

TRANSCRIPTS

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Chargers Media Availability

Monday, December 12, 2022 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

On OLB Joey Bosa's 'timeline of return':

"The same comment as last night. I think the individual workout is going better. In terms of opening up that window, that's still kind of in motion. We're working through that. He looks good. It was good to have him on the sideline last night."

On if Bosa could 'return to practice at some point this week':

"I think anything is possible, but we'll let you know as soon as that window opens and make sure that's communicated to you guys before practice."

On the defensive disguises:

"As you know, that's a big tenet of how we play, is that post-snap rotation. That's something that we kind of feel like is a hallmark of the way we play. What we try to do is coordinate the disguise so that it's believable. We want you to feel like it's one thing and then it becomes another thing after the snap. There's a lot of quarterbacks and a lot of great coaches — [Dolphins Head Coach] Mike [McDaniel] is one of them — that can kind of sense that it's a false disguise. We just wanted to make sure that we were well-coordinated in the things that we were disguising last night and buy ourselves a count post-snap because they're such a big play-action team. Our safeties, our linebackers and Ja'Sir Taylor, they did a really nice job yesterday."

On the amount of man coverage that was played last night:

"Good question. If we play a pattern-match coverage, that's a zone in a breakdown for you. It's quantified as a zone, but it's going to play like man-to-man a lot. It may not play like man everywhere in the coverage, but it's going to play like man in a lot of the coverage. When I was with the Rams, [pundits] were like, 'Oh, they're a heavy zone team,' or whatever, but we're a pattern-match zone team. It doesn't play like zone where you're just dropping to a spot and there's a bunch of air in the covers. We don't play that way. Our goal was to be close to them, whether we were in pattern-match zone or man-to-man. We played a healthy amount of both last night and I think that the tape will reflect that when you watch it. I don't know the exact numbers right now, but I think what you'll see is a healthy amount of both of what I'm talking about. We certainly did not want them running through areas. That's when I feel like they become just really, really tough to cover."

On utilizing play-action on offense:

"Definitely is more the way we want to play. Just, I think you've seen this at our best, certainly. Whether it's this year when we've been relatively healthy or last year. It's a great way to affect the defense, to protect your quarterback and to be able to get the explosions. Any time we can live in that world, whether it's quarterback under or quarterback gun, that's what we want to do. We want to challenge the end of the defense. We want to change the launch point. We think [QB] Justin [Herbert] throws really well on the move. We were able to hit quite a few things last night, whether it was the keeper game, play [action] pass, checkdown off play [action] pass, screen off play [action] pass. We want to continue to be multiple that way. I think having [WR] Mike [Williams] back certainly does a lot for us, and [C] Corey [Linsley] because he's such an effective part of the running game. Trying to marry the run and the pass as best we can."

On DB Ja'Sir Taylor:

"I'm really proud of Ja. I'm not surprised because he's done an outstanding job on special teams all season long. He has a lot of the characteristics that we value in the secondary. That's why we drafted him. We did a lot of legwork on him pre-draft. I think he's exceeded everyone's expectations, for a rookie. I think, probably, his best characteristic is his make-up. He's poised, very competitive, really smart and an instinctive player. Normally, that's a pretty special combination. He kind of has the DB characteristics that you look for, in terms of being able to be a versatile player — corner, star, safety, money. He could probably do all of that. He's a good special teams player. I thought you saw him blitz last night, tackle, zone coverage, man coverage. He just has a lot of good stuff about him. Playing against those two receivers is a pretty good barometer of what type of player you are because those two guys are really good. I thought that Ja was definitely one of the reasons we won the football game."

On the run defense:

"I think outside of — they had like 28 yards off scrambles. I felt like we did a good job on it. I thought there was good knock-back. Our edges were good. I thought we tackled well, which was probably an underrated story last night. I thought we tackled well, especially in the secondary. Then, our D-Line was really active last night. I thought we had good penetration. I thought our EDGE players made a lot of good plays. [LB] Kyle Van Noy, [OLB] Khalil [Mack] and [OLB] Chris [Rumph II] made kind of splash plays on the edge. Inside, I thought [DL Breiden] Brei [Fehoko] and [DL Joe Gaziano] Joe G., I think [DL] Morgan [Fox] — those guys were all stout in there. [DL] Chris Hinton and [DL] Tyeler [Davison]. They were stout. I thought [LB Kenneth] Murray [Jr.] and [LB Drue] Tranquill were seeing the game pretty well behind the ball."

On OLB Khalil Mack moving around the defense:

"We're trying to create matchups as best we can and move him around. We know the attention that he's going to command and try to manipulate the protection as much as we can so he can get as many clean looks as possible. I thought he had really good pressure last night. He kind of got this close on a couple but was very effective in that role. The sacks are going to come for him. Two weeks in a row — I thought even in the Vegas game, moving him around, I thought he was effective. We'll continue to do that as much as we can."

On recovering the late fumbled snap:

"The football Gods, you just never know what they're thinking, guys, when that ball is on the ground. It's not a basketball, where you can predict where it's going to go. Certainly, we saw both sides of things last night. The fumbled snap, Justin [Herbert] was able to get right on it, which we're excited that we didn't kick it or something. Obviously, the onside kick at the end, that has a personality of its own, that play. I just think hustle has a lot to do with, I would say, changing your fortunes. I think hustle has a way of evening the math out. That's something that we preach in our program. I think we'll learn a lesson on the [Dolphins WR] Tyreek [Hill] play. We'll also learn a lesson on the onside kick play because hustle — [LB] Nick's [Niemann] hustle, ultimately, won us the game at the end."

On T Rashawn Slater:

"There is a potential for him to return. I do think that we're weeks out, but he's rehabilitating in our facility and doing well. That timeline certainly — I know you guys are compelled to continually ask about these players. His timeline is definitely the same as [OLB] Joey Bosa. I want to make that very clear so that, perhaps, we can conserve some of that. I think there is definitely a chance — I'm a pretty optimistic person, just in general. He's given me pretty good reason to be optimistic. He's healing well. I would expect that if Rashawn could do it, he will."

On if Slater could return 'in the regular season':

"Yes. What I would say is that it's not impossible. It has not been communicated to me that it's impossible. That's all I can say. He's doing well. What I'm saying to you is that he's doing well."

On QB Justin Herbert's celebration after the victory:

"I'm not going to interpret what Justin is feeling. I'm going to let him interpret his feelings for you guys and I'm sure that will be a fun process. I would tell you that our team played a very hungry game last night. I thought there was a lot of energy that we used in all three phases. I think starting with Justin and how he played in the game — not just the passing and play-making, but I'm just talking about affecting his teammates in a positive way. I think our team comes alive when he plays that way. I think you guys have seen it before. I think he's battled this entire season and has shown the toughness. The highest level of toughness that you could want from a quarterback. You get a couple of weapons back and he's able to really go play his game, and he goes and plays that type of way in primetime — everyone is going to feed off that energy. I think he can sense that, too, when he plays with that energy how he's having that effect on people. I'm going to let him speak for himself in terms of all the other stuff, but I know what he did a great job of last night was affecting his teammates beyond the performance. You guys were all at [the game], but I just think the other part of it was as important for us as anything. We go out there in two-minute at the end of the game and he's down there with the defense before we take the field. Just those little things, I thought were really big in the game."

On evaluating Herbert in comparison to Tagovailoa:

"I've commented on it many times; I measure Justin [Herbert] against one person and one person only, and that's himself. That's the only person that I can think of that I would ever want to compare him to. He played a good game last night. He can play better than he did last night — just so you guys know, he can play better than that — and I believe that he will play better than that. He played really hard last night and made a lot of big plays and played with a lot of confidence. He made some throws that are signature and made a bunch of signature scrambles. He hung tough, like he always does. What you want, more than anything, is you want your best players — when it's the most competitive type of situation — you want your guys to rise to the occasion, but he has proven that his entire career, so I don't know if anything last night was a statement or anything because he has played like that. Whenever the challenge has been the biggest, I've always felt like he has risen to that occasion. He had a great chance last night in front of the world to have a signature performance, and that's what he did."

On if he is involved with the offense's red zone plans:

"It's definitely a team operation. I'm definitely involved. I deserve as much criticism as anybody. We need to score the ball better down there. Last year, we were a top-five unit in the red area and I was jacked about that. It's something that's very core to me, how we play in the red zone. This year, on defense, we're playing fantastic down there. I think that we can play even better. We're close to being in the top-five. Offensively it's been up and down. I think it's that for a lot of reasons, as you all know, but we have to have cleaner operation. Starting with operation, it's no penalties. You can't be a penalized team down there. It gets really hard to score touchdowns when you're penalized. You can go back in our season and see a bunch of examples of us going backwards, then not scoring. We have to run the ball better down there. How you run the ball, that is going to change, based on the opponent. You have to take advantage of who you have. We have to run the ball better. In terms of the passing game, we have to make sure that we force them to defend all five [eligible receivers], and the quarterback's legs have to be a factor. That's pretty much the red zone in a nutshell. We have to get a lot better at it because two-of-six in the red zone against the best people that you play is not going to get it done."

On injury updates:

"[CB] Bryce [Callahan], [DL] Sebastian [Joseph-Day] and [T] Trey [Pipkins III] will be back in practice this week. We're going to do a walk-through on Wednesday. You will see them in practice on Thursday. [S] Derwin [James Jr.] is still day-to-day. You will know as we go through this week. That's where that is at."

On building off of last night's win into this week of practice:

"Defining the plan and making sure that your guys really understand why we're doing everything that we're doing, putting them through the paces. Make sure that you're really putting them through the paces of what you want them to get accomplished. Define the roles during the week so that everyone has a clear understanding of what their part in it is. Then, as you get closer to the game, just making sure that mindset is right, in terms of what you need to do and how you need to do it. When I talk about us playing hard last night, I think that we've played hard all season. That's what I also said last night. I just felt like what stood out to me — when people talk about our scheme and plan and stuff like that — what stood out to me was how hard we played last night. I say that as a complement to our guys. There were a lot of good plays, good offense, good defense and good special teams, but I felt like we played really hard. As a coach, I'm never going to take that for granted, that they played really hard. I thought that they played for each other and I thought that was why we were able to win the game."

On CB Michael Davis' performance over the last few weeks:

"He has battled. Really since the bye [week], he has done a really nice job for us in pass coverage. He's challenging and being more physical at the line of scrimmage. I think that we have challenged him to use his hands and get on people and really use that length to steer people. Not cushioning and inching, but using those gifts. We know that he is a strong guy. He is long-armed, strong and experienced. He's been taking that fight to the opponent and playing with confidence. We love coaching him. I think that he's a great story. Proud of him. We need him to keep making plays for us. He was up to the challenge last night. The challenges are going to get bigger as we go."

On limiting the Dolphins' offense:

"It's on all three levels [of the defense]. It really involves the back seven, in terms of how tight the coverage is going to be and where the body presence is going to be, and changing up the rotations, in terms of what [Tagovailoa] is looking at. It's not as simplistic as just taking away in-breaking routes because Tua [Tagovailoa] has had plenty of passes outside of the numbers, if you guys have watched him play. This guy is throwing 25-yard blaze outs that these 4.2 [40-yard-dash] guys are running. He's throwing it outside there. There are plenty of examples of Tua throwing outside of the numbers. He completed a 60-yard touchdown last night outside the numbers, so it's not like Tua can't make it there. He is having a really good season. I think what our guys did was just trying and get in the passing lanes more, just be more present in the passing lane in the back seven. I thought that our guys did a good job of executing the gameplan."

On RB Joshua Kelley's performance over the last couple of games:

"I think you're seeing the burst because he's healthy, coming off the knee. I think you're seeing the burst that he had prior to being injured. He was really good on the third-and-one. He had a really nice cut-back run early in the game that was, I thought, a really really good cut. He saw it and just hit it. He's breaking tackles, doing a nice job as a pass-receiver. He had that one nice catch for six yards on a check-down. He has to continue to bring it for us. He's doing a good job on special teams. Definitely excited to get him back in the mix."

On the offense allowing four sacks last night and if Herbert ‘is holding on to the ball for too long’:

“Justin [Herbert] doesn’t hold the ball. He’s not one of these quarterbacks that you’re worried about. Taking a bad sack, he doesn’t do that very much. They have a very good front, you you have to give credit where credit is due. They’ve got a really good front seven. They have two premium edge rushers. [Dolphins LB] Melvin Ingram is still a very disruptive payer. They have [Dolphins DT Christian] Wilkins, [Dolphins DT Raekwon] Davis, [Dolphins DT] Zach Sieler inside who are really good. They have good blitzers at linebacker with [Dolphins LB] Jerome Baker and [Dolphins LB Elandon] Roberts. Then, they have DBs that can rush with [Dolphins S Eric] Rowe and [Dolphins S Jevon] Holland. A very tough unit to play against. I felt like our guys hung in there tough against that group. You’re going to have to make plays with your legs at quarterback when you’re playing against a good, good front. I thought that Justin did a nice job of that, of buying time. Loose plays to run, I thought he had a couple of loose plays to throw, which were awesome. I thought that we did enough. I don’t like four sacks. It was really five, they took the one away from [Dolphins LB Jaelan] Phillips. We have to keep working hard at that. He was strong with the ball. We’re just going to have to continue to mix it up. I’ll tell you one thing, this guy doesn’t take sacks. I think that there was one time where they dropped eight or whatever, there was a sack. It’s not ideal, but the alternative is trying to force it, jam it, throw into eight guys, and then you turn it over. You see that all of the time. Or, you’re late and the ball gets tipped and it’s an interception, or something like that. Sometimes, what may be determined as a sack, you need to look at it and see what happened on the play. They’re not all created equal. We have to keep working hard at it, though, because you don’t like seeing your quarterback get five of them in a game. The zero [blitz] in the red zone was a tough one. I just didn’t feel like he could find the [running] back on it. It was tough. We have to keep working hard at it, for sure. When you stay out of negative plays, you’re just a lot more successful in that way. Penalties and sacks, we have to avoid those, for sure.”

On Herbert ‘spiking a ball upon entering the locker room’:

“It was a game ball from NBC’s *Sunday Night Football*.”

On if he has ‘ever seen a player spike a ball in the locker room following a game’:

“I feel like someone did after we beat Mount Union at Mount Union when I was at John Carroll in 2016 [*laughter*]. That was a huge win. There were a lot of things thrown in that locker room after we beat them [*laughter*].”

On ‘what went wrong’ on the forced fumble that was ultimately recovered by Dolphins WR Tyreek Hill and returned for a touchdown:

“Until that whistle is blown, you have to have 11 guys that are in search of the football. I think that there was some guys who stopped. If you watch the play closely, especially from the TV copy, there are some guys who kind of stopped because they didn’t know where the ball was, but when you don’t hear that whistle, you have to keep trying to search for it. Tyreek [Hill] was there. As you saw, he’s a tough guy to catch.”

On the delay of game on the offense’s opening drive of the second half:

“We were caught in-between a substitution there. I didn’t want to take a time out that early in the second half. They matched, they had a late substitution, defensively, and we were kind of caught in-between. I just didn’t feel like taking a timeout there because if the game got tight — I can’t stand that — so I would rather take the five [-yard penalty] there. That’s on me.”

On utilizing 'less varied personnel groupings' defensively last night compared to 'more variety in personnel groupings' when James Jr. is active:

“What you should not do is draw a conclusion that two plus two is four, because that is not the conclusion to be drawn from that. When you’re playing with as many new guys in a gameplan, the last thing that you want to do is jerk them around, when you’re playing with as many backups as we were on both levels. What you don’t want is a bunch of in-and-out of the game. We’re used to doing that when we’re at full strength. We’re used to doing it because we built our front lines to be able to play that way. That’s kind of a hallmark of the way we play. But when you get cleaned out, what you really want to do is take an approach where you feel like you can get consistency from the group out there so that they can play fast. Then, have enough disguise, have enough variation within that grouping of what you’re playing — blitzes, coverages, all that — so that they can get in a comfort zone. Now, we substituted on third down and stuff like that, just like we always do, but our staff just felt like letting our guys settle in and play fast together in that plan because of who they’re going against, too. They have enough to worry about with those two receivers, we don’t want them worrying about who is in and who is out, what grouping we are in. ‘Let’s just go play.’ Our guys did a good job with that.”

RUNNING BACK AUSTIN EKELER

On setting the record for most receptions by an undrafted free agent running back in a career in NFL history:

“I am not really sure how I feel about it because we have had some injuries to receivers, so it’s like, man, I wish those balls were going down the field to some of our guys like we saw last night. Also, as an individual, looking back on my career, that will be a pretty cool mark in my career where it’s like, ‘Yeah, I caught a lot of footballs that year.’ I think we have been supplementing me getting check downs with some of our run game just because we have been struggling there. I am in a haze about it. It’s like a good and a bad thing at the same time.”

On areas in which the offense can improve red zone efficiency:

“Score more touchdowns. That’s what we need to do.”

On scoring touchdowns in the red zone:

“We’re trying, let me tell you. We are trying. It comes down to trying to get us in matchups where we feel like we’re in an advantageous spot. Even then, it’s little details that if they get messed up just a little bit — like, we had a little pick play down there in the red zone this week and the linebacker was just able to get over the top just enough where right as soon as I caught the ball, I am getting smacked in the back. Everything gets a lot tighter, a lot more precise down there because you don’t have as much room to work. It really comes down to us executing, but then getting creative ways to get ourselves in advantageous matchups.”

On the ‘matchup’ this week with Titans RB Derrick Henry on the other side:

“Yeah, I mean every week we have a new competition. We had [Dolphins WR] Tyreek Hill last week. He is kind of their headliner as far as their offensive guy. So now, it’s Derrick Henry coming in. That’s going to be a challenge for our defense, for sure, but it’s always good to go up against one of the other premier backs in the league, especially chopping it up after the game just to see how things are going. But yeah, we’re definitely different types of people. I actually had an interview this morning and we were talking about that. I think it was Rich Eisen. He was like, ‘You have a stiff arm in you.’ I was like, ‘Yeah, but mine is like a foot shorter than Derrick’s. I am not using it as much as he is [*laughter*].’ But no, it’s fun to watch other players that are having success in their own way. I love watching this game. I love having running backs go out there and be successful.”

On his reaction in a video of QB Justin Herbert spiking a football in the locker room:

“I didn’t catch the spike. I wasn’t in there during that time. I was in there when he got the game ball.”

On the locker room being ‘exceptionally more emotional or energetic’ after the game:

“I guess all of our games have been so tough this year it seems like. When were on like a little losing streak, I don’t even know how many losses, like three in a row or something like that, we’re finally able to get a game where we won. I literally don’t even pay attention to what we have done in the past. It was like three out of four [games] I think is what it was. Just to get a win, especially when we are coming down to the end of the season where it’s crunch time and then we have the playoff picture in sight, it’s definitely emotional. For [QB] Justin [Herbert] to break the record is pretty cool, too.”

On if Herbert ‘showed more emotion yesterday’:

“For sure [*laughter*]. He is usually the same guy every time after a win or loss as far as I know what he is going to do. He is going to come in. He is going to get collected. He is going to go around and dap everybody up, make sure everyone is good and then he is going to go sit in his locker and sit there for the next 20 minutes and just kind of unwind. He even gave us a little speech during the breakdown. It was pretty cool to see Justin coming out of his routine a little bit more.”

On if Herbert gave a postgame speech:

“Yeah, after the game. He gave us a little speech. Also, it was funny, since we have the Victory Monday, [Head] Coach [Brandon Staley] said it was a real Victory Monday, so you don’t have to go lift. Justin was like, ‘We should be booing. We should be booing,’ because he is like, ‘We should be in there lifting,’ because everyone is cheering [*laughter*].”

On if last night was the first time Herbert gave a postgame speech:

“Yeah, I think that is the first time he has done that. Good stuff.”

On if him giving the postgame speech is an example of Herbert's growth:

“Yeah, we all have grown. We all look toward him. He is our leader out there on the field, so we always want to hear what he has to say. Like I said, we're all at different points of our growth. I think as he'll play more, he's going to realize that we are looking for him to lead us, whatever that looks like. Whether it's encouragement, whether it's on the field, just something. It's really good. He has been doing a better job of that this year, too, just out in the field, for sure. I think it is because he's finally had the same offense in back-to-back [years] and starting to understand it. I am kind of biased because I come in with a guy that was playing for 17 years, and so that is what I was comparing him to. I'm like, 'I have Philip Rivers, who knows everything about practice, about all defensive coordinators and all of the speeches.' Things like that, hyping people up. It will take some time because there is a high demand on that position. He's coming along.”

On his run at Wildcat last night:

“My first rep of playing quarterback, so happy about that outcome [*laughter*]. It was a nice 10-yard gain.”

On if he had ever run a direct-snap from the quarterback position before:

“Actually, I did do that in college. Yeah, I did do that in college a couple of times. It wasn't as efficient as it was there, but we did do that a couple of times.”

On if he was able to hand the ball off:

“Yes. I was reading the defensive end. If the defensive end was crashing down, I'm giving it to [RB] Joshua [Kelley], he's running around the end. If not, I am taking it and slicing underneath.”

On if the play was an RPO:

“Not an RPO because an RPO is a 'run-pass option.' I didn't have the pass option [*laughter*].”

On how 'cathartic' the win was for the team yesterday:

“It was very cathartic [*laughter*]. In a way where we don't really know what to expect in the outcome, but we know what to expect in our effort. We didn't have some guys on defense here and there and we have some guys back on offense. We have been going through these seasons where it is like we have had guys here and there, but it doesn't matter. We still have to go out there and play. When we can come in and shut down, for the most part, [Dolphins WR] Tyreek [Hill], when he had two fluke plays, as coach said. He had the fumble and then [CB] Mike Davis fell down. For the defense to come in and do that with what they were giving as far as guys, people had opportunities to step. People stepped up. Then offense, we did enough to get it done. We still have more in the tank, for sure. That third quarter was not as good as it could have been. Too many negative plays. It feels amazing to go out there and get a win because we work so hard. Every team does. Every team does, but when we are in a situation where playoffs, we're in the hunt, we have a chance still. That feeling of like, 'OK, we're staying on track. We still have playmakers.' Especially when we get guys back and they are able to do what we have expected from them and what we have been missing from them, it feels really good.”

On if RB Joshua Kelley has received the second running back spot:

“Yes, for sure. I think he had that for a while until his injury from special teams, getting rolled up on. I am very thankful of him being back just because it takes so much off of my body. My body feels so much better after games when we have that two back — whatever it is. Just relieving me sometimes and me relieving them. So yeah, for sure.”

On if he can make reads quicker when taking a direct snap as opposed to taking a handoff:

“Those plays are pretty much designed like if you had a running quarterback, you could do it with that. You can see [Ravens QB] Lamar [Jackson] doing that. Exactly like you said, it's much quicker because if you have to hand it off to me and then we try to do it, it's taking way too much time. It's literally a hike, you have about half of a second to read, can the defensive end tackle [RB] Josh [Kelley] or can the defensive end tackle me? Whichever one he can tackle, give the ball to the other one or keep the ball. It's like right off the snap. The only thing there is just making sure that we have a good handoff because I am not really used to handing off the ball like that. I have done it in the past and we were able to get it done there.”

On appearing on the Men in Blazers podcast with Roger Bennett and Michael Davies:

“I appreciate you asking about that. It was incredible. I always love when people ask me questions about my story and things that I have going on and talking about what I am passionate about and what I want to give back to the community and messages that I have for people. I love those types of topics and that’s all we talked about. I am not really big into the following of soccer across the U.S. or even the global stage. I have been peeping at it a little bit since the World Cup is on. They understood that and it’s literally like, ‘OK, how can we get value from Austin?’ They understood it’s like, ‘There is a lot of value within his story and his commitment of his journey to growth and how has gotten to this point.’ It was really cool to do it in front of a live stage on a bigger audience. It was pretty special. There was a cool part because they were talking about culture shock, this is just a little story that just randomly happened, I shouted out Paramount Plus because they once put me in a helicopter because they needed someone for talent. Someone drops out and they basically flew me the same day, signed the contract, ‘Hey, come do this for us.’ And Paramount Plus was a sponsor of Men in Blazers. It was a perfect plug. That was a cool story that came from that. Those guys are great. Those guys are very passionate about what they do and it’s very obvious just the way they go about it and ask their questions and dive deep. It was fun.”

On if he met Will Arnett at the Men in Blazers show:

“Yes, I met Will briefly in the Green Room in the back. That’s why I love to do things like that where you get to meet so many different types of people from different walks of life. I met some other people, as well, that I would have never met if I would have said no because it was on a Friday night and I don’t want to go up to Los Angeles [*laughter*]. You put things aside that are the small inconveniences for the potential of connections that you may never have an opportunity to have in the future.”

On the performance of the run game over the last few games:

“Not good.”

On if getting Kelley back from injury will be able to help improve the run game:

“We’ll see. We have been struggling running the ball. It has been obvious. We have chances. It’s like spurts here and there. Really can’t put my finger on it. It’s like, ‘Is it the reads? Is it the offensive line? Is it both of us? We’re losing sometimes here. Maybe it’s a bad play call sometimes there.’ It’s a lot. There is a lot that has gone into it that it’s not where it should be at an NFL level as far as now. That’s why I have so many catches because it’s like, ‘We’re still giving him the ball, but we just have to throw it to him.’ You come down to what’s the dynamic of your offense? What’s the identity of your offense? We’re not predominant, ‘Hey, we’re going to run the ball 30, 40 times a game.’ That’s not what we’re doing. Basically, we have mapped that out for ourselves because we have had more success throwing the ball. Our identity is not usually heavily in the run game. I think it was for one game. We ran for a crazy amount against the Browns. But, our identity is definitely letting Justin sling that thing around.”

On the offense ‘having a hard time scoring points coming out of halftime’:

“It’s frustrating. It’s frustrating because I feel like we’ve had a couple of quick starts where we’re starting up. I think we’ve been up 10 [points] in the past few games. That’s just the flow of the NFL, it’s really hard to blow anyone out. They’re going to make plays, as well. They’re going to make adjustments to what we’re doing. In this last game, we had too many negative plays in the third quarter starting out. Putting my finger on it? No, I can’t. If I could, then it wouldn’t be happening. I don’t know.”

On Herbert’s ‘first down celebration’:

“Coach put an emphasis on that before the game. He showed a little highlight of, basically, all of our skill players showing energy at some point in our careers. He showed that Justin Herbert two-point conversion catch against the Bengals last year, and how he spiked it and was juiced up. I could feel lit that night. People were getting first downs. The energy, let’s keep it going because that stuff is contagious. The sideline feeds off of it and the offense feeds off of it. For him, just playing his part in going out there and making plays and making things happen. I think that was a third down, too. A big third-down conversion, that was a big part of all of that emotion that we were building up, all of the energy that we were giving. It carries over. When you see Justin out there showing that emotion, you can see that we’re in a rhythm. It’s always a plus to see any of the guys, especially Justin out there, having fun.”

On Herbert's 'ability to navigate pressure':

"It's an art that all of the great quarterbacks have, one way or another, either escaping by getting the ball out of their hands quick to people that they know or escaping physically, like running around and making things happen. That's like one of the new era of quarterbacks, where you see the quarterbacks that are able to get out of harm's way and continue to extend these plays. He's right there with them. You watch [Bills QB] Josh Allen, you watch [Chiefs QB Patrick] Mahomes, you watch [Ravens QB] Lamar [Jackson], Justin [Herbert], the list goes on. When there's pressure, they're either getting out of the way or running out of the pocket. We've had some banged up O-linemen, so he's having to dodge people in his face for the past few weeks, a little more than usual. He's a guy that is going to give you a chance, regardless of the scenario. You have banged O-linemen? OK, we can move the pocket more. If you have all of your O-linemen, guess what? We have our receivers back, so he is going to give you your chance and put the ball in a spot where people are going to make plays to catch them. He's just a guy that can adjust. I've said it in the past, me being around him makes me want to play longer because this guy is very special. When you have a quarterback that can give you a chance, it makes playing football a lot more fun."