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## **Chargers General Manager Tom Telesco Media Availability**

**Thursday, January 19, 2023 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.**

### **Opening statement:**

“Disappointing end to the season, obviously, losing in the playoffs. 10-7 going into the playoffs, feeling pretty good that we can make a run. To lose in the opening week — any playoff loss is painful, but losing in the first round is difficult. Then, the manner in which we lost, just stings a little bit more. The only thing worse than a loss is when you have that feeling that you let people down. We have around 200 people in this organization, football and non-football, and we’re all representing them on the field. We just didn’t play our best when the best was needed, especially in the second half.

“Our fan base, they’re dying for a championship, just like we are, so you have that little feeling of letting people down. I will say this, our current team of players and our coaches, they are really mentally tough people, and that’s not by accident, that’s intentional. Those are the type of people that we bring in here. It’s important to us because you have to be able to withstand these types of situations, especially leading into an offseason. That’s what we’re going to work on this offseason. We’re going to lick our wounds a little bit here, and then rise and fight again. We have a whole offseason to figure out how we’re going to do that.

“Any playoff loss is tough. I’ve been through these before — I’ve lost a Super Bowl before — it feels awful. You think that you have a chance to go [to the Super Bowl], and we just didn’t get there. With that, I’ll open it up.”

### **On if Head Coach Brandon Staley’s position ‘was ever at stake’:**

“No. That was probably more your discussion than ours. Our belief in Brandon [Staley] hasn’t changed. He has our belief, our players believe in him. You’ve been around him, he’s a tremendous leader, he’s detail-oriented and he’s a fighter. That’s the type of person that I want to be with me going to competition. I understand that the season didn’t end quite the way we liked it, but he has our whole support.”

### **On playing time distribution in Week 18:**

“We talk about a lot of things. I’ve been in the league a long time. I have a lot of experiences with those situations in the past. There isn’t one right or wrong answer to that. There are different ways to handle it. I’ve seen it handled the right way, you think it’s the right way, but it doesn’t work out like that. But, in this particular case, Brandon [Staley] mapped out what his plan was, and I’m going to support that. If you look at how we played in Jacksonville, how we didn’t come out flat — we played well to start the game, so that’s a positive. Is that because we played our starters long against Denver? I don’t know that. But, we came out well in the playoff game. Losing [WR] Mike Williams], not ideal, obviously. Like I said, there isn’t a one-size-fits-all answer in how to handle those situations. Hopefully, we have that situation a lot moving forward, where at the end of every season, we would have to make that decision. Each one is a little bit unique, as far as those situations go. I was behind him on that.”

**On the second-half performance against the Jaguars ‘showing the teams weaknesses’:**

“It always seems like whatever your weaknesses during the season are, they magnify in playoff games; it’s the best versus the best, high-stress, high-pressure situations. I agree with you, there were some things. Our run game throughout the season wasn’t where it needed to be, and that showed up in the second half. There were a lot of things that went down that path. We gave up that long touchdown in the second half. We gave up a lot of explosive plays during the season. There were some things that showed up, but again, like I said, when you play 17 games, you can see where your strengths and weaknesses are. You get in the playoffs, you try to minimize some of those, but sometimes they crop up, like they did against Jacksonville. But, yes, I’d agree with you on that.”

**On improving the rushing offense:**

“We’re going to probably have a new vision and approach on offense, that’s one way to go at it. We’ll always be a passing team. We have [QB] Justin Herbert, we like to throw the ball. We’re never going to be a 50-50 balanced team of run and pass, but you have to be able to run the football efficiently and effectively, especially in the second-half of games where you have leads. We were unable to do that this year. If you look at where our rushing numbers will be — like I said, they’re never going to be high rushing numbers, as far as terms of yards — but yards per carry should be better. Two years ago, our yards per carry were pretty good, top-10 in the league. This year, almost toward the bottom. Obviously, that’s a big thing. We’re going to look at it in the offseason because that has to be better to be a good playoff team.”

**On ‘if a deficiency in rushing offense is due to personnel, schematics, coaching, preparation or a combination of factors’:**

“It’s always a combination of all of that, as far as how you put it together.”

**On the potential of a contract extension with Herbert being finalized this offseason due to ‘what his fifth-year option number could be’:**

“I haven’t really thought about any contracts right now with anybody, but, obviously, we want him here for a long time.”

**On if he and Herbert’s representation have had discussions regarding a contract extension:**

“We haven’t talked to anybody about any contract. The season just ended.”

**On this upcoming offseason, in relation to cap space available entering the 2023 season, compared to previous offseasons:**

“I don’t know about other offseasons. It may be different than last year’s offseason. Every year is a little bit different. This year will be a little bit different, not as much [salary cap] space to work with, which is fine. Every offseason is a little bit different. Certainly, this year will be different than last year’s.”

**On ‘evaluating his 10 seasons as general manager’:**

“I don’t even know how to answer those questions. We’re trying to put the best team on the field that we can. If you look at this team, and if you look at the glass being three-quarters full, we have some stars on both sides of the ball. We had the depth this year to withstand some challenging circumstances. We have a coaching staff that all has leadership ability, they teach really well. They were able to adjust on the fly this year. Locally and nationally, our fan base is really exploding. Those are the positives right there. We can build on that. I’m excited about that. I love the people that I work with. There’s just a lot there in front of us right now.”

**On entering his 11th season as general manager:**

“I’m entitled to nothing, and I don’t take my job for granted, at all. There are some positives here. Understand that I’m not sitting up here saying that I deserve anything, that’s just the way that it is. I like where our roster is headed. I love the coaching staff, and we’re going to add to that coaching staff coming up, certainly on the offensive side of the ball. Seeing the passion right now, and even meeting some of the fans in Jacksonville that traveled to the game, it’s an exciting time here. But, like I said, I’m not entitled to anything. I work really hard at what I do. I put all of my time, effort and energy into this job, because if you don’t, you can’t compete at this level. I’ve had great support from the Spanos Family, and it has been like that since the day that I arrived.”

**On his two seasons with Staley:**

“Any time that you work with somebody, the longer that you work with them, the smoother and more efficient that it is. We see things similarly, most times — you don’t want to it to be 100 percent of the time, you need to have some give-and-take and some counterarguments. But I really enjoy working with him.”

**On the search for a new offensive coordinator and Staley being a ‘defensive-minded head coach’:**

“I’m not concerned. I don’t so much buy into the offensive- and defensive-minded coach mentality. I’ve seen a lot of defensive coaches have good offenses that develop quarterbacks. Yes, we’ll have a new coordinator this year. I don’t think you ever want to play scared, where we don’t want to make a change because we’re afraid of how the changes may affect. We’re trying to get better. It’s going to be a little bit of a different vision and approach, but not worried about how Justin [Herbert] will adapt to that change. We’re just trying to improve and get better, that’s the thing. Not too worried about that.”

**On ‘how far away’ the offense is ‘from reaching a new level’:**

“That’s a tough question [*laughter*]. We’re just trying to improve each year. It would be impossible to put a number on how many players away, or the style of player or the type of player. Obviously, we’ll lose some players this offseason. We’ll add some players. It’s a tough question to answer. I do think that we have a good core. Talking about offense specifically, we do have a core there, as far as protecting the quarterback and throwing the football. We have [RB] Austin Ekeler. Too hard to say how many players aware we are.”

**On ‘if creating more explosive plays can be easily solved by adding speed at wide receiver’:**

“Good question. If you talk to people that work with me and for me, I want speed at every position on our roster. That’s kind of the philosophy, it always has been. Would I love an explosively fast, stretch-the-field receiver? Absolutely, I would love to have that. But, I’m not going to give back [WR] Keenan Allen. I’m not going to give back [WR] Mike Williams. I’m not going to give back [WR] Josh Palmer. This past year, our dual punt and kickoff returner was [WR] DeAndre Carter, who was going to have a smaller role in the offense and ended up having a bigger role due to injuries. He had a really nice year for us. I wish that our fifth receiver was [Pro Football Hall of Fame WR and Chargers Hall of Famer] Lance Alworth [*laughter*], but it’s not. Josh [Palmer] has shown the ability, in college, in the SEC, to get behind some people. He’s not a 4.4 [40-yard-dash] receiver, he’s around 4.50, 4.52. Mike Williams is 6-foot-4, 220 pounds and runs a 4.5, and he can really affect people deep, and you have to account for him. It may not be the style that everybody likes because he is not running 4.3, but it’s effective. He led the league in yards-per-catch with over 20 yards per catch a few years ago, so he can affect people down the field — in a different style, obviously. I like our group of receivers. I would love to have some speed there. We’ll see how that kind of works out. But, I agree with you, there are different ways to be able to improve there — some of it is just by pure speed talent, but I think that we have some guys that can do that in different roles. Then, schematically, as well. It’s definitely something that we need to add to our repertoire, as far as being able to get down the field just a little bit more. It doesn’t have to be 40, 50-yard throws, it can be the intermedia 15-to-18-yard crossing routes. But, I will say that Mike Williams, people have to account for him deep down the field, even though it may not be the style of what you’re talking about.”

**On Williams and different forms of speed:**

“I’ve seen Mike [Williams] make a lot of catches deep down the field, a lot. That counts just as much as a little guy running fast down the field. Mike Williams is an incredible player. He averaged over 20 yards per catch a few years ago. I’m not going to argue with that. Would I love a bit, 4.3 receiver? Yeah. Are you kidding me? Absolutely. But, I like the guys that we have, too. I’m not giving those guys back.”

**On ‘if speed and scheme go hand-in-hand’:**

“Brandon [Staley] has talked about it, when you marry that run to the pass, that helps, obviously. Like you said, we’re not going to be 50-50, I wouldn’t want to be. I just think that this is a passing league, overall. I agree with you.”

**On ‘the marriage of the run and the pass offensively’:**

“A lot of it is play-action [pass], too. Make sure that everything looks the same. We run plays, pass plays, that look very similar.”

**On 'why that marriage doesn't already exist in the offense':**

"It exists in all offenses, it's just about how efficiently you can do it."

**On desirable traits of an offensive coordinator:**

"The one thing we always talk about, and it has nothing to do with X's and O's, it's leadership. [Former Offensive Coordinator] Joe Lombardi has leadership, that was great. You have to have that as a coach, certainly as a coordinator, because you're leading that group. That's the first thing that you look at, leadership. Then, the ability to teach and communicate, and those both go together. You're dealing with a lot of players. Everybody learns differently, so we have to treat them all differently, but being able to really teach the concepts. In a simple manner, there's a lot that goes into it. Those are two things. I like to look at their backgrounds of where they're from, who they learned from, things like that."

**On if experience 'matters' in the search for the next offensive coordinator:**

"Not necessarily. I think that we're going to have a pretty wide scope of what we're going to look at, then see what it narrows down to after that."

**On offseason moves surrounding available salary cap space entering the 2023 season and if releasing WR Keenan Allen is 'tempting':**

"It's not tempting to me [*laughter*]. Good players make money, and I would rather have a lot of good players on our roster than a lot of cap space."

**On if the team 'has a mentality where they don't feel that they can't lose':**

"I didn't feel that. I didn't feel it during the season. I didn't even feel that during the [playoff] game. Now, each individual person may have different feelings. But, especially when you have the quarterback that we have, you're never out of a game. I've never felt that. I even felt, against Jacksonville, like, 'We're going to get a stop here.' That's a pretty high-level question. I can't answer that for every specific person. I know what we're like in the building, especially on Wednesday in the team meeting, after a win or loss. I think we have a great mentally-tough group of players. That, to me, is not an issue. Like I said, that's very intentional, as far as how we build the football team. [OLB] Joey [Bosa], in that game, I think that his passion probably superseded his poise a little bit in that game. He wants to win more than anybody. I love having him on our side. That, to me, has not been an issue, as far as when I look at our football team."

**On OLB Joey Bosa's penalty at Jacksonville:**

"I love Joey. I trust him. He also knows what he did, that can't happen. We make mistakes. I make plenty of them. We all do. It was unfortunate. I didn't like it, but I trust Joey. He'll learn from that."

**On the defense:**

"The positive is that I thought we played well down the stretch. I think you saw what the defense can get to. That was with an interior defensive line that really played well down the stretch, but it wasn't what our vision was going to be for what the inside was going to look like. Our vision on the edge didn't quite get there because Joey [Bosa] was hurt most of the year. I thought our secondary played really well. I saw that most of the year. I thought we gave up some explosive plays. We have to fix that, but we were competitive on the football. We challenged a lot of routes. I thought the inside linebackers played really well. I saw some really nice development there. My expectation is that, when we hit training camp, we're going to hit the ground running this year. I did feel last year with that many new faces on defense that there would be a transition period, it was going to take some time. It took a little longer into the season that I would have liked. For whatever reason, we had some guys down, whatever, it doesn't really matter. We saw it towards the end, what it can get to. I just think this offseason, once we hit training camp, we should, hopefully, hit the ground running with that group."

**On the rushing defense:**

"Our first-down defense and really first-down offense need a lot of improvement there. I agree, the Jacksonville game there was one drive where we didn't get them to third down mostly because we didn't defend well on first down. Don't forget, it's not like teams run the ball every first down, so there's also passing involved there, but there has to be major improvement there. The one thing about the NFL, it's the longest offseason in professional sports. We have plenty of time to try and figure that out."



**On LB Drue Tranquill:**

"I haven't even remotely gotten into looking at personnel for next year yet. Drue had a tremendous year as a player, as a leader for us. I know when we drafted him, we felt like he had the ability to be a captain for us in time. That's kind of what he is. He's just a great leader, has a great feel. He represents our team really well, but plays well, as well. We have a lot of puzzle pieces to kind of work in this year to figure out what's the best makeup of our team going into next year. Obviously, contracts and money are all part of it. We'll get into those discussions as we get into February and try to map it out. We'll see how it works out."

**On the medical team:**

"Well, don't forget that the athletic training staff is treating the injury that already happened. It's not necessarily the reason why a player is getting hurt. We had some injuries this year. Overall, we were slightly above the average, I wouldn't call it an epidemic. There were a lot of teams that had a lot worse off than we did. We weren't even in the bottom third [of the league in terms of healthiest teams]. Last year, we were in the top-five healthiest teams. Every team has to try to get through some different points of the season with injuries. I understand that. We did that this year. I thought we did that pretty well, both by the depth we had and the coaches adjusting to what we had. I kind of think the injury narrative is a little bit overblown unless somebody has numbers that can show me differently. We were a really healthy team two years ago. This year, yeah, we were above the average, but it wasn't like we were in the bottom of the league [of healthiest teams]. But, back to the original question — each department of football operations, yeah, we evaluate every year and kind of see if we can get better, where we can get better. That's kind of the normal course of action."

**On injuries:**

"You can weight [players], but even with that — when a player get hurt, as far as time missed, they're all important to us. The injury doesn't necessarily, because you're a starter and you're a backup is different. That's the same to us. I'd love to see your data. We can talk about it next press conference."

"Oh, I'm not saying [losing Bosa] is not big. When you talk about the strength and conditioning staff, the medical staff, that doesn't really matter what type of player that is. But yes, Joey was big. When you compare to the rest of the league, we weren't in the bottom of the league."

"I look at time missed. I also look at who's getting hurt, of course. That does have an effect on the field. But I'm also looking at the rest of the teams and who they have getting injuries as well, so it's not just us. It's us compared to the rest of the league."

**On the playing surface at SoFi Stadium:**

"No discussions [on changing the surface] that I know of. I've seen significant injuries at every stadium. I read a great article about fields written in *The Athletic*, that was very well-researched. I haven't heard any discussion about our particular field. I know it's a pretty new field turf. I haven't heard anything."

**On if CB J.C. Jackson will be ready for training camp:**

"It's too early [to tell]. What he has going for him is his age and the fact that he's in such great physical condition that he should be able to come back from this injury. I think I told you all before, it's not an injury that we see that often. We see it from time-to-time. It's not like some other injuries where you can really have a good prediction of what that time of return will be. He's been here rehabbing and he's moving along. To have an exact timeframe of when he'll be ready, I'm not really sure yet. We'll probably know more, I expect, deeper in the offseason if he's ready for any type of OTAs [Organized Team Activities] or training camp, and kind of go from there."

**On Jackson off the field:**

"That was probably more personal-related than anything else. It's probably something that we'll discuss more in the offseason. Stuff like that, that's personal off the field. That's really for the player to take care of, than us. It's family related."

**On OL Jamaree Salyer:**

“He saved us this year. I wish that I could say that I was smart enough to say we were going to draft him to play guard but that he could go play left tackle if [T] Rashawn [Slater] gets hurt, and play really good football. That wasn’t the case. He played tackle in college. That’s the one benefit when you draft a tackle in college that you really see as a guard, you always know, ‘Hey, look. We could put him out there if we had to,’ because he has experience doing it. He played guard most of training camp. He really played guard most of the beginning of the regular season, maybe a little bit of snaps at tackle. I give our coaches great credit and [Head Coach] Brandon [Staley] great credit for not flinching at all and saying, ‘Look, this is what we have. We could make a lot of different moves on the offensive line, or we could make one move and put Jamaree out there. I know we’ve only seen him do it in college, but he did it at a high level in the SEC, let’s take a look at it.’ Jamaree never flinched. He has great poise and balance, and patience at that position. I think a lot of that is because he played it a lot at the college level and played at a pretty high level. He played really efficient football for us at a critical position. As you move into next year, as good as Jamaree played, I feel pretty comfortable that Rashawn Slater will be our left tackle, but we’ll figure out what the best role for Jamaree is. It’s a negative when a player gets hurt. The one little positive is other players getting an opportunity and now, we know what he can do, rather than thinking he can do something. It will give us some flexibility. Do we see him at a guard or a tackle for next year? I don’t know yet, to be honest with you. I’m not sure.”

**On T Trey Pipkins III:**

“I’m really proud of him for a number of reasons. His development of really turning into a starting right tackle in this league, and then, really, how he handled his injury this year. I mean, he is tough. He knew how much he meant to the team. He played through some things that are really difficult. To see his development from the time he got here to now, I’m proud of him of how much work he’s put into it. He had a really good year for us.”

**On evaluating Pipkins on the season due to the injury:**

“I think him being here as long as he has, I think we have a pretty good feel for that.”

**On the rookie draft class:**

“[S] JT [Woods] and [RB] Isaiah [Spiller], this will be a big offseason for those guys, since they didn’t get as many snaps their rookie year. [G] Zion [Johnson], really happy [with him]. He had his ups and downs like a rookie offensive lineman is going to have. I know when we drafted him, I said, ‘You can’t expect him to step in like Rashawn Slater did.’ What Rashawn did is just really uncommon, but Zion give us an edge and a toughness inside. He’s smart. If he makes a mistake, he doesn’t make the same mistake twice. I just think he has a really high ceiling. He’s really mature. A lot of that stuff that we thought when we drafted him, you don’t know until you see it at this level, and see him out there, but he battled for us. I’m really proud of how he played, and I think he has a long way to go.”

**On S JT Woods:**

“Yeah, I think [he can be a deep-field safety]. Some of it is what you just said, some of it is just on the players around him and how we use players. Things change a lot during the season, a lot of time just based off injuries and who’s available and what adjusts how we play. Same vision for JT. Not every rookie is going to play a large number of snaps. Isaiah didn’t get a chance to get as many carries as we would have liked. It’s just the way it worked out. I’m still excited to see development. It’s always the second year for these guys, it’s a really big offseason.”

**On S Nasir Adderley:**

“He had some really good moments. Probably not as consistent late in the year, and then coupled with the fact that [S] Alohi Gilman was playing really well. It kind of went both ways with that. Alohi from December and on was playing really good football for us. It gave us a lot of flexibility depending on who we’re playing that week, as far as what the gameplan is, who we’re going to use. Nas is a good football player. He’s really athletic. He can run, he has range. The game means a lot to him. We’ve seen him develop from his rookie year all the way until now. It’s also nice having a secondary deep enough where, depending on who we’re playing and the type of offense we’re going to play, we can have some different people out there. Alohi did a really nice job for us, as well.”

**On what QB Justin Herbert means to the organization:**

"I sleep better at night knowing we have a franchise quarterback, that's No. 1. He's done so much already in his young career, yet we all know there's still a lot there because of his commitment to the game. He's a perfectionist and how much he does in preparation for his job. What I've been around, all the great quarterbacks have that, as far as what they do in the building to prepare for the next opponent and the amount of work into it. Then, combine that with his physical ability. We're extremely lucky to have him. We're going to just kind of keep building around him, build him a defense to get him the ball back and go from there."

**On where Herbert can take another step:**

"I wouldn't want to limit it. He's a young quarterback still. I'm surprised nobody has asked about *'the window'* that we all talk about, that you can only win in *'the window'* when a quarterback is on a rookie contract, which I just don't believe in. It's also nice when you have a veteran quarterback that has seen a lot of defenses, seen a lot of defensive play calls and has a ton of experience — that player is even better. Justin will be at that point and then we'll have to pay him a lot more. Every player, I don't care how good you are, there are always things to improve on every offseason. I'm not going to sit here and go through a list with him, but he's the youngest quarterback in our division right now, which is a good place to be."

**On Herbert going through adversity this season:**

"Adversity is a great teacher for anybody, especially at that position. His mentality, when talking about mental toughness and how he handled situations — if you're a player in the huddle and you're looking at Justin Herbert, there's no fear in his eyes, there's no flinch. That's what great leaders have. Sometimes, it does take some development to get there, to kind of go through those different battles and those different wars and see the success that you can have. That's the type of guy you want in your huddle when you're moving the ball down the field."

**On G Matt Feiler:**

"He did a good job. He's tough, he's physical. He's a consistent guard for us. It's kind of hard, I guess, to grade it. He's a tough, physical, doesn't miss a day of work guard."

**On Herbert's growth as a leader:**

"He has grown as a leader. He was a leader in college, so it's not like he wasn't a leader then. I am sure he was a leader in high school. I don't go back that far with him, but I know he was a leader at Oregon. When you are a quarterback, especially a starting quarterback as a rookie in this league and you are in a locker room with a bunch of adults — 30-year-olds, 32-year-olds with kids — sometimes, it is hard as a 22-year-old to walk right in and just take command of the locker room. I saw the same thing with [former Colts QB] Andrew Luck when he was with us in Indianapolis. You do kind of grow into that leadership role as you get older, just like Drue Tranquill did. Drue did not walk into our locker room as a rookie and take it over. He was a young player. You do see that growth among these players as they mature and get older. I think we have seen that with Justin [Herbert]. Everybody leads in a different way. If I know one thing, our players, front office, coaches, we believe in him 100 percent. We know that if we just get him the ball at the end of the game, we have a chance to win."

**On the value of signing OLB Kyle Van Noy and CB Bryce Callahan this season:**

"It was hugely important. Kyle Van Noy, [DL Morgan Fox] Foxy and [Bryce] Callahan, [WR] DeAndre Carter. Those guys all played huge roles. For some of them, like Kyle Van Noy, the vision what we signed them for changed when [OLB] Joey [Bosa] got hurt. All of a sudden, he is going to play a lot more and play on the edge all of the time. What was cool about that is we get into December, Kyle was an impact defensive player for us. We already knew he was a great leader and he was a tremendous leader and a great mentor for the players, but he was just really tremendous down the stretch for us. When you talk about trying to add depth to the team, when Morgan Fox got let go from Carolina — it just didn't work out there — this is a great fit for him here. Those guys all made huge contributions for us. Guys made contributions on special teams for us. I thought it was huge with [LS] Josh Harris as our long snapper and a new punter in [P] JK Scott. JK had a really nice year. We had three kickers that all kicked [*knocks on the podium*] pretty well, except for that last kick in the Jacksonville game. Two brand new gunners [on punt coverage] that did a great job for us, two young players. You need to have some blue-chip difference maker players on both sides of the ball, but you need to be able to fill that in with other players that can play their roles at a really high level and we did see that this year from some guys."

**On if Herbert will 'have input' in the search for the next offensive coordinator:**

"I think so. I know that is what [Head Coach] Brandon [Staley] thinks, and that is the way that I have always operated with quarterbacks, they have kind of earned that. At least some contact and some thought of what goes into the process, and some input."

**On LB Kenneth Murray Jr.:**

"I thought he really came on this year. I thought he played really well. I thought both inside linebackers played well. It was actually a really deep group from top to bottom. Kenneth [Murray] is just a really physical run and hit, kind of seek and destroy linebacker. Really brings an edge to your defense. We saw that a lot more this year and I thought he settled in really well. It wasn't perfect from Week 1 to Week 18, it wasn't perfect, a little bit up and down a little bit, but I really saw a lot of really high-level play from him this year. He brings that edge to the defense that we are looking for."

**On CB Michael Davis' performance in the second half of the year:**

"I don't like to single out players, but I couldn't be more proud of a player and how he played this year, from the start of OTAs to now, and how he handled this situation. He was an undrafted free agent when he got here. He was playing in a specific scheme that [former Chargers defensive coordinator] Gus Bradley had here, and he just kept getting better and better and better to the point where he was a really good player for us and we re-signed him. When there is a coaching change and a scheme change, things just don't happen overnight, and he just kept working at it. He got his opportunity this year and he just played lights out for us. Without how we played, I don't know if we would have had 10 wins this year. He's just so competitive on the football. He is just a rock-solid player for us. I am really proud of how he handled the whole offseason, the regular season. His play time fluctuated at the beginning of the year. Those are the guys you need here that can handle a situation. We're talking about mentally tough players. Things don't always happen right away the way you want it to happen, and it never phased. He had a really tremendous year for us."

**On trying to improve perimeter tackling:**

"I like how our corners played this year. I thought [CB] Michael [Davis] tackled really well. [CB] Asante [Samuel Jr.] can tackle well. He did have some misses. He is an excellent cover corner. They are not all [Pro Football Hall of Fame CB] Champ Bailey, but I love Asante because he competes every single down. I think tackling, as a whole on our defense, I'd like to look at the numbers, it probably wasn't where it needs to be as a whole, I would assume. In this league, you have to be able to tackle on the perimeter with your corners and your safeties. Obviously, it's a given for inside, but yeah, that's part of it. There is a lot of work that can be made there improvement-wise just with practice and technique. Even though Asante is not the biggest corner in the world, he is tough and he will hit. It is just sometimes that back coming through was pretty big, so he may need a little help along the way. I think our corners played really well this year. [DB] Ja'Sir Taylor started to play some more. Ja'Sir can really tackle. He is tough and he is physical, but can there be improvement made there? Yeah, certainly."

**On 'at what point in the offseason he will evaluate upcoming contracts':**

"Pretty soon, just not as soon as this week. I would say within the next couple of weeks. [Executive Vice President of Football Administration/Player Finance] Ed McGuire is always thinking about it. During the season, I try not to think about it, but, inevitably, it's always in the back of your mind. It is really something that I have to be 100 percent focused on, and I just can't be 100 percent focused on it during the season. Give it a week or two. We have a lot of puzzle pieces this year to fit in. It's a different offseason than last year, but we'll get into that more in February, as far as contracts, as far as extensions and UFAs [unrestricted free agents] and our own players, and kind of go from there, see how the money fits."



**On 'preventing' Saturday's loss to the Jaguars from 'being a hangover into next season':**

"I think it's all about the people that you have here and the mentality that you have. It's really cliché-ish to say that this will motivate us in the offseason, but I am not going to forget about it. That's kind of what I am made up. I probably not going let anybody in the building forget about it. If you have that fighter mentality, that is kind of the way that you are built. One really good way to not lose a lead like that is to run the ball better in the second half. It's not like that is something that we just learned automatically. Being able to run the ball better in the second half and get off the field at least once in the second half on defense and make a kick, stuff that we already knew. Myself, I don't really dwell on those negative parts. Brandon [Staley] and myself, as the leaders here, that's our job is to make sure everybody has the right mindset. When somebody doesn't have that mindset, then we may need to find them a different home somewhere."

**On 'if the resources are here to win' and former Head Coach Anthony Lynn's recent comments:**

"I love Anthony [Lynn], I just disagree with his assessment. Maybe he didn't quite mean it like that because when Anthony was here, we were playing in a nice soccer stadium, but a soccer stadium nonetheless. If you look at what we spent last year in free agency, I don't think you can say that. We're going to move into a state-of-the-art building within a couple of years. I don't see any issues with the resources here, based on how we attacked free agency, how we pay our players, the building we are going to move into, the stadium we play in. I kind of disagree with that. I am guessing that he didn't quite mean it like that, is my though. Like I said, when Anthony was here, we were going through a pretty big relocation and transition, and it was hard. He did an amazing job really leading this team through that, as far as moving, playing in a soccer stadium for three years and trying to deal with all of that, and still had a winning record when he was here. Where we are now is just a lot different because we have been settled here for a little while."

**On OLB Khalil Mack:**

"We really didn't start giving him a little bit of rest, probably, towards later in the year in practice, because he will work every day. Everything of what I have heard of him, because Brandon [Staley] had been with him in Chicago, it was the same thing here. He was as-advertised, as far as the make up off the field, and then the player on the field. He is a warrior. He can play both sides of the ball, as far as run and pass. He had to do it in a situation where we really envisioned [OLB] Joey [Bosa] being on the other side a lot more than he was. For a large part of the year, Khalil [Mack] was probably the big attention for most teams in pass protection. We certainly needed Khalil this year. I am really happy we have him."