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## Chargers Week 4 Media Availability

Saturday, October 2, 2021 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

### HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

#### **On LB Kenneth Murray Jr.:**

“He rolled his ankle and had to leave practice. We’re still kind of unpacking a lot of the information, but he just rolled his ankle.”

#### **On if Murray re-injured the same ankle he hurt against the Cowboys:**

“I’m not sure about that.”

#### **On CB Chris Harris Jr.:**

“Yeah, Chris practiced some this week. We’re trying to decide. I think it will be more of a game-time decision for him. He’s practiced and he has wanted to get out there. This guy is a real competitor. He really wanted to test it with shoulder pads on and give it a healthy two or three days of work. I’m proud of him that way and we’re going to make that more of a game-time decision.”

#### **On DL Justin Jones:**

“I don’t know if he’s going to play in this game. We’re trying to be careful with him. It doesn’t feel quite up to speed. He got off to a good start this week and I was optimistic, but yesterday there was still just a little tug in there. We’re going to make sure that he’s full speed before he comes back.”

#### **On if Murray could play on Monday:**

“I don’t know that. I just know that he rolled his ankle. I don’t know the severity of it. They’re still waiting to kind of get the details shortly. We’ll know a lot more later today.”

#### **On if the extra day this week helps give a longer assessment of injured players:**

“There’s a lot of time between now and Monday night. I think that’s a good thing. More importantly, I think it’s just that we feel confident in the depth that we have. It’s just part of the NFL. That’s the team that we have to be, is when things like this happen that you just keep it moving. You prepare those contingencies the best that you can and get those other guys ready to play because this is a part of the league.”

#### **On OLB Uchenna Nwosu:**

“I like that you brought him up because I just talked to him this morning. I’ve felt like this guy is playing well for us, now. I feel like he’s getting into his rhythm and timing. He rushed well in the Dallas game. He had a couple of really good rushes on [Cowboys QB] Dak [Prescott]. He had the big rush against [Washington QB Ryan] Fitzpatrick against Washington. Last week, I thought he really was active around the quarterback. I thought our whole front was, but Uchenna, specifically. He’s a play-maker. I think that all of the things that you guys probably know even better than I do, that he’s a good fit for our system. [Run Game Coordinator/Outside Linebackers Coach] Jay Rodgers has done an awesome job coaching him. Uchenna is a guy that we really trust and respect. I’m just looking forward to continuing to work with him. He’s definitely a play-maker for us.”

**On LB Nick Niemann:**

“Nick Niemann, as you guys know from the beginning of preseason, had a really nice preseason. He played as much as anybody. I think he led the NFL in tackles or something like that. What he’s done a nice job of is carving out a core-four role on special teams. I just feel like he’s really been an impactful player in that way. On defense, you’re able to see him go against a premium offense every day. You’re getting to see that level of athleticism against our offense every single day. This guy sees the game. He’s a gym rat. He’s long and there’s still so much development in his body. I think one year from now, his body is going to look a lot different. He’s working hard at his game and we really like coaching him. I would have no problem putting him in the game.”

**On DL Joe Gaziano:**

“We tried — because Joe was going to be up with his exemptions, we tried to get him up so that we wouldn’t lose him. We felt like we could get [DL] Eric [Banks] back later in the week by having that happen mid-week to late-week. Detroit was able to pick him up. I’m excited for Eric. I’m disappointed to lose him because I really like Eric Banks, but I was with [Lions Executive Vice President and General Manager] Brad Holmes at the Rams, and [Lions Defensive Backs/Passing Game Coordinator] Aubrey Pleasant. They’re very aware of what type of player he is. I think Detroit needed some defensive linemen. I’m disappointed to lose him because I have a lot of belief in him, but it’s obviously a great situation for him.”

**On coaching in Monday Night Football:**

“It’s a Monday night game. It’s exciting. I know that I’m excited to have it in our stadium. I’m really looking forward to seeing the Powder Blue in the stands. It was an awesome way to start the season and I’m just looking forward to competing in front of our fans. It’s a great measuring stick. Normally, when you’re playing on Monday night, you’re playing against a really good football team. This is a really good football team. They’re 3-0. I’m excited to compete in front of the world against a premium team to see where we are. I think it’s going to be exciting for everybody.”

**On the Raiders offense:**

“I think anytime you’re playing a passing attack that’s this prolific, they have a lot of targets. I think [Raiders WR Bryan] Edwards, the younger receiver, has been fantastic as well. I think that can kind of get lost in some of the production of their runners and their receivers — [Raiders TE] Darren [Waller], obviously. I think Edwards has been fantastic, too. They have [Raiders WRs] Zay Jones, Willie Snead [IV]. They’re just a very complete offense and they have a quarterback that allows them to operate at a high level. They can get in and out of plays, in and out of personnel groupings. They can really get into premium plays because of the experience of the quarterback. I think what makes them difficult to defend is that they can put these pieces in a lot of different places. They have a lot of different formations and a lot of different ways to get to those formations. They’re a very tough [team to] cover, particularly in the passing game. In the running game now that they’re getting their runner back and they’ve had more time with the new offensive linemen — they’ve always been a good running team with [Raiders Head Coach] Jon Gruden. They’ve always been able to play physical football. I think, now that they have their offensive line continuity with those new guys, I think they have a very complete offense.”

**On the environment on Monday night:**

“I expect an electric environment. I expect it to be like the first game where there’s electricity from the minute you get into the stadium. I expect to be able to see a ton of Powder Blue in that stadium. I’m excited to see them. It’s going to be fun to compete in front of them. This is a divisional game. I think it’s important to both sides, what’s happening on Monday night. I’m looking forward to it, for sure.”

**On his cancer journey in light of Monday's game being part of Crucial Catch Month:**

"I think the NFL does a lot of special things within the season, within the calendar year, to bring great awareness to really important topics. I think that this is one of those topics that impacts everybody regardless of your race, regardless of your gender, regardless of your age. Cancer is something that impacts everybody throughout the entire world. All of us have been touched by this topic in one shape or form. I wouldn't be the head coach of the Los Angeles Chargers if it weren't for my cancer journey. Cancer has been, if not the biggest, one of the biggest reasons why I'm here today. My mom had breast cancer. She had it for a long time. She had a stem cell transplant. Remission. Recurrence. Remission. Recurrence. I saw a lot as a young kid growing up, what chemotherapy and radiation, all of this treatment looks like and what it can do to you, your family and to others. My dad had thyroid cancer when I was young. He just finished prostate cancer treatment last spring. And I went through it. When I was 24, I had Hodgkin's Lymphoma. I've seen a lot. I've lived through a lot. I've met a lot of people that have gone through just as much or more than I have. I think what cancer does is that it can bring out the best in you. I know that it's brought the best out in me. I think, most of the time when you're going through a cancer journey, you need to know that you're not doing it by yourself. I think the reason why I'm here today is because I had great doctors, I had great nurses. I had [Dr.] Deb Wu in Beachwood, Ohio, taking care of me. I had my family, I had my friends, my faith. You can't do it by yourself. I learned that by watching my mom and my dad. I think the other thing is that you need to have belief in yourself. You need to see other examples of why you should believe that you can do it. I think hopefully, from me, they can see somebody that — I'm just a kid from Perry, Ohio. I was in Division III five years ago. You can live your dreams, you can do anything that you dream of if you believe in yourself. I think that so much of beating cancer is believing in yourself. A lot of times, it's knowing that there are other examples out there that show you that you should believe. I got to see it with my mom and dad. I was lucky that it was personal. My examples just happened to be within my family. I saw my mom. I saw my dad. I knew I could do it. Sometimes, that's just what you need, is knowing that you can do it. I'm so excited for the Crucial Catch Month. I think it's fantastic what the NFL does. I'm a proud representative of that."

**On the rushing attack:**

"I think when you do bring in new people and you're joining up with new people, it's the offensive line, it's the tight ends, the fullbacks and it's the receivers. The receivers are a big part of the run game, too, identifying who to block. I think, from a fundamental standpoint, this is how we do it here, this is how we target these runs, these are our landmarks. I think there's that feeling-out process that's real for whatever side of the ball that you're on. In the run game, this is who our personnel is, we really want to be this but, okay, this is who we are and this is what works best with the group that we have. And then, 'Hey, this is how we're going to attack the opponent,' because we're dealing with a lot of different front structures, coverage systems, personnel [groupings]. How do we, week-to-week, be who we want to be? I think we're learning that right now. I think that we've been able to take advantage of the experience of some of those older guys — [C] Corey [Linsley], [G] Oday [Aboushi], [G] Matt [Feiler]. Those guys have a lot of experience — [T] Bryan [Bulaga] and then even [TE] Jared Cook in the run game. Those guys have played a lot of ball. I think we're improving all the time. I think [Run Game Coordinator/Offensive Line Coach] Frank Smith, [Assistant Offensive Line Coach] Shaun Sarrett, [Running Backs Coach] Derrick Foster are doing a great job designing it. I think what we need to is just continue to feature those guys. Sometimes with the run game, you see the returns on that investment later in the game. I think you'll continue to see that the more we feature the running game in general."

**On Raiders Head Coach Jon Gruden:**

"I've met him once. I don't know him well. We both went to the same school, but I know a lot of people that have worked with him or worked for him. Frank Smith, our offensive line coach and our run game coordinator, worked with him. Even, [Offensive Coordinator] Joe Lombardi being in New Orleans, Jon has had such an impact on [Saints Head Coach] Sean Payton, [Saints Offensive Coordinator] Pete Carmichael and that entire group. Jon Gruden is one of the most influential people in the league. He's been around a lot of incredible football just from his entire time in the NFL as a position coach, head coach at multiple teams, on television. He's impacted a lot of people that are certainly in the NFL right now and in the front of the NFL. I have the utmost respect for him and his path. I think we've all probably learned a thing or two from him in some shape or form. I think what he's doing there now in Las Vegas is really getting that team where he wants it. It has taken some time, I think. They've obviously had a transition, too, moving to Las Vegas, but I think that you're seeing a team that's more representative of the type of football he believes in. I think that you're seeing a real complete team and have a ton of respect for him."

## **SPECIAL TEAMS COORDINATOR DERIUS SWINTON II**

### **On the impact the wind played last week against the Chiefs:**

“I was joking with [Chiefs Assistant Head Coach/Special Teams Coordinator] Dave Toub, their coordinator, before the game, and I said that if you were going to turn the A/C on, he should have let me know before we game. It was pretty brutal. I’ve been a part of a few of those games coaching with Chicago for two years. But, both teams had to play in it. They were dealing with it, we were dealing with it. It’s just managing that part. It’s an extra element. You just have to manage it. You saw on both sides, and in the kicking game, you just have to handle it. We handled it pretty well. Obviously, we want those two PATs back. But, it’s good to say that when you’re coming off of a win.”

### **On K Tristan Vizcaino’s missed PATs:**

“He missed the kicks. He missed them both. He just missed them. He knows it. The first one, he pulled it. The second one, he just missed it. He flat out said it. You get the wind like that, it’s one of those things where you moved in on the hash. It was nothing with the operation, everything was good. You watch one of our field goals and the ball literally, when it’s coming from the snapper to the holder, it almost takes off to another direction. But, we handled it. He’s hard on himself. He’s very honest. ‘I missed the kick.’ He has to make it. It’s good to go back and look at that. Hopefully, not every game has 20 mile per hour winds. You watch their guy, in the third quarter, his PAT barely went through and ended up outside of the net. That’s unheard of. You never see a guy, on a PAT, that if he doesn’t miss it that it goes outside of the net. He just pulled it on that one. Luckily, it didn’t hurt us much. It was brutal and he handled it. We just have to learn from it. He’s still a first-year. Learn those things in pregame. You would see, from play to play, that thing would change on you. Just learning from those things. Just flat-out missed it. Operation was good. I think that he would tell you the same thing.”

### **On P Ty Long:**

“The one he would want back, but the others — I think his net on the day was around 41 [yards per punt]. Really good on the last one; 53 yards with a 47-yard net. Good coverage there. He did what he was asked to do. Obviously, you want the one bad one back, but I think that he handled the wind. Same thing, when you watch both punters in pregame, then their guy went out there in the fourth quarter and checked the wind. It’s not so much the punt — everybody focuses on where the punt goes — it’s their drop. When the ball leaves their hand, the ball starts moving. Like everything, when the ball moves, can you get clean contact on that thing. That was the thing both guys tried to handle. What type of punt do I hit? The one that he hit off of the side of his foot, he was off balance. Handled it well. It’s good to be back at home in a covered stadium — I don’t want to call it a dome.”

### **On Vizcaino initially going onto the field for a field goal attempt, before returning to the sideline as the offense attempted a fourth-down conversion:**

“We went out to check the wind. The whole field goal team didn’t go out there. It was just, ‘Hey, you guys go check the wind and see what’s going to go on here. We’re going to have this conversation.’ Timeout was had. We said, ‘OK, this is the best decision.’ What are the percentages with 20-plus mile per hour winds at that distance and at that point in the game? Then, the second part is that you have number 15 [Chiefs QB Patrick Mahomes] over there. Number 15, you might want to get six versus three when he’s at home, with the crowd, all of those things. I think that we felt good about where the offense was. It was a conversation that wasn’t a long dialogue. We’re going to go out there and be ready. [Head] Coach [Brandon Staley] calls a timeout and you say, ‘Hey, this is the best thing, with all of the factors involved.’ We were talking through it the whole time. You always want to go out and check the wind. That’s what we did.”

### **On the factors that play into the decision:**

“Based off of pregame, based off of halftime warmups and based off of watching both kickers. I watch both of the guys to see where their line of demarcation is. Where does the ball just start moving on them? When they got past, I would say, a 40-yard field goal, that thing started moving, even when it was 15 miles per hour. That thing picked up over 20. When you get up there — and both of those guys kick a ball that has a high flight — you just saw it start moving on them. In your mind, you just guess. You start to think, ‘I just don’t think that the percentages of us getting this field goal, with the wind and where we’re going and all of that, would be higher than putting the ball in the hands of No. 10 [QB Justin Herbert].’”

**On the production of the special teams units:**

“We would all want some plays back, but if you look at it as a whole right now, we’re keeping them under the 25-yard line for drive starts, as far as kickoff. On kickoff return, you get one or two opportunities a game. We haven’t gotten many opportunities at kickoff return. The ones we’ve had, [RB] Larry [Rountree III] did a good job bringing it to the 25-yard line. On punt, we just had many opportunities, just not a lot. Coverage is good. With a guy that they had back there like [Chiefs WR Mecole] Hardman, you’re just hanging on by the seam of your pants. We did a great job. [OLB Chris] Rumph [II] made a great play. The location of the punt, the gunners did a great job. I think that you’re seeing guys evolve. On punt return, I think that [WR] KJ [Hill Jr.] — hat’s off to them, their punter and how he punted the ball, I think that both returners would tell you that that ball was just a perfect ball. I think that we’re improving in the areas where we get opportunities. I think, as the season along, the numbers will go up, then I think that we’ll get better and better. I think that it’s a little hard right now because — and it’s a good thing for us — we don’t punt a lot. It’s a good thing to be on a team that doesn’t punt a lot. I think that we’re getting better. I think that we’re just finding our way. Every week, you’re seeing a different guy make a play. I think that guys are finding themselves. That’s a good thing.”

**On if he visits different position groups during practice:**

“I’m watching almost everything. I try to walk to every group. From Wednesday to Thursday to Friday, I try to hit every group. Maybe don’t give the O-line too much love. They’re not running down and covering kicks. I just look to see who does what in their drills. I have to have that in the back of my mind. Where is this guy on the depth chart? What does he do? Is he improving in this area? How are his movement skills? Something might trigger me like, ‘Man, he does this in his drills and I’ve never thought about him doing this for us,’ one way or the other. I may have a guy that plays this on kickoff return, but he could do this because I see him in a drill. There’s limited time on special teams in practice. I walk around during individual, there are little things that you pick up. I try to just roam around throughout the week. I probably have it organized in my mind of who I want to see each day. I try to manage it that way just to get a feel for them and to get a feel of where the depth chart is. I’m watching team periods of who’s taking reps with the ones, who is doing this?”

**On LS Matt Overton:**

“He’s good. He’s a steady hand. He’s really, really steady. He’s a veteran who’s seen a lot of things. He’s gone against a lot of these coordinators that we’re going against, so he has a lot of experience and tutelage to talk to not only Ty [Long] and the specialists, but also [LB] Nick Niemann, who is his personal protector [on punt]. They have to have a relationship like a quarterback and center. They have conversations and sit by each other in meetings. He’s been really good. A steady hand. He’s been able to be a leader of that group. He’s seen a lot of things. He’s been around a lot of good specialists, too, so being able to have that knowledge, he’s been really steady for us, really strong in protection. It’s been good. He’s a guy we lean on. We just need to keep building with him. It’s been good.”

**On the situation that occurred with the Cardinals that involved a flag hitting the ball on a punt return:**

“I was talking to [Head] Coach [Brandon Staley] about that. The league has different rules. You try to plan for everything, but you kind of can’t plan for one of those things. I compare it to playing at Dallas and hitting the big board, they blow the play dead. I don’t think that the official, because he’s was throwing it — and he wasn’t trying to throw it at the ball. It just hits. Should you call that play dead? Yes. I don’t think that you should give a negative play if the Cardinals lost the ball. That’s just a tough thing to say. You can’t say, ‘Well, the flag is part of the field.’ Yeah, it is, but let’s be humans about this thing. This kid is going to field a punt and, all of a sudden, then whatever happens, like it does, you’re going to punish him for you making an error? It was interesting. That game had a lot of interesting things going on in it. You watch the games around the league and it’s just interesting. You see the Buffalo game where they kick it off and the returner comes up and it hits the ground, then the kickoff guy gets it and it goes through his hands, and then the kicker covers it up. It’s that time of the year, with the wind. You see the wind and things like that, but you’re not accounting or flying flags. You account for weather, just like in Buffalo. I did see it. I also saw the return by [Jaguars WR] Jamal Agnew. Obviously, the Cardinals’ [Assistant Head Coach/Special Teams Coordinator] Jeff Rodgers is one of my good friends. It’s one of those things that’s tough to see because I coached Agnew in Detroit, and then Jeff is my friend. I always talk to the players about how you’re going to get some people in life — you’re going to get some people in football — but you’re going to get got. They always laugh. You’re going to get got. It’s funny, when we were in Chicago, we got the Cardinals, in the preseason, on a kick-six. It’s just the league. If you’re in the league long enough, things are going to happen like that. It’s going to come back to you. Like I always say, it’s good to sit back and say, ‘They gave the play up, but they won.’ It’s good to look at it and say

that you won. I think the Jaguars would say that they don't want the kick-six if they lose the game. There are some interesting things going on around the league in the kicking game. It's just showing that our league is expanding and that more people are paying attention to the kicking game, which is a good thing."

**On if the field goal unit practices covering long field goals:**

"We do all of the time. Any time that we're over 50 yards, we're covering it. You just don't know. You just always want to practice it. Our field goal block return, we always have that up. Different weeks we have different returns off of it. You just don't practice it full-speed all of the time. I had [former 49ers T] Joe Staley at one point in San Francisco and he pulled a hamstring covering at full speed. You just can't do that all of the time to these guys. You just can't. The kid [Agnew] is a good player and he made a cut that wasn't even the return. If you watch that thing, he was supposed to hit it around the edge. He cut up the middle, everybody was filtering out where they were supposed to be, but when there are three guys that are 300 pounds and he's 180 pounds going 4.3 [40-yard-dash speed], it's kind of hard. It's a hard spot. They had some shots on him. It's hard. That's a hard down to win. Hopefully, we don't have to kick a 60-something-yarder this week. That'd be a good thing if we don't have to kick that thing. It's good."

**QUARTERBACK JUSTIN HERBERT**

**On LB Kenneth Murray Jr.'s injury:**

"I haven't seen anything yet. Prayers out to him. I hope it's nothing. I haven't seen anything yet. I haven't talked to anyone yet. We just walked off the field, so I haven't been able to talk to anyone about it."

**On facing former Chargers and current Raiders Defensive Coordinator Gus Bradley:**

"It's a weird situation with us. It's one of those things where we can look back on some of the training camp film from last year and do our best to study the things he does. He's an incredible coach. I got really close with him last year. Being able to spend time with him last year was really meaningful to me. He's done a really good job with those guys. They're playing really good football. They're really well-coached, really solid in their assignments, and they've got some really athletic guys. They're tough."

**On using 'silent count' against the Cowboys:**

"We're focused on the Raiders this week. You don't know what's going to happen, but you have to be ready for everything."

**On the expectation for Raiders fans being present at SoFi Stadium on Monday night:**

"If that's what happens, that's what happens. We have to be prepared for anything. We don't know what's going to happen, so we're going to go prepare for whatever might happen."

**On former Chargers and current Raiders CB Casey Hayward Jr.:**

"Casey has always been a tough guy to go against. Even in camp last year, when I got to go against him, he was really good at man coverage and zone coverage. He's been stepping up and making some big plays. I'm not surprised at all by that. He's always been a super smart, intelligent guy, who's really athletic, too. He fits perfectly in that scheme, and he's done a really good job."

**On his touchdown pass to WR Mike Williams in Week 3 and if he should've run the ball:**

"It's a tough situation because you look back at that, and you think about the 20-30 mile per hour gusts of wind. It didn't make it easy on our kicker. That's not an easy field goal. Our job there is to score. We could've done it. Differently, we could've handed the ball off, gone down and tried to set up a game-winning field goal. In retrospect, we probably could have. But to get the points on the board, to score, was important. To give our defense the shot to close the game out. Because I think they'd been playing really well all game. That's something we have to learn and have to keep moving forward with."

**On the dynamics of scoring late in the game:**

"Those are situations that you have to be prepared for. We talked about that in the meeting this morning -- going down and being prepared for running out the clock. Being the team with the ball to end the game. You can never give the ball back to [Chiefs QB] Patrick Mahomes like that. It's a tough situation, but it's something we have to learn, we have to keep discussing; so, when that does happen again, we'll be ready for it."

**On the illegal shift penalties:**

“We have to get up on the ball quicker, we have to get aligned quicker. If we have motions, we have to take them off. If the ball is made ready for play at 15 seconds, we have to get rid of those motions. We have to get everyone up on the ball, make sure everyone’s set. That’s just something that we as an offense need to keep working on together. We’re all new together, we’ve been working together for a couple months or so now. We just have to keep getting better.”

**On rushing to the line when the clock is expiring:**

“You have to be aware of the play clock. When it’s low, you don’t have time to motion people across, you have to get everyone set. Sometimes that ruins the play. Sometimes we practice the play all week, having these motions and putting our team in a position to win. Sometimes when the clock’s low, we get the play in late. You have to react; you have to make something happen.”

**On practicing late-clock plays with officials at practice:**

“That’s been something we’ve done every day, especially with the offensive line, the receivers, and everyone together. Having the officials here is huge for us, too.”

**On Raiders DEs Maxx Crosby and Yannick Ngakoue:**

“They’re two incredible players, two guys that are really able to rush the passer. They’ve done a great job disrupting the quarterback. Those front seven are pretty impressive, as well. You hit some of those safeties. They’re a tough defense. They’re really well-coached. Coach [Raiders Defensive Coordinator Gus] Bradley has a great feel for the game. When you get two ends like that playing, you know you can do a lot of things. It changes the way the offense has to play. We have to have a solid protection plan going into the game so that we have a chance to win on Monday.”