

Chargers AFC Wild Card Round Media Availability

Tuesday, January 10, 2023 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

On an injury update regarding WR Mike Williams:

“Mike [Williams] is going through treatment right now. We’re having a walk-through, so we’ll give you guys the injury report, but he is going to be doing treatment today. He is going to be day-to-day as the rest of the week goes on. Coming out of the game [CB] Bryce Callahan and [LB] Kenneth Murray [Jr.], those guys will be at practice this week. [OLB] Joey Bosa will be full [participation] in practice this week. Then, something of note. As we told you that we would, we’re going to activate the 21-day [practice] window for [T] Rashawn Slater. You will see him at practice. He is not going to play in this game, but we’re going to open up the window for him to start practice. He is progressing well. We’re excited to get him back out there with the football team.”

On if the game being played on Saturday impacted Slater’s ability to play this week:

“This week, that is not going to be the case, regardless of when the game was played.”

On if he is ‘hopeful’ that Slater could return to play ‘at some point in the postseason’:

“We’re just going to take advantage of the window and take it day-to-day, but he is progressing well enough to get out there on the football field. He has been working really, really hard. Just having him out there at practice is going to be great to see. Where he goes from there, it’s day-to-day, but we’re going to open up that window and try to take advantage of it.”

On ‘not having many players with postseason experience’ on the roster:

“We’ve taken guys from really, really successful college programs, too. In the last two drafts, we’ve taken people who are very, very accomplished and have been in the big-time atmospheres and have played at the highest levels of college football. I think that has been important to us. Then, just leaning on the experience of the leaders on this football team. You follow the examples of others that are really impactful. That is why we were really intentional about onboarding the veteran players that we’ve been able to onboard in the last two years, so that they could provide that leadership to the younger guys. I think that we have a team that is full of really, really quality experiences, and it has been really fun to watch this group take shape together to carve its own path here with the Chargers. We get a big opportunity on Saturday to really make our mark.”

On preparing for his first playoff game as an NFL Head Coach:

“It’s really special. You dream your whole life to be able to compete at the highest level in sports. That was always my dream, as a young kid, was to be able to compete at the highest level in sports, and to be on this type of stage where the best of the best are in one tournament, that’s where you want to be. I’ve experienced being in the playoffs before at the other places that I’ve been. That is certainly the case when you make it to the playoffs; it’s the very best players, the very best teams, the very best coaches, the very best organizations. That’s where you find out a lot about where you are. We’re excited that we’re here. Like I said, it’s just the beginning.”

On 'leaning on' players with playoff experience this week:

"That type of experience, where it's your brothers that have gone through it — it's always the most impactful, the players who have gone through it. I think that we have a really good combination on our coaching staff of guys who have been in Super Bowls and guys that have been in the NFL Playoffs, National Championship Games in college. You lean on all of that experience. Our players know that. Since we've gotten here, we've had that type of atmosphere, where you can really trust the people that you're around and bring out the best in one another. You want to be that player-driven team. There's nothing better than when you have a player who has gone through the same exact thing that you're about to go through. All of those guys — guys like [OLB] Kyle [Van Noy] and [OLB] Khalil [Mack], these players that we've been able to bring here — and the older players, like [WR] Keenan [Allen], who have been in the playoffs. We have too many team leaders — [C] Corey Linsley — all of these guys who have been through it, they're going to really have to lead the way for us."

On Williams' practice outlook for this week:

"He's day-to-day. I think that you will see him at practice at some point, yes."

On if Williams 'could play in the game if he did not practice this week':

"I think that is fair to say. We expect him to practice at some point this week. In what capacity? That's to be determined."

On Bosa's designation on this week's injury report:

"Kind of like [QB] Justin [Herbert] last week — how you list a guy on the report, but they're full [participation]. That's just the nature of it. He is going to be on the injury report with a groin, but he will be full [participation] in practice tomorrow."

On Herbert's first playoff game and 'qualities of quarterbacks who perform well in the postseason':

"I think that Justin's whole life, he has performed well in these types of games, these types of environment. His last season at Oregon, he did about all you could do, as a college player. He has always played his best when the stage is the biggest. That is how his career has been in the NFL. In primetime, the big games he has had for the first three years, he has always risen to the occasion because that is the type of competitor that he is. Now, just getting to that stage where he is joining up with his teammates, and there is a team around him that is really excited to compete and be a team out there. He is going to have a good week of practice, like he always does. I know that he will be ready to play."

On preparing to face the Jaguars' offense and QB Trevor Lawrence:

"They've done a nice job offensively this year. They've onboarded a lot of quality players in free agency and drafted some guys. I feel like they're really solid, all the way around — skill players, being able to run the football, throw the football. They take care of it. Their offensive line, they've been able to withstand some attrition on the O-line and still play quality football down the stretch. Trevor [Lawrence] has really had an outstanding season, and we knew that in the first game. He played a really good game against us. He has done a really nice job of leading that team down the stretch to help get them in the playoffs. They're a very complete offense. They're balanced, well-coached. They definitely have our full respect."

On limiting the Jaguars' offense:

"I think that you have to do a really good job on early downs. They do a really good job of getting into third-and-manageable. They do a good job of distributing the football to a lot of different people. They make you defend a lot of different people. That's the sign of a good offense, where it's not just about one person. We have to make sure that we do all of the things that are necessary to playing good defense; being ahead of the chains, making sure that you're physical at the line of scrimmage, putting a roof on the explosions and trying to take the football away."

On Lawrence's development since Week 3:

"Just more experience; more time on task, more familiarity with their skill group. Their skill group has been intact the whole season, so him having that chemistry with that skill group. You can tell all of those guys in the skill positions have really improved down the stretch, as well, and featuring what they do well. I think that they have done a good job playing to Trevor's strengths as a football player. He is the same player that he has been his whole life. Coming out of Cartersville, Georgia, he has always been a really good distributor, a guy that is a play-maker, a guy that can play well in the clutch. He is having a great season."

On 'combatting' Lawrence's 'quick release':

"You just have to play team defense. You can't have a bunch of mental errors, where there are guys open that he can hit them. We have to play team defense and make sure that we force them to execute, and not give up a bunch of easy completions or free plays because guys aren't doing the right thing."

On Jaguars RB Travis Etienne:

"[Travis] Etienne is a really good back. I think you have seen it all season long. Had a lot of respect for him coming out. He is a complete back. I think that is what he has shown. He can run between the tackles, outside on the perimeter. He is a good pass-catcher. He does a good job in pass protection, for a young player. He was a high pick in the first round, and you can see all of that talent on display, especially as the season progressed. He has been one of the keys, I think, for their football team, playing at a high level down the stretch."

On 'how his role as head coach changes from a regular season game to a playoff game':

"Everyone here knows you treat every week like it has a life of its own in the NFL. Every week demands that full respect from you, as a competitor. That is the way that I have always tried to live. They are all the most important games in the world to me. That is the only way that I have ever known how to compete and that is what I have tried to bring to this team. What happens in the playoffs, every play and every possession is magnified. You have a ton of film. You have 17 games worth of film for someone to watch. It's extremely well-scouted. I think that intensity, that attention to detail, and the quality of the players, makes for every play, every possession counting at a high level. You're seeing the best of the best every single play. You just really have to focus on the things that you do from your first day in training camp, which is your assignment, your technique and the energy you play with, and making sure that you do that consistently down-in and down-out."

On 'the quarterback's reputation being made in the playoffs':

"It's the one position where someone associates a record with you, and championships for your legacy and things like that. It's one of those types of positions. That's what makes the position special, and the reason why is because that position has such a big impact on your team, on the organization, on the landscape of the NFL. In the NFL, the history of the game has been written in two-minute. Normally in two-minute, you need your quarterback to come bring you back and do something special. That is just the way it is. In the playoffs, everything is tight. More often than not, you need your quarterback to make big plays for you and also elevate the play of everyone around him. I think that is the big thing. That is the nature of the quarterback position, you have to elevate everybody around you — not just your offense, but your defense, your kicking game, your fans. That position elevates everything. I am sure glad that we have Justin Herbert."

On the challenges of defending Jaguars Head Coach Doug Pederson's offensive scheme:

"I think he does a good job of protecting the quarterback. Getting the quarterback in rhythm, on schedule, well-protected, high-completion plays. The marriage of the run and the pass. I think he puts a lot of pressure on you in situational football, third- and fourth-and-short, red area. You can tell that this guy played the position at the highest level and that he is thinking about his quarterback. That is how he has always been as a pro coach. He is doing an outstanding job with Trevor [Lawrence] this year, for sure."

On 'expecting the unexpected' in coaching against Pederson, regarding trick plays in the playoffs:

"Doug [Pederson] has the full command of his team and he knows how to use those players. I think that what he has shown is that people get labeled as aggressive, but what he is going to do is he is going to put the pressure on you. He is going to try to put the pressure on you and force you to defend. That strategy has worked out really well for him since he has been a coach in this league. He definitely has our full respect."

On the Jaguars' defense:

"A really good front seven. I think a very complete front seven — their defensive line, their edges, off-the-ball linebackers, I think they are really, really solid. They are deep. They run well. Then, a secondary that has a lot of talent on the back end. I think their two safeties are fantastic, [Jaguars S Andre] Cisco and [Jaguars S Rayshawn] Jenkins. Then, they have three quality corners that play for them. One of the guys that I used to coach, [Jaguars CB] Darious Williams, who I know really well. [Jaguars CB] Tyson Campbell is an emerging young player. They have really played good defense down the stretch. When we played them the first time, we knew that they had a lot of good pieces, and they have improved since then. A very complete defensive unit."

On the importance of C Corey Linsley's playoff experience for the offensive line:

"It wasn't a good day for me when we went against him in the playoffs [laughter]. That was part of the motive for joining forces because he is that impactful of a player. I am glad that we get to compete together, so, hopefully, we can even up that record. Corey [Linsley] is just such an integral part of our entire team, not just our offense. What he does for us in the run game, in the pass game, situationally, the leadership in the locker room, there is just a lot of wisdom there. He has been in a lot of these moments in the playoffs. Certainly, we're going to lean on him this week. He is just the engine of the middle of our offense. I'm glad that we have him. He is healthy. He has played very well down the stretch for us and we're going to need him to play at a high level, and lead at a high level for us, here in the playoffs."