fourth down in that situation was 'under consideration':

"Just felt like after the explosions, and the way that we've been playing, that [Chiefs Defensive Coordinator Steve Spagnuolo] would play a lot of split-safety to mitigate the risk. We didn't want it to turn it into a dropback game until we kind of felt like, to keep them off balance, that we could split them on a couple of runs — specifically, a third-down run against dime. We just weren't able to get it there. Had it been a little bit closer, I think it would have been under consideration to go for it, but we had settled into the game on defense and really felt like pinning them back and flipping the field would have been the best strategy there."

On RB Austin Ekeler 'limping' and if there is an update to report:

"No updates to report on that. We'll know Wednesday."

On if QB Justin Herbert's finger is 'impacting his play':

"Well, I know that it is not impacting the run game at all. It doesn't have anything to do with that. So, that's one part that you can take out of the equation. I know that Justin [Herbert] is ready to go. He has talked to you guys about how he's feeling. He's just like a lot of the other players that are dealing with knicks, but he has been able to perform. I think you've been able to see him throw the football at a high level. You're dealing with something that you're not used to being there and you have to get used to it. But, I don't think that it has impacted the way that we call a game or play the game. You can imagine, any time you are someone who carries the ball, and then all of a sudden, it's going to feel a little different when you're not able to feel and carry the ball the same way. That's part of playing football. All of the players have to go through that at some point. Any player who carries the ball or is used to doing something, and then you get a nick, you have to manage it. Justin is as tough as they come. He made a lot of big throws yesterday."

On the timeline for activating WR Jalen Guyton and DL Ogbornia off of Reserve/PUP:

"They're progressing. No timetable yet, but it's good to have him back at practice. We're just going to make sure that we ramp them up the right way."

On an injury update regarding TE Gerald Everett:

"It's actually a hip, not a quad or a thigh, as it was reported. Nothing more to add than that."

On Chiefs WR Mecole Hardman's punt return near the end of the game and the punt coverage unit's responsibilities on that play:

"We had two guys at the point of attack, who were unblocked, that just had poor leverage on the tackle."

On if he will continue to call the defense:

"That is correct."

On RB Joshua Kelley's performance yesterday:

"I thought that JK was a bright spot for us yesterday. I really felt like he gave us energy in the game. I thought that he was decisive. Two of those runs were really big energy runs for us. It kind of reminded me of when he hit that run against San Francisco in the preseason, on that cutback run. It really reminded me of that. I really liked the way that we ran the football yesterday and he was a big part of it."

On if he 'envisions a bigger workload' for Kelley moving forward:

"It will be a similar workload behind [RB] Austin [Ekeler] that he normally gets."

On the team 'needing to reset':

"We lost two tough ones to two good teams. I think that after you lose two games in a row, you need to, as a group, just reset and focus on your fundamentals, focus on the identity of your football team. Just put one foot in front of the other, not be thinking too much about the telescope, making sure that you're focusing on the microscope and just controlling the things that we can control. That is all this football team needs to do. We have a good team. Through six games, we haven't gotten the results yet, but I think that a reset just takes the pressure off and just gets us focusing on the things that really allow us to perform the way that we're capable of."

On 'what a reset looks like':

"It's not anything big picture. What I meant by that is making sure that we go back and that we're not carrying the weight of six games with us to Chicago, and certainly the last two games. Just not carrying the weight of two tough losses with you to the practice field on Wednesday. What we need to do is make sure that we focus on the Chargers and getting ready for Chicago — not worrying about what happened with Kansas City or Dallas. I know that our group is going to do that. We have really good leadership on our team, coaches and players, and we just need to hit that practice field on Wednesday fresh and focused for Chicago."

On if he 'questions how good the team is':

"No, I don't think that we question it because the people that are on our team understand the quality that it takes in the NFL, when you have it and when you don't. Most people that have been in an NFL locker room understand that. We know the quality that we have. We have seen it in spurts. The way that the season has started hasn't been what many would have envisioned on our team, but it doesn't take away from the belief that we have in us making it happen. I think that those of us that are here on a day-to-day basis understand that better than those who aren't. That's why I think that us just getting to the practice field on Wednesday, fresh and focused, that we will be able to put a good practice week ready for Chicago."

On 'what makes him know that this is still a good team':

"I know the players that we have on the team — [OLB] Khalil Mack, [OLB] Joey Bosa, [S] Derwin James [Jr.], [QB] Justin Herbert, [WR] Keenan Allen, etc. I know the type of players that we have, both veteran and rookie, young players, veteran players. I know the coaches that we have on this team. That gives me all the confidence in the world. I've been out there on the field for six games and I know the types of games that they have been. I've also been a head coach in the NFL for three years, so I know the quality that you need in order to win and I know that we have it."

On if he has 'any concern' on 'his place as head coach':

"We're six games into the season. I'll have a much better picture of that when we're 17 games in, not six."

On P JK Scott's performance yesterday:

"I thought that he was a bright spot for us yesterday. I think that he is improving, as a player. He hit a couple of really big ones in that game that neutralized the returner and really flipped the field for us. I felt like we were doing a good job. When we were punting the football, I felt like we were gaining an advantage with our coverage units, which was a big part of that game. When we started to play at a high level on defense in that second half, we were able to gain an advantage on special teams. Hopefully, we will continue that trend because he was such a weapon for us last year. He's been good for us at times this year, too. For him to find that rhythm, that is going to be important for us."

On WR Joshua Palmer this season and his performance yesterday:

"You know the quality that you're seeing on the practice field and on the game field for three years. He has improved every year as a player and he has full confidence out there right now. You're seeing it. Justin [Herbert] has full confidence in him to separate, to win. I think that you're seeing a lot of the explosions come his way, too, where you're seeing him get to the deep part of the field, you're seeing good run after the catch. He's just a complete player. You can put him anywhere in the formation. He can beat press coverage outside of the red line, in the slot. He is one of the top young guys that I think is emerging in the league."

On 'what prevented the pass rush from having consistency yesterday':

"It just didn't feel like we were consistently around the quarterback. I felt like, give my credit to them, they blocked us. Four, five, six-man rushers, I felt like they blocked us well. We just didn't win enough of those matchups. When we did, they didn't have any impact on the outcome. Just one of those days. That can happen at times. I'm more concerned with the loose plays by the quarterback than the actual sack production. It wasn't a good game for us in that phase. I need to do a better job."

On the third-and-five prior to Hardman's punt return and the play developing where WR Quentin Johnston 'was open on the left side' but WR Keenan Allen 'was coming open as he was next in the progression' before the pass intended for Allen was batted down at the line of scrimmage:

"Bingo. You're seeing it, but you have to understand the progression of the play. So, put yourself in Justin Herbert's shoes and start right to left, and that will be the answer to your question. Good job doing the work. Keenan [Allen] had a good win on that play."

On WR Quentin Johnston's 'play as of late, even though the reception numbers aren't there':

"Improvement yesterday. Improvement from Dallas [game] to Kansas City. Felt him on the completion, beating press. It was a really good back-shoulder play. I think that you guys saw him make that play often during training camp. I thought that he separated yesterday. The play [previously mentioned] against split-safety man, I thought that he had an outstanding release and was open. Again, I feel like his alignment and assignment are improving. He's playing with confidence. I thought that yesterday was a step forward for him. If he continues to take the practice field the way that he has, you're going to continue to see the improvement. Like I said, that is all that he needs to be focused on."