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## Chargers Week 12 Media Availability

Thursday, November 24, 2022 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

### OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR JOE LOMBARDI

#### **On the return of WRs Keenan Allen and Mike Williams:**

“Mike was in there for so short a time — but sometimes it’s just a feeling of confidence having those two in the huddle. I think it kind of permeates the whole huddle when those guys are in there. It makes everyone feel better. Mike made the big catch and then he was out. We got some production from Keenan. He had the first catch of the game and then had the big third-down conversion at the end, there. It makes a difference, for sure.”

#### **On Allen opening up the offense:**

“I think that there’s a trust factor between him and the quarterback, as far as knowing exactly where he’s going to be and what he’s going to do. Not that the other guys aren’t running their routes correctly — but when you’ve got those kinds of reps and you have a receiver with that kind of feel, the quarterback just has the confidence of maybe hanging with him an extra count because he knows he’s going to get open or being able to time the throws up because they’ve got so many reps together. He just runs routes a certain way that’s unmatched by most people in the NFL. That also helps.”

#### **On the late third-down conversion to Allen:**

“It’s a third-and-California play. The corner played it a little better, maybe than we would have carded it in practice. He was hanging with Keenan deeper down the field, where we completed one last year at home — anyway, where the corner sat and Keenan caught it in the Turkey hole. It was just a great play by the quarterback and the receiver.”

#### **On what ‘third-and-California’ is:**

“Just forever. Third-and-extra-long. Sorry, that’s a [former NFL Defensive Coordinator] Gregg Williams term from my New Orleans days.”

#### **On if Allen and Williams helped open up the running game:**

“I think, having those guys in there helps. Again, Mike wasn’t in there for long enough to really know, but I think we had a good plan and the guys were executing it well. That always helps, too. When the runs are being efficient, you feel more comfortable calling them. I think it’s a combination of things.”

#### **On the offensive production in the second half:**

“I don’t know if there’s one universal statement that’s going to explain it all. We had that last drive with the interception where we were down against the clock and kind of in desperation mode a little bit. We had four drives before that. The first one, we get a first down and then a positive play on first down in the second set of downs. We blocked a run wrong, so we lost two [yards] and had a penalty, so now we’re third-and-long again and didn’t get the first. We get to third-and-short and didn’t execute the run. I could point to each drive and why it went South, but it’s something that we’re certainly aware of and are working on. It’s not like there’s an easy, ‘Hey, if we just do this, it’s going to change.’ I think it’s just overall execution.”

**On second-half adjustments:**

“As you watch it, it’s not like they’ve completely changed their philosophy or made a huge adjustment on defense. Those adjustments are usually, ‘Hey, they’re playing this formation differently than what we thought.’ Atlanta was showing us some looks that we hadn’t seen before, so, we’re going to put a play in that we didn’t necessarily practice or have in the game plan that we think is going to take advantage of it, or [a player] is struggling more against this defender than we anticipated, so we have to adjust our protection that way. You may go into a half and say, ‘Hey, they’re pressuring us more than we anticipated. So, here’s the portion of the game plan that we want.’ It’s not like you go in and install a whole new offense. There’s small adjustments and they certainly matter.”

**On allowing five sacks against Kansas City:**

“There were a couple of coverage sacks. We had one, again, in that last drive. I think when you get into some of those desperation-mode — you’re trying to avoid those situations where the D-Line can just tee off on you. They have some good rusher. Again, I think we’ve been pretty good protecting the quarterback all year. Like you said, there were a couple of those where [QB] Justin [Herbert] kind of scrambled and gave himself up and it was a one or two-yard loss. Different things, but they did a good job, for sure.”

**On the Arizona defense:**

“They’re a very diverse defense. They blitz a lot. They give you a ton of different looks. I think I said about a defense earlier [this year], some teams you’re like, ‘Hey, here’s our personnel, here’s our formation. Here’s the card that we’re going to draw for scout team defense. This is how they’re lining up,’ maybe the top three looks. When you think of a formation or personnel grouping with the Cardinals, well, I could draw 12 different cards and maybe they’re all equally as likely to show up. They do a lot. They play hard. They hit hard. They’ve got some really good players — [Cardinals DL] J.J. Watt, still can take over a game. [Cardinals S] Budda Baker is one of the top safeties in the NFL. They have this [Cardinals LB Isaiah] Simmons, No. 9, who lines up everywhere and does everything for them. He’s kind of a tough guy to identify what he is when you’re trying to figure out who to block. It’s a big challenge.”

**On Cardinals Defensive Coordinator Vance Joseph:**

“There are certain pressure packages that have kind of been a hallmark of the way he operates that are very challenging. There’s definitely some carryover. He’s been in the AFC forever. When I got to the AFC, he was in the NFC. I’ve been part of teams that would cross paths with him. There’s always long protection meetings when you’re facing his defense.”

**On TE Stone Smartt:**

“I think he’s a smart player. For a rookie, there’s a lot of confidence that he’s going to know where to line up and what to do. He’s an athletic guy that runs routes well and catches well. He missed all of training camp and didn’t have any preseason games, so I think you have to be cautious with how much you do expect out of him, as far as a play rep. You kind of have to get his feet wet and progress him along as we’re going when he’s up for the games. He’s a kid that we were throwing out there on some third downs. He made some good blocks in some of those perimeter screens. He’s a trustworthy, athletic guy. We’re looking forward to see how he progresses.”

**On RB Joshua Kelley returning to practice:**

“He brings a lot of energy. I think he was getting going before his injury. He had some production as a runner. It’s good to see him going. He always runs hard and decisive. He’s an energy bringer in the huddle and when he’s out there, so it’s been good.”

**On how running back depth would look should Kelley return:**

“Brock [Anderson] would get mad at me if I answer that [*laughter*]. I don’t know, to be honest. We have to see how he’s feeling at the end of the week. We’ll see how all that goes.”

## **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR RENALDO HILL**

### **On the loss to the Chiefs:**

“We knew that it was going to be a competitive game going against 15 [Chiefs QB Patrick Mahomes] over there and all of the skill guys that they have. Obviously, we wanted to do a better job of stopping the run, putting them into some difficult situations. At the end of the game, we had a chance, and that’s what we wanted to do. We just have to come out on the better end. We have to make sure that we do the right things at the end of the game in order to finish it off.”

### **On S Derwin James Jr.’s coverage of Chiefs TE Travis Kelce:**

“They’re going to do a good job of making sure that they move [Kelce] around into different locations. We tried to get [James Jr.] to the matchups as much as we can. Sometimes, also, the defensive call that comes in, it just requires him to do something else. We tried to mix up the matchups and give them different looks. We didn’t want to give them the same look the whole time. When you look back at it, I think that we had the right gameplan. We just have to continue to find out what we need to do in those tough situations when we know that [Kelce] is going to get the ball.”

### **On CB Asante Samuel Jr.’s coverage of Kelce and the ‘difficulty’ the matchup presented:**

“That play in particular, he should have had help underneath. We should have had another match underneath to help him there on the crosser, but we kind of got caught up in the trash a little bit and Kelce popped out. That’s really more about execution than, more so, the matchup. We weren’t going to leave him alone by himself. That’s kind of what happened on that play.”

### **On Samuel Jr.’s responsibility on Kelce’s second touchdown:**

“That was actually the rep that I was referring to earlier with the help; he should have had help on that situation. He was playing hard, physical. He was trying to leave it all on the line. He was trying to make a play. I don’t question his effort on that play. He’s a playmaker and we have to let him do it. If he were to have, maybe, one more step, he could have, probably, gotten a hand on it. We’ll keep working on our execution to be better in those situations to take away their guy.”

### **On if the Chiefs’ offense ‘is incorporating more crossing routes’:**

“[Kelce] does a lot of things on that backside. You can anticipate him going under. He will show that he is going under, then he will go vertical. He does a great job with his setups. We try to give our guys enough looks to make sure that they see the things that he’s going to do. He’s a crafty guy. Obviously, he’s been doing it for a while. We have to get some other people with some eyeballs on it, as well, to get the ball down. Just better execution. We’ll continue to work on that. Hopefully, we’ll have a better week set up for us, going against Arizona.”

### **On improving third-and-long defense:**

“We’re just trying to spend more time on it. Today was a big third-down emphasis. We try to make sure that we put more plays to stopping the third down, making sure that our guys have the right looks. Even in the walk-through, taking the time to slow it down and make sure that we’re going through it with the right progressions to make sure that everybody is on board. We just have to spend more time on it, and make sure that we meet more together, so that everybody knows the importance of that execution and that down. That’s what we have to continue to do.”

### **On the ‘challenges’ with stopping the run:**

“It’s been different things. It hasn’t been the same thing. We’re just trying to continue to shore up the things that we do see because we know that teams are going to try to continue to attack us that way. We have to be working a step ahead to make sure that we’re self-checking ourselves. If there’s anything that didn’t expose us that could have, that we are making sure that we get the guys the right looks.”

**On Cardinals' offense:**

"They're a very talented skill group. You see all of the receivers that they have on the outside lane. The one thing that they do all have is speed to stretch the field. Those crossing routes that we saw a lot last week, there could be a chance for them to express it there, so we have to make sure we have a good gameplan to stop those crossers. We have to be prepared to cover you three or four times with a guy like [Cardinals QB Kyler] Murray, who can extend the play."

**On preparing for Murray:**

"It's very tough because you have the quarterback reads along with it, not him just dropping back. They do a good job. Even with him in the draw scheme, you're dropping back for pass, and the next thing you know, he's taking it up the middle. It's so much more to prepare for with this guy because you have those reads, you have the draw reads, and then you have the ability for him to scramble. It's just going to take all 11 guys just being in tune with what this guys does. We have to put an emphasis on keeping him in the pocket so that he can't get those scrambles off. We do know that he is elusive, so we have to make sure that we have some eyeballs on him so that if he does break the pocket, we can have more people populating to the ball."

**On S JT Woods' development:**

"He's getting more and more confident out there. We wanted to get him reps. Sometimes, you put guys out there because you want to see how they respond. I thought that he responded the right way. The more and more he responds, we're going to try to continue to find packages and ways to get him on the football field because he's a talent and he can get the ball for us."

**On what he 'wants to see' out of the defense over the final seven weeks of the regular season:**

"The biggest thing is this week, right here. Obviously, going into Arizona and being able to stop the run, we want to make sure that we put ourselves in better situations. We know that is going to help us in all those situations, whether that's redzone third down, but we have to be better on first and second down, and that takes all of us stopping the run. Like I said, if we can put this team in some longer situations — we know that they have their struggles on third downs, as well as us. It's a challenge, for us, to go out there and get it done this weekend. We're going to focus on this week, but we know that the main focus is stopping the run."