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## Chargers Week 16 Media Availability

Friday, December 23, 2022 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

### OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR JOE LOMBARDI

#### **On QB Justin Herbert ‘spiking a football in the locker room’ out of excitement following the Week 14 win against the Dolphins:**

“It was cool. You’re happy to win the game. Glad to see him excited. It was neat.”

#### **On ‘if there’s anything especially cool’ about Herbert ‘showing that kind of emotion’:**

“It’s good to see him come out of his shell a little bit like that. He probably does it more than he shows you guys [*laughter*]. But, yeah, it’s fun. It’s always fun in a locker room after a win. The guys are fired up. It feels good.”

#### **On if Herbert ‘comes out of his shell in meeting rooms’:**

“Not in the meetings, per se, but in the locker room, he shows a little more personality, at times. I don’t want to give up any of his secrets, though [*laughter*].”

#### **On the performance of the run game last week:**

“I was real pleased with how we ran it in the red zone. There were some other runs in there where we were getting good yards, so I thought that it was an improvement. I think that we can still get better at it, though.”

#### **On if he ‘knew before the game that the offense was going to primarily run the ball in the red zone’:**

“No, but if they work, I’ll keep calling them [*laughter*]. If we’re ahead of the sticks, we’ll keep after it. You’re always trying to avoid the third-and-long. You have to stay balanced, though. You don’t want to become too predictable. But, if those runs are getting 5, 6, 7 yards, we’ll keep after it, for sure.”

#### **On the development of the run game:**

“I think that it helps getting the five up front working together. The tight ends are improving. I think that [RB] Joshua Kelley being back is a big help for all of that. I think that we’re improving. That was a good run defense we were facing, so I thought that — everything considered — it was a positive. This is another good run defense. Just keep plugging away, keep working at it. Hopefully, we have that breakthrough.”

#### **On Kelley:**

“He’s always a guy that’s been a hard, decisive runner. I think that this year, his vision has improved a little bit. There are times where he makes a decision, maybe last year where he wasn’t quite hitting the hole exactly where you wanted him to, and I think that he has been a lot more consistent with that this year.”

#### **On if Kelley’s improvement can be attributed to this being his second year in the offensive system:**

“Yes, I think so.”

**On the defense's performance benefitting the offense by 'giving them energy':**

"Well, you get more shots on goal — the ball comes back to you a little bit faster. In theory, you'll be in a little bit more of a rhythm if you're not sitting on the sidelines too long. I think that those guys have played really well. We need to take advantage of opportunities a little bit better than we did this last game. I think that the team is coming together, so we feel real positive about all of that."

**On if Herbert's 35-yard pass down the sideline to WR Mike Williams to set up the game-winning field goal last week was a 'routine throw':**

"No [*laughter*]. It seems like it, at times, but you don't take it for granted. When he has those opportunities, and he was able to buy some time and break contain. Mike [Williams] made an adjustment to the route. When you see Mike deep down the field, one-on-one, it's good odds for us. He can get it there quick. It's a good combination when it gets set up — we didn't necessarily set it up, they kind of improvised on the play and made it happen. Obviously, it was a huge play, and it's something those guys are capable of doing. You know that they can do it, but it's still pretty impressive when it happens."

**On 'quantifying how impressive' Herbert's throwing ability is:**

"Overall, his play is really good. Those plays, which are more improvisational, making a play outside of the structure of what the play was designed for — we ran the same exact play that we ran the first play of that drive. The first play, we had the coverage that you want, and Justin [Herbert] did a good job, he manipulated the corner to bite up on [RB] Austin [Ekeler] and was able to hit Mike [Williams], get out of bounds for the first part of that play. We called it again, they were in a different coverage and they were in man-to-man. He broke contain and Mike took it a little bit deeper. He just had that straight shot for it and made it. I would say the first play was probably, just from a pure quarterbacking, was a more impressive young guy play, the way that he worked that, where the second one was just God has gifted him and he took advantage of that [*laughter*]."

**On if he is able 'to call more stuff' for Herbert:**

"Early on, right after the injury, there was definitely a slight tweak in how we were calling plays. But, I'd say, within three weeks after the injury, where you felt like he was feeling better. I don't think it's been the last two games, per se, but certainly, those first few games after the injury, there was a little bit of an adjustment. I think that, right now, it's all back to normal."

**On areas in which the unit can improve third-quarter scoring:**

"It's a combination of things. I think that we have to come out with, hopefully, a little more energy. Then, just get a better script together that, maybe, gets us in a rhythm earlier. Last week, we were driving, and we had that unfortunate interception. But, overall, as I look back at all those games, I need to help get the team in a better rhythm with some of the play calls. At times, you're looking for a big play — and maybe too aggressive at times, maybe not aggressive other times — so it's just finding that play script for your opponent to help get the guys in a rhythm. Definitely something that we're looking at and looking to fix."

**On if the offense scripts the first offensive drive of the second half during halftime:**

"Well, we definitely highlight it. 'Hey, here are the plays, based on what we've seen, here's what we want to come out and highlight early.' I'll probably, maybe, get more specific — like you do at the beginning of the game — and maybe script them out a little more specifically, as far as the order that we are calling them. That will certainly help."

**On discussions during halftime:**

"During halftime, we go through it. We sit down, as an offense. Nuge [Offensive Line Coach Brendan Nugent] will be like, 'Hey, here are the runs that we like,' based on what we've been seeing from the pictures. 'They're playing a little more single-high [safety], or more shell [coverage], so let's get to these passes.' You kind of have them highlighted. Then, up in the box, you kind of start thinking about it. We'll probably do that a little earlier and more specific. 'Hey, guys, here is what our first three plays are going to be.' That kind of thing. That first down goes better or worse than you thought, then, maybe, you make an adjustment. We can definitely get a little more specific with that, maybe help the guys visualize what we're going to do, and, maybe, we will be a little bit more precise when we go out and play."

**On G Matt Feiler:**

“He’s just a warrior. He’s one of those guys that’s been through a lot. He’s a veteran. You know what you’re getting from them, and that’s a good thing. A steady presence up there, up front, and durable. He’s a real important piece.”

**On efficiency in two-minute offense and ‘why the offense cannot perform that well the entirety of the game:**

“What defenses are doing in two-minute is a little is, oftentimes, less aggressive, and there’s more space. That’s one answer. That would be the big thing, I think. It’s a different part of the game and defenses are playing you different; softer, less aggressive. We certainly could fall into a two-minute mode maybe earlier in the game, but I think that it is more just the nature of how the game is going at that time, as far as how defenses are playing.”

**On a clarification of ‘two-minute mode’:**

“Tempo, yes. That would be the big thing.”

## **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR RENALDO HILL**

### **On the defense's performance over the last two games:**

"It definitely feels good, the way that we responded. We knew that we had some tough times early in the year. This is the time where we want to kind of start progressing. We want to be a playoff team and have that run going into it. We want to be playing our best ball at the end. I think that is what guys are seeing, that's what they are feeling, and that's what we want to keep progressing on throughout the rest of the season. Keep growing as a defense. By the end of this thing, hopefully, we like what we see."

### **On the impact that a positive defensive performance 'has on the rest of the team':**

"It definitely feels good. You feel the buzz around the building. At the same time, it is one of those things where you visualize where you could be and where you saw the team going. Obviously, not where we thought it would be with all of the injuries, but I just want to commend the guys because all of those guys worked their tails off to be in this position, to have us in an opportunity where we have a chance to be playing into the late months of January and February. That's where we want to be. When you talk about bringing a team together, that is usually what it takes. You don't know when it is going to present itself with all of the injuries, but keep having guys step up and knowing their role and even taking on bigger roles. It means a lot for our team. I think everybody sees the growth in what we could be and where we could go. Hats off to those guys just for the continued hard work that they do."

### **On 'the challenge of getting to this point of the season and dealing with injuries':**

"I even go back to my days when I was in Oakland, as a player. We looked great on paper when we had [Pro Football Hall of Famers] Charles Woodson, Randy Moss. You never know how it is going to turn out. You are hoping that it shows like the paper is going to display, but we know we have to go out and put the work in. I think that is what it is about. It may not always look pretty at the beginning. We have to make sure that, as coaches and players, that we all stay on board and keep it going in the direction we want. Like I said, it may not be how we presented it at the beginning, but we wanted to make sure it is like that at the end. That is the goal, I think, that everybody in the room is focusing on."

### **On 'how much previous experience as a player on the team's injuries helps him as a coach now':**

"For that situation, it didn't end pretty for us [*laughter*]. Like I said, it looked great for us at the beginning of the season, but it lets you know, 'Hey, you have to put the work in. You may have all of the athletic [abilities] and skill that you need in order to win it, but if you don't come together as a team, none of that really matters at the end of the day.' I think that is what we are forming here. We are forming into a team that we like to see each and every Sunday and go out there. It has been great to see those guys operate on third down. In the last three weeks, we have been pretty much number one in that position in getting off the field. Trying to do our best to take away their premium guys at different spots. When you see those things come together at the end of the year, I think those are things that you know guys are buying into. They understand what the task is for the week and they are going out and executing and that is what we have kind of been seeing lately."

### **On if the defense has 'limited the playbook' over the last few weeks to 'not give the players as much on their plates':**

"The biggest thing, I think, is that we do have a volume of numbered calls and different personnel groupings to help us express any amount of weakness. Now, all of those things are very interchangeable, but coverages are the same. It's really Xs all over the field, when you think about it. That part, very not complicated, but what we saw in the last couple of weeks is that we had to be different versus Miami, we had to be different versus Tennessee. I think with all of those things that we installed in the spring and in the summer, I think those are the things that are starting to carry over late into these months now. I just think the execution of where we are at now, you go through pretty much a whole season, I think guys really have a hold of it. They really know exactly what they need to do in order to go out and execute it. We don't shy away from that. We know that it can be a lot with the multiple packages, but I think it is something that the guys have been embracing and we're hoping that they will continue to embrace it."