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## Chargers Head Coach Brandon Staley Media Availability

Tuesday, October 17, 2023 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

### On WR Quentin Johnston's development:

"He's at the beginning of his rookie season. Like you said, I think that he is getting more snaps, which is something that we're looking forward to because that allows you to improve, when you're actually out there on the field. The targets will come. There are certainly some games where there will be more than others, but he's just at the beginning. He just needs to keep putting in the right work on the practice field and more opportunities will come. The receiver position, it takes time, as a rookie. We have two outstanding guys outside of him. He just needs to continue to improve and do his part."

### On Johnston 'developing comfort' with QB Justin Herbert:

"Any time that you're a new player establishing a rapport — and that trust and that chemistry — with your quarterback, it's such a timing-based relationship. You're brand new to the NFL and you're brand new with your quarterback. You just need a lot more time on task. Those guys are going to continue to throw before and after practice. It's a work-in-progress. He just needs to keep making the improvements. The fact that he is out there on the field, getting the snaps, that is the thing that is going to allow him to improve, to continue to get out there on the field, being able to see the game, learn the game, feel the game. That is going to create the confidence, not only in himself, but then, obviously, the relationship with Justin [Herbert]."

### On WR Joshua Palmer:

"We really feel strongly about Josh [Palmer]. He is one of these emerging young players in the league. Last year, he really held the rope for us. You're seeing a guy who can separate, a guy that can win versus man-to-man. You've seen him beat the top players in the game. Last night, on that first possession, you saw that run after catch and the speed. He has been able to flourish in a lot of different ways. We can move him around the formation. He has definitely earned that confidence and trust in Justin [Herbert]. You're just seeing a young player that is taking advantage of his opportunities. I thought that him and [WR] Keenan [Allen] were outstanding last night."

### On S Raheem Layne's injury update:

"Raheem Layne has an ACL tear and he will be out for the season."

### On the loss of Layne:

"The special teams contribution, Raheem [Layne] is one of our top special teams players. This is a tough moment for him, but he will be back. He has proven himself, in two years, that he can play in the league. Excited to get him back because he is one of those tough, smart, dependable players that you need. We'll definitely pick it up around him. I thought that he was having a good season for us."

### On if he watched video of the 'pregame skirmish' and if RB Austin Ekeler is 'facing any lingering effects following the pregame skirmish':

"I did not see it and I am not aware of any of the effects."

**On T Rashawn Slater 'playing through an ankle injury':**

"He is toughing out an ankle, just like a lot of players are in the league. He had a good enough performance last night for us to win."

**On evaluating the third-down defense:**

"Capable of being an elite unit, that needs to stop fouling. We're in premium coverages, leverages, and our guys have to play clean football. I think that we're playing with the right variety. I think we're rushing the passer at a high level. I think we're covering people up, taking away their targets. Last night, they had a couple of tough plays. [Cowboys QB] Dak [Prescott] made a couple of loose plays with his legs. From an execution standpoint, our guys are executing the defenses well. What I'm seeing is a unit that is playing at a high level and that we would be feeling, I think, convincingly positive if we hadn't had the fouls."

**On the third-and-18 play where DB Ja'Sir Taylor and CB Michael Davis were both called for illegal contact on the same play:**

"When you are able to watch it — I think that you're wise enough to make your own mind up — you'll see the coverages that we were in, and then you can judge accordingly. Regardless, we're not going to make any excuses for anything that happened in the game. We're not going to make excuses about any type of call, one way or the other. We need to play with cleaner technique in the secondary. It continues to be an emphasis, and will always be an emphasis, especially with the way that things are being officiated in the league. We need to continue to do better."

**On the impact of penalties on opposing offenses converting third downs:**

"I think that penalties make the conversions sort of a much different story. That's where I think that we've been focusing, as coaches, and where we need to continue to put the emphasis on — just playing with the right technique and taking advantage of the leverages that we give you. If you do that, then you will stay penalty-free."

**On the 'game plan' for Cowboys WR CeeDee Lamb last night and how that plan was executed:**

"We made him work. There was a loose play for 23 [yards] there, but there weren't any explosions. There were a lot of catch tackles. We made it tough on him, mixed it up. It's not just him, they have [Cowboys WR Michael] Gallup — that's a highly compensated receiver, as is [Cowboys WR] Brandin Cooks. They have a bunch of guys that you have to take control of. I feel like we did a really good job in the passing game last night, definitely good enough to win."

**On WR Quentin Johnston:**

"We're just five games into his rookie season."

**On if he spoke to Johnston after the final offensive play:**

"Not on that specific play. [Cowboys CB] Stephon [Gilmore] made a good play. There was a lot of pressure on that play. I think that's a situation that we'll all learn from. Quentin just needs to keep improving. There's not a storyline there whatsoever. He just needs to stay on track. He's just at the beginning. We're confident that he'll keep improving. That's all we're going to ask them, is to keep making improvements."

**On the cornerbacks playing in rhythm:**

"Those guys, they have a connection. Those guys play really well together. Again, I thought that they gave really winning performances for us in the passing game. I feel like those guys are going to continue to improve together, but there's full trust within those three [Michael Davis, Asante Samuel Jr., and Ja'Sir Taylor]. Then, obviously, when you factor [S] Derwin [James Jr.] in and [S] Dean [Marlowe], that group is a group that plays well together. Then, bring in [LB] Eric [Kendricks] and [LB Kenneth] K9 [Murray Jr.] back — that group is a group that can win us a lot of football games."

**On OLB Joey Bosa:**

"It's just a work-in-progress. I think he had more snaps yesterday than he did the games before. Just needs to continue to get on the practice field, too. I think the more he practices, the more he's going to get that full timing and rhythm. Then, you'll see the playmaking come as a result of it. Hopefully, we can continue to get him back on that practice field because that's where you're going to make the most improvement."

**On being in close games:**

"I'm not encouraged by losing. That's not something that we're excited about, just being in close games. We expect to win every game that we play. I think our level has been high enough. I don't think that last night that we executed well enough in all three phases to finish the game. They have an excellent team. Like I said, two playoff teams from the year before. There were a lot of good players on that field. We just need to play cleaner football in all three phases to win that game. We're not satisfied at all by the result. I'm definitely not discouraged, if that's kind of what you're insinuating. We're right in it. We've had five games. I know the one thing that we can say, for sure, is that we're battle-tested. I think that is a truth of these first five games, that we're a battle-tested team."

**On ineligible player downfield penalties:**

"It's the same call for an RPO-oriented play. I have no further comment on that."

**On the rushing offense:**

"As I mentioned last night, and I think it's the truth of the film, it takes all 11. We have to be more physical at the point of attack. Their movement was disruptive to us last night. Our backs have to stay on their tracks and trust the scheme. Then, you need your perimeter players to block the run support. I feel like we need to make a lot of improvements in that phase because it wasn't good enough last night."

**On QB Justin Herbert:**

"I thought that he competed in the game, as I mentioned after the game. I thought that he hung tough. That's a really good pass rush that we went against. I thought that the made enough plays for us to win the game. There are going to be tough games like that where you just have to make one or two plays. I just think that, as an offense, we didn't operate consistently enough last night, and it was in all phases — it was in the run game and in the pass game. I just don't think that we operated with consistency last night. It was a tough night, that is a good defense, so I give full respect to them. But, we need to be more consistent in order to finish that game."

**On the rushing touchdown by Cowboys QB Dak Prescott:**

"[S] Derwin [James Jr.] should be behind the football there. [OLB] Tuli [Tuipulotu] was aggressive to the dive element. We should have a guy behind the ball for Dak [Prescott]."