

## Chargers Week 17 Media Availability

Wednesday, December 27, 2023 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

### INTERIM HEAD COACH GIFF SMITH

#### **On an injury update regarding WR Joshua Palmer:**

"He reported Sunday after the game with some symptoms, so he is in the concussion protocol right now."

#### **On if he 'expects' Palmer to play on Sunday:**

"It's just day-by-day. The NFL has a protocol that goes day-by-day. That's kind of where we're at right now."

#### **On the Broncos' quarterback situation and 'if that changes anything':**

"Their strength is their offensive line and running game. Obviously, [Broncos QB] Russell [Wilson] is a great player. I'm sure they did what they thought was right. We'll prepare for whoever goes out there, even if they switch it back. We'll have a gameplan for all the quarterbacks."

#### **On an injury update regarding WR Keenan Allen:**

"Keenan [Allen] is working hard. I wish I could give you more information. Just like [DB] Deane Leonard, they're just working right now. He's trying everything he can to get back. We'll just see how it goes, day-by-day."

#### **On an update regarding OLB Joey Bosa:**

"Joey [Bosa] was able to work into practice today. He got some team reps, too. We'll see how he recovers tomorrow and go from there."

#### **On 'what it says about players wanting to come back and play this season':**

"I think it's the character of the individual that you're seeing, and the way that the organizations has brought the right guys in here. They want to get out there and compete and they want to play for their brother. That's a credit to the Chargers organization."

#### **On what he can 'be better at' entering his second game as Interim Head Coach:**

"There are a number of things. The first series, I'd like to switch to the offense [on the headset] before the second play. I learned on that one. There are a number of things and situations that we talked about. I think I can do a better job of helping the offense and defense in certain stuff. Overall, I thought it was a good first game. The guys played hard. Just like a player, I'm no different, you have to judge yourself first and get better, the things that you think you were weak at."

#### **On if he 'second-guessed himself' in electing to kick a field goal on the offense's opening possession:**

"At the time, and in discussion with the offensive coaches, it was such a great drive, we felt like we needed to get points on the board. Especially with the way we've been operating, they needed something positive out of that. So, no, I do not look back and regret that one."

**On 'the most difficult about being the head coach' last Sunday:**

"Really nothing during the game. I've been in the business a long time, so on game day, nothing. I think during the week is the challenge that you have never been through. But, on game day, all three coordinators did such a great job, so you just manage the game for them. I was comfortable in that aspect."

## **QUARTERBACK EASTON STICK**

### **On 'the focus for the last two games':**

"Just trying to win. I've said it before, you put everything into this game. When you do that, obviously, there's a ton of pride. This matters to a lot of people — not just in this building, but especially in this building, it matters a lot. We're going out there to get better on the field here and go out on Sunday to win."

### **On if last week's loss was 'especially frustrating with how close the game was':**

"It's always frustrating. Especially that one, like you said, we had a bunch of opportunities on offense, and really didn't take advantage. The defense played really well. Special teams forced a turnover. We weren't able to put the ball in the end zone enough. Definitely frustrating."

### **On 'bouncing back and scoring points against the Bills' following the performance against the Raiders:**

"I said it against the Raiders, too — when you go back and watch the tape, it's never as bad as you think and it's never as good [as you think]. There were plenty of good things that we did. For us, it's just little things. We had some procedure issues, obviously, that hurt us with penalties, I held on to the ball a few times. Put [K] Cam [Dicker] in really tough spots, and he came up huge and made some kicks. It's just little stuff that we have to clean up."

### **On the first game with Interim Head Coach Giff Smith:**

"It was a lot of fun. We love Giff [Smith]. He's put a lot into this place and has great relationships with the guys in our locker room. You can tell it matters to him. Like I said, it matters to us. It was a lot of fun. I thought he did a great job, laid out a plan. Unfortunately, we were just a little short."

### **On his 'growth' since playing the Broncos in his season debut three weeks ago:**

"I think you get better every single rep you take. That's the goal, at least. I've really enjoyed being in the huddle with the guys, communicating, getting lined up and going to play. It's been a lot of fun. I think we've gotten better over the last two weeks. We'll just try to clean up some little things and hopefully go play really well on Sunday."

### **On if he has 'thought at all about beyond this season' and if it has 'sunk in that these may be the last games playing for the Chargers':**

"No. It really hasn't. You put everything into the week. Like I said, there's a lot going on. Just trying to play really good football and doing it for everybody in that locker room, that's what is important. Everybody has a situation like that, right? Everybody's playing for something. Everybody's contract is different. I'm just trying to go out there and play really good football for Giff [Smith], for the organization and for the guys in the locker room."

### **On if his teammates are 'playing for' him:**

"We're definitely playing for each other, for sure. I think you saw that on Saturday night. I really do. I think the guys played hard and guys rallied. We played like a team. That's important, it really is, and it was a lot of fun. It was a great atmosphere. The guys played hard. When you go back and watch the tape, that's the thing you appreciate a bunch, is how hard guys played. For us, it's just little things, but guys are definitely playing hard."

### **On if he 'wanted to see' Dicker 'get his sixth field goal':**

"Of course. If that would've won it, absolutely. He was incredible. To hit five big ones like that, and some long ones — like I said, we backed him up a few times. He was awesome."

### **On the Broncos' defense:**

"It's a tough group. It's just really well connected, from the front all the way through the secondary. They have good players at every level. You can tell that they communicate really well. They're on the same page. There's just not a lot of space, not a lot of air, when you watch the tape and the routes and things like that. They're physical. They have guys that can rush. Their linebackers play fast and downhill and are really physical. With [Broncos CB Patrick] Surtain [II] and with [Broncos S Justin] Simmons on the back end, it's a really good group."

**On the weather outlook for Sunday 'not looking like a North Dakota type of game':**

"[*Laughter*] It looks like it's going to be pretty nice. We'll take what we can get, for sure."

## **SAFETY DERWIN JAMES JR.**

### **On his playing time last week:**

"I trust in the process. It was part of the gameplan. They wanted to get me reps at Star. We were doing a lot of substitutions and stuff. We made a mistake, I was supposed to be in the game, but like I said, it's part of it."

### **On the arrangement of substitutions on the drive that he did not play his 'normal amount':**

"We were substituting, me and [CB Essang] Bassey. He was in, and I was supposed to come back in, but I didn't get a chance to go back out there. On that drive, I wasn't in to start the drive, like two or three plays. Until the beginning of that last drive, I wasn't in. It wasn't just the third-and-eight, I wasn't in to start the drive."

### **On the substitutions and distribution of reps:**

"Just part of the gameplan. They wanted to play me at Star. I've been getting a lot of routes deep and stuff. Like I said, we were rotating, getting a lot of guys in. It was part of the gameplan."

### **On if that specific arrangement of substitutions will 'be the same the rest of the season':**

"Probably not. I'm not sure, but probably not."

### **On playing Star and the Bills' final offensive drive:**

"I was the starting Star coming into the game. That was the package, to get me close to the line [of scrimmage]. That final drive, I wasn't in to start the last drive. It's part of the game."

### **On 'playing closer to the line of scrimmage':**

"I definitely felt good playing closer to the line [of scrimmage]. It felt good being down there, where I show different looks — play man [coverage], blitz. It was good being down there."

### **On the Broncos' move to start QB Jarrett Stidham:**

"It doesn't change our mindset, going forward. With the guys that we have on defense, we have to come out and make it about us. I feel like if we come out, compete and play our brand of ball, that we know we can play, I feel like we'll like what we see."

### **On Interim Head Coach Giff Smith's first game in the role:**

"I like Giff [Smith] out there. He had a lot of confidence. We were ready to play. He's a great leader. Expectations are high when he's out there."

### **On Smith's demeanor:**

"Straight-forward. He's not trying to be one way or be your friend, he's straightforward with who he is. I think that a lot of guys gravitate toward that."

### **On only two games remaining:**

"Definitely frustrating. This is not the way that we wanted this season to go. To lose six, seven games, whatever it is, by two or three points, definitely not the way that we wanted the season to go. These last two games, we have a chance to close it out how we want to and get the feeling that we know that we can have around here."

### **On if the team 'has something to prove':**

"I feel like any time that you suit up in the NFL, I know that for sure — for me, I feel like I always have something to prove. I feel like there are a lot of people that play this game that wish that they could. Just to be in a position to play the game as a professional, that's something to prove itself."