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## Chargers Week 11 Media Availability

Friday, November 19, 2021 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

### HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

#### **On the players currently on Reserve/COVID-19:**

“Those four guys are on day-to-day. I think that we’re going to know more tomorrow, but all four of them are day-to-day. They have a chance to play in the game. I think tomorrow we’ll know a lot more.”

#### **On if DL Christian Covington tested positive:**

“Christian is a confirmed positive. He kind of went positive, negative, positive. It has stayed positive. Those two guys have tested positive, and then [LB] Drue [Tranquill] is at the end of it.”

#### **On if DL Joey Bosa has continued to test negative this week:**

“He has, yes.”

#### **On the testing protocols:**

“With Joey [Bosa] being a close contact trace, it’s just five days. The 20th, tomorrow, is his last day. Then, the other guys just need two consecutive negative tests. In Drue’s case, the 10 days, and then he should be fine.”

#### **On Tranquill’s ‘10th day falling on Saturday and if he should be off of Reserve/COVID-19 tomorrow’:**

“In theory, yes. We’re going to make sure that he is feeling well. It’s kind of like with a concussion and your baseline, coming back and making sure that he’s OK.”

#### **On DL Linval Joseph’s injury:**

“Similar to [S] Alohi Gillman, they just gutted it out. They’re gutsy players, had gutsy performances. The residual, just very sore. Nothing long-term at this point, but just real soreness. Linval, the ultimate competitor, same with Alohi. They gave us a real chance in that game and it was a gutsy, gutsy effort by both of them.”

#### **On the linebacker rotation on Sunday is Tranquill is activated:**

“We’ll play all three of them, if Drue [Tranquill] can come back. As we’ve talked about, we really feel like we have three starters. Then, within our packages, within our personnel groupings, kind of activate them accordingly. Then, taking into consideration where Drue is within the gameplan. As you guys know, he’s a quick study. He doesn’t need, probably, the practice reps that somebody else would. We’ll just kind of wait and see how he is, if he can play and where he’s kind of at physically and mentally within the gameplan. We always want to trust our guys. If he can go then, we’re going to put them out there.”

#### **On CB Michael Davis:**

“We really feel like this guy has practiced well this week, so if he is out there on the field, then he will play full. That’s an expectation position, to go the whole way. If he needs a blow, then we’ll give him one. Kind of similar to [LB Kenneth] Murray [Jr.], you go until you need one, and then you tell us that. It’ll be similar with Mikey. He’s practiced well this week and has looked really good. His conditioning has looked good. With his first game action in a couple of weeks, if he needs one, we’ll give him one. Other than that, he’ll be out there playing for us.”

**On DL Breiden Fehoko:**

“He is a really steady football player. We really like coaching him. He is kind of a commander in there with the D-line. The way we play, you’d like to have a general in there that can kind of run the show for people. That’s what we’ve kind of had at different stops. He can kind of be that for you. He’s a gritty, tough player. He’s a smart player. We really enjoy coaching him. When he’s been out there, whether it’s preseason or regular season, he’s performed for us. We have confidence in him going out there and doing the job for us.”

**On the depth at defensive line:**

“That’s part of the NFL, but we have a lot of confidence in these guys. They’ve improved a lot. Where we were at the beginning and where we are now, with all of our guys, are different. We expect them to go play well. I know that Linval Joseph and all of these other guys are expecting those guys to play well. [Defensive Line Coach] Giff Smith has done a really good job of improving that group. They’ve shown a lot of improvement from the bye, all of them — game action and in practice. We expect those guys to go out there and do the job.”

**On preparing for two quarterbacks:**

“It’s been good for us to assess both players and see the stylistic differences between them. You’ve been able to see some game action from both guys, not only this year, but the year before. There’s a new offensive coordinator there this year, so you’re able to see him within this offense and the only offense that they had, just those mannerisms and playstyles. There are a couple differences and we’ll be able to be ready for both of them because we’ve seen them.”

**On Steelers WR Chase Claypool:**

“He’s an outstanding player. Pittsburgh has historically been outstanding at identifying receivers, going a long way back. He certainly fits that list of guys that they’ve been able to find. I think in the draft process, people were trying to assess what he would be. Whether he’d be a wideout or a tight end. What they’ve discovered is he’s just a playmaker. When you have size like him, body control, ball judgement in the deep part of the field. He’s a matchup problem. He’s gotten off to a good start in his young career and he’s a real weapon for them. You can tell that the quarterback really trusts him, where he puts the ball. He’s been a very productive player this far in his career and he’s an outstanding young player.”

**On S Alohi Gilman’s injury is a result from colliding with S Derwin James Jr.:**

“That was part of his injury report, that play. He was banged up going into that game, it was just a gutsy, gutsy effort and that play didn’t help his cause. I’m just really proud of the type of competitive toughness that guy has because that’s what we’re looking for in this program.”

**On versatility in the secondary:**

“We’ve been training [CB] Chris Harris [Jr.] to go back there. He’s done it. Within that corner grouping, [CB] Kemon [Hall] and guys like that can go back there. That’s part of the fun of coaching, cross-training guys. That’s something [Defensive Coordinator] Renaldo [Hill], [Secondary Coach] Derrick [Ansley] and [Assistant Secondary Coach] Tom [Donatell] do such a good job of. It’s something I really enjoy about the coaching process, watching coaches coach guys like that to get them ready, to make sure that when you have a situation like that, that you feel good about your chances, that the guys going out there can execute the job. Those two guys would be the guys to do it for us in this plan. Hopefully, we’ll be able to stay healthy and we’ll have a couple guys gut it out for us.”

**On team’s adjustments to COVID-19:**

“What COVID-19’s done is show you how unique the NFL is because of the numbers. Now, the practice squad being able to change and some of the roster management being able to change, you’ve had to figure out even now more than ever. Being able to manipulate the roster to get guys up and things like that, it’s been a unique part of the league for the last couple of years. The thing that’s not changing anytime soon about the NFL is that week-to-week you need to be able to figure it out. because if it’s not COVID-19, it’s injuries. If it’s not injuries, it’s something else. That’s part of the greatness of the NFL, that week-to-week. Anything can happen.”

**On DB Trey Marshall:**

“He’s sore, but he’s in a better spot than [S] Alohi [Gilman]. Alohi is banged up, but Trey’s got a chance to play.”

**On DL Linval Joseph:**

“We’ll leave it open for Linval, always. He’s earned that, but we’ll wait and see.”

**On the AFC:**

“There’s a lot of good coaches, players and quarterbacks on the AFC side. There’s a lot of depth within each football team. What you’ve seen is, week to week, the matchup dictates the result. When you look around the whole league, it’s pretty even right now. A lot of things are happening that not many are predicting. I think it says a lot about the NFL and the depth of the league, the coaching and the playing. From the AFC side, just looking specifically at our division, you have four really quality teams, and thus far through nine games, we’ve played nine outstanding teams. It’s been one of those seasons.”

**On the significance of back-to-back AFC games:**

“Just because we’re passed halfway, each week you have that urgency and those types of implications, just because we’re far enough along now where things start to matter from the standing standpoint. The fact that it’s an AFC game, from a tie-breaker standpoint, all those things that matter down the road, yes. But all of us that are in it are looking at Pittsburgh. You know how well-coached they are. You know this team’s gotten a lot better from where they were at the beginning to now. It’s a great challenge for us and it’s going to be exciting to do it on national television.”

**SPECIAL TEAMS COORDINATOR DERIUS SWINTON II****On the first punt return allowed against Minnesota:**

“Well, it wasn’t great. We gave up the edge there. Whenever you do that in the NFL against a good returner, it’s something that’s going to happen to us. It’s something that we’ve been emphasizing. The punt was good. It was a good location and all of that. He just popped around the edge there. If you watched the next two, we had the edge, covered it well and limited him to less than, I think, 15 yards for the next two. It’s just that you have to be on your p’s and q’s every single punt in this league. I think the young guys are learning that. That was [WR] Maurice Ffrench’s first NFL coverage play other than a kickoff. We’re taking some lumps and we just have to go through it. We’re just learning those lessons every week. As you know, especially young guys, you can tell them — you can tell them don’t touch the stove, but sometimes it’s hot. They want to touch it and that’s okay. We learn from it, we survive it and try to learn and build from it every week. Unfortunately, we took a little lump there, but, I think, if you watch the other areas, they were good as far as a whole. We’re developing. Things are coming together. That’s the one that you just want back.”

**On DB Trey Marshall:**

“He shows up. His impact, really, we challenged him a few weeks ago. I said, ‘Where is the guy that we saw in Denver that was just running through people?’ You saw him last week. You saw him the last few weeks. He’s not going to be stopped. He runs through people’s faces, he runs through their sides, he runs through his own teammates. He really shows up. I told the guys, ‘Trey Marshall is going to make the tackle. He’s not going to cover the kick.’ I go, ‘We can get other guys to get cardio. You have 24 hour fitness, we can get a lot of people to run down the field for cardio.’ I said, ‘We’re running down the field to go make the tackle and that’s what you watch Trey Marshall do.’ You think that it’s the NFL and that some guys wouldn’t, but it’s never understated that you have to remind them, ‘Hey, you’re going to make the tackle here.’ You’ve seen him show up. He ran through guys. He basically ran through his own teammate. He hit his teammate. He hit [TE] Stephen Anderson in the back on his way to make the assist. He has really been showing up. He’s done a good job doing [personal protector] pp for us. He’s just, all-around, a tough guy. I think that just rubs off on the other guys.”

### **On experience on special teams:**

“It is something that, throughout the game of football — you look throughout time and these guys just don't play a lot of it. The guys that you get in the NFL are the top whatever percent of college players, right? When you're the top percent of college players, you're not covering kicks. It's just part of it. You're the best player on your team or one of the best five players on your team. So, your experience of playing in, what I call, the 65-yard box — they live their life playing in this 15-yard box. If I'm on defense, I've seen these route combinations — there is only so many ways you can do it. There are only so many ways that you can run an out, you can run a slant, you can run this and you can run that. You can see it in that small box. When you get on special teams, it's now a 65-yard box. You've got to see things coming and going, forwards and backwards. For them to now change their view and be able to play at a high speed while seeing things flash in front of you is just a different world for young guys. It's a skillset that it takes a lot of talent to do in space. If I was to put it, as you people say it, simple, I would just say, 'Hey, Daniel is right there. I'm going to start 20 yards back. Daniel is going to drop back 20 yards. I'm at full speed and he's going backwards, he has to flip around and stop me from getting to that wall.' It seems simple, huh? But I have a 20-yard head start and he has to go backwards. People say that it's simple, but it's really — it's angles, it's leverage. It's a lot of things that they don't get to see in college and you don't really even get to see in high school. High school, they're the best player. They say, 'Run fast.' You're probably faster than the other eight guys because you're a No. 1 prospect, and go make the tackle. Whereas, now, you're going against guys where this is what they get paid to do only. Being able to go from never doing it to, again, do it in training camp where you just don't go full-speed like that because of contact and safety, to now you're doing it in games. Preseason is a whole other level and now you get into it. For young guys to take it from I've never done it — where if I've done it, I've done it in a limited capacity — to now this is what I do every week against guys like [Steelers LB] Robert Spillane. That's all that he has done there. [Steelers FB] Derek Watt, that's what he has made a living doing. Now, you come in and you've had no snaps and have to learn, and take some lumps. That's why, outside it does look like you just run down [the field]. Yeah, but say you're running down and I have Derek Watt coming to knock you out. Will you run at full-speed then? It's kind of like, from the outside in, just cover the kick. Okay, let me put Derek Watt and all 250 [pounds of him] and you're peaking outside [of your helmet] like, I don't know what he's going to do. That's a little bit tougher than just going to tackle [Steelers WR] Ray-Ray McCloud.”

### **On the illegal formation penalty:**

“That's on me. We switched two guys. We switched the fives. They usually play one side or the other. We put [LB] Amen [Ogbongbemiga] inside the hash, so we have to have two in the alley and two outside of the numbers — two inside of the numbers and two outside of the numbers. We were slightly on the numbers and they called us for that. They were right, it's on us. I have to see it. We went through it this week. Sometimes you have a guy pull, 'Go here, go here,' and we'll switch it. That's on me to see it. That's what I told the guys. I said, 'Hey, I'll take that one. I have to see it for you. I have to help you out. I can't expect you guys to cover the kick and be able to see it formationally when I switch you.' I have to be able to see that.”

### **On the short return by WR Andre Roberts:**

“He'll tell you that it was there, he just thought he saw something that wasn't there. You have to trust your returners with that they see. I don't question returners. He got the picture on the sideline and said, 'Ah, it's there!' The return we wanted was there to the right and he said, 'I thought something flashed there.' Then, he looked at the picture and everything was blocked up and he goes — he told the group. We're establishing a culture in that room where guys can say, 'Hey, I messed that up. I got you, I won't let it happen again.' He stood up, as a man, and said to the group, 'I got you. I'll make up for it.' That was the good thing, but yeah. He will tell you that it was there and sometimes you have to trust the returners. Sometimes, it's for a big return. They see something and it's there. Unfortunately, it wasn't, but we don't want to trade him in. He's still good.”

### **On touchbacks on kickoffs:**

“It's game-to-game. It's the returners [we are facing], it's personnel. I think everything goes into it as a factor. If you look at it, you say, 'Okay, [Eagles QB] Jalen Hurts is a second-year quarterback. Our defense is playing pretty well. Do you want to give him a chance [for a short field] or make him go 75 yards?' It's week-to-week and who you have back there. If your defense is playing well, is the offense playing well? That's what the facts have been the last few weeks. It's not really, 'Okay, Dustin. Put it out.' It's, 'Hey, if it carries, it carries. Give us a chance with hangtime.' He does a great job with hangtime. Then, let's see. A lot of them, I mean, you say that but you look last week and two of them or three of them hit two-yards deep into the end zone. Most people bring those out. So that's a respect to our [unit]. I told our kickoff [unit], 'That's respect to you guys

that it's two yards deep and he doesn't want to bring it out.' Some of them go out of the back [of the end zone], a few maybe. I'd say probably four or five have gone out the back, but the majority are in the end zone and the return team is just saying, 'We don't want to bring it out.' It's a combination of both situations. We're giving them opportunities. If they don't want to bring it out, we can't make them."

**On K Dustin Hopkins' hangtime:**

"That's part of the scheme, right? It's a bait-and-hook. You just throw it out there and see if they want to do it. See if they want to bring it out. If you do, okay. It's up there, let's see. It's a race to the end zone. It's a little manipulation on our part — put it up there, make them think about it and then they go, 'Well, I don't think I want to do that.' It's a little bit of scheme, too, that we're trying to get that done."

**On OLB Chris Rumph II being close to blocking a punt:**

"It was an in-game adjustment. Credit to him. We work on those things all the time. I talk about how we work on the techniques. In a game, we might have to scheme a certain way and we might see something. I told him — he was working that gap pretty good early on and the last one came. I wanted to get a return and I said, 'Hey, listen. Do this.' He said, 'Okay.' He went out there and it went right through his hands. It was a great, great job of taking the techniques to the game. He's a young guy that's coming on. We work on that with everybody. It's an in-game adjustment where he's coming and giving me feedback, 'Hey, this guy is doing this.' Okay, alright Chris. Then I look at him and I go, 'Okay, that guy is doing that, Chris.' Then he sets him up. It was a really good job by him. I think it's something that we can build on. Every week, it's just a matter of, in the game, being able to adjust to those things. It's a fun thing to have the young guys. Their eyes get big and everybody is like, 'Oh, man.' We talked about it all week that this might happen and it did. Just, hopefully, next time we block the punt and get to recover that thing."

**On if a 58-yard field goal is in Hopkins' range:**

"Yeah, I think it's in his range, but also early in the game, you look at field position, right? You look at how that game was going early in the first quarter, it was a pull-tug-pull. Both teams were [fighting]. I think it was a smart thing to not give them the ball [with potentially good field position]. They weren't really doing much on offense. I told [Head Coach] Brandon [Staley], 'Listen, let's just flip the field here. Put them down inside the 20 and let's not give them the opportunity to have the ball at the 48-yard line.' Let's pin them down there and make [Vikings QB] Kirk Cousins and those guys go a long way. That, strategically, you just kind of know how the game goes. I think a lot of people are focused on the end result. Not saying you are, I'm just saying in general, people are like, 'Ah why don't we kick the field goal? We could have gotten points.' Well, yeah, but have they done anything on offense? You don't look at the utopia result, you look at what's the negative that could happen. You say, 'If we do this, are we helping them?' Whereas punting it down there in that situation, it put them backed up and gave our defense the opportunity to really pin their ears back and go at it. Every time that happens, it's just a matter of the game. Offensively, are we really going? Are we really moving? That discussion happened. I told [Staley], 'We need to flip the field here and make them keep going the long road.' You make them go the long road. That was our decision there."

**On OLB Kyler Fackrell:**

"We don't use him on all four [units]. I think that's because you look at his value and what he's done on defense. I look at it from the defensive special teams. Going into defense is punt — you're running 50-something yards. We have guys that can do it. [OLB] Chris Rumph [II] doesn't play as much as him [on defense] and they're the same position, right? Then, you look at kickoff. We have a pretty fast kickoff team. He's a backup there. On kickoff return, he's really good. He's available on punt return. It's really me just trying to spread it out over the roster because he is playing [on defense]. When [OLB] Joey [Bosa] gets nicked up, he goes out there. When [OLB] Uchenna [Nwosu] gets nicked up, he goes out there. He's playing a lot and, I mean, that guy plays hard. We're just trying to manage him because it is a 17-game season. He's always ready to go. He always knows his assignment. It's just a matter of protecting him. Kickoff return, he can get a blow right before and get some water, go on kickoff return and get some rest because offense is on the field. I look at it that way of how can we manage the roster? How can we manage him because he's not a young guy. He's not a spring chicken, but he can help us and he really does a good job on that unit. It's just a matter of where is he on defense and trying to spread it out for him, but he has done a good job."

## **QUARTERBACK JUSTIN HERBERT**

### **On the offense's preparation this week:**

"The focus has all been on the Steelers. They're an incredibly well-coached team, they have some really good guys on defense, and offense, as well. They're a tough team, so it's going to take our full effort all week to have a good week of preparation heading into the game on Sunday."

### **On Steelers S Minkah Fitzpatrick:**

"He's a really talented player. You turn on the film and see he's making plays all over the field. It's not just in one spot, he's able to do everything. From the run game to the pass game, he's able to do everything. Whether or not he plays, we're going to have to have a plan because they have some really good guys on defense, as well. It's a tough defense."

### **On WR Mike Williams:**

"It's execution. We can always get the ball to Mike more. We've tried to do our best to get him the ball, and defenses are playing good defense. It's up to us to get him the ball."

### **On yards-after-catch:**

"It's up to us to execute, it falls to us as players out there. The coaches are giving us a shot to go perform and execute, but it's up to us to get the ball down the field and score touchdowns."

### **On WR Joshua Palmer:**

"Keep doing what he's doing. He's put in the hard work, and he's doing all the right things. Like we've seen him make plays in big-time games, he's one of those guys that we trust out there. When we put him out there, we know something good's going to happen. If he keeps working like he's going to, good things will happen."

### **On the mood in the locker room:**

"It's on to the next one. It's the NFL. Obviously, we'd love to win every game, but it's all about the next one. We have a great opportunity against the Steelers this Sunday, so it's all about them and getting prepared for the game."