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Chargers Week 1 Media Availability

Thursday, September 9, 2021 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR JOE LOMBARDI

On 'slowing down' Washington's defensive front:

"I think it's a number of factors; smart play selection, protection plan. It's obviously an elite front. Our guys have to come ready to play, and we have to be smart in the way that we handle them. It'll be an all-day affair with those four."

On RB Austin Ekeler's injury status:

"I'm not sure. [Head Coach] Brandon [Staley] probably knows more than me, as far as where that is. We feel good about that room, so we'll deal with whatever gameday brings us."

On RB Justin Jackson:

"I think we feel good about what we saw before he got nicked up. He's come back, looks healthy, and has given us everything that we thought we saw before the injury. We feel good about Justin."

On any 'anxiety' involving the offensive line:

"A lot of practice reps, I think that counts and matters. We have four really seasoned veterans, and then we have [T Rashawn] Slater, who has been doing a great job. I'm pretty confident in that group. I always have anxiety about everything, but I feel confident in that group coming together."

On T Rashawn Slater's development:

"I think it's been a steady ascension. He impressed from day one. You could see the talent that made him the pick that he was. Just the way that he approaches his game. We have a number of guys like this that have really great talent, and then a great approach to their profession. I think he's kind of seasoned beyond his years, so I'm really excited to see him play. He's drawn a tough hand for this first game. I think that he's a mentally tough guy. We think that he's going to battle and do a good job. I'm sure whoever he's blocking will win their share, too, but I feel fortunate to have him manning our left side."

On if the staff watched Slater's matchup against Washington DE Chase Young when the pair went against each other in college:

"We certainly did in the draft process. He knows the player, he's gone against him, so it won't be foreign to him. I don't think that it'll be too big for him, either. We'll get him settled in and I think that he will do well."

On the sustaining impact of Slater and Young's matchup in 2019:

"It's a good storyline. There's probably some reality to it. I'm always thinking in the micro, like taking it one play at a time. Those stories, like I said, they're good headlines. As a pro, every game, every play, you have something to prove. A lot of it is just tuning out the noise, not making it bigger than it is. Hey, you're a left tackle blocking a premium end; you're going to have a lot of these, so get used to it."

On if all four tight ends on the 53-man roster will be active on Sunday:

"I think special teams will have a lot to do with that. You said it right at the beginning, that's a good question for Brandon [Staley]."

On if he will add to the offensive gameplan up until Saturday night:

"I'll probably try to avoid those late adds and try to get everything in the practice plan by Friday. There are times, as you keep watching film, every now and then, a great idea pops up. I think that we have smart enough guys. You don't want to overload them on a Saturday, but one or two ideas, certainly if they're great ideas — if it's something that we feel really good about — we're not going to not put it in. We grind at the plan pretty good and spend a lot of time on it. I'll try to avoid that as much as possible, though."

On Staley's influence on potentially adding to the gameplan late in the week:

"I think that he's aggressive in that manner. He doesn't mind pushing the envelope in that way. I'm sensitive, especially early, of not putting that kind of stress on them, letting these guys go out and play fast. Like I said, we'll avoid it as much as possible. If it's one of these ideas that require a lot of moving parts, we might put it on ice for a week or two. If it's a five-star play, we'll certainly try to get it going. I don't anticipate a lot of that, especially early."

On the tight ends group contributing in the run game:

"Like everything, we're going to tilt what we do to highlight their strengths. We're not asking them to do something that they're not capable of, but I think that they've done a good job in camp. We've seen a lot of evidence of how they're playing against our defense, so we feel confident in those guys."

On if working with Passing Game Coordinator/Quarterbacks Coach Shane Day and Run Game Coordinator/Offensive Line Coach Frank Smith has been 'smooth':

"It has. We have a really good staff here. Frank [Smith] kind of heads up the run game, with [Assistant Offensive Line Coach] Shaun's [Sarrett] help, [Running Backs Coach] Derrick's [Foster] help and [Tight Ends Coach] Kevin's [Koger] help. The rest of the guys are pitching in. It's been a good group, good synergy on that staff. A group effort that I feel really good about."

On QB Justin Herbert's preparation for Week 1:

"He's very smart and an extremely hard worker. He has a process in place. You can just see his comfort level in going into the huddle and calling plays. Every week, going back to the spring, it's just gotten better and better. Even during the week — we're cut down the verbiage a bit from what I was used to in New Orleans, but we still have some wordy plays and he picks it up pretty quickly. I feel pretty good about where he is. One thing that's exciting is that I've been so impressed with him, but the football that we've played has kind of been half-football in a way, in that the second reaction plays — because it's not real football, necessarily, in practice, in regards to sacks and everything. When I watch film from last year, seeing him break contain and make plays with his legs and his arm, I'm excited to see that element come alive, as well."

On if WR Mike Williams is 'prepared for Sunday':

"Yes. Certainly, mentally, he's been locked in, even with the injury. He's not a guy that I've seen mental errors from. He gets lined up and knows what to do. We'll be smart. I think that his conditioning is good, but we'll keep an eye on that because he did miss some time. We feel real good about [WR] Josh [Palmer] and his ability to come in and play his role. Josh is a guy that's going to have to move around and fill in — [WR] Jalen [Guyton] is the same way. I think we're going to be just fine."

On seeing the first-team offense in a game setting:

"It's exciting. The first game is always a very exciting situation. There's maybe a little bit more fog and friction of war because it's the first game. You've seen what this defense has done for a whole year, but they've had a whole offseason to prepare. They don't usually show a lot of new stuff in the preseason. There's an excitement, there's an anxiety, but I'm more excited. I think that it's a really good group. I think they're ready to go, too — they're ready to go out there and get this thing kicked off."

On Staley and Herbert's involvement in the game-planning process:

“Good. I’ve said it a million times, Justin [Herbert] is really bright and he works really hard at it, and he’s a perfectionist. He makes sure that he gets it. That’s been good. He’s been real receptive and has picked things up really quickly. It’s really nice to have Brandon [Staley] because he’s a guy that is very familiar with our offense, and certainly what we did in New Orleans. He’ll watch film and he’ll have some ideas, and they always make sense. Sometimes defensive coaches come in and they might have good ideas, but they might not match your offense — he’s like having another offensive coach on staff. It’s been fantastic. Like I said, the rest of the staff has been really good helping out with this. It’s been all positive.”

On Herbert's ability to avoid 'taking shots':

“One thing that’s been impressive for the young guy — and I’m going to use one of Brandon’s [Staley] phrases — he’s not a guy that you see getting stuck very often. He gets through his progression, he plays with rhythm. I don’t think he’s a guy that’s going to take hits because he holds the ball too long. Certainly, I think it was the first game against Kansas City where he had that big collision on the sidelines — I think he ran someone over. Those are things that you have to be smart with. For a quarterback, the number one thing that you’re responsible for is being available. Competitive guys have trouble doing that, protecting themselves when it’s time, knowing when the journey is over. I think he’s kind of learned that lesson. I feel pretty good that he’ll do the right thing.”

On TE Tre' McKitty:

“I think that you see all of the potential. He’s a strong player. Very optimistic about his future. He’ll find his role, so we feel good about what he’s going to bring to our team.”

On Washington's linebackers group and secondary corps:

“First thing you’d say is that they’re a really well-coached team. They play hard, they run to the ball and they tackle well. There are a lot of plays that you see that you think the ball is completed, or the ball gets on the perimeter, and you’re just used to seeing the angles and you’re like, ‘Oh, this should go for 10 [yards],’ but they rally and tackle it for five [yards]. They’re DBs that like to challenge. They’re competitive. Like I said, they play hard, they run fast and they tackle well. We’ll have our work cut out for us, that’s for sure. They were one of the top-ranked defenses last year. They’re pretty strong across the board.”

On how excited he is to see Herbert's development in his second NFL season:

“Very. After watching that rookie year, you have such high opinions, high expectations of him, and he’s met and exceeded them all. With anything new, there are going to be some growing pains, I’m sure. He’s not a guy that makes the same mistake twice. He learns. If he makes a bad read, he learns the second time. I think he’s outstanding right now. I just think that every game, he’s going to get better and better. Very excited. I’m happy that we have him.”

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR RENALDO HILL**On the defensive unit preparing for Week 1:**

“I think the whole group is excited. From the staff to the players, we have talked about this for a long time, knowing that this is game week. You can feel the excitement, you can feel the urgency. We like how the week has been going. I think everybody is ready to roll.”

On Washington QB Ryan Fitzpatrick:

“Experienced guy. He’s seen a lot of looks, he’s seen pretty much anything you can throw at him. We just have to be sound on our assignments. We can’t give up the explosives. We got to make him work for everything that he gets. Hopefully, we can try to speed him up in that way, where the offense has to press a little. But at the same time, he has played a lot of ball. He’s going to know what we are doing, just like we are going to know what he’s doing. It’s going to be a game where we just have to play smart football. That’s our plan.”

On if it's challenging to prepare for playing against Fitzpatrick:

“It is. He can play out the pocket. He can make those checks and get them in the right plays, but we have rules. We have to be able to apply our rules and just play smart football. Like I said, if we don’t give up those explosives, we feel good about the plan that have right now. We just have to play good, sound football.”

On if he ever faced off against Fitzpatrick during his playing career:

"I believe I have, but it has been a while so. I know he has been on the team; I don't know if he was the guy. I've coached against him for a number of years. You've seen what he's done in the past. When he was in Tampa Bay, he had those guys rolling. We watched a lot of his film with Tampa Bay. Similar scheme and the same guy, but we know he's seen a lot of football. He can do some damage. We just have to be smart with what we do."

On if playing against Fitzpatrick and Washington's defense in the season opener is 'a good test' for the defense:

"It definitely is. Week 1, un-scouted looks. New players on there and a new offensive scheme. With [Washington WR] Dymari Brown and how they are going to use those guys and incorporate them, you are always trying to place those guys in position. Week 1, you don't have that foundation that you build with three or four games. So, we have to play our rules and play our responsibilities. Communication is going to be key. Everybody is talking and on the same page."

On Washington RB Antonio Gibson:

"Explosive and size. When you see him in person, this is a big six-plus-footer, 200-something pounds, who can roll. He gets going running inside, and he's good in the passing game. He gives you problems. We have to identify where both of those backs are aligned and what they do."

On scouting a rookie running back based on what they showed in the preseason:

"It can be a scheme. Maybe in college they asked him to do some different things — not saying that he can't run between the tackles now. Like I said, I've watched him use it in all aspects. He's a complete back, and they are maximizing that. We just have to have our antennas up when he's in the game and be aware of the certain locations that he's in."

On similarities and differences Gibson and RB Austin Ekeler:

"Different size, different traits of that nature. As far as them being able to run inside and then get into the passing game, it definitely helped us a lot. We know that we are going to see a bigger guy with bigger mass once he does touch the ball, not saying that Austin is not strong when he gets it, but it's just two different combinations you get with Gibson and [Washington RB] J.D. [McKissic]. So, it's going to be a tough task because they both can do a lot of the same things, but different body types."

On preparing for Washington TE Logan Thomas and S Derwin James Jr.'s involvement:

"I think it's just going to be our scheme in general. I think it's going to be a mixture of a lot of guys matching up against Logan, based on the call. But, we have to be aware of him, and we will be, and know what he likes to do in certain spots. If you start to move to one guy, they have playmakers all over the field, so we just have to do a good job within our scheme and do a good job of identifying those guys where they are at those locations and what they like to do in those spots."

On limiting the ability of Washington's pass-catchers to gain yards after the catch:

"Yeah, we put together those films each week, those guys being explosive in space. It's not just going to take one guy bringing these guys down once they are in space. We got to have multiple guys getting to the ball and getting these guys down because they are explosive in space. From the receiving core to the tight ends and to the backs, we have to do a really good job with that."

On preparing for Washington WR Terry McLaurin:

"It's tough. With all of those guys that they have, they have a good offensive personnel. When you move the coverage to one guy, you can really explode the other guy. We want to do a good job of making sure that we move it around. We talk about that throughout our whole defense, trying to make sure that not one guy always feels the stress. We know they have a lot of skill guys, a lot of explosive guys. We just have to continue to move our down around and try to make it difficult. I think when you have been giving one viewpoint, that's when fits will come alive. I think that's when those other guys can scheme, knowing that they either have a one-on-one and that they can take advantage of that matchup. We want to do a good job of moving our defense around to really task all of those guys."

On if LB Kenneth Murray Jr. can ‘live up to his first-round potential’

“Definitely. First-round potential, it’s all there. We are hoping that we get the most of Kenneth this year, and I know we will. He has worked extremely hard. We have talked about playing him downhill, being back, and being able to run sideline-to-sideline. He has all of those traits. I am excited to watch him do it this weekend.”

On LB Drue Tranquill and Murray contributing to the linebacker group:

“That’s been big, even with that whole trio — you may have K9 [Kenneth Murray Jr.], you may have [LB] Drue [Tranquill] down and [LB] Kyzir [White] out, but having these guys altogether Week 1 and ready to roll, they know the competition at that position, so all of those guys want to play at a high level. That’s what they have done all training camp. I am excited for all three of those guys because we have a really good linebacking core. I know whoever is out there on the football field, they are going to go out there and get the job done and do it at a high level.”

On if he has gotten any sleep since the birth of his daughter:

“Not at all. Every time she moves, I pop up. I told the guys that I had may have had two, three hours of sleep, but that’s about it. I told the guys, as well, that it’s game week, so it’s on. I’m happy she came on a Tuesday, that’s a beautiful thing. There’s been no sleep, but like I said, we have a game to win.”

On the potential of his daughter being born this weekend:

“I thought about it long and hard, what the flight path would have been like — if I were already in Washington and that was the case, some of the other guys would have had to hold the reigns. I thought about it a lot. I’m glad that it’s out of the way. Hopefully, I’m getting a lot of pictures and videos while we’re in the hotel on Saturday getting ready for the game.”

TACKLE RASHAWN SLATER**On preparing for his first NFL regular season game:**

“I’m excited. Thankfully, we had preseason. I feel like that first scrimmage we had at SoFi Stadium, and then playing against the Rams, really helped me get that anxiety out from playing in a [professional] stadium for the first time. Right now, I’m excited and ready for the season to finally start and see what this team is going to do.”

On learning from the veterans along the offensive line:

“It’s been huge; everything from having all those veterans on the O-line to being able to go against veterans like [OLB] Joey [Bosa] at practice. As far as situations I could’ve come into, I’d say this is optimal. I’m always asking [T] Bryan [Bulaga] and [C] Corey [Linsley] about their experience, how they approached things. And then I get the reps in real-time going against Joey. It’s the best of the best.”

On his conversations with T Bryan Bulaga:

“He and I have different playstyles, but at the same time, I’m able to learn a lot from him. A lot of it is the mental, how he approaches situations in his head. Some of it is also technical. He says to me, ‘Well, you’re good at this. That’s not what I do.’ He’s able to acknowledge that and show me how I can do my own thing while also getting the big picture.”

On practicing against OLB Joey Bosa:

“It’s been amazing – definitely very beneficial for me just because he’s one of the best, if not the best, at rushing the passer. Being able to get that experience helps me relax and know that I’ve already done that. If I can win against him, I can win against everyone. It’s been huge for me.”

On Bosa ‘joking with him’ at practice:

“I don’t know about joking, but there would be moments. He’s a funny guy. He’d get me and have something to say. I wouldn’t say joking, but I’ve picked up a lot. If he were to beat me at something, then I would ask him what I could do better, what he saw. He’s very sharing with the information. I was able to pick his brain, too, and learn from that.”

On the matchup between himself and Washington DE Chase Young:

“I think Chase is a really good player. I went up against him a couple times in college. He’s taken big steps since coming up to the NFL. He’s a much more refined player than I saw in college. I’m excited to do that again. It’s really cool to be able to have that matchup – someone I’ve gone against – in my first game. I’m excited about it.”

On if there’s something to prove against Young on Sunday:

“Maybe. I look at it like that’s a past matchup. This is a totally different environment. He’s taken steps since then. I’ve taken steps since then. I don’t really think about that past matchup as having any sort of factor in it. It’s all about protecting [QB] Justin [Herbert], moving the ball. Whatever I can do to help us win.”

On the skills Young’s refined since entering the NFL:

“His technique. He’s added more to his toolbox. He’s a lot smoother.”

On trash talk:

“I don’t really talk on the field unless someone else starts it. That’s just not my style. I tend to be out of breath, so I’m saving it. I don’t remember him talking to me. If [Young] does, he won’t get much of a response.”