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WEEK 5 — PODIUM AVAILABILITY

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LOS ANGELES CHARGERS OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR KEN WHISENHUNT

On the offense:

“It’s really hard to get over the five called back touchdowns — or the four and the one fumble — from the standpoint that we have had too many things like that in situations where we had big plays that have hurt us. I think we’ve pretty resilient from the standpoint of being fairly consistent. We’ve had our share of explosive plays. We’ve moved the ball at times. We’re decent on third down. We’re pretty good in the red zone — all of those things. None of that really matters, to me, when you’re 2-2. I think — and maybe I’m wrong — if we had those five touchdowns on the board, I think it’s a completely different situation right now for our team and from our wins and losses. To me, that’s what is really important. I think that we have a lot of guys in our group, the offense, that are doing some good things. Everybody is contributing, which can really help you as you progress during the season. We, obviously, have some pretty good players that haven’t been able to dress or participate. One of the things that is really good is the chemistry of our unit has been really good. Other guys have stepped up. When you get that working, it can really help you. I think we’ve been okay as an offense. Statistically, we’re pretty good, I think. That’s just the thing that keeps going through my mind. Three consecutive times in Detroit — which, it turns out, must be a pretty good team — we get down there and actually score, but one of them is a turnover and two of them are called back because of penalties. Those are the ones — it’s just hard. It’s hard to think about that, but I’m really happy with the way our guys are playing and how they’re working hard at it.”

On RB Melvin Gordon III:

“That’s going to be something, I guess, that will progress as we get to the game. He looks good. I mean, it’s great to have Melvin back. One of the things that you just never know is when a player has been out like that for a while, what the chemistry is going to be like when he comes back, especially having gone all the way through camp and a couple of games in the season. I give Mel a lot of credit. He has handled it really, really well. I think he has been around some pretty good leaders and pretty good guys, like he spent time with [former TE] Antonio Gates when he was here, who did such a good job for us. Obviously, he’s close with [QB] Philip [Rivers] and those guys. I think he has really done a nice job with how he’s interacted with the team and has just gone about his business. It’s never even been an issue or even talked about. Guys were happy to see him. He’s genuinely excited to be back. We all know what a good player he is. From that standpoint, it’s awesome. It’s great to have another player that we feel can help us. [Head] Coach [Anthony Lynn] is really good about those things with how they play. He has a good feel for that, so I’m sure he’ll have more of an idea as far as maybe relating to you guys how that comes about.”

On if he expects Gordon’s return to be seamless:

“You know, it feels that way right now, but he hasn’t played. He hasn’t been in a game. I mean, he has been good in practice. He has looked really good out there. With the way it went last week — the way everything was crazy, we thought he was going to have to play in that game. That worries you a little bit that he comes back on Thursday, but gosh, I give Mel a lot of credit. He worked really hard at it. He studied. He has always been one that’s been good that way, but he came in and was really into it. To think that he would have been able to play last week — I think he could have contributed last week. At least now we’re a week further along and he’s gotten to actually have some reps dedicated to him instead of scout team reps. It’s good to see that.”



On Gordon being mentally prepared coming back:

"I think I said this last year. One of the things that I really appreciate about Melvin is how hard he worked at that. I think that we ask a lot of those guys. I think a little bit of that showed up last week because of the way our running backs were able to play a couple of different spots and contribute. [Running Backs Coach] Alfredo [Roberts] does a really nice job with those guys. He spends a lot of time with them as far as protections and assignments. I give Melvin a lot of credit. He has obviously worked at it. He was really good last year and that appears to be the same way this year. He hasn't made a lot of mistakes."

On playing two running backs at the same time:

"I think every week is different. We did some of that last year with [RB] Austin [Ekeler] and with Melvin. [RB Justin] JJ [Jackson] has worked himself into the mix and [RB Troymaine] Pope has been good. I think it's nice to have that available. Sometimes, it's a matter of what you're trying to do when you play another team — how they play it, what type of opportunities are there or how you can scheme those kinds of things. It could be a week where we use them a lot. It could be a week where maybe we're relying on another group. I think when we're at our best, we're constantly changing those things up, but it's really nice to have guys that can do that because it gives us more flexibility."

On TE Lance Kendricks:

"For a guy that was here for, what, eight days, nine days and having to play? I mean, he caught the second pass of the game against Miami. We never would have ever anticipated that. We were kind of thinking we could work him in. He has really done a nice job. I was asked about that and I think one of the things that helps is that he's been in the league for a while and he's played on a couple of different teams. I know when you've been around it, even though terminology is different and systems are different, you can get a comprehension or an understanding of what you're trying to do. It doesn't mean that you get it, but guys helped him out and he did a nice job. He's a talented player and he certainly helped us out in the game. He caught a big third down where he made a nice — No. 20 for them [Dolphins S Reshad Jones] is a really, really good safety. [Kendricks] ran a nice route, beat him on an in-cut and really looked good last week. That helped us in the third down area where we were much better last week. It's good to have guys like that."

On QB Philip Rivers getting comfortable with new players on offense:

"He had a lot of work with [Troymaine] Pope in the spring and in training camp. In fairness to you, I think that's just a little bit different than Lance, who he had never seen. I think the biggest thing with that is getting comfortable with the guys. It's almost like you have to show me that you can do it or what you're good at doing, and then we can work something out that way. Philip is great about that. He's like, 'Okay, let me see,' and then he'll see them do something at practice and say, 'Okay, I feel comfortable with him now because I kind of have a feel for how he's going to work the top of his routes, how he's going to put himself in that position.' [Kendricks] caught a pass in the first game that he played, so that helped carry over into this game. Philip just sees the field so well. The thing about him is just that he's so accurate when he's in the pocket under duress. Obviously, he's a tremendous player."

On Denver's rushing defense:

"I have a lot of respect for [Broncos Head] Coach [Vic] Fangio and that group. I've gone against him when he was in San Francisco those years when they were really good and we were in Arizona. They've always been a good team regardless of where he has been. These guys, you can say what you want to about their record — I think they're a good football team, especially I think just looking at that from a defensive perspective. Sometimes, things — just like us, we've had five touchdowns called back or that have been wiped off the board. There have been things that have happened for them. They're very disciplined. They understand their scheme and they're playing it well. They have some good players. [Broncos OLB] Von Miller is the best in the business and their interior line is very good. [Broncos CB] Chris Harris [Jr.] — gosh, from talking with him when we were at the Pro Bowl, just his knowledge and how he approaches the game. I have a lot of respect for them and, certainly, don't take them for granted at all."

On the long drive in the fourth quarter:

"First of all, I wasn't just standing there because it was crazy trying to figure out who was in, who was out, who was playing and who was going. I think it's great when you do that, when you get past it. While you're in it, you're just focused on what's going next and who's going to be doing what. In the end when you do that, just to have that long of a drive to take that kind of time off the board and convert those third downs — that's a big deal. I think it goes towards the confidence of your team. It's pretty rewarding for the group to do that. We've had a couple of plays where we've scored quickly. Those are all great, but when you can take — especially in the second half of a game — a drive like that, it can really help you put yourself in position to have a good outcome."



On Offensive Line Coach Pat Meyer:

“One of the things about Coach Meyer is that he’s a little nutty, but all of those guys are to a certain extent. He really, really strongly believes in how you do things for that group. What I mean by that is the approach, technically, his footwork, how you put your hands, how you have to handle all of those things. He’s a tremendous technician. He really works hard with those guys, even OTAs and through that when they’re working on their individual techniques. Getting them to enact that into a game is something that he does very well. I think those guys respect it, they play hard for him and they do a good job. He’s a tremendous line coach. One of the things about that position is that, a lot of times, the rigidity of the thinking is, ‘This is what we’re going to do,’ and, ‘This is all that we can do.’ He is way beyond that. He’s very open-minded. He’s very on the edge of, ‘Let’s try to do different things.’ It’s really helped us. I think one of the things that our entire staff does more so than anything is try to put the players in the best position. It’s not so much that we’re running this play. It’s, ‘How can we tweak this so that these guys can do it? What fits them?’ There were a couple of times in training camp or in preseason games where we ran plays that weren’t our strength, but we did it because we needed to see what our guys could do. We knew, when we got into season, that we were going to focus on what we can do really well. A lot of that is because there’s a flexibility in thinking and Coach Lynn allows us to do that.”

On using timeouts early in the second half:

“That was all on me because I called some position groups that weren’t available and they were like, ‘We don’t have it.’ We got down there and I called goal line, and we didn’t have enough guys to actually do goal line personnel. A lot of times what happens is that a guy goes down and they say, ‘He’s out.’ Then, you get into the flow of what you’re trying to get done. Sometimes, they’re back. Sometimes, they’re not. You just don’t always know because of the way that things are progressing. That was on me.”

On learning what players are unavailable:

“They’re on my sheet. Certain plays, you run out of certain groups. A lot of times, our staff is good about giving you notifications for when guys are out, but sometimes when you’re in a series and things are going pretty quick — because the clock shuts off at 15 seconds for talking to the quarterback and a lot of times, you’re running out of time quick. You have to make a call quick, make a group. Sometimes, you just make a mistake and lose track of that. Our training staff tries to get the information, but sometimes in a series like that, it happens because I think this was more of an anomaly — an unusual situation because of the number of them.”

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR GUS BRADLEY**Opening statement:**

“Just to recap a little bit about the Miami game, I thought that we came out and obviously gave up a couple of plays that we needed to get back. I think what I appreciated most and saw from the team was the poise they had. They kind of settled down, we re-grouped and came out, and then I thought we played much better football. We ended up getting a win, that’s the main thing. I think guys like [S Roderic] Teamer played better. [DT] Jerry Tillery played better. We’re seeing improvement with guys. We talked a lot about us last week. That still is kind of the mindset going into this week. It’s a challenging game though. [Denver has] very good skill positions and a very good running game. The two backs are awfully good, I know, as far as tackling plans and the running styles that they have. The offensive line does a really good job. Skill positions, the receivers — I think [Broncos WR Courtland] Sutton is really coming on for them. You’re seeing a lot of confidence in getting the ball to him. The backs are always available for them. They get the ball to them if [the quarterback] gets in any kind of trouble. They have a lot of catches themselves. They spread it out really well. [Broncos QB] Joe Flacco, he’s doing a good job as far as they’re quarterback. You can see that they kind of fit to his strengths. If they get a lot of possessions, they’re going to score some points. That’s the big thing, to try and limit some of the possessions that they have and what they do in them.”

On S Roderic Teamer:

“I keep talking to the coaches about that — just make sure our guys improve. They have to get better. When you see strides [made] — there was a seam-route that they ran and he covered it. He did a great job on it. Those are signs right there that I think he’s understanding the position more. He did a good job. Still, we still have to challenge him. There are still things that he hasn’t seen yet in the short time that he’s played. We’re always trying to stay one step ahead for him and some of the other guys just to make sure that, when they do show up in a game, at least we’ve talked about it.”



On LB Uchenna Nwosu:

"I think you saw last week that we moved Uchenna to LEO. We felt like [LB] Kyzir White could play the OTTO position for us. We just felt like, in our mind with [DE] Melvin [Ingram III], for him to get consistently over 60 reps per game, we just felt like we had to set it up somehow where we could limit some of his reps just to keep him fresh. We decided that last week and sure enough, Uchenna played over 30 to 35 plays. We're excited about Uchenna. One thing about Uchenna, is he is going to play hard. He plays extremely hard and plays with great effort. I think the technique and things like that are coming. It's not like a big shock to our unit. They have a lot of confidence in them. It will be exciting to see when he does get his opportunity, how he does.

"He was a pretty good OTTO for us, too. I think he's naturally a gifted athlete. It's hard to find a guy that can play outside linebacker, ask him to do all of the drops and also be a rusher. That's unique. That's why we took him as high as we did. We felt like he had that skillset. We also felt like, if he really committed to playing more LEO, that he could be a good LEO for us, too. That's why in the OTAs that he was with [Defensive Line Coach] Giff [Smith]. He spent a lot of time with him. Fortunately, that time we needed it and it paid off.

"We thought we could get him on the field more [as an OTTO]. We thought by him playing OTTO and LEO, we could make this work, but it's more challenging than we thought. I think that had to go with it last week, too, as far as, 'How can we get him on the field more or keep our other guys fresh?' We felt like, at the LEO spot by adding Uchenna there and having Kyzir playing OTTO, it really strengthens our team. It's a credit to [Linebackers Coach] Richard Smith. He's done a good job. I've never been accustomed to it as much since I've been here, but he'll cross-train all of those linebackers. A WILL will play an OTTO. An OTTO will play a WILL. You'll go through it and [wonder] if they're getting enough reps to get good at it, but here's a classic example — Kyzir White, moved to OTTO and did a good job there. That cross-training paid dividends.

"If he's in base — let's say that you're in the middle of a series or you start a series and day, 'Hey, Melvin [Ingram] needs a breather.' Melvin comes off and Uchenna goes out there, but the second or third play is base. You need Uchenna to play OTTO, then Melvin [Ingram] is thinking he's getting a three or four play breather, but no because they went base, Melvin has to go back in and play LEO. It was just difficult to manage.

"[It was helpful to give Nwosu reps] during training camp and OTAs because we felt like we could make this transition and we feel like he's ready to go there."

On other players that can play LEO:

"[LB] Emeke [Egbule]. He played OTTO. He's another guy. For us, when we look at this OTTO position, he should be a guy that can drop in coverage, set the edge, but also has the flexibility to be the third or fourth LEO. As we go and look at those types of players, that's what we have in mind. It was natural to get him some reps at LEO this week."

On CB Michael Davis:

"I thought he had a good game coming back. I think we noticed it at the end of last week in practice. He had a couple of go balls thrown on him and you could see his speed again. We felt pretty confident going into the game that he was healthy and in a mindset. Some guys go in and you're not quite sure, but seeing him in practice and how he can run, we felt like he was back to [full] health. For him to get his first career interception coming back was pretty good."

On S Nasir Adderley:

"He's a good player. You want to give opportunities for good players to get on the field. I mentioned that, I think, in other press conferences that if guys show well in practice that we're going to try and find roles to get them on the field. I couldn't go into too much detail last week, but he was showing really well. That's why we came up with that package and got him on the field. We'll see. He's kind of day-to-day. I'll wait to hear from the trainers. Hopefully, he's okay. Yeah, you'd like to have him back and have him in there so you can get good players on the field."

On LB Jatavis Brown:

"He's very knowledgeable and he's a guy that showed up in practice, too. Here's another way to get him reps. I think the biggest thing with [LB] Thomas Davis [Sr.] is to make sure we manage him right to have him for 16 games. If we have a guy that's very capable of going in there and playing the dime spot and we can roll with that — but it might be this week Thomas is the dime and maybe it's some first and second down plays that we give him a breather. I think managing him to continue to gain all of those guys for the whole season.



On giving LB Thomas Davis Sr. rest:

"I think it's matchups and how we feel with what the personality is in certain situations. That's when we'll start putting our game plan together with how we're going to utilize our personnel."

On not blitzing a lot:

"It felt like, as a play-caller, that we're bringing more pressure on first and second down this year. I know we started the game against Miami and brought some more pressure early. I think it was Detroit, it felt like it. We'll use pressure in multiple ways. One is to attack protection, but I think sometimes it's to get a defense going. If you ever feel like you're a little bit sluggish or not playing full-speed, we'll start calling pressures to kind of jump-start them. I know last week in Miami, it felt like we needed to go right from the start. It can be used in multiple ways. I don't keep track of how many we're using or where we are. It's more based on game plan and how we feel like we can affect the quarterback."

On DT Jerry Tillery:

"I think it's the instincts, just like Uchenna [Nwosu]. Here it is, third down, he's rushing. We always say that it smells different. It just doesn't seem right. The reaction that he had [to the screen pass] was good. They've had some big plays on screens. That type of recognition — screens always concern you a little bit as a defensive coordinator. Some teams will use screens to slow down pressures — if you want to bring pressures to try to get less guys in coverage. To be able to defend the screens well in certain situations, I think, bodes well for us as far as staying more aggressive."

On DE Joey Bosa:

"I think he's becoming more complete. He really affects the quarterback in more ways. He was so close. We had this conversation and I know Giff [Smith] has, too. He feels like he's so close multiple times where he [could have] had a couple of strip-sacks. He's right there. Those things will come. When you're rushing as good as he is, coming off the edge, using his hips and his hands — I think there will come a point where it's just like takeaways. We said they come in bunches. All of the sudden — just keep going. Keep doing it and your time will come. We really like that he's in a good place right now and playing with a lot of confidence."

