

TRANSCRIPTS

714.540.7100 ⚡ chargers.com ⚡ @chargers



Josh.Rupprecht@chargers.nfl.com ⚡ Jennifer.Rojas@chargers.nfl.com ⚡ Jamaal.LaFrance@chargers.nfl.com

Brock.Anderson@chargers.nfl.com ⚡ Danny.Markino@chargers.nfl.com ⚡ Jordan.Colquitt@chargers.nfl.com ⚡ Leonie.Strehl@chargers.nfl.com

Chargers Week 14 Media Availability

Wednesday, December 6, 2023 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

On WR Joshua Palmer returning to practice today:

"Good to get him out there. No timeline, but it's a good sign for him to get out there and practice a little bit today."

On if he 'sees' C Corey Linsley 'playing again this year':

"I don't think so."

On 'the vision' for S JT Woods:

"Being in competition with all of those guys. We've been working with him now for two years. I think that all of those guys are competing for snaps, so that competition remains open. It's good to have him back. It's been good to get him out there on the practice field. We'll see where it goes."

On the Broncos defense featuring CB Pat Surtain II and S Justin Simmons:

"Those two guys are two of the best at their positions in the league. They've been playing together for a long time, as well. You add [Broncos S] Kareem [Jackson] in there, as well. They've just played a lot of football together, so there's a lot of trust and confidence. They've been well-trained. Definitely have a lot of respect for both of those guys."

On if he 'sees any similarities' between the Broncos' current offensive system and the offensive system ran with the Chargers when Broncos Offensive Coordinator Joe Lombardi held the same role with the Chargers:

"Yeah, definitely."

On the Broncos' defense creating takeaways 'after allowing 70 points to the Dolphins':

"They have a lot of good defensive players. They've been well-trained for a long time. They've been playing in a high level system since 2019, so they have played a lot together. They were an elite unit last year, and many of those guys are still there. They had a tough game early, but I think it's a very, very good defense. It's not an accident that they've been playing very well. A lot of good players on all three levels. We have a lot of respect for them."

On P JK Scott being named AFC Special Teams Player of the Week and being 'consistent':

"You said the word consistent, and from a field-position standpoint, it's been invaluable for our team this year. In that last football game, I think that was the catalyst to us winning the football game. He made some Chargers history, and then to be recognized by the AFC, I think that it was well-deserving, and we're going to need that down the stretch. But, I think that it's also a team award, it's also a unit award. We talked about [LS] Josh Harris after the game and that group of gunners — that group of four or five guys that have been doing it the whole year, I think that they've been playing well. Then, our core protection unit covering, as well. It's a team effort, but definitely happy with JK [Scott] and his progress."

On Scott's ability to produce a proficient hang time:

"Invaluable. I think that that aspect of it just buys everybody more time. Just like how the accuracy of a quarterback helps all skill players, the hang time of a punter is going to help his supporting cast. JK [Scott], that's a real talent that he has. We're going to have to continue to improve on that unit, continue for it to be a strength for us."

On 'how much the offense has been impacted' with Linsley being out:

"I think that any time you have a star player, one of the top players at his position, it's going to have an impact. But, with that said, I think [C] Will Clapp has been really, really, really solid for us. I think he's been one of our most consistent performers on our whole team, but definitely on our offense. I think Will has been fantastic for us. We miss Corey [Linsley] a lot, but he's still with us. I think that relationship between him and Will really helps. Then, [QB] Justin [Herbert], ultimately, having confidence in Will and their relationship, it's really important. Will has a ton of experience. Since he's played for us, he's been really, really solid."

On the play of the offensive line this season:

"I think that it's been inconsistent. I think we've been good in spurts, and I think that we've shown quality run and pass, but it's been inconsistent. But, it's a good group of guys. They're working hard. I think that it's fair to say that our best football is in front of us."

On 'inconsistency' on the offensive line:

"Sometimes it just takes time with the unit. There are different factors at play, some guys being nicked up. You win a couple more of these games, I think that we would feel differently, certainly, about the group, but it's the right group to be coaching. I think, again, our best football is out there. That's what our focus has been on, on the improvement. That group, it's a close group of guys, so I know that they're going to make the improvements on the field. I think it's a couple of little things, it's a couple of little things within that group. But, I really like coaching them. We have a really good opportunity this week versus Denver."

On the offense establishing the run game:

"I think we've been able to do it in spurts. I think what's frustrating is that we've done it, we just haven't done it consistently. I think that's probably where the frustration is. It would be one thing if I hadn't seen it at all, then I think you'd be frustrated and upset and feeling a little bit differently, but we've shown that we've been able to run the football. It's not just about the offensive line, it's not just about the runners, it's about all 11 guys, and coaching included. It's just finding that formula. I said it a couple of weeks ago, there are just some aspects of your team that take longer than others in a season, there are just some aspects that way. But, we still have a bunch of games in front of us. We have a good opportunity this week and we're working hard at it."

On if the Dolphins game would be 'one of the examples of establishing the run':

"The Miami game would definitely be one of the games. That defense is really good, that's one of the most talented groups that we've played. To do that, in that game, we were at full strength in that game. I thought you saw what we can do, as an offense, in that game. That's just one example, but I just felt like everybody in our group that played in that game was a big factor in our success. It wasn't just one group. We have the same running backs. I think that there were some things that happened along the way where your identity shifts a little bit, in terms of maybe what you thought you were to what you are now. Then, all of a sudden, you hit it, you find that rhythm later on in the season and away you go. That's what we're after. We're after that. We believe in these guys. We've done it with these guys this year. We've done it with these guys in the past. We just have to keep searching for it."

On determining which running back gets which carries moving forward:

"Competition for carries is going to be something that you can see happening. I think you've seen it on defense, competing for opportunities. When I say, 'keep searching,' we're going to keep exploring, making adjustments, so that we can find that rhythm that I've been talking about. That's certainly one way to do it."

On CB Michael Davis and 'how he has handled everything this season':

"Like a pro. We've won a bunch of games with Vato out there, played high-level football with Vato out there. We believe in him."

On OLB Khalil Mack's performance this season and 'if the success is due to remaining healthy':

"What did he tell you, did you ask him yet? [Laughter] That's the simplest answer. The proof is, when he has been healthy, that is how he plays. When I was in Chicago in 2018, the only thing that held him back was a high ankle sprain. If he doesn't have a high-ankle sprain — he missed two games, and then was kind of there for two others — that guy is the slam-dunk Defensive Player of the Year. He had a couple of nicks after we left. But, when he's been healthy, he's shown that he is one of the top players in the game. There aren't many players in the history of this game that play the way that Khalil Mack does, that can impact the game in the run and the pass. He is healthy, I think that it has been a team effort around him to create opportunities — coaching, playing, his teammates. You take all of that out of it and just focus on Khalil, this is one of the rare players in the game. That's how the rare players play, they play like he does."

On Mack nearing 100 career sacks:

"It just puts you in that rare company. You saw it with [WR] Keenan [Allen] and the receiving company that he is in. The company that you're in at 100 [sacks], it's very, very few guys, and they're all huddled up in a certain place in Canton. To be Defensive Player of the Year and to be a First-Team All-Pro with three different teams, he's one of two players in NFL history to have 12 sacks with three different teams, and when you're part of that type of company, then you just know what you're seeing. If you didn't know anything and you just parachuted in and you watched him play the game, there are very few people like him that are playing defense or offense in the NFL. I've been fortunate to coach him. I've been fortunate to witness it at two different places, and witness it from afar when he was with the Raiders. Like he'll tell you, the most important thing to him is winning. The fact that we won that last football game and he was a big part of it, that is what matters to him, that is what has always mattered to him, and that's why it has been so important for our organization to see that standard every day."

QUARTERBACK JUSTIN HERBERT

On Sunday's game in New England:

"I thought we struggled. We did our best out there. We battled and we fought. We ultimately couldn't score in the red zone. I think that's the biggest part of it. I thought we did a good job of protecting the ball, but there are plenty of things on film that we can clean up."

On dropped passes:

"I think it's a tough situation, especially with the weather. I think that's going to affect it. Those guys battled. I know they're doing their best, just like I'm doing my best. They've made incredible catches before and they've saved me and protected us. It's part of the game. I know that next time we're going to go to them and they're going to make the play. That's just the trust and faith that we have in each other."

On Broncos CB Pat Surtain II:

"He's incredibly talented. You watch him on film and he always seems to be in the right place at the right time. He's just a smart ball player. He knows exactly what to do, how to cover guys. He's able to cover different types of guys. It's really impressive to watch."

On his reaction to dropped passes:

"I think it's just part of the game. If I miss a guy or I miss a wide open guy, I'd like for him to not do the same thing where he puts his hands up or pointing at me. Things like that. I think it's kind of just treat people the way you want to be treated. I could always do a better job of that. It's a tough situation. There was a lot of rain. It's tough on the footballs like that, but I know those guys are doing their best. Kind of like I said earlier, it's trust and confidence that we're going to go back to them the next play and they're going to make a play."

"I think it is, maybe, a conscious effort to treat people the way you want to be treated. Those situations are always tough, they're never friendly. You always want to try to avoid those situations, but they're going to come up. I think we have a great team and a great locker room that are able to handle it and talk to, especially communicate with each other about them."

On WR Joshua Palmer being designated for return from Reserve/Injured:

"Josh is a special player. We know that he's fighting. He's doing everything that he can to be out on the field. He's a tough guy. Injuries are a part of the NFL. It's tough dealing with adversity like that, but he's doing everything that he can in the training room, in the film room. Whenever he's called, I know he'll be ready."

On 'how far back' in the season the team goes in preparing for the Broncos:

"I think that's a good question. Generally, our process, as quarterbacks, is to watch the past six or seven games. I think that's outside of the scope, but you can always go back and watch. We end up watching all of the games from the year, but you pay more attention to the recent ones, just how they're playing, who they're playing and the type of things that they're putting in. It's definitely something that you can go back and watch, but generally, you tend to the more recent ones."

On the Denver defense taking the ball away:

"I think that's something that [Head] Coach [Brandon] Staley brought up in the team meeting room this morning, is focusing on that. They're causing turnovers and they're doing a good job of protecting the ball. That's something that we have to go into this game having a good mindset about it. To answer your question, they've done a good job of forcing those turnovers. They're going out and getting them — picks, fumbles. Getting after the ball. That's the good part about a defense, is if they're playing around and flying like that, they're going to be a good defense. Causing and forcing turnovers like that, it just reminds you that you have to be smart with the ball. Play smart, winning football."

On WR Alex Erickson:

"Alex is an awesome guy. He's a great teammate and he knows exactly what he's doing. He's going to fight out there. He always seems to be in the right spot at the right time. He's one of those guys that I trust going out there, running the routes. He's quick, he's athletic and he's able to win one-on-one matchups."

SAFETY DERWIN JAMES JR.

On his feelings after the win on Sunday:

"It feels good to win, on the road especially. We've got a division game coming up this week. We have to get ready for Denver."

On Sunday's performance:

"It was just us going out there and doing our job for four quarters. I feel like we executed at a high level. We could be better at some spots and tackling and stuff. Overall, I feel like we came, took the field and we communicated well and got off the field."

On whether he likes the tackling drills in practice:

"Definitely, for sure. Like I've said, Week 12, Week 14 you never want to lose the fundamentals. We want to make sure that we're fundamentally connected and make sure that we play the way we need to play."

On Denver's offense:

"They're coming in as a physical team. [Broncos QB] Russell [Wilson] is doing a great job controlling the offense. [Broncos WR] Courtland Sutton is having a great year this year. [Broncos RB] Javonte [Williams] looks like he's running the ball again, getting back from that injury. We have a good division game coming in here on Sunday."

On the challenges of Denver being a 'ball control type team':

"Like I said, that all comes down to being physical. You have to come out and you have to be ready to play. Whether it's first down, second down or third down, whatever down — we have to be ready. And we have to be ready to get off the field."

On Broncos QB Russell Wilson:

"He looks more confident. Like I said, his team looks like they're more together. He's playing at a high level right now. We have to go be ready to play."

On being nominated for Walter Payton Man of the Year Award:

"It means a lot. It's an honor for my team to nominate me for that back-to-back. Thank you to my team and everyone that has taken credit to help me to get to where I am to this point, to this day."

On any parallels from Broncos Offensive Coordinator Joe Lombardi's offense from his time with the Chargers:

"They're a different team, but there are definitely some similarities in there. It's the NFL — each week certain stuff is going to show up, especially if it's something that we haven't stopped or that we need to work on. I feel like each week with the NFL, you're going to see some NFL staples. We just have to be ready."

On 'how important' this division game is:

"12-out-of-10. Let's go. 12-out-of-10, division game. I feel like they count as two games. It's a division game and we really need to win this game."

On winning at home:

"It's just about finishing, we need to finish. I know we've probably lost by two or three points, so we just need to finish the game and, like I said, go out there and play hard."