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Chargers Head Coach Brandon Staley Media Availability

Monday, September 18, 2023 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

On the 'snap count and playing-time structure' of DB Ja'Sir Taylor and CB Michael Davis yesterday:

"It was about the gameplan. We felt like that would give us the best chance to win."

On if CB J.C. Jackson 'came out of the game OK, health-wise':

"He did."

On if Jackson's snap count yesterday 'was a continuation of trying to get him up-to-speed':

"That's exactly right."

On WR Quentin Johnston:

"He is continuing to improve. Like I said, we have three outstanding receivers and we're going to feature those guys. He's going to continue to improve as we go on. He'll earn more and more playing time the more that he continues to show up on the practice field and in the games, getting into a rhythm. I like where he has progressed."

On the final offensive play of overtime:

"We just were lined up incorrectly."

On if there were any 'communication issues' on that play:

"No."

On what he would have 'liked to see' on the final offensive play of overtime:

"We were going on a quick cadence. When [Williams] was lined up incorrectly, we didn't allow him to get over there, because of the type of cadence that we were on — because of the crowd noise — it was just kind of that stars aligning. We had a tough play there. We have to do better."

On the potential of being able to call a timeout or change the play in that situation with a quick cadence:

"It's a tough situation to be able to orchestrate all of that, especially in shotgun. Just a tough sequence for us."

On 'reconsidering' timeout usage in overtime, in hindsight:

"No reconsideration there. That was a high-leverage situation and we wanted to get the right grouping in, defensively, to give us a chance to knock out that run. That's why we made the substitution. That's the grouping that we felt would give us the best chance to knock out that run. It had done so earlier in the game."

On QB Justin Herbert's performance:

"I thought Justin [Herbert] gave us a chance to win in the game. I thought he was outstanding in the two-minute at the end of the game, driving us down the field. He had a couple of big-time fourth-down conversions for us. The first one to [WR] Mike [Williams] and the second one to [WR] Keenan [Allen], the one in the red zone on fourth down. That's as good of a play as you're going to see in the NFL from a quarterback. I thought he hung tough. I thought that there was a lot of internal pressure, which is the toughest type of pressure, as a quarterback. I thought he managed that well. He made big plays in the passing game. With Keenan [Allen], [TE] Stone [Smartt], [TE] Gerald [Everett], we were able to make big plays in the passing game. Then, there are obviously plays that I'm sure he is going to be critical of himself, but, I think, overall, he gave us a winning performance. He gives us a chance every time we go on the road and in a tough environment. We'll have to build off of that."

On how Herbert is 'feeling' following the game and if his 'internal clock was sped up':

"You'll have to ask him about how he's feeling. I'm not going to speak for him and how he felt, but the pressure was there. There was internal pressure, so that's going to affect your timing. I thought he was able to find the back a couple of times. I thought he was able to get a couple of key throwaways where we didn't make a tough situation worse. That's one of the things about him, his internal clock and his instincts in the pocket, and how strong he is with the ball — I thought that you saw that on the touchdown to Keenan [Allen], just how strong he is. Through two games, we have zero turnovers, as a football team. That's something that we definitely want to build off of. Justin [Herbert] is a key reason why."

On 'if the coverage unfolded' the way that he 'wanted it to' on Titans WR DeAndre Hopkins' overtime reception:

"We were trying to pressure to knock them out of field goal range, because they were in range. We were trying to pressure to get them out of range and, hopefully, create a negative play or a throwaway. They were just able to find him on the sideline, a good throw-and-catch. We had pressure in his face, but give credit to [Titans QB] Ryan [Tannehill] for throwing a good pass there."

On the defensive back personnel and alignment in the nickel sub-package:

"We're going to go with [DB] Ja'Sir [Taylor] at Star. Then, those three guys on the outside will play, based on, like I said, J.C.'s [Jackson] ramp-up and how they are performing in practice and in the game. We would like to get those guys into a rhythm right now. It's competitive. Like I said, we feel like we have three starting corners."

On 'balancing' the rotation at cornerback:

"The guys are in the positions that they are used to playing, so that is a good way to get them in rhythm. I felt like them being in the right spots is a key component in that. As we continue to play these games and perform, then the competition is going to express itself. Then, two guys will emerge and we'll be able to settle on our starting two. Right now, it kind of is where it is and we need to keep moving forward."

On if Herbert's touchdown throw to Allen was 'more impressive on film as it was in-person':

"I would say it is as impressive as it was live."

On OLB Tuli Tuipulotu's progress:

"He has made a lot of progress. He has made a lot of plays through two games and has been a real bright spot for our defense. He continues to improve. He's been a playmaker for us for two games."

On a sub-package consisting of Bosa, Mack and Tuipulotu and the challenges that presents to an opposing offense:

"They're three known rushers, but they can be in a lot of different locations. We're trying to exploit matchups and create matchups. Those guys are playmakers for us. The fact that those guys have versatility, and then to get, what we feel like, are our best rushers on the field, it's definitely what we feel like is a winning edge for us. We have to continue to evolve that package."

On LB Kenneth Murray Jr.'s performance yesterday as the defensive 'green dot':

"I thought that it was Kenneth Murray's [Jr.] best game since I've been the coach. I thought that he had a winning performance. I thought his communication was outstanding in the game. His physicality and toughness were outstanding in the game. I thought he gave us pass rush. There was just a lot of positives to take away from his performance. One of those performances — especially considering the running back, I felt like that was a really good matchup in the game, him matching up against Henry. I have a lot of respect for the way that he played yesterday."

On 'calling three deep shots' on the offense's series in overtime:

"They weren't three deep shots that were called. I would like to have seen our execution be better in overtime. That sequence wasn't a strong sequence for us. We have to be better in that situation, for sure."

On if teams 'will go for two more often' if in a similar situation where a penalty is called on the scoring play itself, placing the ball at the one-yard line, rather than enforcing the penalty yardage on the kickoff:

"Yes."

On the message to the defense:

"Just speaking to the performance yesterday, I thought it was a far different performance than the first week. Leaving the field yesterday, I think there was a lot of improvement in our defense. I thought our group took care of the [running] back, who's one of the premium backs in the league. I thought that was a bright spot, the way we defended the run yesterday and in the first week. I really thought we pressured the quarterback well. We had five sacks on third down or fourth down. I thought we affected the quarterback yesterday. I think there were far more three-and-outs yesterday, which got the ball back quickly to our offense. I thought that we were much more consistent yesterday at all three levels of the defense. I think the two big pass plays were a big factor in the game. Those, I think, prevented us from having a special performance. Then, those two third-down penalties at the beginning of the third quarter — I think those four plays in the game were very impactful, but I think that it definitely was an improved performance yesterday, defensively and one that I think we can build on."

On 'optimism' surrounding the competitiveness of each of the first two games:

"I think this team knows that we've been through tough games — two tough games. I think that our guys know. This group, top to bottom, one through 48 is playing, I think, the right way. Playing really, really hard. There's a lot of pride in that room. I think everything that has happened on film, that you can say were mistakes from our first two games, are correctable. We have the right people to correct them. I think there's confidence in who we have and how we're doing things. We're just going to focus on making the improvements each day so that we can create that confidence for game day."

On messaging to the team:

"We've had a fantastic offseason and training camp. I think through two games, you've seen the level that we've played at in terms of how hard we've played. Two tough losses. All the way down to the very last play. This is a really mature group. It's a connected group. Again, we're just at the beginning. I think everyone knows what's happening on that film. I think that people believe in the type of players we have, the type of coaches that we have to make good things happen moving forward. We just need to stay consistent with our process and consistent with the people out there on the field and good things are going to happen for us."

On putting the team in a good position:

"There are always plays and sequences that, when you come on the other side of things, that you're questioning, but that would be the case if we had won both of those games. I think that's the big thing with process over result. Had we won the Miami game and the Tennessee game — let's say we won both of those games, really close — a lot of the same issues that we have or that we're working through would still be there. You could just have two results that say, 'Wow, everything is going great,' when it's really not. I think that's what we're focused on here, is making sure we're focused on how we're doing things. Again, through two games, it hasn't been good enough. We're paying close attention to everything that we do. I think that we do things the right way here. Again, we have to stay consistent with that. That's ultimately going to lead to good things for us."

On if there's a consistent theme between the games:

"The games have been completely different, so there's not been a consistent theme other than the fact that we haven't won. In terms of how the games have gone and how we've played in all three phases, both games are very different. I think we've made improvement. All I can go by is game one to game two, the improvement that we made as a team. I think we've made improvements and we're getting a strong sense of how to use our guys, getting people doing the right jobs. I think that's been a good thing coming out of these first two games. Again, I think that at the end of the games, us making the plays down the stretch, those are going to be what ultimately make the difference. I think, in the middle of the games, we've had the opportunity to separate in both games. Both games, where we could have separated and we just haven't had that happen for us yet."

On defending deep passes:

"When we talk about defensive football or just football in general, explosive plays are one of the biggest determining factors of winning and losing. Respecting the deep part of the field is at the very core of how we play. Then, trying to get there on offense. Yesterday, both of those plays were tough lessons where we're in a split-safety defense. We just didn't play with the right technique and leverage on those two particular plays. I said it after the game, it's just knowing the players on the field who can get there and making sure that we respect it accordingly. Those were the two big plays in the game that we gave up. We have to make improvements there."

On if the defense was in 'quarter-quarter-half' on both of the deep passing plays:

"That's correct."

On leverage played by CB Asante Samuel Jr., on one of the deep completions:

"He should have been on top of the route."

On if Samuel 'should have played outside' on the play:

"That's correct."

On the play by CB Michael Davis on one of the deep completions:

"The safety to his side could do a better job of giving more body presence, but that's the 50-50 ball that you have to make as a corner in the league."

On messaging to outside corners:

"No, there's no problem with the messaging. You have to move the hard down around in the NFL. You can't protect both corners when you're playing against a top running back in the NFL. We moved the hard down around. That's part of how we play. When you do get the tough down, you have to win your fair share. Those are the 50-50 plays that you have to be able to make as a corner in the league. Again, we'll continue to coach, disguise, leverage and all of that. We'll continue to emphasize it. We have to do better and it starts with me."

On defending a specific toss play in overtime:

"It just starts — 15 [Titans WR Nick Westbrook-Ikhine] was the guy that we knew was kind of the pin guy. Just, I think Ja [DB Ja'Sir Taylor] being able to establish the force, which would have allowed [DL] Nick [Williams] to run inside-out. Nick was unblocked. Just perimeter force there. We could have handled it better."

On defending outside runs:

"You just have to establish the force playing defense so that your defense can play inside-out."

On Titans QB Ryan Tannehill's rushing touchdown:

"The edge player has the quarterback."

On punting on fourth-and-two early in the fourth quarter:

"We felt like field position was critical in the game. Just kind of outside the fringe of us being able to go for it. It was a long two. We felt like it was a long two, almost three. Our defense was playing at a high level. We felt like flipping the field there based on the point in the game would give us an advantage. I thought we executed the punt. Defensively, we were able to get the three-and-out and get the ball back to [QB] Justin [Herbert] with good field position."

On RB Austin Ekeler:

"No timeline on his return."

On if LB Eric Kendricks will also have no timeline on his return:

"That's correct."