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Chargers Week 10 Media Availability

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OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR JOE LOMBARDI

On his biggest takeaway from last week's win over the Eagles:

"We played good enough to win. I wish we would have scored when we were down there that first drive. It was a 98-yard drive and it was kind of frustrating not to come away with points there. But, their defense had a good stand. We ended up getting the short field after that and scoring. I thought the guys played really well and I was happy with the end result."

On the offense's opening drive:

"I think that it is always good to get into an early rhythm like that. It doesn't guarantee anything, but it always helps you gain a little confidence when you can get into a rhythm like that."

On getting 'into a rhythm' with the protection scheme:

"It's always your preference. Every team presents a different challenge. Sometimes it works out where you're able to play like that. Other times, it doesn't. It just happened to be one of those Sundays where it worked out according to plan. It's always satisfying, but it doesn't guarantee that you're always able to execute in that fashion week-to-week, but it's always your goal."

On if Sunday's win was a 'complete game' by the offense:

"It's always good to get a lot of guys involved. The running numbers might not have been as high as some other games, but it was effective when we needed it. I think that any time you don't punt, it feels good. I would have to go back each game, individually, to see if it was the most complete, but it felt like we executed really well."

On not reaching the line-to-gain on fourth-and-two:

"I thought that it was a good play by the Eagles. The linebackers flowed fast. They recognized the play quickly. You're trying to go spontaneously and try to catch them flat-footed a little bit there — we were right back on the ball. We could have executed it a little bit better, but I thought that they played it really well."

On 'closing the game out' in the four-minute drill:

"As you're moving towards field goal range, you start feeling good and you really start paying even closer attention to the clock. Once you get into field goal range, you're like, 'Alright, let's see if we can bleed this down as far as we can, with the thought of get as close as you can for the field goal. You're juggling a few thoughts in your head. During the drive, there's stress involved. You don't know how it is going to end. But, once you end the game, and you end it with the football — like we did in Washington, like we did on Sunday — it's really satisfying to burn that much clock. If you've ever been on offense and watched the opposing offense, when you never get the chance to go out and try to win the game, it's so frustrating. Being able to do that is very satisfying."

On the two fourth-down conversions:

“Those were huge. That last run — I don’t know if it was going to be a 47-yard field goal, down to kind of a chip shot — I’m not going to say that it was a throw-away call, but we knew that we were running it and we knew that we just wanted to take more time off of the clock. To see him bust through there and get down into that really tight red zone area, that was really where I felt a big sigh of relief. I just felt that our odds of making that field goal went up. That was huge. Fourth downs were huge. Every play turns out to be big in those situations.”

On gaining a first down on a second-down pass to RB Austin Ekeler on that final drive, helping to avoid third down:

“It’s always relieving when you get a fresh set of downs. That was a good play by those guys. It’s all kind of just blending together right now as we’re talking because I’m just thinking about the Vikings and their red zone defense, but yeah, those were all big.”

On QB Justin Herbert’s play-action deep pass to WR Mike Williams:

“It’s not easy. Not many people can do it, but he can. We just have to continue to expand our imagination and know that those things are possible with this guy. Not every team can have their quarterback do it. We just have to keep using that arm as a weapon, as it is. He’s so efficient throwing underneath. You saw it on Sunday, where his completion percentage was so high. There is a comfort level knowing that when I call one of those plays, there’s a 90-percent chance that we’re getting six or seven yards. It’s an extension of the run game because of the efficiency. That can cause you to play it safe sometimes. Really, Kevin Koger, our tight ends coach, was like, ‘Hey, I think that one is there.’ I’ll give him credit for calling that. Just always seeing which shot play is applicable on each drive, I think, is important to keep doing. Again, when he is firing away that efficiently, because that’s not a high-percentage throw — sometimes it’s like, ‘Would I rather be second-and-two here or second-and-10?’ You have to force yourself to do it. We did some of that on Sunday. I’ll continue to try to keep that aggression up.”

On if he ever asks himself ‘if Herbert can make that throw’ when drawing up plays:

“No, that never really crosses your mind. There are certain parts of the field that, in your past, you haven’t thought about: ‘Wow, we can make this throw from this hash all of the way back to that back corner.’ It just doesn’t occur to you because there aren’t many people that can do it. I don’t even know if it’s a true story, but they said that when [former Broncos QB and NFL Head Coach] Gary Kubiak was backing up [Pro Football Hall of Fame QB and Broncos President of Football Operations] John Elway, they would roll out all of the way to the right and throw it across the field — a little bit like what you saw — and if Kubiak had it in practice, he would pretend like he slipped because he knew that he couldn’t make the throw. I don’t even know if that is a true story or not, but there is a lesson there that you want to access everything that someone is capable of doing. There was a third-down throw in the Dallas game that was a turkey-hole shot to the field. People can’t do that, but he can. You have to keep giving him opportunities to do that.”

On TE Donald Parham Jr.:

“He really surprises you so often with his ability to run after the catch. Part of it is that he’s just so long and that he has an effective stiff arm. You’ve seen the cartoons here the big guy has the small guy out and he can’t reach him with his punches — there’s a little bit of that going on. He has better feet than you think. He’s elusive. You don’t see guys that height playing football, period, but you really don’t expect him to be as agile as he is. Sometimes, with a player like that, the only thing that is keeping him from having a bigger breakout is us not throwing him the ball more. He’s capable of probably a lot more production. Part of that is [TE] Jared [Cook], he cannibalizes some of the throws that would go to him as a tight end. We just have to keep finding ways to work him in. One of the luxuries of this place is that I say that about four or five different guys every week; we have to get [WR] Mike [Williams] the ball more, we have to get [WR] Keenan [Allen] the ball more, we have to get Austin [Ekeler] the ball more, we have to get Jared [Cook] the ball more, [WR] Joshua Palmer. We have a lot of guys that you say that about and he is definitely one of them.”

On 'lessons learned' from Ravens game that are applicable to this week's game against the Vikings:

"For sure. Man, we had a lot of games against them. Every game, it seems like we come up with another plan. They're so well-coached. I think that [Vikings Head Coach Mike Zimmer] does such a good job, and his staff does such a good job. One of the challenges is that if they've seen you do something before, they're going to have a counter to it. It's something that we've had a lot of experience with over the years. I don't think that you ever have the perfect plan, but part of it is trying to stay out of third down as much as you can. That's kind of what we're practicing today. You always think that you have the right plan; sometimes you do, sometimes you don't. We think we do this week. We'll find out come Sunday. They've always been a challenge. In New Orleans, we had some battles with them. It's never easy."

On if he has used the film of his former games against the Vikings to prepare this week:

"When you have the same coordinator, especially when you get into special situations — third down, red zone — you'll go look at the archives a little bit more closely if you don't have as much of a sample size. But your scheme is so much about matchups. Sometimes, when you're looking at different players, even though the scheme is the same, it's like, 'Does this apply given their current cast of characters?' There is a little bit of that, but you're really trying to focus on who you're playing against as much as what they're doing."

On if the Vikings playing three overtime games this season factors into gameplanning:

"I guess you just kind of hope that they're tired. They're going to have a week to recover, so I don't put a whole lot of stock to it. If they come in and they're a little beat up and tired, that would be great. But, I expect to get their best shot and everyone being 100 percent. We've been in those situations. I'm sure that they're doing a good job of adjusting their practice schedule to make sure that they're getting recovered and that they're ready to go for Sunday."

On Vikings LBs Anthony Barr and Eric Kendricks:

"They've been together for so long. They play off of each other so well. Part of the magic of their third down is those guys' ability to communicate with each other and recognize protections. They have a way of making you wrong. They figure out what you're doing and they figure out a way to defeat it. [Vikings S] Harrison Smith has been a part of what I've always considered the straws that stir that drink out there, as far as their ability to disguise and everything. Harrison isn't going to be playing, but those two guys, I think, are one of the best tandems, linebacker-wise, in the NFL. They've been doing it a long time together. It's a challenge. We played them on Christmas last year and they were both out. That made it a lot easier."

On Herbert and T Rashawn Slater having success early in their careers:

"I think that it is unique. I can kind of harken back to [Saints T] Terron Armstead's rookie year. He was from a smaller school, came in and didn't start right away. Late in the year, we stuck him in at left tackle and I remember never thinking about the left tackle again. We just knew that he had everyone blocked over there. It's not unprecedented, but it's definitely unique. I think that it's such a credit to those guys and their maturity. It's not easy coming into this league and playing that well that fast. I think that speaks a lot to those guys. We're glad to have them."

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR RENALDO HILL

On LB Kenneth Murray Jr.:

“Right now, we’re still trying to evaluate. The biggest thing is having him out on the practice field with us. But him being with the edge rushers is something; he always did through training camp. But that shows his versatility — that he can get on the edge and do those things if needed. We want to make sure we get him out there, get him running, see where his condition is and see where we can build the package from with him moving forward this weekend.”

On CBs Tevaughn Campbell and Ryan Smith:

“I thought they went out there and battled those guys, hard. That’s a good receiving core over there — a lot of speed. And then you have [Eagles WR DeVonta Smith] Smitty out there, who’s a good route runner. We’re going to face a similar group that we’re going up against this week who are route runners. It’s going to be important for us to have those guys ready to go this week as well. But I thought they went out there and performed well. Ryan was just saying, ‘Hey, I was really starting to find my footing.’ And then that freak injury happens right there. But I’ve been trying to lift him up and make sure he’s good. I know he’s a hard worker, so he’ll face his recovery head-on and get back to us as soon as possible.”

On the pass rush:

“The biggest thing with us is that we have a guy who’s versatile. He’s explosive, he can do a whole lot of things. We just want to continue to strengthen our group. We like the guys we have with [OLB] Uchenna [Nwosu] and [OLB] Joey [Bosa] and [OLB Kyler] Fackrell on the end. And you have a young, crisp guy that’s continuing to develop. We’re just trying to make our group more versatile. It’s a number’s game in the NFL of who you can have up or down. And to add another piece to go along with it, who’s a premium athlete, and can do a lot of different things, I think it helps our group.”

On Vikings WRs Adam Thielen and Justin Jefferson:

“Those are two terrific receivers. They do a lot for that team. These are really good route-runners. When we talk about guys who take the top off, or can change the pace, I think these guys are multi-cut route-runners. They can get in and out of breaks, they do a great job of setting up routes at the top. They’re a handful. They can line up in multiple spots, it’s hard to identify what locations they’re going to be in. This is a good group. Besides going against that Dallas group, this is probably the most polished group between those two teams.”

On Vikings QB Kirk Cousins:

“He’s seen a lot. He understands what the defense is doing, he’s able to get the ball in and out of his hands. He’s not going to sit back there and pat the ball for long. He’s been around — he’s been through the paces. He definitely knows where to go, and if it’s not there, then he knows that rush is coming. He does a good job managing the game and making sure he doesn’t lose the ball for those guys and they possess it. That’s the reason they’re a top offense; because that guy is a general back there.”

On LB Kenneth Murray Jr.’s athleticism:

“When you have a good linebacking core and good edge guys, it’s just a way for us to maximize everything. We’re going to find a home — whether he’s behind the ball or up on the edge. And we’re going to maximize all the other guys are him, as well. I just think it’s going to make us a stronger team. For being who’re preparing for us, where does he line up? It adds an element, and we want to create that element. Same way we do with D.J. [S Derwin James Jr.]”

On sack production:

“There are different parts of the ballgame that’re showing up. We’re facing a lot of people, and guys know [OLB] Joey’s [Bosa] a premiere rusher and they’re able to chip and protect. The biggest thing is — and we’ve faced a lot of quarterbacks who we’ve tried to change up our rush plan — keeping these guys in the pocket. Trying to limit their rush lane, their escape lanes. A lot of that ties in. It’s a long season, so we’re going to keep trying to find ways to guy those guys rushes they need and get the production. The biggest thing is finding a way to get the W at the end of the day. Sometimes, each week, that’s going to be different; how we get that done. Earlier in this season, we faced a lot of guys who were getting on the perimeter, making things happen. These guys have done a great job of buying into what we’re trying to do in order to get the win at the end of the day.”

On the strength of the Vikings offensive line:

“You’re trying to put together your rush plans on how to get to this guy, [Vikings QB Kirk Cousins] but he’s not holding the ball long. He knows where to go with the ball, and he has a good understanding about that clock. We’re upstairs, late night, trying to figure it out. We know if we can affect him early, that’s a big part of the game. He’s a steady guy, but we have to try and find our ways. Coaches, we’re digging down deep trying to get those answers.”

On CB Chris Harris Jr.:

“Chris does everything that we ask him to do. He does so many different things — if he’s not PBU-ing or getting an interception on the ball, he’s definitely making sure that things are orchestrated. He keeps a calmness back there for our guys in the secondary. He’s seen a lot of football, so he’s able to identify everything the offense is trying to do. And we have a lot of young guys going in and out of our lineups this year. He helps keep those guys calm. That can be taxing for an older guy, but he’s doing everything we ask. I don’t have a problem with his performance.”

On S Nasir Adderley’s interceptions:

“Being in this league, they do come in bunches. The biggest thing for him is making sure he’s in those spots, those places we need for him to make it happen. And continue to work on it out on the practice field; put him in positions where he’s touching the ball. They’ll come because he’s doing the right things, he cares about it. All those things matter. Right now, he’s doing a good job of making sure he’s quarterbacking in the back end. And we’ll keep challenging him on the practice field, and we know he wants it. They’ll come.”

On DL Linval Joseph:

“For one, I think we’re past the early part of the season where he’s feeling it out. He’s filled himself out, and he knows where he can get those opportunities. A lot of times, we’re getting a lot of five-oh opportunities, where it’s one-on-one with him and he’s on the center. He’s a massive man so it’s going to take a lot to stop him one-on-one. But he’s able to get that push in the pocket on the inside that we’re asking for and what we need. He’s been doing a good job with that. I think he’s just finding a good comfort role and I think [Head] Coach [Brandon Staley] is doing a good job when he’s calling those pressures that it’s allowing him to be one-on-one and not have to double team.”

TACKLE RASHAWN SLATER

On how his season has progressed:

“I definitely feel like I’ve just gotten more comfortable with the speed of the game and what goes into preparing each week. I’ve realized that every week is different in the NFL. You never really go about defenses the exact same way, so a lot of learning since then. I feel good.”

On preparing for specific pass rushers on a week-to-week basis:

“Different teams have different plans for how they’re going to rush the passer. It’s not always just beating this guy one-on-one — a lot of times, the whole defense will work together. For me, I’ve been able to see that maybe this team does this, so we have to set, as a unit, differently. It’s not just me trying to gameplan one specific person, it’s the whole D-line.”

On the ‘games’ defensive linemen will present in their pass rush:

“It really depends on the team. Some barely do any and some of them do a lot. The speed of them, and sometimes the complexity — like how it all fits together — is a bit more. Overall, it’s pretty balanced from college.”

On ‘closing out’ the game against the Eagles:

“You know that it’s now or never. This is what the game is going to be determined by, if we can get that first down over and over again. It’s really cool because you get to take on the mindset that the game is under our control. As long as we do what we’re supposed to do, we’re going to be fine. I’ve noticed that within this team, everybody always has full confidence that we’re going to do what we need to do. There’s never panic. When the game is in our control, we have a lot of confidence.”

On if his relationship with G Matt Feiler has ‘grown’:

“I’d say a good amount. When I first came in, I was like, ‘I’m the rookie, I’m just going to shut up and listen to everyone.’ Now, there’s a little bit more dialogue going on. It’s definitely grown. Those guys have been so helpful.”

On ‘limiting the pressure’ from the Eagles’ pass rush:

“We just knew that a key to the game was going to be protecting him. When he’s protected, and even when he is not, he’s doing great things. You guys saw his stats. He’s unbelievable. We were just focused, on the same page and had a good plan.”

On the Vikings’ pass rushers:

“They’re extremely talented. They can win in multiple different ways. High effort throughout the game. It’s very physical. We have to be ready for that.”

On efficiency running the ball behind him and Feiler:

“I think it’s just the trust in each other, the scheme and, also, just a ton of experience and reps. That’s something that we work every day, double teams. There isn’t a day that goes by that we aren’t working on that. As the season goes along, we’re starting to just get used to exactly how that is supposed to look and feel.”

On if he has had his ‘welcome to the NFL moment’ yet:

“Yeah, I think so. I think that it came in camp. I hadn’t played football in a while, so it was like, ‘How is this going to go?’ You have confidence, but until you actually get a chance to go execute it, that’s when you’re like, ‘I got it.’ Then, you just keep going.”

On playing against experienced pass rushers thus far this season:

“I always like to look at what I can improve on. I know that there were a couple of things against [Browns DE] Myles [Garrett] that I definitely could have done better. I could have stayed more square. I could’ve had a better anchor on some reps. I just feel like I could do better going forward. I just get excited for the next time that I get to go against them.”