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Chargers Week 18 Media Availability

Friday, January 7, 2022 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

On C Corey Linsley's injury status:

"Good to go. He had a really good week of practice."

On his interaction with S Derwin James Jr. on the sideline last week and the defense 'performing how he's used to':

"I was actually referring to our performance, but, specifically, how he led us in that performance. What I'm used to is joining up with guys like him that play like him, that lead like him. I felt like he was fantastic. He's been fantastic all season, but I really felt like he was the engine in that performance in more ways than one; the way we were able to utilize him and then the way he led us throughout the whole game. I think that our performance reflected his performance. I felt like us, teaming up, that we performed well."

On the challenges that the defense has experienced this season:

"As a competitor, you're ready for all of the different circumstances that you have to face. For us, this year, like I said, it's been a fight for a lot of different reasons. I think that we've hung off. I think the way that I want to be evaluated; are you maximizing your players? Are you going into the gameplans with good processes? Are you practicing well? Are you preparing well? Are you putting these guys in good positions to be successful? I feel like that's what we've done all season long. I know that that's something that I'm really proud of. I think that we've hung tough. Last week, we were able to get our guys back and were able to perform like we did more towards the beginning of the season. Performance, it can't be exclusively looked at just by where you're ranked. I think that you need to be always mindful of if you are maximizing this group, regardless of the group. I think that's what my mindset was last year with the Rams, when I was with the Bears, when I was at John Carroll [University], Hutchinson [Community College]; are you maximizing this group? Are you doing your best to prepare these guys to reach their full potential? I feel like we've done that this year. I feel like, defensively, we have hung tough together. I felt like last week, when we were able to get everybody back, I thought you were able to see more of what I'm used to seeing and what our guys are used to seeing when we have our full squad out there. I've been proud of the way we've hung together this year."

On 'repeating the Week 4 performance of zero interceptions and zero lost fumbles':

"That's such a big predictor of success, particularly in games like this. For you to compete and play that way, from an execution standpoint, it really comes down to assignment, technique and effort. I think that that's what execution means, is those three things; knowing your assignment, having command of your technique and then playing as hard as you can play. In order for you to execute, you know that you can't do it alone. Every individual has a role, but then you also have to perform as a unit, as a team. That's going to be the challenge for us on Sunday."

On the Raiders' offense:

"[Raiders QB] Derek [Carr] is having a fantastic season. You know their weapons — they're getting [Raiders TE] Darren [Waller] back, [Raiders RB Josh] Jacobs is such a good runner, [Raiders WR Hunter] Renfrow is one of the top receivers in the league, [Raiders WR Bryan] Edwards, [Raiders WR] Zay Jones, [Raiders WR] DeSean [Jackson] has more 60-yard NFL receptions than anyone in NFL history. [Raiders TE] Foster Moreau is a heck of a player. Then, they've done a really nice job with their line, creating continuity there. When we played them the first time, I think that they were ranked number one in the NFL in total offense. Now, I know that they're in the top-10, for sure. When you're in the top-10, you're among the best in the NFL. They're of that caliber, and it really starts with Derek [Carr]. It's going to be a challenge for us. You have to play team defense when you're playing against an offense as good as this one."

On Raiders WR Zay Jones:

"I played against Zay when he was in Buffalo and had a lot of respect from Buffalo, had a lot of respect for him coming out. I've been a fan of his game. He's a big target. I think that he's an instinctive player. He's a very quarterback-friendly player because he can run the route tree outside and inside, so they can put him in a bunch of different positions, which is a strength of the Raiders — they do a good job moving their pieces around. When you have a quarterback like Derek, who is as accurate as he is, I think that a wide receiver like Zay can really express himself to his full potential because Derek is very accurate with the football at all spaces in the field. Zay has done a very good job for that football team this year."

On his pre-game music selection:

"Variety is the spice of life with me. I try to, like most people, just go with the way that I'm feeling — a little bit of this, a little bit of that. I just try to try to mix it up. I really just trying to base it off of how I feel and kind of go with my staples. My staples will change, based off of the mood, but I'm a variety guy. I think that that's the great thing about music, there's so much good music. I like to try and listen to as much of it as I can. The Weeknd has a new album out today that's really good. I'm a big [The] Weeknd guy. I like being able to lose myself. I like music that takes you someplace and some people that can really sing. I don't know if you guys know this Andra Day; she's incredible, she takes you places. A lot of Florida Georgia Line, they're amazing. I've always loved them. I could go on and on. Jay-Z. I'm 39, so I go back to Jay-Z and Tupac and all of these people, Lil' Wayne — I go through a bunch of them — Drake. These people are well-represented on my list. Maroon 5, they're here in LA. I can't wait to, hopefully, connect with them. Those are a couple that kind of come to mind as I'm thinking about my playlist."

On 'if there's a chance' that OLB Kyler Fackrell and DB Mark Webb Jr. will be activated off of Reserve/Injured; Designated for Return:

"There's definitely a chance. I think Kyler is probably more likely than Mark, but we're going to make those determinations here in the next 24 hours."

On LB Drue Tranquill's injury status:

"He's been in practice all week; even Wednesday, he was able to participate. I think he's been ramping up as we've progressed through the week. He had a good day of practice today. I would anticipate him playing in the football game."

On if Tranquill LB Kenneth Murray Jr. will start at LB:

"They'll both start in the game with [LB] Kyzir [White], dependent upon the grouping."

On if there were any additions to Reserve/COVID-19 today:

"No, sir."

On if the potential of making the playoffs with a tie 'change his strategy at all':

"That's a very loaded scenario there. There's a lot there, from a variables standpoint. It's all good conjecture. I think it's worthy of consideration. We're just going to have to wait and see on that. I don't think I could speak in absolutes. I think that we'll just have to wait and see if that situation expresses itself, and then we will have to be forced to make a decision. That will certainly be a big one. I guess we'll all just have to wait and see on that one."

“You guys know that we’re going to try and do everything we can to finish this game and win this game. I don’t think the Raiders or the Chargers are trying to tie in any shape or form. I know that we’re both trying to win this game. We’re just going to see what happens. We’ll see where fate takes us. I know that we’re going to do everything we can to close it out.”

On ‘if it is tied at the two-minute warning of overtime and you’re on your half of the field, compared to normal games, would you still be aggressive or would you be conservative, understanding that the stakes involved enter into the equation’:

“I think that it has to. I guess that is a real circumstance, it potentially could happen. I think that we’ll be evaluating that space and time, if and when the time comes. I think what I’ve always tried to say when it comes to decision-making like that is that we’re going to do what’s best for our team, and if that’s what’s best for our team, then that’s what we’re going to do. Scenarios like that are what make the game so special. There’s a lot that can happen; that’s why the NFL is amazing. We’ll cross that bridge when we come to it. Hopefully, we’ll be well-prepared for it.”

On ‘if those discussions ever came up at a coffee shop at the University of Dayton’:

“No, my buddies and I at the University of Dayton, we were more talking about players. We loved the NFL Draft, my buddies and I. We always had big NFL Draft parties. That was something that all of those guys that I was fortunate to team up with, that are dear friends of mine, that’s where our coffee shop talk normally went, in terms of players and who we would draft and you know. We were from a lot of different areas — a couple of my good friends were from Pittsburgh, Chicago, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Detroit. That’s where most of our coffee shop talk took us back then.”

SPECIAL TEAMS COORDINATOR DERIUS SWINTON II

On if WR Andre Roberts' kickoff return touchdown last week 'was the ultimate team play'

"Everybody on the unit; everybody from the scout team guys to get them ready with the looks that's just the ultimate team thing. It's not just that play, it's the play before. It's during the week when we're talking about this guy on their team is going to do this; make sure you give us this look that we will be anticipating. I think it's just a culmination in that play of just everybody during the week doing their job and that the little things matter. We have been chipping away the entire season, and really since Dre has been her, and then all of a sudden, it hits like that. It was a great thing to see it all come together like that. Hopefully, we just keep building from there. It is the ultimate team deal. Even from the guys not on the field, just the energy you saw that occurred from that play, I think it was just everybody that went into it that it was a culmination of that for them."

On if Roberts and K Dustin Hopkins 'have been the two most significant in-season signings of his career':

"From where I've been, mid-season, year. It's rare that you get quality players like that in the middle of season that can really make an impact. Those two guys have really stepped in. From my 13 years so far, a mid-season impact like that, you just don't get those types of players. They were just on the street, so good for us, right? I think that those teams would probably want them back, if they saw the production that they've had. Good for the Chargers and good for those guys that they've been able to be productive since they've been here. For me, in my career, they've been the most significant free-agent signings in the middle of the season."

On Roberts' impact on the improvement of the team's starting field position:

"A high-level returner with a young group that just took their lumps early on, learning how to win on blocks in the NFL, what it takes to get a returner — we were watching the last Las Vegas game and [RB] Larry Rountree [III] had a pretty good return to the 27-yard line. I look at the unit and some of the guys are the same, some of the guys, just maturity-wise, say, 'Gosh, we play a lot faster now. The game is a lot different since we played them.' I think it's just having a veteran come in, and he gives you that element, and then those guys learning through the game through trial by error. That's what we've gotten better at in every phase. I'm really proud those young guys. Hopefully, we will just keep it going this weekend."

On 'how rewarding' this season has been for him 'building this thing from scratch':

"Coming in, we knew what it was. I talked about it probably ad nauseum from the beginning of the process that we were going to take our lumps and that we had to learn from things, and that we have to build who we are in training camp, in the offseason, and then go through the beginning of the season. Now, I think that the guys are beginning to see all of the little details that I get on them about. I was hard on them in training camp. I was yelling, screaming, and now they're seeing it. We went through our lumps. After the Baltimore game, I asked them, 'Why do you think that I'm so hard on you?' It was funny, [TE] Stephen Anderson goes, 'No, you're getting us ready for the second season.' I go, 'Exactly, I'm getting you ready for playoff football because when you get into playoff football, it's the little things, it's the little block here or this little technique.' I think that they've really grasped that and really just grown with it. We've grown as a group together. I've grown as a coach, knowing who does what well and putting them in those situations. That's a part of me just learning them. You come in and you know them, but then you don't know them. The rookies, the vets, what do they do well? You've seen that process. We're going to keep growing from it. We're going to get a good Raiders core group. [Raiders Interim Head Coach/Special Teams Coordinator] Rich [Bisaccia] has them playing well as a team and on special teams. It's going to be a good challenge. We've grown, but we want to keep growing. Don't let that be just the one thing that we're known for, let's keep building from this."

QUARTERBACK JUSTIN HERBERT

On the Sunday night matchup:

“I think with every game that we’re really excited. It’s always a great opportunity to play our type of football. We’ve had our ups and downs this year, but we a good week of practice so far. A good week of preparation. That’s what’s important heading into Sunday night.”

On the Raiders defense:

“They’re really well-coached. That’s the thing and they have some really athletic players on that side of the ball and they make plays. They fly around and they play together on defense. You can see that. It doesn’t take a lot to turn the tape on and tell that. They’ve done a good job of stopping offenses and getting pressure on the quarterback. They’ve been able to do that all year.”

On if he’s ‘set a mark’ for passing yards that he has to get to in order to beat the Raiders:

“I think it’s team football and if I throw for 50 yards and we win, I think that’s the goal. It doesn’t really matter how many yards I throw for as long as we get the win. We’re doing everything that we can to have a good week of practice, of preparation so that we have any chance on Sunday. They have an incredible front seven. They do a great job of rushing the passer. We have to be sharp all week.”

On if he likes when the rushing attack is effective:

“I think it’s great to have both the ground game and the air game in football. To have that as our offense and be able to get the ball to those guys that made plays, I think it adds to our offense. To have [RB] Austin Ekeler, [RB] Justin Jackson, JK [RB Joshua Kelley], [RB] Larry [Rountree III] — all of those guys in the backfield. They’ve done an incredible job all year.”

On if he utilizes the 2019 training camp practices against the Raiders defensive scheme for preparation:

“We actually did the first time that we played them. We kind of took a look back, but now with a full year of film, we’re able to watch those games and maybe flip through them a couple of times. This time, it’s just kind of watching their defense now.”

On how focusing on what defenses are trying to do has helped his decision making:

“I think experience is the best teacher. Having a full year of football and playing quarterback in this system has definitely helped a lot. Unfortunately, we’ve made our mistakes, we’ve turned the ball over, we’ve missed big plays, but with them getting better and being comfortable in that offense. That’s all that you can ask for, is your best effort. Now, that we’re in the position where we feel pretty comfortable with our offense — guys know what they’re doing. We know the ins-and-outs of it. It’s all about progress. I think we’ve done a good job of that so far.”

On Head Coach Brandon Staley participating in quarterback meetings:

“It’s a lot about defense. I think you kind of expect that with a defensive coach like that. He comes in and he talks defense. He tells us why certain guys are playing with certain leverage, where the linebackers have to line up in their gaps and defend the nose. Kind of like the pass rushes and the blitzes that teams bring. He has a great insight on that and he talks a lot about that.

“[He makes it in] at least once a week. He’s always in there. He’ll come in and just hang out for a little bit whenever we have extra time.”

On if he ‘recalls the last win-and-get-in game’ he’s played:

“Maybe the Pac-12 Championship to get into the Rose Bowl, but other than that, I don’t know.”

On what if he implements ‘tips and tricks during the week to maintain poise’:

“Just to treat every practice like a game. Every rep like a game rep. I think the experience of going through it and seeing those reps, and seeing a live defense — making sure you’re adamant about your focus and your effort, so that when you head into Sunday, you feel comfortable that you’ve already been there, you’ve already seen it all, so that you’re ready for anything.”

On he recalls anything ‘special’ about Allegiant Stadium:

“I thought it was a great stadium, a great field. I feel like guys had a great grip on the grass. No complaints there.”

On if there’s anything he can apply from last season’s game at Las Vegas to Sunday:

“That’s kind of the tough part about the NFL, is that you’re watching that game and you realize that the defensive coordinator isn’t there anymore. They’re playing a new defense. We have a new offense. There’s not much film that you can watch from our offense and apply it to this year. I think a lot of the footwork and mechanics, things like that, are things that you can pick up from that game. Other than scheme and that type of deal, there’s not too much to look at.”

On coming from behind to win in overtime last season at Las Vegas:

“I think those moments from those games, you’re able to learn from. Close games like that, in those two-minute situations and overtime games —going through it and learning how to close games out at the end. That’s something that we’ve had to learn this year and something that we did a poor job of last year. Whenever we’re able to do that and try to put a game away like that, I think it does build confidence for your team.”

On if this is the biggest game he’s played in since the Rose Bowl:

“We feel like every game is a big game. It does come down to this one and it is super important for us. Every opportunity to go out there and play football is big for us. I think we’re treating it like that.”

On Friday conversations with Staley:

“We’re talking about football. We’re talking about life outside of football. He’s one of those guys that I really look up to and I really enjoy playing for. Any time you get to talk with him, you have to pick up what he’s saying because it’s probably something pretty valuable. I have really cherished talking together so far. Any time you get to meet with him, it’s a cool experience.”

On being named the team’s MVP for the season from the PFWA local chapter:

“I appreciate that. That probably means the most to me. That is a huge honor and I really appreciate that.”