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Chargers Week 9 Media Availability

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HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

On the injury status of CB Michael Davis, CB Asante Samuel Jr. and RB Justin Jackson:

“No changes. Vato [Davis], with his hamstring, will be kind of day-to-day. I don’t think that he will practice today. Asante is still in the [concussion] protocol. J.J. [Jackson] is still the same, kind of day-to-day. I do not think that he will practice today.”

On if QB Justin Herbert has a hand injury ‘lingering from the Kansas City game’ that ‘could be affecting his performance’:

“No.”

On if Herbert’s ‘air yards per throw’ is where he would like it to be:

“I think that we have a lot of design in the plan to push it down the field. I know that if you study the type of plays that we have run, a lot of our design is to get it down the field. Whether or not it makes it there, that’s a different story. We’re always trying to hunt explosions in the passing game. At the same time, you’re always hunting completions, too. You want to complete passes and stay on schedule. A lot of the passing game is pass protection, too. You’re factoring in who is blocking for you and what is on the other side, what type of defenses you are facing. When you have premium wide outs and a premium passing game, in terms of targets that we have, there are going to be certain teams that want to put a roof over the deep part of the field. So, maybe a designer play-action pass or a designer drop-back pass doesn’t get to 30 or 40 yards of air time, maybe it is a four- or five-yard check-down [pass] to a back or a tight end that gets you 10 to 12 [yards], which would be a nice chunk. I think that is where we have to find the balance, to be able to attack the deep part of the field and make people respect the deep part of the field. But, also, explosive passes can come in a lot of other ways, too; in the screen game, quick game that takes advantage of man-to-man, those types of things. We have a quarterback that can access any part of the field, which is a good thing, but I do think that it is really more about completions. It’s about finding completions and staying on schedule, and being aggressive and setting the terms to the defense, not the other way around.”

On if opposing defenses are putting an emphasis on containing Herbert’s deep passes:

“I think so. I think they know the types of passes that he can make. I think they know the types of receivers that we have and the types of tight ends that we have — they can get there. From a formula standpoint, if I were playing against us — which I did all through training camp — you’re not letting the ball go there. You’re trying to say that you’re not going to get here. I think that we just have to find the balance of being prolific in the passing attack in other ways. Then, when that scheme dictates itself, then you’re attacking, staying aggressive and giving your guys opportunities. Like I said, I like our design right now. If we can continue to practice more, be together more, then I think that our execution will improve. That’s what we’re really after right now, that execution piece.”

On if Herbert has ‘taken what the defense gives him more’ as of late:

“Any time that a quarterback feels pressure early in the game, or there is some consistency to where the pressure is coming from, it can affect you at times. He has to play the position, trust the pocket and trust his instincts. He has both of those — trust in his teammates and trust in his instincts. If there are some plays in there where his feet and his eyes don’t match up, it’s going back to his fundamentals and the timing and the rhythm of the play, working with [Passing Game Coordinator/Quarterbacks Coach] Shane [Day] and [Offensive Coordinator] Joe [Lombardi] on all of those quarterback elements that are important. A lot of times, it’s not the design of the play, it’s just your fundamentals within the play. I think that’s part of being new in an offense, just really trusting your feet and your eyes. I think that the last two games, he would tell you that he can be better in some of those areas. At the same time, we have to do a great job around him — coaching and playing — because I know that he is going to make the improvements. In the passing game, where we are at right now, we’ve shown that we can really throw the football, but we want to be able to show that we can do it consistently all of the time, regardless of the coverage, regardless of the gameplan. I think that’s where we are at right now.”

On WR Jalen Guyton:

“J.G. has done some good things for us. I like the way that he has practiced. I think that he is really earning Justin’s [Herbert] confidence. He stays with him after practice every single day. That’s a positive as a young player. I think that he has been able to create some positive plays. I think that he has fallen short on a couple — the Kansas City play in the end zone, the Baltimore on the sideline, there are a couple of near misses for him. I think that’s where he can solidify more production if he can finish some of those plays in the deep part of the field. We need him to be that guy that can get to the deep part of the field for us and be a guy that can run after the catch, too, because he has shown that he can do that. I think that he is still developing. I’m glad that we have him. We’re just going to continue to try and search for that consistency and that right role within the plan. I know that he is working hard.”

On if the staff could ‘put a little bit more on WR Joshua Palmer’s plate to assist Guyton’:

“I think that you’ve seen that the last couple of weeks. I really thought that Josh had a good game against Baltimore. I know that we didn’t have the type of performance offensively, but I thought that Josh played well in that game, and I thought that he played well in the last game, too. I think that he’s getting more and more confident. I know that he and Jalen [Guyton] are both with Justin [Herbert] after practice, attached to the hip. I think if you guys saw that, you would see that these two guys are really trying to earn the trust of this quarterback. Both of those guys in that third [WR] role, there is a place for them in that third role in different ways. That’s what we’re going to try to do, try and feature both of them. I think that they’re both continuing to improve. They’re both young guys, so I’m excited to keep coaching them. [Wide Receivers Coach] Chris Beatty is doing an awesome job coaching them. We’re going to continue to try and find those right roles, within the plan, for both of them.”

On if opposing defenses have defended WR Mike Williams any differently over the last few games:

“Specifically him? No. I think that it’s just us in the passing game. Against New England, there was more two [safety] deep zone. Baltimore didn’t play us that way, but New England did. New England played a lot more zone defense, whether it was two deep or three deep, against us. As a receiver, your touches are going to come, maybe not in a spectacular fashion, like early in the season, or that the type of volume of throws within the plan. It’s kind of like [pass] rushers and guys that are kind of productivity-driven positions. Your catches can come in bunches and within a specific plan and flow of the game and stuff like that. We’re trying to feature Mike a bunch in the plan. For instance, we had a really good shot play that was open versus New England. We kind of were, at the snap, not on the same page from an alignment snap-point type of operation issue. If you hit that, then, now, you’re kind of rolling. We didn’t get that rhythm and production that we had at the beginning of the season with him. I know that he is working hard. That’s something that is really important to me. I think that he feels comfortable within this offense and he knows that we’re trying to get it to him. When you have guys like him and [WR] Keenan [Allen] that are feature players — [RB] Austin [Ekeler], [TE] Jared [Cook] — what you’re trying to do is say that Justin [Herbert] has all of you available in this plan, and that we’re going to try and get it to you the best way that we can. Be patient because the ball is coming your way. That’s certainly what I’ve tried to tell those guys. When you have a good group of guys, it’s going to get spread around sometimes. I think that he got hot early. To say that he has cooled off as of late, I don’t know if, ‘cooled off,’ would be the right way of saying it, but I know that that hot streak is going to come back to him soon.”

On having offensive ‘alignment issues’ through Week 8:

“No matter how long that you’ve been together, I think that a clean operation is what you’re after. For us, offensively, some of our issues can be traced back to that. Not all of them. What we’ve tried to do since the bye is be more exact in all three phases of the game. Now that you’ve kind of established that this is who we are and this is who we have, now you can dive into those specifics and really demand those details from one another. I think that is where we are at. I think that this group of guys is going to pour into the work this week and get there. Offensively, we know that we’re capable of more.”

On Eagles Defensive Coordinator Jonathan Gannon:

“He’s one of my very, very best friends. He’s one of the best men I know. He’s one of the best coaches that I know. I certainly would not be here without him. We started competing against each other in the fourth grade, playing AAU basketball. We come from similar families. We kind of grew up on the basketball court together, competing against one another. We were both point guards — similar, I think, type of players and similar type of competitors, just got to know one another. We stayed in close touch in college when we were both playing. Then, after college, when we both got into coaching, we started to get really close. Once you’re in that same fraternity, we became like best friends. He climbed the ladder fast. He was in the NFL at an early age. He has always meant a lot to me. He’s been around a lot of great coaches. He’s coached a lot of great players. He’s the godfather to my youngest boy. His wife, Gina, and their family mean a lot to me and Amy. He’s one of the best guys I know. I know that Philly is really, really lucky to have him because he’s one of the best coaches I know and one of the best people I know.”

On which one of them was the better AAU basketball point guard:

“J.G., if he hadn’t gotten hurt at Louisville, would still be playing in the NFL. He was the better athlete, for sure. We had some great matchups. That’s what really brought us together, that competition on the basketball court. He has a heck of a player, though. He actually could have played basketball at Louisville, too. As good of a football player that he was, he could have played for [former Louisville Head Coach] Rick Pitino and those guys. He was that caliber of player.”

On learning from the head coaches that he has gone against thus far this season:

“[Washington Head Coach] Ron Rivera is an NFL Coach of the Year. [Chiefs Head Coach] Andy Reid, Super Bowl champion and coach of the year. [Former Raiders Head Coach] Jon Gruden. This stretch to open up the season, I’m learning from everybody I go against head-to-head. Every matchup is a little bit different and every coach has a unique style. [Cowboys Head Coach] Mike McCarthy, there are a bunch of great coaches that we’ve gone against so far this season. I think that in every matchup, there’s that game within the game. The inventory of experiences that a lot of these guys have — that have been doing it for so much longer than I have — you’re trying to draw from. I’ve read about a lot of these guys and followed them as a young coach coming up. That’s what you’re always trying to do, learn about your competition. I think that if you’re a competitor, that’s a big part of it; knowing your competition and knowing who you’re up against. When you do go head-to-head, regardless of how it goes, you take away those meaningful experiences. These last two weeks, there have been a lot of lessons to learn, but there were a lot of lessons to learn at the beginning of the season against those guys in wins, too. More than anything, you have to be yourself and you have to incorporate the lessons that you’ve learned into your own game. Then, do your best for your team. I think that’s where we are at right now. We’ve had two tough losses. I think that’s going to reveal a lot of you — responding when things aren’t going as well. That’s part of the NFL. We haven’t won a game in three weeks because we had a bye, so how are you going to get your team ready to play? How are you guys going to practice? What’s the mood like within the building? Are you going to change? That’s something that I’m going through right now for the first time as a head coach. We’ve lost two games in a row. That’s the first time that’s happened for me. What are you going to do to respond? That’s what we’ve been working hard at this week with our players and coaches. I think that is something I’m learning from those guys, is you know why they have stood the test of time; it’s because they have a lot of that consistency in performance, getting their team to play, knowing who their team is and being able to push the right buttons and learn from their mistakes. I’m hoping to do that, too.”

On the consistency in his message to the team:

“It’s very consistent. I think that’s what everyone’s looking for — consistency. Not the same message, but the consistency in how you’re doing things. The message is every week has a life of its own. Every week’s a different week, but our approach is going to remain consistent. What we’re actually saying and how we go about the week and specifics of the week are going to change; but our approach, our philosophy and how we do things is going to stand the test of time. And that’s what players want — players want that consistency in performance from their coaches and that allows you to be as good as you can be. Knowing where you need to be is a big part of it and every week’s different. Your team changes a little bit — injuries and circumstances. You have to be where you need to be. That’s what I’m learning and trying to do.”

On Eagles QB Jalen Hurts:

“Jalen’s a really tough cover. Number one, he’s a winner. You go back to his high school days in Texas, to his time at Bama and Oklahoma — the guy’s a winner. There’s a reason why he’s the starting quarterback there. They’re coming off a really big win, and he’s the guy that can really elevate the performance of the people around him. I think people believe in him and what he can do. That Tampa Bay game is a good example; they were behind, but he comes roaring back and brings them back. That’s the type of player he is. He certainly presents a lot of issues in the run game because of the plus-one issue of him being able to truly carry the football like a running back. And in the pocket as a passer, he’s able to affect the pass rush plan because of how effective he is as a runner. He’s got a thick lower body. He’s tough to tackle. He’s fast. He’s a young player, so he’s learning a lot every game. You can see that he’s getting the chemistry with those guys, those young receivers. They have a lot of young receivers, and they’re getting that chemistry together. That response they had last week coming off a tough loss says a lot about him because they went on the road, won a big game and he played extremely well. He’s definitely a difficult guy to defend.”

On LB Kenneth Murray Jr.:

“K9 is going to work back into practice. His status for the game is still day-to-day, up in the air. He’s going to work back into practice this week in individuals. I’m excited to see him out there today.”

On CBs Tevaughn Campbell and Ryan Smith:

“I thought T.C. and Ryan came into the game and held their own. We played a substantial part of the game with them and I think that said a lot about their performance. Our secondary coaching staff does a great job getting all those guys ready to play. I thought their performance against New England was reflective of that. Now, we’re going to see them more in a leading role this week. We’re hoping to get some guys back, but if we have to play with those guys as starters, they’re going to be ready to play. We’re going to try and feature their games as much as we can and get the guys behind them ready to play. That’s a big part of the NFL; playing when people are down. We’re going to find out a lot about ourselves this week.”

On the team not making any trades prior to the deadline:

“It goes back to my statement on Monday about value with the opportunities and where we’re at right now. I think the deadline came and went and this year was a quiet period for us. I think our approach is that each year has a life of its own. We’re going to try and assess our team the best way we can and be aggressive when we can. If we can’t, we’re going to move on to the next part of player acquisition, which is free agency, then the draft. We’ll keep it moving that way.”

On Murray’s role and his impact on the linebacker group:

“I think K9’s role is evolving for us. We certainly see him as a starting linebacker for us in any capacity. We think he’s a really quality player, and what I think this injury has done is it has allowed us more time to develop that role. I think you’ll see K9 come back and I’m excited to see him out there. He can do a lot of things for us, and I think we got a good little sample of him at the beginning of the year and in training camp. Moving forward, we’re going to need him out there — he has the type of athleticism and play-making ability that needs to be out there for us. I’m excited to get him back into practice.”

WIDE RECEIVER JOSHUA PALMER

On his first touchdown catch:

“It was a two-minute drill. They called ‘all-go’ and I ran the route as best as I could — straight line. I saw [QB] Justin [Herbert] throw the ball up and I wanted to make a play.”

On if he thought he’d make the catch:

“I was 100% sure. When the balls in the air, I don’t think receivers think about the possibility of not catching it. We want to catch every ball. We put a lot of work in every day after practice, high pointing the ball. That’s what I wanted to show.”

On the significance of the touchdown:

“It was a special moment. Obviously, if we’d gotten the on-sides kick and had been able to tie the game, it would’ve hit better. But I tried to do my best to give the team a chance to win or tie the game. It’s one I’ll remember forever.”

On his growth in the offense:

“I feel like I am growing. I have guys like [WR] Mike [Williams], [WR Jalen] JG [Guyton] and [WR] Keenan [Allen] that are teaching me a lot. The blueprint is right in front of me, I just have to pay attention to it.”

On his role in the offense:

“There’s always opportunities, that’s one thing we preach in our receivers’ room — being ready for that moment. It’s something I like to believe; the player doesn’t care who makes it. The ball’s going to be thrown somewhere, and someone has to make the play.”

On the confidence boost in scoring his first career touchdown:

“I’ve always had confidence in being around great leaders like [WR] Keenan [Allen], [WR] Mike [Williams] and [WR Jalen] JG [Guyton] and my coaching staff. Even the defensive guys push me, every day. I develop confidence every day throughout practice. It’s just great to be able to show it to the world on gameday.”

On what he’s adjusted to since entering the NFL:

“The speed, you have to see things a lot faster.”

On staying after practice:

“That won’t stop until I finish playing this game. You’ll hear it every time.”

On the chemistry between himself and QB Justin Herbert:

“It’s grown a lot, but it’s been growing since the first day we walked in — growing with everybody. Justin has a lot of trust in us, and we have a lot of trust in Justin.”

On his understanding of the playbook:

“It’s going well. Just learning different ways to remember the plays — different ways to study. It’s all different for everybody, but I’m now finding my groove for how I remember plays and how I make my way through the offense.”

On advice he’s gotten from the receiving core:

“Just critiquing my game. For example, if I run the route the way it shouldn’t have been run, [WR Keenan Allen] he comes to me and tells me how I should’ve ran it. And then he’ll work with me to do it.”

On his expected role in the offense:

“Whenever they put me in, if I have to block, if I have to run a route, if I have to be a decoy, if I have to catch the ball — I’m going to do it.”

On his favorite part of being in the NFL:

“Being around professionals. I’m at the highest level of the game — every time I come into the building; I have to be the best route-runner in the NFL. Every time I come in; I’m going to learn something new. I wake up every morning understanding that, and I look for things to improve on every day.”

On if he kept his touchdown ball:

“Yes, I kept it.”

On his assignments in the scheme:

“I move around to different spots. Whatever they want me to do in that play, I move around for that specific play.”

On whom he had at the game:

“I had my girlfriend and my cousin. It was great to have them there. But family texted me, dad called me, mom called me. I wish we’d gotten the win, but I was happy to see the support I had.”

LINEBACKER DRUE TRANQUILL**On his return from injury:**

“The pectoral is feeling solid. I’m really happy with the recovery and what we did. It felt really good in the game. I got in a couple positions there that were very similar to the tackle on [Browns RB] Kareem [Hunt] and it held up pretty well for me.”

On Eagles QB Jalen Hurts:

“He ties in a lot of elements you see in college football with RPO [run-pass option] and the zone-read game. When you have an extra guy — the quarter back running the ball — the math gets a little funky and you really have to be on your P’s and Q’s. He’s a competitor more than anything, and he is going to certainly have his team and his offense ready to play. We’re going to have to show up and play physical and stop the run early.”

On improvements to the run defense:

“Over the bye week, we put an emphasis on it. This has been evolving into a passing league, but you can’t lose sight of the run game. If the team is able to establish the run, they can control the time of possession, they can keep the ball out of our explosive offense’s hands. We just put an emphasis on being better, taking on double teams better, stacking and tracking, seeing the path of the bag better. I think just emphasizing our techniques allowed us to play better last week against New England.”

On DL Justin Jones:

“He’s fantastic. He’s really explosive off the ball, has great hands. As a second-level player, you can always appreciate when a guy can take up two and you can kind of stack, track and find the ball and do your thing. Justin certainly does that for us.”

On LB Kyzir White:

“I just think he’s so confident and comfortable out there. He’s just playing what he feels. He’s not trying to be robotic and be right or be in a certain spot. He’s just getting back to football and doing what he loves. He seems to be getting his hands on the ball a lot; force some fumbles, get interceptions being at the right place at the right time. It’s awesome to see all his hard work pay off with the production we have seen so far.”

On the first half of the season:

“Primarily, it’s been a little tougher on our edge guys. Asking [OLB] Joey Bosa to drop into coverage, guys who are typically just handing the dirt for three downs who have been rushing the passer, I think they have done such a tremendous job taking on that responsibility. You have one of the premier pass rushers in the league dropping as a quarter-flat defender, as a seam-flat defender. It helps our defense in terms of what the offense has to account for. Joey’s done that for us. Guys like [OLB] Uchenna Nwosu, [LB] Kyler Fackrell, all these guys have done that for us. It certainly adds an element to the defense.”

On the pass defense:

“We have great players and great coaches. We’re able to get a lot of two-on-ones. Post-snap, the communication on the backend is fantastic. Whether it shoves, pushes — whatever it is to get two on routes and two on those deep balls, it really forces quarterbacks to check it down so our linebackers can come and make plays. I think that’s probably the primary thing we talk about, getting two-on-one in those up-field routes.”

On Eagles TE Dallas Goedert:

“From watching film this morning, he’s tough, competitive, versatile. He’s good at blocking, he’ll be in line blocking, he’ll be spread out running routes; he’s crafty in his route running. One of the routes we really saw on tape was what we call the ‘banana route.’ You don’t see a lot of tight ends do it because it’s a longer-developing route where he runs in and over and then is able to get back into a seven cut. Routes like that, it speaks to his athleticism. We’re going to be ready for him and be ready to D him up.”

On the Eagles offense:

“It’s the awareness that they could take the top off any time. We really have to be on top of it in the back end in terms of our communication, staying on top of routes. I think it’s an awareness more than anything. I don’t think schematically that it changes anything, but we have to be on top of our communication and make sure they can’t leak anything out on the back end.”