

Chargers Week 11 Media Availability

Friday, November 18, 2022 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

On injury updates regarding WR Keenan Allen and WR Mike Williams:

“Those guys have been in practice. We were able to see them do a little bit more today. Those guys will be game-time decisions.”

On the ‘level of encouragement’ of potentially having Allen and Williams available on Sunday:

“They’re great team guys. Besides being two of the top players at that position in the league, they’re really good players for our team. They really help our team chemistry. Them being out at practice just improves all that. They mean a lot to us, more than just what happens on the field. Certainly, that’s going to matter for a lot, but they also count for a lot with our team chemistry and the leadership of our team. They have a lot of experience, have made a lot of winning plays for us. It was good to get them back out there and practice and get them into a rhythm.”

On Allen:

“Keenan [Allen] is one of the top receivers of the decade. Historical production at that position. Four consecutive seasons of over 100 catches and widely regarded is one of the top route-runners in the NFL. One of the top third-down producers in the NFL. He’s one of the premium players in the league, so he means a lot to our offense because he creates a lot more space for our offense, creates a lot more space for others. He can really make the tough catches in this league that you need in ‘deny the ball’ downs. He also brings the dog to this team that it needs because he’s a premier guy and he plays like that. That’s also what those two guys bring; the dog that you need each and every time you play in this league.”

On Williams and Allen continued:

“They’re two guys that have the same impact because they both are premium guys in the league. Those guys have done such a good job since I’ve been here. To get them both back in practice was, like I said, good for us this week.”

On ‘game-planning against’ Chiefs Head Coach Andy Reid:

“You’re game-planning against their team. They have a lot of good players who have played together for a long time. They have a very complete offense; O-line, tight end, wide outs, backs and the quarterback. You’re defending an entire offense. When I think of their system, I think of players, coaches, scheme, I think all of it. That’s why they produce the way they do. We’ve had some really good matchups with them in my time here. It’s great for the game when you have a rivalry like this with coaches and players like this. It’s great for the game.”

On the ‘emotion that he is going to feel’ with the potential return of Allen and Williams:

“The emotion is the same going into every game. You know what it’s going to take to win the game. Each game, that is different, but it’s certainly a lot easier to take on those challenges knowing that you have your crew there. We’ve had so much subtraction, to get the addition, it’s important for our team.”

On if K Dustin Hopkins ‘will be one more week away’ from potentially playing in a game:

“I think so. Trending positive. He’s been out there working out. Very close to returning.”

On ‘if there has been a different vibe around the team this week’:

“No, same vibe that it has been. Really feel like we’re hitting that part of the season where you start to get energized because the games start to get bigger later on in the season. Each game means more once you get past halfway. Just have to stick to our preparation, stay committed to that. That’s where the improvement will come and that’s where you’re going to be able to perform, knowing that you prepared the right way. I think we’re just hitting that groove of preparation. Hopefully, we can keep some continuity of our team so that we can keep getting better as we go.”

On CB Bryce Callahan’s impact on coverage in the slot:

“The slot is where most of the passing game happens in the league. If you look at the high-volume producers, the passing game happens inside the numbers in the NFL. Certainly, with being a three-receiver league, you’re Nickel, you’re Star, is as important a defender as anybody. Bryce [Callahan], he has a lot of experience. He can do all the jobs at a premium level. He can cover man-to-man. He has great zone instincts. He can cover different types of players because he has a big engine for a Nickel. There are some nickels that are speed deficient that just have quickness, he has both. He has quickness. He has deep speed. He can play outside corner. He has a strong lower [body]. If he’s going against a bigger receiver like Keenan [Allen] or somebody, he has the lowers to anchor. His brain works. This guy has a premium processor. He plays the position the way it’s designed to play. He has been doing it for his whole career. I’m so thankful we have him. He’s been one of our best players all year long.”

On DL Tyeler Davison:

“Tyeler [Davison] is a pro. Really excited. He actually was like roommates with [LS] Josh Harris in Atlanta, which I just found that out. He’s just a pro. He’s been through it. He has confidence. He’s fit right into our group. Really proud of [DL] Sebastian [Joseph-Day], Foxy [DL Morgan Fox], and [DL] Breiden [Fehoko], those guys leading the way of getting him onboarded, and [Run Game Coordinator/Defensive Line Coach] Jay Rodgers and [Defensive Assistant] John Timu coaching him. We expect him to play well on Sunday.”

On the Chiefs’ defense:

“I see a defense that has a lot of good players. With their defense, you start with [Chiefs DT] Chris Jones and what he is able to do, establishing himself as one of the premium players in the league. Then, you have [Chiefs DE] Frank Clark and [Chiefs DE] Carlos Dunlap [II] on the edge. You have [Chiefs DE] Mike Danna, [Chiefs DE George] Karlaftis, it’s a very formidable group. [Chiefs DT Derrick] Nnadi inside, [Chiefs DT Khalen] Saunders, they have a lot of good players up front. Then, their linebackers, I don’t think that they get enough credit. [Chiefs LB] Nick Bolton is having a fantastic season. They’re really good in the front seven. Then, their secondary, with [Chiefs S] Justin Reid and [Chiefs S Juan] Thornhill back deep, I think that those guys are really good players. [Chiefs CB L’Jarius] Sneed is one of the better Nickels in the NFL. This guy has made a lot of winning plays for them over the years and I have a lot of respect for him. He has a big engine for a slot-corner guy. At corner, them getting [Chiefs CB Trent] McDuffie back was big for them. They have had quality play out of their secondary. [Chiefs Defensive Coordinator Steve] Spagnuolo is always one of the tougher coordinators to go against. He has a lot of experience. I just see a defense that is really tough on all three levels.

On DL Joe Gaziano’s status leading into Sunday:

“Joe [Gaziano] will be up on Sunday.”

On the value of winning the turnover battle:

“That is where it starts in the NFL, with us, is the takeaway margin. That has to be at the heart of your program. Right now, we’re plus-two on the season, so that’s a good thing. That’s good place to start. But against them, it’s going to be a possession game against them. How can you create possessions? How can you eliminate some of theirs? Then, can you score? Always going to be important in game like this?”

On QB Justin Herbert's progress since the Week 2 matchup against the Chiefs:

"I see a lot of progress. I see a lot of growth with him. He's discovering what the NFL is about. Sometimes you're going to go through stretches like this. Hopefully, he plays a ton of years, but if you play a ton of years, you're going to go through a stretch like this. You have to be able to figure it out. That's what he's done. He has stayed consistent. He stayed true to himself. He's been an outstanding teammate. He's an example of what it takes in the NFL. You need to be able to hang tough sometimes and that's what he's been able to do. He's been able to give us a chance in all these games, that's why we have the record we have. He represents the toughness that we're looking for. I think, since that Chiefs game, he has really grown as a player, really grown as a player. I think you're going to continue to see him improve as the season goes on."

On if Herbert 'displayed more patience' or 'discovered that this is the league and that you have to get through it':

"I think you discover that you can't do everything on your terms in the NFL. That goes for everybody; every coach, every player, every team. You can't do everything on your terms. You have to do it on the terms of that week. That's something you have to learn in the NFL. The sooner you learn it, the better. I think that that's where a lot of our guys on our team is. They're learning that that's how it is. All of us need to know that. I think that that's where, I think, the growth happens for him, as he's learning what it takes. He's been outstanding for us this season, outstanding in that way because every time he's gone out there, I think he's given us a chance to win."

On how the team 'replicated' Chiefs QB Patrick Mahomes this week in practice:

"The best you can. We're fortunate that we have [QB] Chase Daniel and [QB] Easton Stick who give you a premium look. Chase, with his experience, and Easton with that mobility and being able to create off-schedule. Try to simulate the best that you can. You're never going to simulate Pat [Mahomes], but you try the best that you can. I think that those two guys do as good of a job as anybody."

QUARTERBACK JUSTIN HERBERT

On WR Keenan Allen and WR Mike Williams returning to practice:

“They are really talented receivers. They are two of the best in the game. To have guys like that around, they have been a big help to all of the receivers stepping up. It’s been good to just see them working and see whatever happens.”

On the energy Allen and Williams brought to practice:

“They are really special players, like I mentioned. They are two of the best in the game. To have guys like that out there, whenever they compete, they are two of the best. It means a ton to us to just have them out there and to have a chance for them to play. We’ll see what happens.”

On Allen:

“He’s a really special player. He’s very talented. To have a guy like that out there, a competitor like him, especially Mike [Williams], as well, they are two of the best. It definitely helps our offense to have those guys out there. Hopefully, they will be able to play. We’ll see what happens, but if not, I know that they are getting their treatment in and they are doing everything they can to be out there.”

On the Chiefs’ defense:

“They are a really well-coached team. They have really athletic and talented special players on that side of the ball. They do a great job of affecting the passer, getting after it in the front seven, the rush. They have done a great job all year of that and they are able to force turnovers. It’s going to take a lot from us to have a good week of practice, a good protection plan, to go into the game.”

On playing close games against the Chiefs:

“I think they are a really good team. It takes a lot of effort, especially during the week of practice, to prepare and to practice to have a good week to have any chance to go up against them on Sunday. They are a talented team, both offensively, defensively and on special teams, as well.”

On how often he watches opposing quarterbacks:

“For the most part, we watch the defense. During the week of practice, we don’t have a whole lot of time to really watch extra film outside of what we’re supposed to watch. We do a good job of watching the defense and getting a plan going together and doing everything that we can. With similar opponents, sometimes you are able to watch that quarterback maybe on off-weeks or different weeks, but mostly just the defense.”

On ‘if he sees’ Chiefs QB Patrick Mahomes ‘in a similar light’ regarding arm talent:

“I appreciate the kind words. I don’t think there is a throw that he can’t make. I think he is being humble there. He’s, obviously, one of the best to ever do it. We have a ton of respect for him, but there is not a throw on the field that he can’t make. He’s able to do everything.”

On if he and Mahomes have ‘developed a relationship outside of playing each other’:

“I just have a lot of respect for him. I get to talk to him after the game, during the Pro Bowl last year. Obviously, a great guy and a great competitor. I have a ton of respect for him. It’s good to see a great guy on the field have so much success, as well.”

On ‘it is fun to have a quarterback rivalry’ with Mahomes:

“They are, obviously, a very talented team. They have had a lot of success over the past couple of years. We’re doing everything we can to be able to compete and have a good week of practice so that we are able to compete on Sunday and have a chance to win. They are, obviously, a very talented team. All three phases are exceptional. It’s going to take a lot for us on Sunday.”

On ‘how much more he is doing at the line of scrimmage this season’:

“I think experience is always helpful. Just having gone through that for two years now, you are doing everything you can to be better than you were last year. I feel like we have made a lot of improvement, a lot of room for growth still, but I think we’re doing a much better job at the line of scrimmage and continuing to get better.”

On if there is a 'natural progression' for a quarterback 'to do more' at the line of scrimmage:

"I think it's just learning from mistakes. Having seen a pressure and having to get home and you realize, 'You know what? I could have done something to change it, to flip it, to change the play.' You bank that and you realize, 'Hey, going into the next one, I have seen this before. I could do something to change it to alter the play.' But, just going through that and years of that experience, I think that is the most helpful."

On his 'biggest growth area' at the line of scrimmage:

"I think it's just continuing to see pressures, to see exactly what we can do protection-wise, of being able to change protections, flip it, and just getting the running back out in protection so we don't lose him, and especially getting those check downs and everything like that. I think there is definitely a lot of room for improvement there."

On Allen and Williams:

"I think they are two very talented receivers. If they are in the gameplan, there are going to be plays designed for them, just like any other week. They're a matchup. To find those guys out on the field, they are going to make something special happen. My job is just to get them the ball. Whether they are out there or not, we have guys that compete and push everything they have. It will be good to see."

On Allen:

"He is a great leader. He's a guy that steps up. He cares so much about his team, especially in the locker room. He's a vocal leader and he has done such a great job for those young receivers of just teaching them everything that he has known and learned throughout the game. To have a guy like that around, he has helped me a ton, as well."

On specific examples of Allen helping him:

"I'd have to look back. I can't remember off the top of my head."

On 'if he has been able to develop relationships with the wide receiver corps' with Allen and Williams not playing:

"I think the past couple of weeks of just having those reps with all of those guys and having them step up and play in those big-time games, it has been really good to see. I think, all throughout camp and all throughout training camp, the offseason, we have been able to get those reps and we feel comfortable throwing to those guys. They know what they are doing. I think that is a big bonus for us, as well."

On 'if there has been a different vibe around the team' this week:

"I think the best thing about our team is they are looking forward to and excited for every game. Obviously, we're playing a really talented and special team, but they treat every week like it's the biggest one. To have a team like that week-in and week-out is able to answer the call, it's really good to see from them."

On the 'challenge of balancing injuries' to Williams and Allen and 'taking what defenses give him':

"It's part of the NFL. You are going to lose guys to injuries. It's kind of part of the game and it's the unfortunate truth about it. I thought we have done a great job of battling and dealing with adversity. I think the offensive line hasn't flinched at all this entire year. They lose their left tackle. Pip [Trey Pipkins III] hasn't been able to play sometimes, but [T] Foster [Sarell] goes in there, [OL] Jamaree [Salyer] goes in there and they answer the call. To have guys like that, you trust them, especially with the receivers, as well. Guys goes down, but they step up. It's not an easy job out there, but it's the NFL. Those guys are professionals. I have been really privileged to be a part of that group."

On 'dealing with injuries' around the team:

"It has definitely been a learning experience. You are always trying to do your best to learn from those mistakes and get better. Having to deal with those injuries, especially my own personal injury, you have to grow from it and you have to get better. If you don't get better, that's kind of when you fall off and things like that. For our team to really battle and kind of grow together throughout this whole process, we're exactly where we need to be and we have a lot of football left."

On 'if it is different playing under center when facing Chiefs DE Frank Clark':

"We have a lot of respect for those guys, especially him, [DT] Chris [Jones]. They have some really talented, special players on that side of the ball. You definitely have to be aware of them out there on the field because they are playmakers. They are going to make something happen. You have to do your best to be aware of that, as well. Take in consideration the protection plan that we have going on and everything else that goes on with it."

On if there is a 'chip on his shoulder' playing against the Chiefs:

"I don't know if I have gotten quite there yet. I think there is still a lot of room for improvement for us, especially for myself. We're just doing everything we can to be the best team that we can be so that we have any chance on Sunday. Obviously, we know how talented these guys are. It's going to take a lot from us, a good week of practice and preparation."

On 'finding patience' with the injuries surrounding the team:

"I'd like to consider myself a little patient, but I think it's such a great team that we have. Those guys compete. To have guys like that, I'd go to battle with them any day of the week. To have those guys come out to practice, give their best every single day, we know that we have a chance. To have guys, especially on the offensive line, as well, being able to step up and answer that call, we know that we can go to play football with them any day of the week."