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Chargers Week 5 Media Availability

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OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR JOE LOMBARDI

On fourth-down conversions:

"I remember in New Orleans, if [Saints Head Coach] Sean [Payton] ever asked, nine times out of ten, I'd say, 'Go for it.' It's a lot easier when you're not calling the play. When [Head Coach Brandon Staley] says, 'Hey, we're going for it,' I don't really judge the decision, I just call the play. In the heat of the moment, I thought, in retrospect, it was pretty gutsy, but they've worked out. As good as our quarterback is playing and our receivers are playing, if I'm on defense, I don't want to see us go for it. I'd rather see us punt, I think that's a good way to look at it. They've been good decisions, it's easy to judge it after you've been successful. I don't think we'll always be successful on every fourth down, that's unrealistic. But you stick with the process and know in the long-run it's going to help you win games."

On Head Coach Brandon Staley's trust in QB Justin Herbert:

"That's huge. Knowing that, more often than not, he's going to make a play and your receivers are going to make a play; your O-line's going to protect. The better you feel about those guys, the more aggressive you're going to be."

On the run game:

"It was great. Passing yards can be sexy, but man, it's fun when you're running the football well. That's often more gratifying, it was really nice to see that."

On the versatility of the offense:

"It's a nice luxury to have. To know if you've got five guys out in the route, they're all five guys that can win, get open, and do well when their number's called. I think we usually have that situation with the talent that we have here. A lot of times, the defense does dictate where the football should go. It's good to know that you've got receivers and running backs and tight ends that are going to make a play when their number's called."

On RB Larry Rountree III:

"There's always a couple things, especially with a rookie, that you'd like to see improvement on. I think it's expected that a rookie's sometimes not going to be as detailed as a veteran, but he's had some good runs. [RB] Justin [Jackson] is the same way. I've been pleased with those guys."

On TE Stephen Anderson:

"It's always good in the tight end room when you have a Swiss Army Knife of sorts, a guy that you can play all these different roles and you can him in those 'figure-it-out' situations. Guys that have good gap instincts as far as where to fit through the offensive line. The tight end position, certainly in our offense, is probably the most difficult to learn. He's one of those guys who, when there's a tough job to do, you can give it to him and know he's going to figure out the right way to do it."

On Browns DE Myles Garrett:

"I don't know if there's a better defensive end/pass rusher in the NFL. He's impressive. It's going to be a challenge and he's going to win some battles. That's just something you have to know going into it and be smart about the plays you're calling. Knowing that he's a guy who can ruin your day by himself very quickly. [Browns DE Jadeveon] Clowney, too, and [Browns DE] Takkarist [McKinley] is playing really well. I have some experience playing against him in Atlanta. He's really popping off the film as you watch the Browns. It seems like every week we're in a situation where teams have good rushers, but these guys are really top-class."

On QB Justin Herbert:

"The most impressive thing about him is how quickly he processes the information of what's happening, how quickly he gets rid of the ball. Whether it's, 'This is the guy that's open.' Or, 'I'm under pressure, I need to get rid of it before I'm ready. I know exactly where to go with the ball.' He seems like a ten-year veteran when you get to that aspect of the game. His ability to figure out where the ball should go, make those decisions, and understand when, 'Hey, I don't have as much time as we were hoping here. I need to get rid of the ball to my check-down right now or else thing thing's going to go south.' We had a couple breakdowns in protection that were really silly. We dropped a three-technique once, we dropped a defensive end once that we shouldn't have. He took a sack once, but protected the football, and the other time he got rid of the ball for a positive gain. It's not easy to do what he did in those situations. His ball security and clock in his head are outstanding."

On if Herbert felt the pressure coming from the Raiders rushers:

"Yes. He's done it a number of times, it's not the first time he's done it. He's just got that instinct, that feel — that awareness that I'm not sure you can really teach. It's nice, a good security blanket as a play caller to know he's going to not let a lot of bad things happen if things break down in front of him. He knows what to do, it's outstanding."

On Herbert's relaying the play to the offense:

"It's pretty basic. I give him the personnel; he relays it to everybody. I give him a little second to do that, then call the play. Keep an eye on him, see if he heard it correctly. I might see him [look at me] and I'll give him the play again. I don't really bother him a whole lot more than that. It's a pretty straightforward process."

On teaching Herbert the offense:

"Early on in the process in the spring, I was standing next to him and just reading the plays to him. It was brand new at that point, so often times, you'd need to repeat it and he'd have to go through it in his head. But since training camp and getting into it, it's been smooth."

On Herbert's decision-making traits coming out of college:

"A lot of it didn't express itself in Oregon, but I didn't see any red flags from that perspective. A lot of times, when you're watching film, you're not exactly sure what he's being told. But I didn't see any red flags. I can't say I had a strong opinion that made me think it awesome or that it was poor. It just seemed that he was competent, and he knew what he was doing."

On if he's surprised about how fast Herbert's excelled:

"It has because of how young he is. A lot of it is innate, natural. I remember when we played the Chargers in the Super Dome last year, I'd gotten to know [Passing Game Coordinator/Quarterbacks Coach] Shane [Day] a little bit because we'd come out and practiced. You could tell that he was playing really well. And I said, 'How quickly did you know that he was good?' And he said, 'Right away, because you could tell he has an instinct on who was open and where to go with the ball.' I don't know how to explain it, it's pretty rare for someone who's as young as he is. It's really good."

On Browns CB Denzel Ward and the secondary:

"Ward's a really good player. He had a terrific game last week against the Vikings. They put him into the boundary, which is a corner that often gets a little more action, so you can tell what they think about him. He's a really good cover corner; we'll have our work cut out there."

On offensive line adjustments before facing the Browns:

"We had a couple twitches from the O-line, at least one. But the other stuff was solid. Hopefully, we keep having that squared away."

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR RENALDO HILL

On the Browns RBs Nick Chubb and Kareem Hunt:

“Physical runners. They get stronger as the game goes on. They’re going to run hard. They keep building up. As you get into that fourth quarter, they’re running through some guys.”

On the defense’s tackling on Monday night:

“I felt pretty good about it. That’s always a glaring thing that we’re looking at, just to see if it is expressing itself as we’re watching the film. We didn’t feel it as much. We knew that they had good backs over there, as well. We have our hands full this week.”

On the increasing physicality of the defensive unit:

“We’ll continue to put a big focus on it in practice, whether that’s in the walk-throughs, slowing it down, walking and talking, making sure that everyone’s on the same page. We know that once we get those guys lined up on Sunday, they’re going to play physical and fast. That’s what we expect. As we were going through it, really getting through it, and really trying to iron out our things as a coaching staff, we wanted to make it an emphasis that we wanted to get better in the run game. We wanted to make sure that we slowed the teaching down and take everybody through the progression so that everyone is on the same page, and that they’re hearing it from the front to the back so that we can all tie it in together, so that we can play faster and more physical up front.”

On the depth of the defense:

“We want to make all of our rooms competitive. When you know that the next guy can step up and keep it going, it just makes the team that much stronger. We know that’s going to happen in this league. Guys go down. We have to have good guys behind them that are ready to roll and step up and play starter minutes and starter roles. That’s what we’re developing. We’re going to continue to develop that as we move forward.”

On if he has noticed anything different in Browns QB Baker Mayfield’s throwing mechanics since the injury to his non-throwing shoulder:

“If he hadn’t said anything, or if there haven’t been any reports, I wouldn’t have thought too much of it. They’re going to do a good job of controlling the game with their run game. They get out on the perimeter with him running the boots, in the play-action game. You know the focal point of their offense. I think that he does a really good job of running the show over there. Until the reports came out, I wouldn’t have heard anything or thought anything different coming from Baker Mayfield.”

On if he has ever witnessed a DB as versatile as S Derwin James Jr.:

“I haven’t seen it, not since I’ve been playing or coaching. He is a unique individual. A guy with that size and speed and the ability to think on the go, it’s something that I’m sure a lot of people would want. I’m glad that we have him in our room. He’s a special guy. We’re just trying to maximize everything that we can out of him because he brings so much to the table. I know that I’m happy every day that I see him in the meetings. I’m sure that the other coaches feel the same.”

On if the decision to play James in multiple positions was predetermined when they got here, or if it was developed over time:

“I think that, in the offseason, we came in and we were trying to get a feel of our personnel, who we have around us and what can we do differently to help express us be multiple in what we do? We’re always trying to figure those options out. I even remember from his college days where he played money backer and played safety, so it kind of already gave us those thoughts that it is something that he could do. Expressing all of our packages, and coming from where [Head Coach Brandon] Staley came from and where I came from, we see the value in it. He has good size. He’s smart. He’s dependable. He’s all of the things that you want. It just allows us to be better in all of our spots. I think that it helps out everybody on our defense with him being able to play all of those roles.”

On James wearing the 'green dot' and calling the defense from a secondary position:

"A lot of it has to do with him being a part of all of those packages, so we know that he's going to be on the field. In the spring, I think that all of the guys wore the dot. You just want to get that feel of a guy who is always going to be on the field, always be in those packages. Obviously, our linebackers, we have some really good linebackers. It could be a situation where those guys could be rotating in and out, but we know that D.J. would be on the field 90, 100 percent of the time."

On the advantage of having a defensive back call the defense:

"For our team, it's just the individual. Staley did it over there with the Rams, and it worked out well for them. He's our communicator. He's our leader in the huddle. We already know that he sees a lot and does a lot for us, so why not put it on the guy who is the vocal guy in the group? We tried to make it, when we went through the spring, that a lot of guys were heading his voice constantly so that they can get used to it. I think that it's different for every team. For us, it's a really good fit."

On how the defense communicated when James was not on the field in Week 3:

"No to not answer your question, we also have to make sure that we have those hand signals. Finding that our early in our stadium, how it would be, nobody knew how it would be with the fans in there. I think that gave us a good understanding that we need both, we need the headset and the signals from the sideline. I think that we do a good job. If [LB] Kyzir [White] or [LB] Drue [Tranquill] is in, they can get it from the headset and get it from the sideline, as well, too. We wanted to make sure that we had both of those pieces together so that we wouldn't have any mess-ups throughout the game."

On Browns WR Odell Beckham Jr.:

"I heard him say that he's trying to get his legs up under him, but he looks fine to me. He's out there rolling. You see him stop and start, he's one of the best in the business to do that. The ball could be on a line and I've never seen somebody completely turn their hips around and stop on a dime. He has those traits. I would hate for him to say that he's not there because I don't know if I want to see him turn it up a notch. He looks good out there to me. I'm sure that the other coaches would probably say the same. He's been looking really good, flashing in and out of breaks, just like the old Odell."

On CB Asante Samuel Jr.'s defensive pass interference on Monday night:

"We talked about that the other day. It was just, more so, of knowing where is help defenders were at. He was really fighting to stay on top of that route. He was anticipating that it was going to be a post route. We had a post safety, he was just being overly aggressive to make a play. Just knowing where his help defenders are at. We talked to him about that, 'Hey, you have post safety help, let's use that guy. Stay on the outside line.' I think that would be the biggest coaching point for him, just knowing where your help defenders are at."

On preparing to defend the screen game:

"It's going to take us all. We always talk about our responsibilities, what we have on the screen game. I think that it's going to have to be everybody involved in this. They're going to have some numbers, but I think that our advantage is our speed, trying to get to the ball and closing down those lanes as quick as possible. We know that it's going to express itself. We have to do a good job of trying to contain these guys. [Browns RB Kareem] Hunt and [Browns RB Nick] Chubb do a great job in the screen game, as well as the draw game."

On if CB Tevaughn Campbell has 'earned a spot' in the defensive rotation:

"Definitely. Each week, you just never know, in this league, what's going to happen. Like I mentioned, having competition in all of our rooms, that is going to help big. It can be to the point where, 'Hey, I need a blow.' [CB] Chris [Harris Jr.], but he may need a blow on a set. We feel fine with T.C. going into the game and playing at a high level. I think that's what you need if you're talking about advancing and playing into those late months. You need guys that are going to be ready to step up because we know that it's a long season — 17 weeks plus the playoffs — and you have to have everybody on board. That's the only way you really survive this, when you have guys that can step up and keep pushing the paces, not having a letdown at any position."

LINEBACKER DRUE TRANQUILL

On his comfortability in the scheme:

"I felt really, really good. I think you see that reflected in the stats. They had 45 rushing yards, it was a really solid defensive performance. I'm happy with where we're at."

On defending the Raiders' run game:

"We had the gameplan coming in and we executed it really well. We didn't want [Raiders RB] Josh [Jacobs] to get going. We felt like they were going to come in and run the football after what we were showing the first three weeks. To be able to stop the run early and get them in passing situations was definitely favorable for us."

On his rhythm after returning from injury last season:

"I feel like I keep getting better and better. Coming off an injury, every day you continue to progress. I really like where my game's going and where it's at right now."

On his 'limited snaps' through Week 3:

"As a competitor, you want to be out there as much as you can. But we have a really competitive group, a lot of great guys on defense that deserve to play. It's just figuring out that balance of guys. How can we get everybody on the field playing and helping this football team win games? Ultimately, I think that's what it comes down to."

On the Browns rush offense:

"They have two really good backs. An interesting stat [Head] Coach [Brandon] Staley brought up was that [Browns RB Nick] Chubb and [Browns RB Kareem] Hunt have the most yards after contact in the fourth quarter out of any backs in the NFL. I think that speaks to what Cleveland's trying to do, philosophically, in terms of wearing you down and being able to take over in the fourth quarter. It's going to be imperative Sunday afternoon to stop those guys and not allow them keep going."

On the tackling plan:

"Our Linebacker Coach [Michael Wilhoite] was giving the tackling plan today, and said, 'Man, it took me all night to find good tackles on these guys, because the first guy's rarely making the play.' I think that swarm to the ball — the second, third guy in getting shot attempts at the ball — is going to be very crucial for us to be successful against them."

On his blitz role in the scheme:

"One, talking to guys like [OLB] Joey Bosa and trying to take from their game, what they're seeing, how they're successful. But two, instinctually, one of the things I like about my game is my instinct and feel for the game. My ability to feel the shot clock coming down, my ability to feel the quarterback's cadence — when he's going to snap the ball. You can't necessarily teach that, that comes with reps and experience. I really felt like I had a good rhythm on when [Raiders QB Derek] Carr was trying to snap the ball, when he was trying to see stuff. I think that shows in the pressures we were able to get on him."

On how the training camp reps were distributed among the LB group:

"We had an incredible rotation through training camp. All three of us got a ton of reps and felt really comfortable playing together. It wasn't anything where I felt that any of us needed to get up to speed, we always felt balanced and comfortable. One of the nice things about our system is guys being able to be interchangeable at either position. That speaks to the depth in our room and the quality of guys we have."

On S Derwin James Jr. serving defensive play caller:

"It's definitely a change-up in terms of how a linebacker is in the middle so he can easily communicate to the defensive line, and then in the back end with Derwin wearing the headset sometimes, especially in our stadium, we've just realized how loud it is through two games having fans there. It's tough sometimes; he's running back from covering a deep ball, trying to relay that call. We've had to be really on top of things in terms of our signaling and communication to each level. At the end of the day, it hasn't really affected us as a defense."