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Chargers Week 16 Media Availability

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OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR JOE LOMBARDI

On T Rashawn Slater making the Pro Bowl as a rookie:

“I think it’s a well-deserved honor for him. I think he has played outstanding, coming in as a rookie and just manning that left side for us. I think it’s as good as you could have hoped, how he’s played. I think he deserves the honor. I am very happy for him and proud of him.”

On Slater’s poise as a rookie:

“Yeah, the guy you could compare him to is [Saints T] Terron Armstead, who we really didn’t play until late in the season his rookie year. Once he went in, he performed really well. Looking back, I guess we didn’t think he was maybe ready early in the season. He probably was, but we certainly didn’t have that feeling. From day one we could see Rashawn was ready to go in and play, and I think that’s rare. The way he approaches the game, his whole makeup lends himself to a guy that you will be able to rely on for a long time.”

On four Pro Bowl selections from the offense:

“I think it’s a credit to them, I mean, obviously they all work hard they are good guys. They are all in every day — they don’t have off days and are consistent. They’re good players who play well. The credit is to those guys. I’m happy for them, I think it’s all well deserved. Hopefully, we keep getting that kind of production. I’m happy for them.”

On C Corey Lindsley:

“I think we’ve said it before, he’s just a really good leader. His intelligence is off the charts. He does a lot for us on the line of scrimmage setting protections and setting the run game, letting everyone know who they are supposed to block and making those calls. And you know just an attitude — the attitude of the offensive line permeates the whole offense and really the whole team. He is kind of the ring-leader of that group. His attitude, his work ethic all those things has a multiplying effect for everybody, so it’s been huge. [He’s been a] great pickup for us.”

On run game against the Chiefs:

“First, I’m real proud of [T] Trey [Pipkins III], how he went out and performed and allowed us to do that — and just that whole group, they work hard every day. We’ve got a certain makeup of this roster where it’s so tempting to be a pass first offense and sometimes, we are. The plan that [Run Game Coordinator/Offensive Line Coach] Frank [Smith], [Assistant Offensive Line Coach] Shaun [Sarrett], [Tight Ends Coach] Kevin [Koger] and [Running Backs Coach] Derrick [Foster] put together was outstanding. Those guys, as that game got going and you felt all those runs were positive and efficient — you know, as a play-caller it really makes you want to keep calling them. I think the Chiefs were probably playing us for pass, we were getting a lot of light boxes, which help, but even when they are bringing a guy down, we were blocking them up and getting positive runs. There’s an attitude when you feel like you are dominating the line of scrimmage like that, it’s a big confidence booster.”

On RB Justin Jackson:

“For sure yeah. A lot of the running back position comes down to opportunities, getting into rhythm. As those guys get more reps, I think they’ll get more comfortable and you’ll see that kind of production moving forward. All those guys we have faith in, obviously, [RB] Austin [Ekeler] means a lot to us, but those guys can carry the load if he’s not able to go.”

On RB Austin Ekeler’s effectiveness in the red zone:

“He’s so strong. I know he’s not a big guy, but I think he plays like a big back. I haven’t seen them all, but my daughters are big into CrossFit and they’ll show me the workouts that he posts and — he plays like a big back. When you’ve got that kind of stature, but you’re strong and you’ve got that center of gravity, he’s a hard guy to tackle. He makes it work. He smells that goal line and he gets across it.”

On QB Justin Herbert’s improvement in his second season:

“He was pretty good last year, but I think you said it. He works so hard on the fundamentals and [Passing Game Coordinator/Quarterbacks Coach] Shane Day does such a good job with those guys in their individual period just refining their footwork, refining their eyes, refining their timing. He takes it so seriously. I think sometimes when you’re as talented as him it’s easy to be like, ‘I don’t need to do that, I can rely on all this talent.’ He does not take that approach. He takes all of those details seriously and he’s committed to getting better at it every day. Combine that with his talent, the kind of production you see out of him is what you’d expect when you combine those things.”

On the quarterback draw in the red zone against Kansas City:

“Yeah, there are a few options. You kind of read the defense and see what they are guarding and what they are not. I think in the Washington game we scored a touchdown just throwing a fade to [WR] Mike Williams on that very play. So, the O-Line is blocking the quarterback draw and you have some other outlets to throw it if you think there is an advantage.

“Yeah, they did a good job. They took away the one option and they were leaning towards Mike [Williams] with the other, but these two guys had a chance to fold in. They really defended that play pretty well.”

On RB Joshua Kelley:

“I think you don’t want to reach the ball in those situations, so keep that ball secured. Probably could have run it in a different spot that might have given us a better chance. Probably jumped a little early, but it’s something he’ll learn from and be better at in the future.”

On fourth down plays that were unsuccessful:

“The one where we were — I forget the exact yard line, we were kind of around the 28- or 30-yard line — we threw it to [TE] Jared [Cook]. They played a defense they don’t play a lot in that situation so they defended that well and I probably could have called something that gave us a better chance to succeed. Then, I think one was batted at the line of scrimmage that I think had a chance and they made a good play. One I was happy with, one I was lukewarm and the other I wish I held back.”

On evolution of coaching from the Saints:

“Yeah, I think it evolves quite a bit. In most NFL offenses there is a lot of carryover and one thing [Saints Head Coach] Sean [Payton] would say is, ‘It’s not what we do it’s how we do it.’ Just the process of preparation and game planning, that’s probably the biggest carryover. Certainly, there are a lot of plays that carry over, but we’ve got different players and our goal is always to tailor what we do to the strengths of our team. Even in New Orleans, it evolved year to year and I think the same thing is happening here.”

On fourth down game planning between the Saints and Chargers:

“I think it’s similar. We may have a few more calls on the call sheet — because third-and-three and fourth-and-three, they are similar mindsets. I am not sure you have enough film on a team what they do on fourth-and-three, so you kind of think of those situations in the same way. But where you maybe have five or six plays on the call sheet [in New Orleans], we might have eight for certain situations just because we know we might hit them a little more often with fourth-down aggressiveness.”

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR RENALDO HILL

On S Derwin James Jr. and OLB Joey Bosa being selected to the Pro Bowl:

“It says a lot; obviously, switching systems and buying into what we want to do, but it also shows the effort and the work that they’ve put into being really good players in this National Football League. I’m happy about their accomplishment. It’s a great accomplishment for this team, as well. Those guys do a lot for our team, and we ask a lot of them. I’m happy to see those guys get rewarded for their work.”

On adjusting his coaching to tailor James and Bosa:

“A lot of times it’s coaches getting out of the way, too. You have two great players; our job is to try to put those guys in the best possible situations because you know that if they’re in good positions, they’re going to make some things happen. We wanted to tap into that and make sure that we had those guys doing the right things to help themselves, as well as to help the team.”

On if anything ‘caught him by surprise’ about James and Bosa:

“Both are extremely hard workers. The detail that those guys put into their work was probably the biggest thing. That’s what you expect from great players, but they do a good job of really focusing on the detail. I’ve probably mentioned here about Joey [Bosa] having his regiments, but I think that’s what makes him great. He is detailed about all of those little things, and it’s the same with Derwin [James Jr.], as well.”

On getting the defense to ‘avoid looking past’ the Texans:

“We always talk about just focusing on us and focusing on our goals. Our goal is to be a playoff team sitting at the end of the year. We know that Houston is the next team on our schedule, and we have to do a good job of taking advantage of this opportunity. They’re just coming off of a win. They’re getting some guys back. We have to be ready to go. Regardless of the dates and the time and the situation, we have to be ready to show up on Sundays.”

On CB Essang Bassey:

“Spending some time with Essang in Denver, he was a rookie who came in undrafted and was able to step right in and have some starting playing time early. Obviously, when you get late here in the year, you have injuries. It happened. With where we’re at in the world, where COVID[-19] pops up, as well, guys can go down. We thought that he would be a good guy moving forward. He’s been in the system. I think he’ll fit great into the room and into this Charger family. It made sense when I brought it to [Head Coach Brandon] Staley. Seeing the [transaction] wire and our situation, it just made sense. A good player. A fast learner. He was able to step in as a rookie and perform at a high level. That spoke volumes to what we would be getting here in LA.”

On Bassey’s time with Denver:

“He did a great job for us. At the start of the season last year in Denver, he was the starter at the Star position because we had some injuries; we had [Broncos CB] Bryce Callahan go down early and he stepped right in. We were trying to keep Bryce on the outside lanes in Denver, and that allowed us, if Essang could step up and play inside, that we could keep Bryce out there, and that’s what he did. He stepped up and played at a high level. We know that he can play inside at the Star, the Money, and also the outside lanes. It gives us a little bit more flex for what we can do moving forward, especially with guys getting injured and numbers going up and down each week.”

On if OLB Uchenna Nwosu’s role will change this week:

“I think it will be the same role. I think the biggest thing that we had, and we explored earlier during that bye week, was having [LB] Kenneth Murray [Jr.] being able to be that adjuster and be able to do multiple things. I think that really helps us. We have to have more guys on board. We’ll see how it plays out throughout the week, whether we’ll get a guy back or not, but I think we have a lot of guys with experience playing at that edge position, so I think that we’ll be fine by gameday.”

On Murray's development at EDGE:

"He's just getting a little bit more confident. Obviously, working a little bit more with [Run Game Coordinator/Outside Linebackers] Coach [Jay] Rogers, working on his get-off, working on his hand movement, things that when you get thrown in the fire, you don't realize until you're lined up against a starting tackling this league. Now, I think that he's starting to recognize those things. He's an athletic guy and a talented guy. Now, I think he's starting to apply some of those things to where he can take advantage of it."

On OLB Emeke Egbule's development:

"I think that he's been great for us. H's always been a guy that when you need to call on him, he's ready to roll. He's always had a positive attitude out here about getting better each day. He gave our offense some great looks earlier in the year when we were going against the Raiders, being some of their edge guys. He's a guy who prepares well. If he has to step in there on Sunday, I know that he'll be ready and that he'll play well."

TACKLE RASHAWN SLATER

On being named a Pro Bowl starter as a rookie:

“It means a lot to me. For me, the biggest thing is it means I got the respect of the fans, players and coaches, which to me is a huge deal and a huge honor. Obviously, the goal is to be busy that week preparing for the Super Bowl. It’s a great feeling and I’m excited to keep building.”

On if he was surprised by the selection:

“It wasn’t something that I had set out to do as one of my preseason goals. Really, I’m just honored. It’s such a cool thing to be able to say. I really appreciate being selected but as a team, we have bigger goals”

On how he found out about the selection and reactions from family and friends:

“People started texting me. I guess people found out before I did. People were congratulating me over text and I was like, ‘Oh shoot, I must have made it.’”

On if he was surprised by ranking highly among the fan votes:

“I don’t think so just because when logging on to Twitter and Instagram, you can see Chargers fans coming in really strong. They were extremely great and super supportive. That’s been the case since I’ve been here. So that doesn’t come as any surprise to me. Chargers fans are the best.”

On his dad helping campaign for his Pro Bowl selection:

“It was awesome. As I said, I have so many people to thank for that like my fiancé, my dad and really everyone who went out on a limb and put that out there. I’m just thankful.”

On returning to his hometown of Houston for Sundays game:

“It’s a really cool opportunity. It’s something that I’ve looked at since I got drafted and saw the schedule that we would be here on Christmas. It’s a cool opportunity just growing up a Texans fan and being able to go out there and play around family on Christmas.”

On the team having six Pro Bowlers:

“I think we have some special stuff going on and I think we have a few guys that should have been in, too. What stands out to me is the way we look at it as a team. We’re so focused on going 1-0 this week and making the playoff push. I don’t even think it’s a huge deal to us. Not that we don’t appreciate it, but ultimately our goal is to win a Super Bowl. That’s what we’re still focused on. However, I think it speaks to the talent we have and how bright the future is here.”

On how he has been able to adapt to the NFL:

“I think I had a lot of great people around me as far as training like Duke Manyweather, my trainer in Texas, [Northwestern Offensive Line Coach] Kurt Anderson my O-Line coach, the guys on this team like [Run Game Coordinator/Offensive Line Coach] Frank Smith my O-Line coach. I’ve just had so many great people around me who have been guiding me in that direction of realizing what it takes at this level and what you have to do to succeed. When I first got here, [RT] Bryan [Bulaga] was such a huge help to me by teaching me this is what you have to do at tackle in the NFL if you want to win. Same with [C] Corey [Linsley], [G] Matt [Feiler] and all of those guys. I’m just blessed to be here.”

On if he went to games Texans games growing up:

“A few. My family actually grew up Broncos fans, so I was always the odd one out because I was born in Denver. Definitely just a really exciting opportunity.”

On what was the hardest transition to the NFL:

“The hardest transition was pass blocking because, in college, guys aren’t as skilled of rushers. In the NFL, guys have moves, they have multiple, they can switch it up and they can put two or three together. Whereas in college, usually if you can beat one move, that’s the end of the rep. So, I say that’s the biggest adjustment just being ready to see all these different sorts of things from a rusher instead of being bull-rushed every play like in college.”

On missing the game against the Chiefs last Thursday:

“That was tough. I feel like a lot of people are going through that right now in the NFL and just around the world with what’s going on right now. I had the support of all my teammates and family. I wasn’t that sick, so from that standpoint I was alright. I knew all I can do is control what I can control — try to hydrate, rest and get back, which thankfully I am.”

On if he gets surprised by the skills of some elite pass rushers:

“I would say no because I see it all week on film. Going against [Browns DE] Myles Garrett, I’ve seen what he’s capable of doing. So it’s not surprising, but it’s a challenge to get ready for.”

On if veterans have ever given him props on being so skilled as a rookie:

“There’s been a couple of times like [Bengals DE] Trey Hendrickson is a really good player and he said something like that game after the Cincinnati game. Obviously, he got me that game. For me, getting respect from my peers means so much to me. Coming in as a rookie and hearing it from other players always means so much because they go through the same thing and they know what they are talking about as much as anyone.”