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## Chargers Week 10 Media Availability

Friday, November 11, 2022 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

### HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

#### **On the decision to waive DL Jerry Tillery:**

"I think that there's just a point in relationships like this where you have to move on. It's best for both people to move on; that's just what happened here. We wish Jerry [Tillery] luck moving forward in his career."

#### **On 'if anything happened' since the trade deadline with Tillery:**

"Competing visions for the role, moving forward. It just became clear that it wasn't going to be a fit anymore. Where we're headed, as a team, wasn't going to be compatible with Jerry [Tillery] and where he is trying to go. We felt like it was best to move forward."

#### **On the 'differing visions' between Tillery and the coaching staff:**

"He probably expects more for himself. I think that with where we're at as a team and what we see, they're just two different places. That happens sometimes in the NFL. When you get to that point, you have to do what's best for the team and what's best for the player. That's what we did here."

#### **On if Tillery's role would have been changed following the injury to DL Austin Johnson:**

"I don't think that is necessarily the case. I think that we felt like we were going to give [DL] Breiden [Fehoko] and [DL] Joe [Gaziano] a chance to compete. With where we're at and what we're trying to do with our team — on the defensive line, our defense, on the whole team — trying to create competition and have guys earn their roles. That's what we want to be here. That's what we want to do. Like I said, when those things didn't line up, we had to make a change."

#### **On 'navigating the relationship' with a player that did not have their fifth-year option activated:**

"It's the first time that it has happened to me as a head coach, but I know that it happens throughout the NFL. I was with [Ravens CB] Kyle Fuller in Chicago, who I'm very close with, he had his option declined. He ended up having a fantastic season in 2017, led the NFL in past breakups and earned a huge extension with the Bears. He became a first-team All-Pro on the number one defense in the NFL. I think a lot of it is how you approach it. You try to approach it that way that when business decisions happen, you're still pouring into each other, you're still trying to make things work and create a vision for someone's role. Sometimes it happens like that and sometimes it happens like this. At the end of the day, you have to do what's best for your team, and that's what we did."

#### **On if Gaziano will be signed to the active roster or a potential gameday elevation:**

"Probably will be an elevation situation. We've had a good practice with both Breiden [Fehoko] and Joe [Gaziano] and both of those guys have played for us. We know that we can win with both of those guys and play the way that we want to play. Both those guys are great fits for our team."

**On Fehoko's improvement:**

"From the minute I got here, he has improved. Last year, when he got his opportunities, I thought that he excelled in his role. This year, the same way. I think that he's improving all the time. He's one of us and that's important. He's going to go out there and he's going to play well on Sunday night."

**On if T Trey Pipkins III will be a 'game-time decision':**

"Yeah, he was able to get out there and do some practice today, which we want to at least get him out there so that he would have a chance to play, and see how he feels. He's definitely questionable, a game-time decision, but I'm proud of the way that he has given himself a chance."

**On if a decision has been made on which player will start at right tackle if Pipkins does not play:**

"Not yet. We have a direction that we're leaning, for sure. We have a lot of time between now and Sunday night, so we're going to use all of that time and make a decision before game time."

**On if the decision at right tackle is between T Storm Norton and T Foster Sarell:**

"Yes."

**On if there is 'any chance' that OLB Chris Rumph II plays on Sunday:**

"I think that there's a chance. I think we wanted to get him out here at practice. He has progressed well. Get him out on an individual basis and be there for us, maybe in an emergency."

**On Sarell:**

"He has size. He has position flex. I think he's really improved outside. Since we got him, I think that he has been really a pleasant surprise for us. I think that he has improved a lot. He was able to get a lot of work in camp, at training camp — a lot of opportunities. We just feel like he's getting better. We'll see where it goes, but we're glad that we have him."

**On WR Keenan Allen's injury status:**

"Day-to-day. Trending much better than last week, for sure, in the Atlanta game. Feel confident in his progress. We'll let you know when he gets back to practice."

**On WR Mike Williams' progress:**

"Positive. I think that there's a strong chance that he'll be back in practice in some capacity next week. He's progressing well."

**On the challenge of preparing for the 49ers' defense:**

"It's a great opportunity. All of these games are different going. You go in with your group of guys and you have to figure out how to win, you have to figure out how to make it work. Those types of challenges, as coaches and players, you love those challenges, to go compete against great competition. We believe in our guys. We've had to win a lot of different ways this year, and this week will be no exception. You have to really believe that each week has a life of its own, and this week is certainly no exception."

**On the team 'changing up practice tempo' this week:**

"Yeah, it just gets us off to a different start. Guys have to be ready for team [period] sooner. I just think that little things like that, for all of us, is just keeping things fresh, but also putting the focus where you want it to be, which is starting fast and trying to do little things to make that happen."

## **QUARTERBACK JUSTIN HERBERT**

### **On overcoming first-quarter deficits:**

"I think it speaks a lot about our team not giving up — being down early and being able to fight back and continue to execute throughout the game. Ideally, it's not an ideal situation. You want to be up early. It's kind of where we've found ourselves, so we have to continue to execute. We have to do better on offense of getting the first, first down, of just getting the ball moving and converting on third downs. I think it shows great fight by our team."

### **On what he attributes to low offensive production in the first quarter:**

"I think, you take a look at the last game and I think we only had maybe four or five plays in the first quarter. It's going to be tough to be able to put up points with a small amount of plays like that. We have to be able to convert on third down. We have to limit turnovers and do all of these things so that we were able to convert on third down, get first downs and be able to move the ball because that all leads to it."

### **On the Chargers waiving DL Jerry Tillery:**

"I wish nothing but the best for Jerry. He and I were good friends and it's an unfortunate circumstance, but that's a [Head] Coach [Brandon] Staley decision. Those guys in the front office make that decision, so that's probably a better question for them."

### **On changing tempo in practice:**

"I think it's just important to get out there and execute and to know that the first drive is one of the most important. It's going out there and getting that first, first down and getting the ball moving. As soon as you feel like you can do that, you get more comfortable out there. I think that is a big part of our offense is just going out there and trying to get that first down. It's something that we haven't done a great job of, but I know that we're going to continue to work and continue to get better at it."

### **On the San Francisco defense:**

"They are a very well-coached team. They have a lot of athletic, very skilled guys on defense. They fly around and they play really good defense. It will be a challenge for us."

### **On 49ers DL Nick Bosa:**

"He's very tough to block. He's a guy that you have to be aware of out there. It will take a good protection plan going into the game to have a chance at it."

### **On if Nick Bosa is different than his brother, Chargers OLB Joey Bosa:**

"I haven't met him, so I don't know personally quite what he's like. I know he's an incredible competitor and I know he's a tough guy to block out there. Joey and him definitely share those characteristics, but I'd have to get to know him better to say anything like that."

### **On the type of game he expects on Sunday against San Francisco:**

"I try to avoid making predictions like that. I think it's important for us to go out there and do the best that we can. I haven't spent too much time in the defensive meeting rooms. We're doing our best to have a good protection plan, to have a good run game, pass protection plan, all of those things that are important to an offense. I know that if we can take care of that, I know that we can play pretty good football, but it's up to us to execute and continue to get those first downs, like we've mentioned."

### **On adjusting to different offensive personnel throughout the season:**

"I think the great that we have done so far this year is that we have been able to get reps with all of those receivers and they all have done a great job of stepping up and stepping into their roles. Even guys like, [WRs] Jason Moore [Jr.], Michael Bandy, DeAndre Carter, they have stepped up into big-time roles and we have been able to get them the ball. We'd love to be able to put up more points and continue to execute at a high pace like that, but those guys have done a great job stepping up and we feel really comfortable with those guys out there."

**On if he noticed ‘intermediate and long shots opened up against Atlanta’:**

“I think it’s important for an offense each week to be able to take those shots down field. The defense has done a good job of covering those downfield, and so we have been able to kind of attack underneath. As long as we’re able to attack downfield, I think it opens up a huge part of our offense. It’s definitely something that we have definitely looked at this week.”

**On if working with different wide receivers has limited throwing passes down field:**

“It’s a good question. I think for the most part, those guys have done a great job of competing and battling and we trust [WR] Josh Palmer, Jason Moore [Jr.], all of those guys going down field and competing for balls like that. It hasn’t gone our way all of the time, but I know that I trust those guys and I’m going to be able to push the ball down field for those guys to go make something happen.”

**On the offense using more bootlegs and pocket movement in last week’s game:**

“I think that would probably be a better question for [Offensive Coordinator] Coach [Joe] Lombardi. I don’t know exactly what their plan was to activate or not activate. I feel great, I feel better and things have gotten better since the injury. I feel like I have been able to escape, scramble a few weeks ago, and so I think that’s probably a question for them to talk about more.”

**On RB Austin Ekeler:**

“He’s a huge part of [the offense]. He’s so tough out of the backfield and to be able to catch passes like that as well adds a whole other dimension to our offense.”

**On Ekeler’s personality:**

“Competitive. He’s a competitor and he wants to be the best. We really appreciate that from him and we know that no one is going to work harder than him out there. It definitely shows on the field.”

**On RBs Isaiah Spiller and Sony Michel opening up the run game:**

“It’s a good point. To have guys like that that are able to step up and fill a role for Austin Ekeler is huge because as much as we want Ek to be out there every single play, it’s tough as a running back. To have a guy like Sony [Michel], Isaiah [Spiller], Larry [Rountree III], they have all done a great job. We trust those guys in protection, running routes, and they have all done a great job. It was really good to see from them.”