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WEEK 3 — PODIUM AVAILABILITY

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LOS ANGELES CHARGERS DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR GUS BRADLEY

Opening statement:

“Okay, onto the next challenge here. We have a very good team coming in. Obviously, it’s a team that runs the ball very well — over 150 yards rushing-per-game. I think in average per rush, they’re second in the NFL. They really have it going. Their running backs are good. Their offensive line is doing a really good job. Any time you’re facing a quarterback like this that’s a dual-threat and is one of the top in the league — he can run the ball, but is a very gifted passer. He’s very gifted at extending plays. They’re a team that will take multiple shots anywhere on the field. It’s a combination. We have to play well against the run and try to eliminate some of these explosive plays.”

On Texans WR DeAndre Hopkins:

“They have three really good wide receivers, but obviously he’s a guy that you have to have great awareness of where he lines up and play accordingly.”

On the rush defense against Detroit:

“I thought we took strides. We had [stretches] where we had that trust that we were talking about last week. Guys were just doing their job. I think it really started up front, though. The [defensive line] played really well against the run. Not only did they take care of their responsibility, but they also got off blocks and made some plays. I thought they really set the tone for us improvement-wise against the run.”

On Texans QB Deshaun Watson:

“Like I said, he’s a dual-threat guy. His ability — let’s just start with the run. He’s always a threat to run the ball. You have to account for him in the run game. In the passing game, he has some of the components of a really good quarterback in our mind as a defense — timing, accuracy, decision making. He has those things. The accuracy on deep balls, on intermediate routes and he has great trust in the receiving corps. He truly is a dual-threat.

“You know what? As far as the ability to run the ball, a dual-threat. Deshaun is a very good thrower. He’s very accurate and really at all levels — level one, level two, level three. All levels of the field, he can make those throws. I think he just has really good trust in his receiving corps, too. He’ll give them chances to make plays. You can be pressed on a receiver and it doesn’t matter. He’s still going to try to go to him.”

On Houston’s rushing attack:

“I would say that [the passing game] helps [the rushing attack]. Scheme-wise and what they’re doing is pretty challenging. When you look at explosive plays — how we categorize an explosive play is 12-plus [yards] in the run and 16-plus [yards] in the pass. I think they’re at 17 this year — at eight run and nine pass. Usually you don’t see that. Usually, you see a lot more passes than runs as far as explosive plays. They’re a pretty balanced team throughout. You see that even in explosive plays.”

On defending Hopkins:

“Well, I wish we had 12 [defenders]. That has come up a couple of times in our meetings when we were game planning. He’s a guy that, again, is a threat at every level. [We have to have] awareness as a defense. He’s going to make his plays. I think the big part of it is tackling in space. He’s a physical wide receiver, too. Teams will try to press him and he does a really good job against that. I think it’s just overall awareness of where he is and then do a good job with him at the line of scrimmage and compete.”



On preventing Watson from running:

“Well, there are six lanes when you’re rushing the quarterback and there are generally four rushers. You have to do some adjusting as far as that’s concerned. Whether you’re bringing pressure and adding extra guys into those lanes or make sure that your pass rush lanes, you have all of those gaps accounted for. Every game, he takes off running. I think the best thing that we can do is try to contain him, have a good plan to contain him and try to take away that threat. If you do have good coverage downfield, that he doesn’t escape and get a first down on third down with his legs.”

On replacing S Adrian Phillips:

“He is a big loss just because he played multiple positions for us. You’ll see it a little bit by committee. Guys like [S Roderic] Teamer, [S Jaylen] Watkins, [S Nasir] Nas [Adderley]. We just have to position guys around. We put a lot on [Phillips’] plate. We’ll spread it out a little bit.”

On S Roderic Teamer:

“He’s a very intelligent player. He has very good instincts. I think when he came in, in OTAs he really stood out because he seemed to be around the ball a lot. He made a lot of plays on the ball or the ball finds him. I think those are his traits. He’s pretty sharp. He has stayed on it through the time that he’s been injured. He sits right up front by where I am presenting. He takes meticulous notes, stays on it and is very detailed. I think a guy like [Adrian] AP [Phillips] has helped him in that aspect.”

On LB Thomas Davis Sr.:

“I think Thomas Davis took a big step last week. I think, for him like I mentioned before, what we’re asking him to do is different than what he has done in the past. It’s a little bit of a growth in progress. We understand that. He had I don’t know how many tackles. He still finds the ball, gets around the ball. You see his speed. He has the speed, he has the quickness. It’s just a matter of getting enough reps in the system where that speed continually shows up.”

On the other Houston wide receivers:

“You had to bring that up? It is a challenge. They’ll take shots anywhere on the field. They have no conscious to that. They have two guys that are extremely fast — extremely fast. Then, [DeAndre] Hopkins is their talented receiver that’s one of the best in the NFL. It’s a challenging group. I think for us it’s the ability to stay on top and try to eliminate some of these explosive plays that they are having. Obviously, rush and cover work together, so get pressure on the quarterback and have them work together for us.”

On Teamer getting reps on defense:

“I’d be comfortable with it just because of what he’s shown in OTAs and training camp when he was healthy. The ability to pick things up, he’s pretty sharp on things. I think, as a group and a coaching staff, that we’d have no issue with that.”

On S Rayshawn Jenkins replacing Phillips:

“That was a conversation as well. Ray has taken some reps being down [in the box]. I think the ability for all of those safeties to give us the flexibility to mix and match is important. Ray has played strong safety. He came to the sideline right when [Phillips’ injury] happened and said, ‘I can move to strong. Let’s go.’ He gives us some of that flexibility.”

On motivating players to step up in replacement of injured teammates:

“I think they know that. I don’t address it that way. I think every season there seems to be stories that take place. It’s exciting to see what story is going to take place this year. I think last year it was kind of [Adrian] AP [Phillips] — who would’ve thought? We drafted [S] Derwin James [Jr.] and AP probably was thinking that he was going to be the starter, then we went to a backup role. We had some injuries and the story was AP and the year that he had. I think when you have injuries like this, it gives opportunities to guys. There is going to be a story that takes place. That part of it, I think, is pretty cool.”

On CB Brandon Facyson:

“You know what? They first game he kind of got thrown into it. I think he was prepared and ready to go as far as getting reps as a corner, but a lot of his focus was on special teams and he got thrown into it. Last week, he had a chance to prepare fully knowing that he was going to be the starter. Hopefully now — this is really his second game — he takes the next step. His length and speed, I think, showed up some in the game. I think as he gets more reps and focused in — I think his challenge is every play. That’s sometimes why a nickel can’t play corner because you can’t take any plays off when you’re on the outside, especially in our defense.”



LOS ANGELES CHARGERS OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR KEN WHISENHUNT

On the Houston defense:

“They’re a good defense. They’ve always been a good defense, it seems. We played them a couple of years ago and they were good. You see a lot of the same things that they’ve really well, they continue to do. [Texans OLB Whitney] Mercilus has done a nice job. He has really become a force off the edge out there. Obviously, [Texans DE J.J.] Watt is playing at a high level. You always have issues when you deal with this defense.”

On the offensive line:

“You know, I think everything is a little bit of a work in progress. We’ve had our good moments. I think there are some things that we’re still learning and still getting experience in as a group. Overall, I don’t think that you can say it’s been poor. I would not say that. I think that we’ve been effective in a lot of areas. I don’t think that we accept it that we’re great or really good by any stretch. I think those guys are really working hard at continuing to get better. We have a number of young guys like [T] Trent [Scott]. [T] Sam [Tevi] is still a little bit of a young guy. He has played a lot. I think they’ve had a good start. There’s always a couple of plays that we’d like to have back, but they’ve done a good job in the running game. Last week, I think we were a little slow starting because we were playing a defense that was different for us, new for us. It took us a little while to get it kind of figured out. Sometimes that’s natural when you’re playing an opponent that you haven’t seen. I thought in the second half that they really did a nice job.”

On TE Lance Kendricks:

“The only thing that we have going from that standpoint when you talk about expecting a lot is that he’s a veteran. It’s a lot easier to do that when you’ve been around it a while. If it’s a first or second-year player — or even a young guy — and you come in, it’s really hard, especially when you change systems. He has seen a lot. He has been in offenses that, at one point or another, were similar to this from a terminology standpoint. It doesn’t make it easy by any stretch, but we’ll see how he progresses during the week. I think he gives us a player that has experience, has done some good things in this league. We’re excited to have him.”

On WR Keenan Allen’s route running:

“Well, I think first of all, he’s very smart. Keenan understands and processes things very well. When he sees things on the field, he knows what they’re trying to do and the can enact that physically, which is a tremendous talent. He has grown considerably. I was here in 2013 when he was drafted. Where he is now compared to where he was then is quite significant. You knew that he had physical ability at that time. His change-of-direction, he ability to recognize what’s going on, his sense of timing — a lot of time when you talk about a golfer, baseball player, being able to hit a golf ball or hit a baseball, it’s a sense of timing. I compare Keenan a little bit like that from a standpoint of knowing when to break, how to set up a route, understanding the concept of what we’re trying to get done. He really has a great, innate feel and uses that to his advantage.

“A lot of it comes down to these are the parameters of what you do. You have to stay within those parameters and then you talk about the technique and what you want to do. I think it’s a collaborative thing. Obviously, the talent and his work that he does preparing for that is what makes him so good.”

On approaching improvements:

“I don’t think you really do anything other than understand the mistakes that you made that caused [points left on the field]. We had penalties that stopped two touchdowns. They weren’t flagrant penalties, but they were ones that were called. It’s in those situations when you’re in space, as a lineman, you have to be careful. When you’re a receiver and a guy is in front of you and you give him even a minute tug on the jersey, you just can’t do those things. I don’t think you certainly say anything because in the second half we moved the ball as well as we’ve moved it. I just think you have to correct the mistakes that you made and keep going. I don’t think that affects you from a confidence standpoint or if it makes you tentative because it happened. We’re not happy that we didn’t score more points. That’s one of the things that’s hardest about that game, is living with that, but it also motivates you to get it cleaned up and do better the next week.”



On RB Justin Jackson:

“He has done a really nice job. You don’t really like to reminisce with a player this young, but his first camp he did nothing. I mean, really. He really didn’t. I didn’t even know who he was. At the end of camp, he started doing some things that kind of flashed. [Head] Coach [Anthony] Lynn was always a huge supporter of him. I think he saw something in him, to his credit. You just never really know. The last game [of the preseason last year], he did some things where you were like, ‘Okay, maybe this guy has a chance.’ He worked hard during the season early. Things started showing up in practice against our defense on the [scout] teams. He never complained. Then you were like, ‘Okay, I’m kind of excited to see him if he gets his chance.’ Then again, you don’t want to ever say, ‘I want to see him,’ because [RB] Melvin [Gordon III] and [RB] Austin [Ekeler] were doing really well. All of the sudden — which happens in the NFL — you get thrust in. That’s the big challenge for young players, is to see how you respond. Then it was like he was a different guy in a good way. It’s not that he changed his work ethic or it’s not that he did anything different other than getting a chance. He was healthy and he got a chance. From that standpoint, he has really grown. He is a smart player, so he understands what we’re trying to get done conceptually from a protection [standpoint] and a run-scheme. We do a number of different things in our plan. He adapts to that very well. He sees the field really well. He has tremendous vision. That’s one of the things that stands out to me. He knows where guys are. He makes good cuts. The run that he made for a touchdown was tremendous. It was tremendous to see him do that. He’s a good receiver. He does a lot of things that make him quite versatile. It’s great to see him continue to grow.”

On preparing to have two active tight ends at Detroit:

“All during OTAs and during the minicamp, and even training camp. We do all kinds of crazy stuff formation-wise. I think it gets our guys in position where they understand what we’re trying to do. It’s all about getting ready for the season. You compensate with receivers in different spots. I think, certainly [TE Sean] Culkin and [TE Virgil] Virg [Green] can handle it from the standpoint of moving guys around. It’s always a chess match with that, but I don’t think it really affects us that much.”

On splitting time between Jackson and RB Austin Ekeler:

“You could probably ask Coach Lynn that. He’s really good with understanding those parts of the running game. I’ve just always felt, if you have something that’s working pretty well, you don’t try to mess with it too much. We’ll come out of the game and we say, ‘Gosh, Justin, get a few more carries.’ Then, that next week, maybe you try to do a few things more for him to get him in those situations, but like you said it’s really hard to complain about what’s going on with either one of those guys. I think we’ve been doing some good things offensively. We just keep rolling.”

On the delay of game late in the game at Detroit:

“There’s no excuse. It’s probably that I didn’t get the call in soon enough. We had to change it. It came down right to the end. We get close a lot of times on that clock. You see that happen a lot in games when you’re on the road. The noise at that particular time, to their credit, it was loud. It’s one of those things that you can’t allow to happen. We have to be better. I have to get the call in a little bit quicker. If something comes up that changes that, we have to be able to handle it.”

