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LOS ANGELES CHARGERS OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR KEN WHISENHUNT

On this week's preparation:

"Well, I think some of the personnel is the same so you can look at that. It always changes, little bit of differences in some of the schemes that they are doing. Not the same things. I think just speaking from my perspective, offensively we try to change it up a little bit every year. Not necessarily because we are going to play an opponent again, just because you're trying to get better and there are some things that they are doing that are a little bit differently. Some of it you can look at, especially from a personnel perspective and how they play it, but it just seems to me, every year is a little bit different."

On slow starts:

"Obviously, it's not been good. I'm sure you guys have heard this many times — one guy here, one guy there, one slip here it seems like. We started off so good. We hit [TE] Hunter [Henry] for a pass and got up to midfield. I thought, 'Okay, good. Now maybe we can get something going.' Just too many individual mistakes at the wrong time. It's disappointing, obviously."

On the running game:

"To be honest with you, I think the run game — it's always interesting how that goes. You can't ever say that you're just going to run the football. If you come in and say, 'I'm going to run the football,' in the NFL, you'll wake up pretty quickly sometimes. It's not always easy to do that. You have to work at it every week. Some weeks are going to be better than others. We haven't been as effective running it the last couple of weeks. We didn't have a lot of attempts this past week. We had a couple of decent runs — four- or five-yard runs. We never got into a rhythm, I think probably because the turnovers hurt us early. It just kind of changes the way the game went. To be honest with you, we looked up — I know I'm oversimplifying it — we looked up and there was eight minutes left in the third quarter and we're down three scores. It's hard. You have to do everything you can to try and catch back up. It's our fault. We're not blaming anybody for that. We have to try to do a better job being more efficient and effective running the football. It's not for lack of trying. It's more that we just haven't been successful. We haven't done it. We just haven't executed."

"I don't know if it's necessarily [getting behind early]. There are times where you can run it and get back into and kind of plod it out. I think that every game is different. Like I said, we still felt like we could in the first half. Then, we got to the end of the first half and they had a long possession to start the third quarter. All of the sudden, it kind of changes the landscape a little bit. We had to go to more of an up-tempo offense to try to get some points. We were down three scores and they were playing well defensively. It just kind of changed the way it went. I don't want to try to make an excuse. We have to do a little better running the football. We were good earlier in the year. The last couple of games, [we've had] poor mistakes. The way it's worked out hasn't been good enough."

On using an up-tempo offense:

"We've done that through the years in different spots. It's always something that we feel like we can use and can go to. It really all depends on how the flow of the game is going. Some teams, it's better. Some teams, it's not. A lot of it really depends on what your plan is and how you're trying to attack the defense, I would say."

On T Russell Okung:

"Any time you get a Pro Bowl player back that plays at a high level, especially at the left tackle position, is big. It's a big lift for you. I give [T] Trent [Scott] a lot of credit. He's battling his tail off. He has done a good job for us. When you get a guy like Russell that can come back — and hopefully that will be the case. He's been around. Russell has been in the building. As far as what the outlook is for that, I couldn't tell you. Just knowing that if he announced that, that's great. That means in his mind that he's going to do it. Gosh, that would be great to have him back."



On how the offensive line could shuffle:

“There are a lot of questions like that. I think you have to evaluate it. First of all, I know that we’re not where we want to be and we haven’t been as efficient lately, but I have a lot of respect for both [T] Sam [Tevi] and Trent [Scott] for the way they’ve played. They’ve battled their tail off. At times, we’ve played very well. At times, we haven’t. That’s the way the NFL is. I think we would work that out just based off how they’re doing and how we’re doing. Russell [Okung] isn’t back yet. He hasn’t practiced. It’s kind of hard to speculate on that. Once again, you can make judgments and say what you want to say — those guys have worked their tails off to try to be effective. Last year, Sam played for us and we won a lot of games with him at right tackle. He battles his tail off. Trent, for a guy that came undrafted and worked his way to playing, I have a lot of respect for the way they work. They’ll still be involved if Russell comes back, whenever that happens. I have such respect for what they’ve done.”

On RB Melvin Gordon III:

“Melvin has a good feel for what he needs. I certainly can’t argue with his perception or what he feels like he needs. That’d be great. It’d be great to get him more carries and get him more involved. We’re trying to do that. Once again, I think every game is going to be different. Every game plan, how you go about an opponent is going to be different. There are going to be times where he will get a lot more carries. There are going to be other times where you’re trying to work different things as far as how you approach it. I think it’s an ongoing process. We’re certainly glad that Melvin is back with us. We’d like to get him some more carries and have him have one of those days that we’re used to seeing.”

On distributing the ball among the offensive skill players:

“I’ll tell you what, I think they recognize that, every time we go into a plan, we have things that are designed for all of those guys. There are certain things where, ‘Hey, we think this is going to you,’ but the beauty of what we’ve done and where we’ve been most effective is that it’s the way it unfolds. It’s not necessarily, even though this play is designed to go to [WR] Keenan [Allen], designed to go to [TE] Hunter [Henry] or designed to go to [WR] Mike [Williams], it doesn’t always work out that way. I think — you’d have to ask them, but I think they appreciate the fact that we’re trying to do those things to get them the ball. Sometimes it works out, sometimes it doesn’t. I think we try to keep everybody involved. There is one ball and there are only so many times that it can go around. I think when you’re having success, everybody is happy. I’m not saying we’re not having success. From a win-loss record, we’re not, but we’re doing some things where guys are getting opportunities. We’ve just got to be — if we can keep the ball a little bit longer and have a few more plays, that kind of takes care of itself. We didn’t do that in the last game.”

“I love players that can make those plays like those guys can do. That’s what you look for. I think we’re blessed because we have a number of guys that are very smart. Part of what we do, I think, is that we put them in a lot of different spots and they have to know more than one position. They have to understand concepts. Those guys, it’s a credit to them and how hard they work. When we’re clicking, it’s pretty good.”

On WR Keenan Allen:

“Detroit tried to take Keenan away and we still had success. Every team is going to. At some point or another if you have a player like that, is going to try to do that. Now that Mike [Williams] is back and rolling, and Hunter [Henry] is back, [RB] Austin [Ekeler] and Melvin [Gordon] — we have some other guys. It makes that a little more difficult if you’re spreading it around and going through progressions. That’s always going to be the case. I know that you see it happen. When we watch opponent film, when we’re watching other defenses, we see them doubling players and trying to take other players out. Yeah, it does happen. It’s not always that easy. We just keep working at it, try to get more opportunities for him. Sometimes, even though he doesn’t get as much production because of that, the other guys have to step up.”

On QB Philip Rivers:

“I think it was unfortunate in the last game. The one ball was tipped. That happens all the time in the NFL. You can’t say much about that. The lateral was just unfortunate, an unfortunate play. At the end of the game, we were trying to get back into it. We’re 100 yards [away] with a minute left in the game, so he’s trying to make a play and throw the ball up. In that last game, it happened. It was hard for us because it happened early. I don’t think he has been especially careless with the ball at all. If you’re a quarterback in this league, there are a lot of times that you have to make tight throws into tight windows. Sometimes, balls do get tipped. Those kinds of things happen. He has worked at it. [Head] Coach [Anthony] Lynn has been very good about making that a point. We’ve worked at it. We do drills with that all the time.”

On the Pittsburgh defense:

“You know, I don’t know that necessarily that was the case. We just didn’t perform the way that we needed to early. We made some mistakes early. That hurt us. When we got going in the second half, when we were playing catch-up mode, we had some success and did some good things there. They came out, made a couple of plays early and got a lead. Give them credit.”



On Rivers' mentality:

"I'll be honest with you, I don't necessarily see Philip with a gunslinger mentality. When we go through progressions and we talk about reads, and talk about where we're trying to go with the ball — those kinds of things — I think he is really excellent with that. He works very hard at that. It doesn't ever come up like you think it is all the time. If you look at our Tennessee game from last year, there were three tight throws to Mike [Williams] down there in the end zone that we didn't convert on. You're saying, 'Okay, we didn't complete it,' but it was a good throw. It was a tight throw. You see him makes some throws that you have to make. If you don't have that, to some degree — if you don't have the ability to believe that you can throw it into a tight spot, it's hard. They're not always wide open in this league.

On a deep pass last week:

"It should have been caught. It should have been a completion and it wasn't. It was a good throw. It was a really good throw. That's not an easy throw. The throw he threw to [WR] Jason [Moore], the throw he made down the field a couple of times were throws that you have to trust — especially some of those in-cuts. If you look at it from the perspective of standing behind it and you see all of those bodies out there, you're like, 'Holy cow, where are you going to throw it?' You have to have some belief, have some vision and understand what you're trying to do with it. I don't think that Philip has been necessarily reckless with the ball. I just think that we haven't done a great job as an offense of protecting the ball and of being efficient. Early in the season, we were doing a great job of that. That's the way it goes. There are ebbs and flows in this league. The biggest thing I would say is that we've shot ourselves in the foot, what, six or seven times where we've had touchdowns and big plays? If we didn't do that, we might be talking a different story right now. That's just my opinion. I'm not arguing at all. You guys are certainly entitled to what you see, but being a quarterback in the NFL, it's not easy, especially when you have all those big guys coming at you in the pass-rush, too."

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

"Good afternoon, everybody. Let's recap last week's game against Pittsburgh. I think some of the issues — there are some things that we have clean up, obviously. The two big things are gap integrity and tackling. I think there were 35 runs or something like that. We felt like there were seven plays in the run game where there were some gap integrity issues. You're going to have some in a game. When you have some, someone has to cover for it. We're basically a one-gap system. Everybody is responsible for a gap. You have to play your gap. If you're not in your gap and they hit you, plays like that can happen. I thought, with that, [S] Rayshawn [Jenkins] did a really good job. That's the importance of that free safety. He's kind of like the eraser tackler. If for some reason it does breakthrough, you don't fall back, you don't get help from a linebacker or anybody else, then he has to make the play. You saw him involved in the game quite a bit because of those. He made some big plays for us. Then, the tackling — they had 15 completions. Eight of them went to the back. We have to tackle in space. Some of them were on third down. They did a good job. Coming in with a new quarterback, not quite sure what they're game plan was going to be, and adjust, there were opportunities — even on second down. There was a second-and-10 and we missed a space tackle that put them in third-and-four rather than third-and-10. Those are the plays that we need to make. There's a big emphasis on that. As far as the points in the second half, again, we need possessions back for the offense. I think there were five series for 19 plays. Trying to get the ball back to the offense and give them an opportunity to score has to be our mindset when we get down like that — and then, situational football. They scored on a fumble and then came back with another one. It's a sudden-change opportunity. We have to at least keep that to a field goal, and they score. We have some work to do in that area, but there are enough good signs, too — enough good things that took place. There were 28 good plays where we had good gap integrity and made plays. We're continuing to work on that.

"This team — here we go again, quarterback change. How are they going to go about it? Is the option a big part of it? There are some unknowns there. We're preparing for the whole picture. We feel like their playbook is going to be wide open. We have to play rules football on some things and adjust as we go on in the game. They're very skilled at the receiver spot, the tight end spot. They're very impressive. Their running backs, obviously, are two different styles and very challenging for us. You have to know who's in the game and the tackling techniques that we need to use. The quarterback, [Titans QB Ryan] Tannehill is very poised and accurate. You could see when he came in the game that it felt like guys were making plays. He had a high completion percentage in the Denver game. He has been known for that. Guys here like [Defensive Backs Coach Ron] Milo [Milus] said they've had a history. They played him a couple of times when he was at Miami. We'll go in there. I love the guys' attitudes, now. They're very focused, very focused the last couple of days. It's pretty cool to see."



On Head Coach Anthony Lynn wanting more hats to the ball:

"He's right. A running back coach [by trade] looks at it and says, 'If that running back catches the ball and has a one-on-one with a DB, he should beat him 80 percent of the time.' A defensive coach says, 'If we use good technique and proper angle, we should win 80 percent of the time.' There is no argument as far as getting more hats to the ball. That's where I think it's technique. If you happen to be in a zone-drop — it's not just zone-drop — it's getting clean feet and precision. We're not there yet. That's why open-field tackling has been an issue."

On LB Drue Tranquill:

"He's good. He's really progressing along. The challenging thing for us with Drue is that he's a big-time special teams player for us as far as four-core. He played a lot last week during some situations and then special teams. He has his different roles. He'll probably play a little bit more this week on defense, just keeping that rotation going. He's doing pretty well. I think you can feel his explosiveness and his feet on the field."

On the pass rush:

"I think our pass rush, they do a great job of it. It was challenging last week because eight of the completions went to the back. When he did hold it and go downfield, we got an interception and we saw a couple of pressures on the quarterback. It was just very quick, little throws, so we didn't get a lot of opportunities last week. I've been pleased with it."

On interior pass rush:

"You always want more push that helps those edge rushers. I think they're doing a good job of getting their hands up and trying to disrupt. There were a couple of plays where we were close to getting batted balls, especially last week. Each position group, you want more from, but they did a really good job."

On DT Justin Jones:

"You know what, he's very physical. I think what I like about him is his get-off. He had a really good get-off in the red zone area. I think that's a good illustration. I think, sometimes when you look at a game like that, you look at, 'What was their mentality?' I thought it was a great illustration to come off in the second half. We didn't start the way we wanted to. You come out of the locker room, you're not supposed to get a drive all the way down to the red zone, but we had 40 yards of penalties, we had some adversity. The goal-line stand, pretty good. Also, a four-minute situation where we have to stop them and get the ball back, that's a great sign as far as the team and how they're operating. Justin Jones was a big part of that. He did a great job in the red zone area."

On DT Jerry Tillery:

"I would say that Justin Jones is playing very well for us and the plan is to bring Tillery along. I think that his play is showing better. There are still some inconsistencies. He had a gap-control issue where a play hit us. He wasn't the only one. There were some other guys. I think we're just looking for that consistent play out of him. Work ethic, it's really great to see because on the practice field, he's one that stays afterwards. He's a very prideful person. He wants it. He knows what it looks like and he knows it's not where it needs to be and he's working at it. Guys like that, you know they're going to come on."

On LB Jatavis Brown:

"[Tackling zones] was, I think, his big point in the offseason going into it. If they each have a focus, his is open-field tackling and strike zone. He did that last year at times. I thought he got better the more and more he played, but there were times when he tackled high on running backs last year. He had one in the Tennessee game last year. That's what you're hoping, 'Good, that's a focal point and he's working on it.' Then, here it is, your time to shine and he went high again. Hopefully — I know he's just sick about it — in a situation like that, when you have something like that happen, maybe it will be an awakening experience. 'You know what, this is who I am. I'm a 218-pound linebacker. When I'm going against a guy like that, the way that I'm going to be successful is to use that technique.' Sometimes you can talk about it, but when you experience stuff like that, it can bring you to greater places."

On the impact of rookies:

"Drue Tranquill, we're very impressed with him. I think for Drue, we're trying to get him more and more involved. He's playing the four-core. It's how to monitor that. Like I said, I would like to see him playing more. Tillery, I think he is what we thought. I think he's a very talented player, but you're going in there and playing the NFL at the three-technique spot, there's a little bit of a learning curve there. We see flashes from him. The plan is to keep bringing him along. I anticipate that he'll play more this week, so he'll take the next step. I've been pleased with those guys."



On S Nasir Adderley:

"I think, for him, he's making progress. We know that we're going to need him. I think we're getting a better feel for how he handles this. Everybody handles those types of injuries differently. I know he is making progress, but I hope it's not a redshirt year for him because he does have talent. He shows things on the practice field when he did practice that excites us. In this game, you never know if he's going to have to play. We're trying to be patient with him and have him come back. I think he's a guy that feels like he needs to be 100 percent, but he's going to have to learn that you might have to play at 90 or 85 in this league. He's figuring that part out, but his attitude has been great, especially the last week. You can see that he's starting to brighten up a little bit more."

On NT Brandon Mebane:

"He's a good player. There's a lot of trust. Players know exactly where he's going to play. If he's not, there will be a different style. The great thing about what [Defensive Line Coach] Giff [Smith] does — there were times when I first got here where it may be a third down and [DE] Joey Bosa was standing next to me. I was like, 'What are you doing standing next to me?' It was a third down situation. Giff has the mentality that we have to keep these guys fresh and roll, and it will pay dividends for us. He's right. He's right. It's for situations like this — [if a player is] out, our players aren't like, 'Oh boy, I wonder how [NT Damion] Square is going to be,' or, 'Jeez, [Jerry] Tillery is going to play. He hasn't gotten any reps.' It's more like, 'These guys have played for us all year, so let's go.' It's more of that mentality."

On falling behind early:

"It's frustrating because it's not how you hoped that we would come out. You would like to get a lead. The best-case scenario is to get on a lead and go from there. I say frustrating, but it didn't turn out the way you'd hope, but that's the game. I think that's the first thing that we did as a defensive staff when we watched the tape, was to say, 'Alright, regardless of what happened and before we're talking about technique, let's critique effort first. Let's really look at that. Let's see how we handle different situations. Let's really watch this team and see where their spirit is.' There is going to be adversity and I think the way come back from adversity is so important. They're demonstrating that. For me, I choose to look at it more that way, to say, 'Yeah, it's unfortunate. No one likes to lose.' We hate losing, but what's the bright side? You're grateful for that part of it and the team takes a lot of pride in that. Yeah, it's not the way you want to consistently start."

On the linebacker rotation:

"I think [LB Denzel Perryman] tweaked [his ankle] a little bit last week, too. I don't know if [Drue Tranquill is playing more] because of that. I think that, for us, if you're going things right and you're playing pretty well, we're going to get you on the field starting in practice. I think that it's more that Drue has earned the opportunity to get on the field and not so much because of an injury and let's get him on. We're trying to keep guys fresh, just like with the [defensive line] because there is going to be a situation where we might be out a linebacker. If someone steps in, there's really no blink with the defense. It's more of that mentality."

