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Chargers Week 18 Media Availability

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OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR JOE LOMBARDI

On what has led to the development of the run game over the second half of the season:

"I think familiarity with the system and just staying with it. Like we said earlier, reps and time-on-task. That part of the game is very important. I think as the season goes on and the O-linemen work together more, and the running backs get a little more work, it all kind of comes into play that way. A number of factors, but I think [Run Game Coordinator/Offensive Line Coach] Frank Smith, [Assistant Offensive Line Coach] Shaun Sarrett, [Tight Ends Coach] Kevin Koger and [Running Backs Coach] Derrick Foster, those guys that head that up, they do a great job. It's been good to have in this part of the season."

On the offensive line's performance last week:

"Those guys did a great job. They came ready to play and kept [QB] Justin [Herbert] clean. When that happens, I think, usually, good things happen for us. A great job by the guys up front."

On if Herbert 'rises up' in primetime games:

"I think some guys kind of get a little bit extra juice or adrenaline going for when they know that all eyes are on them. Justin [Herbert] feels like he's pretty consistent. Every game day, he's kind of got that killer instinct going. I don't know if it's just coincidence or if that's going play out over the long haul, but I feel like he plays pretty well every week. Sometimes, with stats, you could play a perfect game and your stats may not be as gaudy as some other weeks, but, hopefully, that trend continues this week."

On preparing to play at Allegiant Stadium with fans:

"I think it'll be loud. The Raiders fans are famous for that. They certainly were loud here when we played earlier in the season. I figure it'll be louder. But, we've gotten a lot of work with the silent cadence, so I think that we'll be ready for it."

On crowd noise:

"I think it's most challenging for the tight ends and tackles, they're a little bit further out, tight ends especially. Peeking in and getting the indicators of when the ball is getting snapped, they usually have the hardest time with it. You just have to be careful with how much you're asking for precise snap points with motions and whatnot, because the guys on the move can't hear, so they're going to have to get their heads back in and see the ball. Those are your biggest challenges."

On the tight end group's performance last week:

"I think they did outstanding. [TE] Tre' [McKitty] has really come on as the season has worn on and become a very trustworthy blocker. He's able to take over some of the role that we counted on [TE] Donald [Parham Jr.] earlier in the season. [TE] Stephen [Anderson], we've talked about him a number of times, just how reliable he is and kind of a utility player. Certainly, we missed [TE] Jared [Cook], but we were able to make our adjustments and figure it out as we went. I can't say enough about the position coaches when those things happen. [Tight Ends Coach] Kevin Koger handled it, as Jared [Cook] went out late, and we were able to make those adjustments. It was good."

On the managing 'the shuffling' of the offensive line:

"It's a group effort. I think the players themselves have done a great job of adjusting when their roles have changed, especially when it happens late in the week, which can be challenging. We talked about the assistant coaches making sure that their guys are able to fill a number of roles. It's just part of football. I think this year has been a little bit more than normal, with some of the COVID[-19] stuff. You're always adjusting to injuries and surprises, personnel-wise. It's kind of part of the gig, but you're right, it's been a little bit more focused this year with all of the COVID[-19] absences."

On the Raiders' defense::

"The first thing that jumps out on the film is their pass rush. Their defensive ends are tough the block and they consistently get a pass rush, and they get it there quickly. That's a huge challenge. They're tough in the run game, as well. They're so active and high-effort guys. They're strong inside. The scheme itself is a simple one, but those guys really, especially as this season has gone on — early in the year, you could tell that they were still learning all the nuances — you can see, as the year has gone on, they're getting more comfortable. They're playing faster. With any coach's first year, as the guys learn the system a little bit more, they tend to play it a little bit better and a little tighter. They've definitely been playing well."

On 'if it is different preparing for a heavy Cover 3 scheme':

"It's different in some ways. When we were in New Orleans, Atlanta played it. It feels like I've been staring at this style of defense for eight years, nine years now. You're always watching and trying to find the weakness that you can easily exploit, but it's a very sound system, so they have it kind of tightened up to where it's not easy to get 30, 40-yard gains on them, 20-yard gains. It's a defense that tries to force you to stay patient. We talked about it last week a little bit with Denver, you just have to be very efficient when you go against a team like this. It doesn't mean that you won't have big, explosive plays, but if you chase them too hard, you can get behind the sticks, so don't be afraid to check the ball down and take what the defense is giving you."

On Herbert 'improving as a decision-maker' this season:

"It's a number of things. I think we talked about it earlier; he still is such a young quarterback, as far as experience is concerned. With having so many different offenses to learn every year, going back to college, you spend a lot of your time thinking about offense and learning what you're doing versus studying defense. As that experience comes, you can just feel him growing every week, knowing what the defense is doing and just understanding how our play is matching up against the defense that we're facing and where to go with the football. Again, I can't say enough for the work that [Passing Game Coordinator/Quarterbacks Coach] Shane Day does with him and how hard he works every single week. I think he can see that it's paying dividends."

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR RENALDO HILL

On Raiders QB Derek Carr's progression this season:

"He's just poised. He's been in this system for a number of years now. You can see that he has complete control of it. He knows where to go with the ball, makes quick decisions. If something happens, he doesn't get flustered, just responds the way a QB is supposed to. That's what you're seeing from him."

On if the defense is preparing for Raiders TE Darren Waller to play this week:

"You have to prepare for both. They've been moving the ball and doing things well without him, but we know how impactful they are with him, so we have to make sure that we're prepared for both, whether he plays or doesn't play."

On Raiders WR Hunter Renfrow's connection with Carr:

"They definitely have a connection. He does a good job of being able to separate. He's a multi-cut route-runner, so if you have him covered on the first move, his second and third act is where he separates. We have to do a good job of staying connected to this guy at all times. Even when we think that we have him covered, we have to stay complete until the play is over because he will separate, and those second and third acts, he makes a lot of hay there."

On allowing explosive plays last week against the Broncos:

"The biggest thing when I saw those explosives was that we were in position. Our goal is to come down with the ball. I think that our guys know the urgency of it and we have to keep emphasizing it this week because we know that those opportunities are going to go up with Carr and his receiving corps. We have to do a good job of challenging the ball at the point."

On what he has learned through working with OLB Joey Bosa:

"Continue to try to put him in positions where he can use his skill set. Obviously, I think we made it a goal to make sure that we're getting him to his rush opportunities. I think that's the biggest thing that you have to focus on because if you put him in position, he's going to make plays. That was the biggest thing; just not try to really think so far out of the box where we are taking Joey out from being Joey. Just putting them in positions where he can be effective and letting them ride because we know that good things will happen."

On if he has 'dropped Bosa into coverage more or less than he thought that he would at the beginning of the season':

"I think it's right about at the point where we wanted it to be. Not taking him too far away from the rush, but giving a change-up here and there. I think that we've done that, but he's more effective when he is attacking and going to get the quarterback."

On S Derwin James Jr. and the impact that having 'their full secondary' available last week had on James:

"[Head Coach Brandon] Staley mentioned it last week; when we played Washington and in those early games, we were able to move him around and put him in different spots, but when you get those injury bugs hitting, you want to put guys in roles where they feel a little bit more consistent in their play or where they've had more reps at throughout the practice. He's done a ton for us, as far as playing all of those spots, but when you have other guys, and you want those guys to play at a high level, that's where we kind of took the back seat and made Derwin play more in the back end. Having those guys available, and knowing that those guys can play at different spots — when you have [CB] Chris [Harris Jr.] and Derwin as interchangeable — I think that it helps you move the pieces around throughout the game. I think that is kind of where we are at now. When we had those injury bugs, it kind of made us a little bit more stagnant with where we have guys aligned."

On having the full secondary available to 'implement the defense that they really wanted':

"It definitely gives you options. That's the biggest thing; giving these guys options, knowing that we can go into the game with a few different ways of how we're going to win this ball game. That definitely helps us and we're glad that we're healthy at the right time."

On 'physicality, energy, intensity and focus in the run game':

"I think that's the biggest thing is, the energy and intensity. Things are going to happen, guys may be out of place in a fit. They have talented guys over there. They can shove and nudge and get us out of position, but we have to have 11 guys hunting at all times. A lot of times that solves a lot of problems. We can go up on the board and diagram a whole lot of things, but if you're not playing with the energy and intensity that this game is going to present, you have no chance. That's really the message. We're going to be sound in everything that we're coaching, as coaches — and the players, we're going to be telling them to do the same thing — but we have to play with energy and intensity throughout this game. We have to minimize things when they're out of place and give ourselves a chance by getting to the ball."

On if utilizing QB Marcus Mariota is something that the Raiders 'might go to':

"Definitely. They needed that win last week to have a shot to get into the playoffs. We know that's something that they're definitely going to have ready for us. We have to be ready. We can't not have anything that we haven't covered with our guys. We have to make sure that we're on top of it all. That's something that I can definitely see those guys expressing."

On the challenge of facing a second quarterback at any time:

"I think it's just the preparation. It's the preparation of seeing one guy and anticipating that that guy is going to be there for the whole game. When you don't get that, it can throw a little curveball at you. We have to prepare for those things. We have to get those looks in practice with someone of his skillset. We have to have Carr in mind, as well. I think that you just have to have both of those guys in mind when you prepare, but you have to take a portion out of practice and make sure that you're ready to roll for those situations that may occur."

On which Chargers player 'is playing the Mariota role in practice':

"We have a few different guys. I don't really want to reveal that [*laughter*]. We're just going to keep having those guys give us the looks that we need."

On LB Nick Niemann's performance last week:

"I thought, along with Nick, [LB] Amen [Ogbongbemiga] did a good job, too. We knew that we were going to need both of those guys throughout the game. The one thing that you see with both of those guys is that they're poised. They're not too big for the moment. They know their assignments. They play hard and physical. The one thing that you do like about Nick is that he has really good length. He can erase a lot of plays with just reaching an arm out and getting ahold of the ball-carrier. Along with that, just the poise that those young guys played with was really good to see."

On 'who else they have to worry about' on the Raiders' offense outside of Waller and Renfrow:

"Definitely [Raiders WR] Zay Jones. He's a guy that really came on for those guys when Waller was down. You knew that he was capable of that. I saw him a ton over when he was at Buffalo. When he gets the go-ahead, he really expresses to the NFL that he still can get it done. You can see it on the film, whether he is blocking or in the pass routes, that he's a guy that's always doing things the right way. You can tell that [Derek] Carr trusts him. When he got his opportunity, he made it happen. We have to be prepared for him, as well as all of the other threats that they have. They're really loaded at the receiver position with [Raiders WR DeSean] Jackson and [Raiders WR] Bryan Edwards — all of those guys have something that they bring to the table. We have to be ready for those guys; it's a good group. I really like how Zay Jones has come on for those guys."

OUTSIDE LINEBACKER JOEY BOSA

On the team approaches Sunday like another game:

"I mean, yeah, I guess there's a little bit of that, but I think all know what's at stake here on both sides. It's a huge game. These are the kinds of games that you wish you were playing this time of year — and we are this year. It's just a great opportunity for both sides. I think we all grasp that, for sure. I think all of the coaches have a really great sense of urgency along with everybody this week. We definitely understand what's at stake."

On the health of the team:

"We're getting a lot of guys back from the COVID list, obviously and some injuries — [S] Derwin [James Jr.]. It's tough when we have him out, but getting all of the secondary guys back and [hopefully OLB] Kyle [Fackrell] back this week is going to be huge. I think we're trending in the right direction at the right time. It's not really about peaking in the beginning of the season, it's a good time to all get healthy and all come together at this time of the year."

On what was said between him and Broncos QB Drew Lock:

"I mean, it wasn't malicious or anything. He just looked at me and said, 'He's tired. He's tired.' Which, I mean, I was extremely tired. It was a good point because I was standing there like this [with my hands on my hips]. When he said that, I got in a three-point stance and I said, 'Run it at me, then. Come on, run it at me.' Then, somehow, they ran it right at me and I got a TFL. Then, I was like, 'Who's tired?' As I ran off the field and needed a break. I was pretty tired, but it worked out. It worked out well."

On if trash talk is motivating:

"I mean, it's fun. It's nothing that I can force, which is why you don't really see it happen just all the time. When we get going and we're playing good ball on both sides of the field and making plays out there, it's just fun. Both sides are going at each other. It's a competition. You don't want to, obviously, say anything that's too offensive or mean, but it's fun chirping back-and-forth. We've all kind of grown up — I mean, me and my brother [49ers DL Nick Bosa] going at each other. It's fun competition, for sure."

On Raiders QB Derek Carr:

"I'm a fan of him. I think we get along. I was just pointing out something that I noticed — when he gets pressure, he seems to shut down a little bit. It seems like a lot of quarterbacks do that with pressure in their face. He's one of the top passers in the league. I think he's a really good guy. I have nothing against him and don't disrespect him like that, but I was just pointing something out that you could easily look up and see. He's a great competitor. We're always good to each other. I wouldn't really like somebody that plants their shoulder into me for a living, so I don't see how he would really like me. I wouldn't if I was him, but I think we both have respect for each other and we always like competing against each other. I definitely didn't mean anything disrespectful by that and definitely wasn't poking fun at him or anything."

On facing the Raiders:

"I mean, it's always a big game when we're playing in the division. It's hard to rank one over the other. This week, it's definitely the Raiders — they're our No. 1 rival. Maybe we'll get another chance at another team in our division later on this year if we can come together and pull it out this week."

On his emotions leading into Sunday:

"I think, Sunday night and day, the energy is definitely going to be flowing a bit. I mean, the stakes are high. The nerves are always there. Obviously, going out it matters to me how I play and there are a lot of variables that go into the game that you can't always control, so there's a lot of that going on. I'm just going to try to approach it like I have all this year. I think I've been doing a good job of just staying level with things and not getting too high or too low whether I make a play or mess up here or there. I'm just going to try to attack this like I have all year and play with a lot of energy and passion — like I've been able to for a good amount of the games this year. I'm not going to say every single one, but I'm going to just try to go into it with the same mindset as I have been this year."

On feeling fatigued against Denver:

"I definitely wasn't in the best shape ever. I did play 51 plays after not doing anything physical for 14 days. I think for what I did, it worked out pretty well. We only had three EDGE players — literally, one guy rotating in. It was a tough game, but I wasn't in the best shape ever. I'm getting my breathing back and all of that. It really wasn't too bad."

On his experience with COVID-19:

"It really didn't affect me too bad. I had some cold symptoms for a couple of days, but luckily, just a little bit of congestion. I felt okay. I just wanted to make sure I stayed home, rested and took care of myself."

On his season:

"I'd say, like a lot of years, I'm happy with it, but I think, obviously, there's a lot of room for improvement. Thinking about the offseason I had, it wasn't the most productive for me. It was a tough year for me. To make it this far and be productive and still be healthy — playing hard, working hard at this point of the season, I'm honestly really proud of what I've accomplished this year. It's not the best thing I've ever put on tape all-around, but I think I've had some really, really good games and rushed really well. It's obviously been a [career]-high with the strips, which was a big point of emphasis for me. I think I'm doing well. I've left some plays out there, but with where I came from this offseason, without going into too many details, I'm pretty proud of where I am, definitely. I think, like the rest of the team, getting healthy. I'm still trending in the right direction."

On fitting into the defensive scheme:

"It's obviously an adjustment, but it's just second nature at this point. I know all of the checks. I know all of the calls. It's something that's kind of easy at this point. [Dropping into coverage] is not something that I'm not doing too many times per game. I think last game I did it one time, which is plenty for me. It's fun every once in a while. I've had some fun doing it, especially when you get on a little guy or something and you cover them up. I prefer going forward."

On his health at the end of the season:

"Yeah, I mean if not for maybe my rookie year or a couple of years early on, I definitely trended this season. I'm feeling better probably than I did probably at any time this offseason, honestly. Like I said, the fact that I'm here and feeling good, still working out hard, training hard and doing all of the things that I need to at this point of the year — I'm really happy with it, for sure."

On the strip sacks:

"It's just something you work as a defensive lineman all the time, every drill. After you finish, you reach your hand down. It's something, I mean, it takes time for that muscle memory to get there. For me, getting sacks, I guess earlier on in my career, I was too nervous to let the guy go, so I'd just wrap them up and try to get them down and forget going for the ball. Now, I think more than anything, it's just a mindset — always thinking about it. It's how you really change the game, if you're able to get those turnovers."

On receiving this year's PFWA's Good Guy Award:

"Thanks, I'll take it. Thank you. I want to thank my parents. It's cool. I'm happy people have that opinion of me, thank you. At least I'm nice to you guys."