

## Chargers Media Availability

Monday, October 10, 2022 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

### HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

#### **On WR Keenan Allen's injury status:**

"Keenan [Allen] is just working through his hamstring. He's making good progress, got a good report this morning. We're just going to take it day-to-day. I mean what I said last week, that it's a day-to-day hamstring, not an Injured Reserve hamstring. Trending positive."

#### **On if Allen experienced a 'setback' with his hamstring injury:**

"Not a setback. In terms of the period that you guys were all at practice, he just felt that tighten up on him. We didn't want to take one of those big steps backward, in terms of pushing it too fast. One of those frustrating, soft-tissue comebacks. It's in a spot that, I think, is different than what he had in the past. Just working through that. He made good progress over the weekend. He had a good session this morning. He's just day-to-day."

#### **On the decision to go for it on fourth down in the fourth quarter yesterday and if he were to do it again, would he make the same decision:**

"The thought process, on third down, was to have a run, RPO [run-pass option] type of play. Then, depending on what happened on that play, if it stayed the same, then we would throw it, targeting [WR] Mike [Williams]. We wanted to finish that game with our offense on the field. They had played a whale of a game. We liked our matchup on the outside. That's what I felt like was the best decision was for us at that time."

#### **On Allen's Twitter posts near the end of yesterday's game:**

"I was made aware of that after the game. The thing that I will say is that [WR] Keenan Allen is a captain for us, and he and I, since I've become the head coach, have become extremely close. There's no one that I have more respect for than Keenan Allen. What makes him special is his competitiveness and how much he cares about our team. We saw each other this morning, we met this morning. Anyone that has been a part of competition knows that when you're not a part of it, you can feel some type of way. Keenan's heart is with me; it's with us. To me, I have an understanding of where he was at in that moment because he's not with his team. They're in the fire. That's a money down that he is used to being out there for, which makes it a lot better for us. It's just part of sports. We're going to become closer because of it. We already became closer this morning because of it. We're going to keep it moving to Denver, try and get him well and get him out there playing for us."

#### **On Browns RB Nick Chubb's long touchdown run at the beginning of yesterday's game:**

"Two missed tackles at the point of attack by two unblocked players."

**On DL Christian Covington's performance over the last two games:**

"Christian [Covington] is just really solid for us. Last year, he was really one of our most versatile players. He really held the rope for us last year, playing in a lot of different positions. The people that were here know that. We were fortunate to bring him back in the offseason. He's just been solid for us. He really believes in how we play and does his job. He is a very dependable player. That was a big play for him. Really happy for him, that was a big, big momentum-builder for our team."

**On S Alohi Gilman starting at safety yesterday and the competition for that spot between Gilman and S Nasir Adderley:**

"I think that it's going to be week-to-week. We're going to let those guys continue to compete and try to put our best combination out there. I thought Lo [Gilman] did a good job in his first game. Just like anything, your first start out there, you have to get yourself in rhythm. He made a big play for us, the red-area takeaway. I thought he had some really good open-field tackles for us, getting some guys on the deck. The more you play, the more you're going to improve. I thought Nas [Adderley] did well in his role, too. Like I said, you're going to just let this competition play out and see where it goes."

**On his evaluation of the defensive unit through the first five games:**

"We're a work-in-progress. There's been, I think, some really good games for us. Against Las Vegas and Kansas City, I thought we were outstanding in those games. I felt like, in the Jacksonville game, we were outstanding for a half, and then faded because we were on the field a lot. We just didn't have enough in the second half. I thought, in the Texans game, for three quarters, we were outstanding. The third quarter was not good enough. Then, in the Cleveland game, it was just up-and-down. There were some good moments in there, but it was inconsistent, for sure. Not good enough, overall. We made some big plays yesterday, which was good, and we needed them in order to win. We showed some resilience, but I did not like the way that we started the football game. That was the first game that we've really started that way. When you start that way, you're fighting uphill to get yourself back, and we did that, to an extent. We're just a work-in-progress. We have a lot of pieces that I am very excited about. We just have to bring the group together. The more we play together, the better that we're going to get. I see a lot of potential for improvement. That's where we have to put our focus, moving forward, just bringing this group together and getting them playing team defense all the time."

**On how the unit 'reaches its potential':**

"We need to practice and we need to play together. Everyone taking ownership within their role because it's the beginning of the season and roles are still defining themselves. That's how we're going to get where we need to go, is by practicing playing together."

**On the 'blueprint' for 'increased' development:**

"I think that it's execution of your role. I think that when we execute our role within the defense, then it looks as good as anybody in pro football. I think that the consistency of that execution will bring us to a spot where we're not having these types of conversations."

**On WR Joshua Palmer's injury status:**

"Just banged up, a little bit sore with his ankle. I think that we're going to add a knee to the injury report. That was, I think, a component to what you say, but nothing that is going to prevent him from not being at practice. Just banged up."

**On T Trey Pipkins III's injury status:**

"An MCL sprain. We were fortunate to get good news on that. He made it out of the game OK. As you guys know, he showed a lot of toughness in that game. When I went out there, to the field, I didn't seem good. For him to go off, and then be able to come back on and play the way he did in that game, it just says so much about him. For you guys that have covered him for several years, just the progress that he's made as a competitor and just showing his stuff yesterday. Just an awesome performance by him. We're fortunate to get him out of that game. He's sore, but good news, overall."

**On if Pipkins will have to 'miss time' due to the injury:**

"That is not the indication that we have received."

**On taking a timeout before the fourth-down stop as OLB Chris Rumph II ‘was running off of the field’:**

“Chris Rumph [II] should not have been out there. Just getting the right 11 on the field. It was Chris Rumph that we were trying to get off of the field.”

**On if P JK Scott was evaluated for an injury yesterday and if he ‘came out of the sideline injury tent’:**

“Not to my knowledge.”

**On G/T Jamaree Salyer’s performance yesterday:**

“Very solid, very strong. Zero sacks, zero turnovers, 465 [net offensive] yards. He was outstanding. Those two guys are really tough to block. [Browns DE] Jadeveon [Clowney] came to play yesterday. When he’s on like that, he’s a really tough guy to block. I think that Jamaree [Salyer] spent most of his time with [Browns DE] Myles [Garrett]. As you guys know, Myles is a perennial Defensive Player of the Year candidate, one of the top players in the game. It was a really strong performance by Jamaree. He is going to learn a lot from it. It was his first time playing against a guy of that caliber, that has that type of size, speed, power and play-making ability. It was a good barometer, I think, for him to see where he needs to go. I think that the way that we played around him yesterday, the way we called the game, really allowed Jamaree to get his feet in the grass and play well. Our entire line came to play yesterday. It was very much a team performance. It was probably [G] Matt Feiler’s best game of the season. Those two guys playing together, building that chemistry, it’s just time-on-task of working together, but pleased with the performance.”

**On if K Dustin Hopkins will be ‘in a position to come back’ this week:**

“Day-to-day. I think that we will know more on Wednesday when we’re out there on the practice field. He’s going to work out today, obviously, tomorrow. We’ll know more on Wednesday.”

**On K Taylor Bertolet’s performance yesterday in his NFL debut:**

“Taylor [Bertolet] was an example of what it took yesterday from our team. You join up with somebody on a Thursday, and I told you guys, he went like 12-for-12 in that practice, so it kind of had everybody’s attention. I think I said that in the Friday press conference, or maybe it was in the production meeting, I don’t know [*laughter*]. I said it to somebody, I was like, ‘Hey, this would be a good story, if he has a good game, because he was 12-for-12 in his first practice.’ He came in, he was steady, he was poised. Having that veteran deep snapper [LS Josh Harris], that poise, and then, the operation with [P] JK [Scott], I think that that is a big factor in it, just feeling comfortable and confident. A big story, to go perfect on your kicks. We needed all of those kicks, in order to get this job done. I was really proud of them, gave him a game ball. Definitely, definitely proud of him.”

**On ‘consistency of message’ surrounding fourth-down decision-making:**

“I think that you have to treat each decision like it has a life of its own. I think that you have to be transparent with your process. You know that each of these games are different. Last week, there was not a lot asked or said about what happened in Houston. That didn’t happen to be something that was asked or, sort of, reported about. At the beginning of the season, against Las Vegas and Kansas City, probably a little bit more because those were more national-type games. There were reasons in that game to do what we did. I think that that’s what I’ve said since the beginning, since I’ve become the head coach, is that each of these games are different. They each have a different flow. There are different variables in play. At the same time, we’re going to believe in what we do and how we do it. That’s been my message to our team the whole time I’ve been here, and that’s what I’m going to continue to do. I just think it’s an easier way to live.”

**On the impact of confidence in both the offense and the defense when fourth-down decisions arise:**

“Where we were at in the game, and the way our offense was playing — the way that our offense was playing in that game gave me full confidence in the matchup and the way our defense was defending the passing game, and their kicker. All of that good stuff, that factored into it. We trusted our offense to go make a play. That was the decision I made and I felt like it was the right one.”

**On TE Donald Parham Jr.'s performance yesterday:**

"It was good to get him back out there. He didn't get any targets in that game. We had a couple of things up for him in the plan, but it just didn't go there, but it was good to get him out there. I thought, in the run game, he competed. Again, I think it was big for him just to get back out there, and it felt good to have him out there. I think that there were a couple of opportunities for him that just didn't work out, like I said, but he's going to work himself back into this rotation. What he allows us to do is to even out the jobs that the other guys are doing. I think that his touches and his role will continue to expand with more games."

**On Parham's false start in the redzone and if he was attempting to connect with the defender to draw a defensive penalty:**

"You saw it right, in terms of the sequencing with Myles [Garrett] jumping, and then the flinch. Normally, that tackle that's on Jamaree [Salyer], reaching out and touching him right away, if you get the reach out and touch right away, then it's an inducement, but he's on the opposite side. There wasn't that immediate response from our left side, so I think that was where that interpretation went."

**On the offense gaining possession with 16 seconds remaining in the first half and the thought process behind kneeling, rather than 'pushing the ball to attempt to get into field goal range':**

"Not with that amount of time left, no. We had gotten a stop. It was like, 'Hey, let's get out of here.' We got the ball to start the second half. Maybe, if there was a little bit more time, it could have been different. Just trying to get to the half."

**On if 'Monday morning quarterback conversations' ever cause him to 'second-guess decision-making':**

"I just think that there are 31 other coaches who are going through the exact same press conference I am right now. It doesn't matter which one of them is doing a Zoom right now,, there is going to be some decision that some majority are going to disagree with. You just have to have conviction in what you believe in, and also be transparent with your process, not feel defensive or insecure about it. I understand it in all ways. When you say, 'Does it affect you?' It doesn't affect me, from a decision-making standpoint, no. I also understand the scrutiny. I understand that there should be scrutiny on all of the decisions that we make. It's pro sports, and that's what is cool about sports. I just know that it's part of the job. You're ready to face it every Monday."

**On the 'chemistry developing' between G Zion Johnson and T Trey Pipkins III on the right side of the offensive line:**

"Time on task, I talk about that. On the O-line, you just know that that is your lifeline, the guy that is playing next to you. There are little things that these guys really have to know about one another; how they fit in a combination, how they're going to pass-protect based on a different look. Those two guys, and how they play together, it means everything to the play. If they're on two separate pages, then you're going to get an inconsistency of the result. I think the more that they play together, the more that those little things can start to express themselves within the game. I think that it goes for the same thing with Zion [Johnson] and [C] Corey [Linsley], those two guys playing together. The more that you play together, the better that you're going to be. If you can keep continuity — practice together, play together — the more that you practice and play together, the better that the results are going to happen, if you're good enough. Those two guys are definitely good enough. You're seeing them play good football. They can still improve so much more."

**On yesterday's win occurring in his hometown of Cleveland, Ohio, and the second-straight road victory:**

"It was special to me because of the guys in the locker room. I had a lot of family at the game, but that win is about our football team; that's about the Chargers, that's about the Powder Blues. We had a lot of powder blues in that stadium, if you guys were there. That's what made me feel even extra special, that we have a fan base that will travel to Cleveland, Ohio, for a game at the beginning of October. I just know that when you go on the road in the NFL, especially in that environment, the Dawg Pound, against a really good football team, that it's hard to win, especially when you get down 14 to nothing. You have a backup kicker. There were a whole bunch of things going on in that movie. We had to figure it out, as a team, and that's exactly what we did. To come back and to win that game the way that we did, I felt like it was a team win in every sense. As you mentioned, to be 3-2 and not 2-3, you can't minimize that because if you take a look at the NFL and where it is right now, you guys are all seeing it, every week is tough and every week it's a different matchup. These wins are so tough to come by, and so when you get them, you cherish them. Then you have to keep it moving and you have to make the improvements. That's what we're doing. Just because we won, we're not like, 'Wow, we feel so good, we feel so happy.' There are 60 minutes worth of tape that we need to correct, and that's what we've been doing this morning."

**On a continuation of winning in his hometown and the Browns incorporating the NFL's Crucial Catch initiative into their game presentation:**

"There was that element to the game that made it special. There was one of my former players at John Carroll, Adam Gray. His sister was at the game yesterday, she went through Hodgkin's lymphoma, the same thing that I had, essentially. She's a young woman, and for her to be at the game yesterday, as a cancer survivor and brother of a player that I coached at John Carroll, there were a lot of people there that meant a lot to me yesterday. The fact that that was the game, I felt like it was fitting because that's a big topic for my family, a big reason why I am here. To be able to see my Dad, my brothers, my friends and family, and then, a lot of my former players who are now married with kids, it was really special because you know that you wouldn't be here without them. To be able to have that first 'go back home' moment, I'm really glad that we were able to get that W."

## **RUNNING BACK AUSTIN EKELER**

### **On the offense going for it on fourth down late in the fourth quarter:**

“We were coming off of the field, so I thought we were punting the ball. Then we were getting the message on the sideline that we were going for it and I was like, ‘Alright. Well, we have to get out there and huddle. Let’s get back out there.’ So, that’s what we did. This is no surprise. It’s still [Head Coach] Brandon Staley we’re talking about here. We saw everything last year that we were doing. It showed up in this moment where he believed in us. He said we were having some pretty good success during the day and gave us an opportunity to go get one yard and we came up short.”

### **On if the call ‘surprised’ him:**

“If we’re talking about salaries, then no, it’s not surprising at all because there is a lot more money on the offense than there is on special teams. Those guys held up. I think they held up their job yesterday, and then it was up to us. We were trying to seal out the game and leave no doubt by getting one yard. I liked the call. He believes in us. I love that. I love anyone that believes in me and believes in us as a team. I’m backing it.”

### **On his performance:**

“It felt really good to finally feel like, ‘Okay, I can still play this game.’ I was kind of held in a cage, I feel like, for the first couple of weeks. That was just from us just trying to get into a rhythm. It wasn’t anything crazy that we changed schematically. I think it was just we were starting to attack the weakness of their defense, which we felt like was in their interior. We were able to get those guys up front moving people, which if you go back and watch the run game and see some of these holes and see how our guys are working together, moving bodies, it’s pretty spectacular if you feel like watching football.”

### **On the run scheme against the Browns:**

“We always have some type of variation of runs, whether it’s gaps — which is more so you’re pulling people and things like that. If you watched our game, we had a lot more inside-zone yesterday than usual, compared to the first few weeks. We were able to kind of exploit their interior a little bit more. That was part of the plan and that was part of what we went out there and executed. That’s what I would say were the small differences because there is really not that big of a difference running off-tackle and then now we’re bringing it down a gap and running in the B-gap or the A-gap. That’s what we were able to do. That’s what we were trying to do and got it done.”

### **On if the changes to the running scheme was a result changes to the offensive line personnel:**

“Exactly, man. You hit it right on the head. You should be in coaching. That’s what it’s about. It’s about finding your strengths with your current players. I think one of the most important things that a coach can do is understand your personnel and understand what your team is good at, instead of getting your ego in the way and be like, ‘I want to run this play because this is my playbook and this is how I call plays.’ You’re like, ‘No, okay. These are the guys that I have. This is where strengths are.’ It’s a probability game. Where are we probably going to have the most success? Right now, we feel with that last game there with the interior guys. Our edge guys are playing well, too. It’s like that opens up more opportunities. Coach [Staley] talked about it today, when you start playing well, you start to gain more PT, talking about playing time. If these guys have been showing that they can get the job done, that just helps all of our offense to keep this more dynamic.”

### **On RB Joshua Kelley:**

“I was so proud of him. Just seeing the growth that he’s had from his rookie year. I remember we were watching this play in his rookie year, he just ran straight into the defender. I was like, ‘Bro, you can’t be a magnet out there.’ He had a catch yesterday. He did like a little head shake and then cut inside. He came back to the sideline and I was like, ‘Hey, that’s what we’re talking about. That’s growth.’ I was letting him know like, ‘You’re doing it, bro.’ It’s really cool to see him and his success that he’s been having with his opportunities. I’m looking forward to seeing him continue to grow because it feels good when you see someone else making plays out there.”

**On the offensive line:**

“Not only opening up holes, but protecting the quarterback, too. They’re getting it done. One sack, but we ran out of bounds, but I don’t really count that. Zero sacks yesterday. It’s been like that for all of the weeks. We’ve had rarely any true sacks. There is more into that. [QB] Justin [Herbert] is mobile. He’s smart with the ball. The fact that he can sit back in there and have the opportunities for him to get out and move is just — we’re in a good spot with our O line. [OL] Jamaree [Salyer] stepping up and taking that role of [T] Rashawn [Slater], which was not easy, but he’s been doing it for a couple of weeks now. He’s showing the same thing I was talking about. He’s earning some PT. I think [Offensive Coordinator] Joe [Lombardi] does a good job, too, with scheme because if you’re just sitting back, dropping back the entire time, then it’s not going to be a good day. You’re just going to let these people run up the field. What do we do? We do a ton of play actions. We do a ton of RPOs. We’re moving the pocket. We do so many different things with so many different types of personnel. Some chips and things like that where it makes you have to react. You don’t just get to sit there and put your hands on a guy and sprint up the field. You actually have to understand the surroundings and that’s going to slow you down just enough for our guys to have the edge. If we can continue to do that, I think we’ll have a pretty good chance of making a run.”

**On if his ‘struggles’ to begin the season frustrated him:**

“I was definitely frustrated. Just as a team, when we’re not having the success that we know we can with the personnel that we have, you’re trying to find what the rhythm is, is it something in practice? At the end of the day, it really comes back to just continuing to work. I was frustrated more so because the results weren’t there, not because of how we were working. I knew we were working hard. I knew we were doing things we needed to do, but it wasn’t being represented on Sundays, which is the most important day out of the week for us. That’s the evaluation day. It was one thing talking to [Offensive Line] Coach [Brendan Nugent] Nuge, our O Line, [Running Backs Coach Derrick Foster] D-Fos, Joe [Lombardi]. It’s like, ‘Look, we’re just so close in a lot of spots. Let’s continue to get in a rhythm.’ Luckily, the season isn’t five games long, so we have some time. The quicker we can get into our rhythm — I see teams in their rhythm like the Bills. Oh my God, those guys are on a roll and it’s like you can tell their offense is on fire. Shoot, even their defense. The faster you can find that, the quicker you can get to that, just the quicker I feel like you start to get your streak going. We’re on two right now and I feel like we’re in a good space with our offense as far as moving the ball in these last two games. Hopefully, we’re starting ours as well.”

**On recording his 50th career touchdown:**

“It feels good. Look, I never even really paid attention to it until it obviously started coming from the media a little bit more. I was like, ‘I’ll look into it.’ I went back, I looked at the rankings for the Chargers touchdowns and the thing is exponentially, going down from LT [Hall of Fame RB LaDainian Tomlinson] and [TE] Antonio Gates, I was like, ‘Man, absolute legends back in the day,’ because it’s those two and then everyone else is like miles behind them. It’s been pretty cool. I was like, ‘Sheesh, I didn’t even know I was that high as far as the touchdown count,’ because you don’t even think about it. You just go out there and try the play the best you can and the results kind of play themselves out. I’ll definitely take time to appreciate that and take time to appreciate the work that has been put in and just remember that it has been because of just straight up dedication to this opportunity that all of this has happened and everything else. It’s a good reminder of, ‘Hey, look how far you’ve come. Keep going.’”

**On the Denver Broncos:**

“Denver, I don’t even know what their record is right now. I haven’t even really paid attention. We’ll see how they are. Regardless of their record, it doesn’t even matter. You can’t take any team for granted. Those are NFL players on that side. This is not like, ‘Hey, they’ve been struggling.’ I don’t care what’s in the media because we saw what happened to Jacksonville, too. They destroyed us and then they go and get beat by the Texans, who we played pretty well against. The NFL, like Coach [Brandon] Staley said today, is wide open. You have to show up every single week or you will get beat. Right now, absolutely you’re trying to win matchup at the running back position. That’s against all 32 running backs. Against the Broncos, I’ll have some fans out. It’s a little bit extra motivation, I guess you could say.”

**On winning two consecutive games for the first time since December of 2021:**

"It's been that long? I didn't even know that. I don't even pay attention to it because it's like, 'Hey, one week at a time.' The fact that, just in general, that we have two in a row in the win column, especially on the road, it feels really good, man. It feels really good. I try to ride the high of the win for like the day after, but then it's back to, 'All right, we have to do it again,' because next Sunday, no one cares what you did last Sunday. Everyone cares about what's upcoming."

**On keeping a defense off-balance with screen passes and what he sees when executing screen plays:**

"First part of the question, yes, that's part of the switch up. All of these different types of plays, tempos, what we're trying to attack, that's the beauty of the NFL is in the schematics of it and using your players to your advantage. I would say using me in space, throwing me the ball, is probably an advantage. Probably want to do that, especially down in the red zone. We've been doing that forever here, as long as I was a rookie. The second part of the question, when I catch the ball, it really depends because you get a feel for it. When you're running the route, you have some spatial awareness like who is around you? Is there someone close to me? All of that plays a factor into it. I knew in the screen once they started dropping out into zone, I was like, 'Okay, we're going to have some space.' Now, it's about timing. It's like, 'How can I get out without getting picked?' There was a three-technique and then there was a five-technique out there. With a three-technique, I don't want to get over there too quick because I'm going across the formation, as opposed to if there was a one-technique, which means he's right by the center, now I need to get all the way over there, so I don't get picked off by the guy that's inside. I was a little bit more patient, stayed inside, released, perfect timing, Justin [Herbert] throws on time, catch it. Now, it's like, 'Okay, I know I'm going to have space.' I didn't know there was going to be a guy in my face. Put a foot in the ground, but then it's like I kind of dissect the O-line is trying to outreach him to the sideline, press their angles, press their leverage and read out any type of flow from the defense and just try to get vertical. All of that basically in a split second. It's a bunch of reaction, basically."

**On the chemistry between G Zion Johnson and T Trey Pipkins III:**

"Zion has come in and filled the role where we knew we had a gap in our offense. We didn't have a right guard, so we came out and drafted one. Now, we have Zion coming in here and he's been killing it. He's been solid in pass, run, all of it. Trey has continued to develop and has been holding it down back there. He gets the help as Jamaree does, which is for our scheme to switching it up. I think it would make it a little bit easier on our tackles here. I'm not saying they have an easy job. It's just easier, I think, with our scheme. They've been definitely doing something that's been helping us out because the zero-sack column is a beautiful thing because we know our identity really relies on Justin being able to deliver for us. Any way we can help him out by getting the run game going is great, but we have to keep that guy standing up back there. They've been doing a great job."



## **DEFENSIVE LINEMAN SEBASTIAN JOSEPH-DAY**

### **On the offense going for it on fourth down late in the fourth quarter:**

“Honestly, I didn’t really have time to think. I was talking to my coach about the game plan and what we’re going to do when we went back out there. Mid-conversation of that, then he said we were going for it. I just said, ‘What?’ He said, ‘We’re going for it.’ I just grabbed my helmet and buckled up. Whatever happened, happened. If we got it, we got it. If we didn’t, we didn’t. We didn’t really have time to think in that moment, honestly.”

### **On how proud he was of the defense to hold the Browns offense late in the fourth quarter that led to a missed field goal:**

“Definitely proud of our defense for that. We had that whole sequence. That whole drive was awesome. I think there was like an incomplete pass. Then they tried to run the ball. There was like two incomplete passes, one good play made by [CB] Asante [Samuel Jr.]. Then the other one was made, I think by [CB] J.C. [Jackson], and then [S] Derwin [James Jr.] made an amazing tackle on [Browns RB] Kareem [Hunt]. It was just great team defense. Derwin, especially Derwin in that last play. [LB] Kyle Van Noy for setting the edge. A lot of people don’t know that play happened because of Kyle Van Noy. He set the edge and then Derwin went and made that big play, one-on-one tackle on Kareem Hunt, which is a really hard thing to do on a back like that. It’s definitely a good feeling, for sure, that we got the W, but there are still a lot of things that we definitely have to improve on moving forward to go to where we want to go.”

### **On the culture Head Coach Brandon Staley is instilling in the team:**

“The culture that Brandon Staley is trying to instill in this group, I would probably say that his thing is about relationships, communication and performance. I think he does a great job emphasizing those things because at the end of the day, when you have a great relationship with someone, you’ll want to go harder for them and want to make sure you’re doing the right things. And then, obviously, communication is key because in football, you need all 11 guys in sync. I think that breeds a great culture. I really enjoy the culture that Coach Staley has brought here, for sure.”

### **On the defense trying to improve in defending the run:**

“I think, honestly, it’s more so on the players just being able to execute and just lock in when we need to and execute the things we need to as a team. We always have great practices. We do the things that we have to do, the small things in practice. Sometimes, when we go out there, things get miscommunicated and stuff like that. We just have to lock in a little bit better as a team on the defensive side of the ball.”

### **On if the defense has seen ‘flashes of the defense they want to be’:**

“For sure. We definitely see flashes of it, but I think the biggest thing in this league is about consistency. I think that’s the biggest thing. I think that’s what we’re chasing right now. That’s the beautiful thing about football, it’s never a finished product. There’s always ways you can improve, but I think at least we know as a defense that there are things that we definitely need to be more consistent in. That’s what we’re striving for.”

### **On the adjustments the defense made after Browns RB Nick Chubb’s touchdown on the first drive:**

“I’d say Chubb had a pretty good first half, to be honest. Honestly, it’s more scheme stuff that I honestly can’t really talk about here. We just switched a few things up, mechanics-wise. We honestly just got our heads out of our asses, if you want me to be completely honest with you. I’m being quite frank with you. It’s funny, I made a joke to my D-line coach [Run Game Coordinator/Defensive Line Coach Jay Rodgers]. I said, ‘If you want, you can get that first half of that tape and just burn it.’ And then the second half I was like a whole different tape. It’s funny. It’s not funny, but I tried to make light of the situation. I just think we just did what we had to do.”

**On the fourth-down stop on the Browns' first possession in the second half:**

"We definitely had an idea of what they were running because of studying — t least I did based off the week and what they presented us. Shout out to [DL] Christian Covington for making that play. Huge play by Christian. He beat his man and made the play in the backfield. [OLB] Khalil [Mack] did a great job of setting the edge and I was rounding the corner. It was great. It was really great. It was a great play and if Christian didn't make it, there was [LB] Drue [Tranquill] there, Khalil was there. There was a bunch of guys there that were going to be able to make the play. Huge shout out to Christian. That was an amazing play. That was a really huge play. Honestly, I think that really swung the momentum of the game."

**On the offense going for it on fourth down late in the fourth quarter 'is a sign of respect' to the defense:**

"You can look at it like that. You can look at it any other way. You can look at it as that, you can look at it as our offense was really hot. He may trust the offense to get it. At the end of the day, Coach Staley makes the decisions because he's the coach and he knows. He's the coach. I'm never going to question that man. I'm never going to question his decisions because he has a reason. That's why he's the head coach. That's why he's getting paid the big bucks. I'm going to ride with him, regardless of whatever the decision was or the reason behind it was. If I'm looking at it as him, I'm probably thinking, 'My offense is hot. Our offense has been hot all game. They've been doing whatever the heck they wanted.' Who they were trying to get the ball to, [WR] Mike Williams, he was going dummy the whole game. Mossing people the whole game. He was Mossing their number one DB [Browns CB Denzel Ward], supposedly the best DB in the game right now, one of the best DBs in the game right now. In that regard, when I look at it like that, it's a no-brainer. If your offense is hot and they have the momentum and they're doing really well, and Mike Williams is playing as dominant as he has been this whole year, why not just give him the ball and give him a shot? Also, you could look at it as he has trust in our defense. I don't know. You can look at it either way, honestly."

**On if going for it is 'showing respect for both sides of the ball':**

"Yeah, for sure. You can look at it either way."

**On his thoughts after the first two offensive drives from the Browns:**

"I was pissed. I'm going to be honest with you. What is there to think? I was mad. The way that they did score a touchdown, I wasn't in it either. I got out. I was like, 'Of course, I get out and they score a touchdown.' The second one, I believe it was a touchdown as well, was it not? I was probably thinking the same thing. This time I was in. At the end of the day, honestly, one thing I will say about that game was it was very playoff-esque in regard of back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. At least with my experience, even though I haven't been in the league too long, my experience with my past employment, I was able to see that. I was able to be part of that and see how it looked like back and forth, back and forth. Sometimes, it's just going to be a shootout, back and forth. It's about what defense can make the stop or one more stop or the important — maybe the defense isn't playing as good as they want to. It's about who can make that last play. I think we were just able to do that. Again, I tip my hat to the Browns. They are a phenomenal team. They are a really good team. They are going to be a really good team, especially when they get other pieces back that I know they are missing. That's all I have to say."

**On S Alohi Gilman:**

"I think he did a great job. Alohi did his thing. I'm happy for him. He stepped up and he made the play. He made the big play. Like I said, it was a back-and-forth game. It was about whose defense was going to make — when it's those kind of games, you just need the defense to make, one of the defenses just to make a play and he was the guy that did it. It was a great interception. It was a great play. That's all I have to say. We got him off the spot, we got the QB off the spot. That's all I can say. I'm just happy for him and his progression. He works really hard and I'm just excited. I'm excited to see him progress."

**On 'if he noticed anything special about Head Coach Brandon Staley after winning in his hometown of Cleveland':**

"No, because I think, honestly, in the NFL, every win is very satisfying because it's so hard to do week-in and week-out. I think it might have been satisfying for everyone because of the fashion that we won by coming back from 14-0. Coach Staley is very even-keel. He is a very even-keel guy and he celebrated with us like he usually does, the way he always does. Coach Staley knows himself and he's confident in himself. He's consistent."

**On his previous experience with the Rams playing in a close game against the Browns with the game ending with an interception:**

"No, it was an interception. That's actually really funny now that you bring that up. It was a close game. They were driving down. It was actually in the red zone, and [current Browns S John Johnson III] JJ, who actually plays for the Cleveland Browns right now, had the interception to close out the game. I don't know. It's crazy. Those Browns, they play hard. They play hard, for sure."