

Chargers Head Coach Brandon Staley Media Availability

Monday, September 11, 2023 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

On takeaways from yesterday's game:

"We didn't play the right leverages in a lot of the coverages that we had designed to take away those two receivers. We just didn't do a good enough job of staying consistently connected in coverage. We gave up far too many explosions as a result of it."

On 'why the team wasn't playing the correct leverages':

"First game, there are a lot of things that happen in the first game that don't happen later on in the season. First time out there, some un-scouted looks. Then, really tough matchups, the two people that we were defending. Give credit to Miami. Their players played a really good game."

On if he 'reconsiders the plan to not play starters in the preseason':

"Same comments as my first two seasons."

On RB Austin Ekeler's injury status:

"He had an ankle during the game. His status is to be determined for Wednesday."

On the rushing offense:

"It was an exceptional performance by the offensive group running the football. To get 40 rushes off was just as key as the rushing total. To have three rushing touchdowns — and I think that both of our backs were exceptional in the game — that's the way that we wanted to play that game, in terms of our blueprint for the game. I thought that our guys did a really good job executing. It's definitely something that we need to build off of."

On 'being successful running against lighter boxes yesterday and how that continues through in the season':

"Each game is going to be different, in terms of how they deploy their coverages. I felt like we blocked the box and I thought that we blocked the support players at a high level. Then, we broke some tackles. Regardless of the structure, we want to be able to be that physical at the point of attack. Then, we want our backs to be able to make people miss. I think that is why you saw a lot of 10-yard runs go even further, is because our backs were able to break tackles and create even bigger plays. I thought that one of the takeaways was that we were consistent running the football from quarter one until the last quarter. Again, that is something that we need to build off of."

On CB J.C. Jackson's status and the status of the secondary:

"Let me first state that there were a lot of guys that had tough days yesterday in the secondary. It would be one thing if it was one person in our secondary, and it would be that easy to point to somebody, but our secondary didn't play a good game yesterday, and it starts with me. I'm the one responsible for that and for putting them in better positions. It was J.C.'s first game back after a really tough injury and I thought that he was able to make it through most of the game. We kind of had some reps slotted for him in the game and I thought that — in terms of what type of game it was, where there are 45 passes in the game — I thought that, from a conditioning standpoint, he looked OK. It's getting out there, it's getting your rhythm and timing back. There are going to be a lot of things that he learns from. There were plenty of good plays in there and there are ones that we definitely need to correct. That is why we have to get back to work on Wednesday at practice."

On if Jackson 'came out of the game alright, health-wise':

"He did."

On 'balancing' Jackson's recovery process and 'competing to win games':

"We're going to put the players out there who give us the best chance to win. What we see in practice and what we feel like gives us the best combination of players, that's what we're going to do. We also know that there is a progression and a ramp-up as he continues his return to play. He has proven that he can practice and practice consistently the whole way. Now, he has proven that he can play in a game against an outstanding team that is throwing the football. Now, we just have to keep building his confidence, rep by rep, and that is only going to come in time. Again, our entire group on defense needs to improve, not just J.C."

On the decision to have RB Elijah Dotson active and RB Isaiah Spiller inactive yesterday:

"We just felt like he would be the best guy that would give us the best chance to beat the Dolphins."

On T Rashawn Slater's performance yesterday in his first game back from injury:

"I thought that Rashawn [Slater] was solid. I thought that he gave us a winning performance. Two outstanding edge players over there, [Dolphins LB Jaelan] Phillips and [Dolphins LB Bradley] Chubb — and [Dolphins DE Emmanuel] Ogbah, as well, he is a very solid NFL player. Offensively, no turnovers. Then, to run for over 200 yards, that was a performance that we're proud of, offensively, and, certainly, up front on the O-line. Rashawn is one of our top players. It was good to have him back out there."

On 'how to not ride the roller coaster of emotion in a season':

"It's important. I think that the build-up between your last game of the previous season and your first one [of the next season], there is so much build-up to it. The reality is that one way or the other, like I told you guys after the game, is that it is one out of 17 [games]. My first two seasons, we won the opener. Obviously, there is that great feeling that you get after not playing for so long, then to get out there and win it, especially at home. But, we didn't win this one. It was a tight game and we didn't quite finish it. What we have to do is learn from it, put it away today, and then get on to Tennessee. That is the important thing. This team is mature. We have outstanding leadership. We have to take the tough lessons from yesterday and keep it moving."

On the 'balanced' offensive performance being 'overlooked':

"I think that's an outstanding observation by you. That's what I would characterize it as. The first thing that jumped out to me was that we didn't turn the ball over. That's always going to give you a chance in the NFL. We were plus-two in the takeaway margin. The second thing was the runs and completions. We were able to get 40 rushes and 23 completions. That's going to give you, I think, the chance to be balanced. We scored the ball in the red zone. We were four out of five in the red zone and had really good numbers on third down. There were a couple of third down-and-shorts — one or two that we wish we had back. It was a consistent performance. We all want that two-minute drive at the end of the game, to pass-protect better at the end of the game. Our offensive group gave us a chance yesterday."

On how the team has responded today:

"This is a really close group. It's a group full of outstanding leaders. We all know that it was a tough game yesterday. My takeaways were that I think the group knows that we laid it on the line. I think we played a really, really tough game. I couldn't ask anything more from an effort standpoint. From an execution standpoint, we can be a lot better in all three phases of the game. I think that's kind of where our team is now. You learned so much from that first opportunity. I think this one, we're going to learn a lot from. It's a great group to coach. I'm excited to take the field on Wednesday."

On LB Kenneth Murray Jr.:

"I thought he and [LB] Eric [Kendricks] were solid in the game and gave us a chance to win. I thought they had winning performances."

On the Dolphins utilizing motion on offense:

"They're a motion team. They motion every play. That's who they are. It's every part of the field, every down-and-distance. We were not surprised. They're a motion team. I think the character of some of the motions, at least early on, were a little bit different — but our guys, quickly we realized, 'Okay, this is just a presentation of what they normally do.' We were able to get that kind of adjusted out on the sideline and kind of say, 'Hey, this is 'same as,'" and kind of go through it. They're a tough cover. They were a tough cover last year. They were a tough cover this year. As our guys can see more of that, we'll adjust better to it."

On CB J.C. Jackson on the 35-yard touchdown to Dolphins WR Tyreek Hill:

"He just needs to play outside on the guy because all of his help is inside."

On if S Derwin James Jr., had 'help over the top' on a 47-yard pass to Hill on third down near the end of the game:

"No, he's in the post. We had two guys in the alley there, waiting for the in-breaks. It was a good throw-and-catch, kind of in the weakness of the coverage, per se. It's a single-safety look."

On the challenge in the second half:

"It was a tough look. I saw the [Infinity Screen]. I saw the movement. It reminded me a lot of [CB] Asante's [Samuel Jr.] catch against Kansas City last year. It looked like there was enough movement there where that same criteria would be applied. I thought it could help us."

On RB Isaiah Spiller developing on special teams:

"I think he's improving in that area. We have confidence in him to be able to go in there and perform. He has to earn his way in practice. It's a tight competition between him and [RB] Elijah [Dotson] — one that's not over. We're going to need them both as we go through the season."

On the status of LB Daiyan Henley and OLB Chris Rumph II:

"We're going to know a little bit more later on today. You guys will be able to know Wednesday if there's anything else from the game."

On how to apply pressure against a quarterback that has a quick release:

"It's a combination of factors. I think we rushed a lot better than you guys probably think. If you watch the game film, I think our outside and inside pass rush was better. Then, there's sometimes where you get some sacks and you guys would think we had good rush production, and we didn't rush all that well. I felt like we did a decent amount of five-man rush in the game. I thought in the second half that there was more of that, which I thought helped us. What you're trying to do is slow down the timing of the receivers by being close to them, which was our plan, whether we were playing man-to-man or pattern-match zone. [Dolphins QB Tua Tagovailoa] played a really good game. You have to give credit to him. He played with good timing and those receivers, they got open yesterday. You just give credit to him. He made a bunch of plays."

On Offensive Coordinator Kellen Moore's play-calling:

"I think that's one of the things — I talked to you guys in the offseason and throughout the preseason, is that he's patient. That's one of his great qualities as a play-caller. I think he did what it did to win the game yesterday. Like I was [saying], I thought we had the balance. I thought we had a lot of people touch the ball. I thought we protected the passer well up until that last drive. Like I said, in all of those major categories of third down, red area, run-pass balance in terms of being efficient and explosive at the same time — we were able to be efficient and explosive. I thought it was a good first game for us. Operationally, we didn't have any delays or silly timeouts. It was a good first time out for us."

On the sacks by the Dolphins defense:

"The short-yardage one when we were kind of closer to our end zone, that was a good call on third-and-one. The two-minute protection, the back just missed a pickup, which we have to do a better job of. Up until that last drive, I thought we protected the passer pretty well."