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## Chargers Week 11 Media Availability

Thursday, November 17, 2022 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

### OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR JOE LOMBARDI

#### **On the ‘possibility’ of WRs Keenan Allen and Mike Williams playing on Sunday:**

“If they are going [to play], it’s huge. Obviously, they are our two best receivers. If they are out there and healthy, it’s a big boost.”

#### **On the offense’s performance in the second half against the 49ers compared to the first half:**

“Obviously, we didn’t execute as well. The first drive, we were going down, we got the second-and-long and they zeroed us out. Could have MIKE ID’d that better and had a chance, but he had to throw it away. Third down, I thought we had a chance, but the pressure got to us. We had a guy open. After that, we just had a couple of negative plays. I think we only had about 20 plays because we weren’t converting our third downs. Overall, the execution wasn’t as good as we needed it to be.”

#### **On ‘running the ball on six-consecutive first-and-10s’:**

“They were playing a lot of shell [coverage] in the second half, so we were trying to run it effectively against a light box, and had a few good runs. Any time that you don’t score points, you look back and wish that you called the plays that would have helped you score.”

#### **On if the offense ‘should have ran more play-action on first down’:**

“Yeah, sure. We should have done that.”

#### **On ‘a perception nationally that QB Justin Herbert has regressed’:**

“I think it has been more challenging with all of the different pieces. I think when you get in a situation like that, you can push too hard and turn the ball over. I think, for the most part, he has protected it well. I think, maybe, some of the opportunities to make the big plays just haven’t been there for him and he’s just trying to play smart. I’m not worried about his regression.”

#### **On RB Isaiah Spiller’s first-down run and ‘if he could have taken the run outside’:**

“I’ve been watching the Chiefs for the last four days, so I can’t exactly recall the play that you are talking about. I apologize. If you gave me the play call, I would probably remember. Right off hand, I can’t recall the exact play.”

#### **On balancing scoring points and winning time of possession against the Chiefs:**

“Our goal is always to sustain drives and score. We don’t mind scoring in one play, if we can, but they are definitely an explosive offense that if you can keep them off the field, it certainly helps. All of that being said, you are just trying to get into rhythm. You have a mix of plays you think are efficient, plays that are giving you shots downfield, so you’re trying to mix it up. What you really want to avoid are the three-and-outs when you are only out there for a minute or so and then they have the ball again. It’s definitely a balance you want to strike.”

**On blocking from the tight end group in the run game:**

"I'd say mixed. There have been times where they have been good. Other times where they know that they have to execute better. It's a matter of putting them in good positions, as coaches, and then them executing when they get the chance. There are certainly some plays that I can think of that wasn't up to our standards, but at the same time, I think that they are talented guys that are working hard. I think we're going to be alright there."

**On where TE Tre' McKitty 'needs to improve':**

"Just consistency, I think. Any time, with a young player, they are learning as they go. Just consistency. Sometimes, there are anticipation things — seeing a look and being able to anticipate that the guy is going to spike or he's going to play hard outside. I think he has all of the tools to be very effective in that role. I think, with time and experience, he's just going to get better."

**On playing close games against the Chiefs:**

"One, they are an offense that even if you get up by 17 points, they can get even real quick. They are just so explosive. They are very aggressive on defense, and so a lot of times, it creates negative plays. The way that they play, it's kind of feast-or-famine, at times, and so I just think the aggressiveness of how they play on both sides of the ball, it seems like they are in every game."

**On if there is 'anything different' about the Chiefs' defense from Week 2 to now:**

"I think that when you have looked at a defense or a coordinator as long as we have looked at [Chiefs Defensive Coordinator Steve] Spagnuolo, there are sometimes cycles to the way he is calling games. There are periods where maybe they are less aggressive with the blitzes, and then there are times where it feels like they are dialing it up a little more consistently. The overall playbook, I don't think, has been hugely different. It's just trying to get a feel for how he is calling a particular game. That's always part of the cat-and-mouse game."

**On improving goal-to-go offense:**

"I think it's a combination of things. We were obviously down a few players this last game, but the execution wasn't as good as it could have been. We got down there after the big completion to [WR] DeAndre [Carter]. Called a play on first down that was kind of dead in the water. They had shown a certain defense over and over again and they kind of called one out of character. I wish I could have had that call back and given us something that wasn't so dependent on the look. Then, we jumped off-sides on the second play. Then, I don't think that we executed the second- and third-down calls very well in that situation. Every sequence has a different answer to it, but I think, overall, we just need to hone in and maybe not try to be so cute on offense at times and just execute better."

**On 'if the first call in the sequence' was designed to go to FB Zander Horvath:**

"Yeah. They were heavy man [coverage] in that situation. They just played a shell defense. Generally, we have answers. It's like, 'Hey, if you see this, we're checking to this play,' and didn't do it on that play and certainly should have."

**On G Zion Johnson's performance thus far this season:**

"I think we're going to keep saying the same thing for, hopefully, not too much longer, it's that he is very talented. When he is one-on-one with someone, he blocks them really well. There were a couple of times where just experience, with mostly line movement or twists that, at times, he's not quite as on it as you wish, but overall, I think we're very happy with him."

**On T Foster Sarell's performance last week:**

"I thought he was excellent, given the situation. It was his first NFL game [on the offensive line], called him up off the practice squad, and thought he performed very well."

## **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR RENALDO HILL**

### **On the defense's performance last week:**

"I thought we played with good effort. We competed for the complete game. We tried to make it difficult for those guys. Tried to really force them to really work up the field and maximize their time. We knew they had a lot of talent at all skill positions and we just wanted to make sure they worked if they were going to try to move the ball for a score."

### **On the defense improved in the run game last week:**

"We definitely did. We challenged those guys, as well. Obviously, we're going to keep doing it. We know one week won't solve it, but we have to keep challenging those guys, and as far as coaches, keep putting them into good positions so that they can go play the run effectively."

### **On what the defense 'could have done better in defending third-and-longs':**

"Just the execution. We know there are going to be situations where we have to win our one-on-one battles. They won their battles that game and that's going to be a challenge this week. Can we win our one-on-one battles and continue to try to move the coverages around so that they are not looking at the same thing? We have to win our one-on-one battles. I think that's going to be the big thing. It's going to be a huge emphasis to execute our third-down plan."

### **On DL Tyeler Davison's first practice with the Chargers:**

"Just a smart guy. Obviously, had a lot of experience and starts in this league. That's kind of what he brought to the table yesterday. The moment he got in, he's been spending tons of time with [Run Game Coordinator/Defensive Line] Coach [Jay] Rodgers and they have been attacking it. We're going to need him to be present this week. Hopefully, we can move the bodies around so we don't get tired down up front. There's definitely going to be a challenge. It's what everybody in the NFL goes through. We know injuries happen and we have to have Tyeler [Davison] step in and be ready to roll."

### **On the biggest challenge of bringing in a player mid-season and 'how long it takes for a player to get acclimated to a new team':**

"I think the biggest thing is trying to have those conversations, and if there is any carryover that can help them within our scheme. He's played a lot of ball and it's easier for us to try to translate either those techniques or things that he has done in the past to help speed him up. A lot of the techniques won't change a ton. There will be some adjustments, but how can we put it in terms where he can understand it and process it faster than trying to give him our language?"

### **On 'how much he leans on players on the defense' to help Davison:**

"That's a great point, and that's what it is going to take. Guys like [DL] Breiden [Fehoko], [DL] Sebastian [Joseph-Day] up front, making sure that they can communicate the call, or even just the technique. This is one of those games where even hearing a position or thing that we may be doing it, it really doesn't matter. It's more about helping the guys next to us get lined up so that we can at least play better technique on that down. I think that's going to be the main key, not holding secrets. Just making sure that we communicate what we need to do in order to have a good run-stopping defense."

### **On Chiefs QB Patrick Mahomes and how he has performed without WR Tyreek Hill:**

"His distribution of how he is getting those guys the ball, I think he is spreading it around to all of those guys. When it's on the line, whether that is red zone or third down, he know he still has 87 [Chiefs TE Travis Kelce] in his back pocket. I think he is really utilizing the other threats that he has around him to really make it work. They have been doing a good job. Obviously, some of those guys have similar — I don't want to say the same skillset as Tyreek [Hill], but it's similar. They can use them in those same facets. He's doing a good job of spreading the ball around and making sure that when it is clutch time, he gets the ball to [Travis Kelce]."

**On if the defense ‘rewatched’ S Derwin James Jr.’s tackle on Chiefs TE Travis Kelce from Week 2 in film study this week:**

“It has shown up in the film [*laughter*]. With this being a crossover game, we’re going to look back at that game. There are still the oohs and ahhs, but we were also talking about how can we put ourselves in position to make that play express itself again. We know that we have to be physical with these guys. It’s going to take everybody, not just Derwin [James Jr.]. If he can do that again, I think it would be a tone-setter to our play at SoFi [Stadium].”

**On if there will be an emphasis on forcing fumbles:**

“Definitely going to try to get the ball out. We talked about it, even on that play when [Kelce] is up in the air, it’s an opportunity for somebody else to go in and punch and get the ball out. We’re always searching for those opportunities.”

**On ‘how much of a tone-setter’ James Jr. is:**

“He is the heartbeat. We know that he is the Alpha. He sets the tone, whether that is in practice or even in the meeting setting. We know we need him to do a lot for his defense to work. It lets us express different things that we want to do within the scheme. We ask him to do a lot of jobs and he’s up for the task, which you like. He wants to do all of those things to help us be successful.”

**On if James Jr. has ‘taken on more jobs because of injuries’:**

“It’s been similar to last year. We probably used him in different spots a little bit more. I think we sprinkled more probably last year, especially being in the first year. Being a little bit more comfortable, he’s comfortable. If something dictates where we need him in a certain spot in a scheme, we feel like we can roll with it and he can go out and execute it.”

**On if he will ‘keep in his back pocket’ the potential of James Jr. lining up at interior defensive line:**

“It may show up this week [*laughter*]. It’s a conference game and we have to get a win somehow.”

**On if James Jr. ‘would be up to play interior defensive line’:**

“He wouldn’t blink an eye [*laughter*]. He’ll be up for the challenge, he is always. Like I said, we just want to try to put him in as many roles as you can to be successful. We are down at D-line, so you never know.”

**On the reason the team is ‘bought in’ despite injuries:**

“I think the biggest thing is the leadership that we have on this ball club. When people do come in the building, the chance to join up with a Derwin [James Jr.] or a [OLB] Khalil Mack. Once they do get in the building, they feel that presence and see how those guys are wanting to win, wanting to do the right things to help us. I think they dive in wanting to help and support those guys. The other thing that has helped us in the past is being able to cross-train guys in multiple positions, whether that is in spring or in the summer, just making sure we tap into that because that is the life of the NFL. You have to be prepared. We just want to try to be maybe one step ahead if that does take shape, which we found out it happened a few times this year. We’re going to continue to do it because it helps us moving forward.”

**On what OLB Khalil Mack is like in meeting rooms:**

“He’s probably more to himself. Quiet, but when it is time for him to speak up, he will let his voice be heard, and everybody is listening. He’s the guy on the field who does usually breaks us down, or if there is a message that he wants to get across, he definitely can step up and be vocal at times. But if there is really nothing to be said, he stays back and he takes his notes and he gets ready for the week. A lot of times when that voice is heard, it’s heard.”

**On ‘what causes him to grin when he says that’:**

“That’s his demeanor. It’s his demeanor. He may say he’s quiet on the surface, but when he speaks, it’s powerful. When he speaks, it’s powerful. Guys listen. They respect him. They know what he’s done in this league. They know how he can change the defense. I think everybody saw how him going from Oakland to Chicago, how that effect came to play and the immediate impact when he got here. I just think he brings that to the table. He doesn’t have to say a lot, but when he does say it, it speaks volumes.”

**On if he has ever experienced prior the amount of injuries the team has suffered in his career:**

“The closest thing was maybe 2007 when I was with the Dolphins. I actually ended up getting hurt Week 7, but going into the seventh week, I played with a different safety every game. We lost Zach Thomas. We lost Jason Taylor. We lost my core safety, Jeremiah Bell in Week 1. I have experienced it, but that is something that I can probably help these guys with moving forward. It’s just the communication that you do have when you have a new person in there. It has to be over and above just because guys are not going to know every snap what their responsibility is. I think if you are a core person on the defense, I think you have to take the extra step to make sure that everybody knows what to do in order to have a chance in playing in this league. Obviously, that year, when the year is going on, you have [former Patriots and current Buccaneers QB Tom] Brady in that conference. You just have to do those things, go over and beyond to make sure that guys have a chance.”