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## Chargers Week 1 Media Availability

Monday, September 6, 2021 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

### HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

#### **On WR Mike Williams:**

"Mike had a really good week of practice. He participated fully. Last week, he performed quite well. It was a lot tougher on us defensively. He's moving very well."

#### **On Washington:**

"They're deep. There are several first-round picks on the front. I've evaluated all these guys and had to compete against them last year. Not only are they very talented, but they're very well-coached. [Defensive Coordinator] Jack Del Rio, [Head Coach] Ron Rivera; those are two very good defensive coaches. They certainly played like it last year. I have a lot of respect for all those guys. [DE] Montez [Sweat] and [DE] Chase [Young] on the edge. Then, on the inside you have [DT] Daron Payne and [DT] Jonathan Allen. Those guys are really good players. I think their defense starts with that group. It certainly sets the tone in the front end and the pass rush for how they want to play. It's a quality front and a quality defense."

#### **On how the offensive line will match up against Washington's defense:**

"It's going to be an outstanding challenge for us. That team finished second in the NFL in total defense last year. It's year two of their program. You anticipate them to be even better. Going on the road for the first game, dealing with the crowd noise and a premium defense, it's going to be a create challenge for us from a communication standpoint and from an execution physicality standpoint. The game will be decided up front, like it normally is. We're excited for the challenge."

#### **On T Bryan Bulaga:**

"We're going to find out more today when he goes out there full speed. He's feeling good, he's going to practice today, fully. We're going to go from there. He had a good weekend. We're excited to see him out there, getting this week started off right. We're certainly a better team with him out there."

#### **On Bulaga's injury:**

"It's in that groin-hip flexor area. There's some soreness there. It's more discomfort than anything. The MRIs are negative. He's just been dealing with discomfort and we're just trying to create that good feeling inside. We're trying to get him that adequate rest and the mobility recovery that he needs so that he can go into this game week feeling good. He had a really good weekend. Out there this morning felt good. I'm excited to see him practice fully today."

#### **On who would move to RT if Bulaga is not in:**

"[T] Storm [Norton] would go to our right tackle."

"If Bryan is out there, he'll get the premium reps with the first group. We always cross-train that third guy. He would get the second load of work with that group."

**On if QB Chase Daniel or QB Easton Stick will serve as the backup to QB Justin Herbert:**

“We’re still working through that. I think a little depends on the injury report, the opponent that you’re playing. Both of those guys are ready if we need them. The way we’re going to organize it is Easton’s going to take all the scout team work because he needs it, he needs to play against NFL defenses. We feel like him playing against our defense is a great way to get him ready for the game. As we go, those guys will split the work with the second group, in terms of who would go in. Both of those guys are ready to go if the situation arises. The way we’re approaching that is opponent specific. What’s the help of our team? Who’s the other team? We’re just going to go into the game plan with a case-by-case basis.”

**On if CB Ryan Smith will play Sunday:**

“I don’t think so. We’re going to see here this afternoon. If he doesn’t go, we’re hoping to get [CB] Kemon [Hall] back. If we can do that, we’ll have our ten [defensive backs].”

**On replicating crowd noise:**

“The big thing with crowd noise is that a lot of people pump music in. That’s not what’s being played as the down’s going on. What we want is for it to sound like a crowd. I think that’s where sometimes you can mistake crowd noise for crowd music. We want to replicate the roar of the crowd. That’s what we try to do; just bring in the noise, not the music. Sometimes you can crank a bunch of music and it’s too loud. That’s not realistic in terms of what the game really sounds like. What we try to do is replicate the actual environment, which is just noise. That’s what it is when people are cheering loudly — it’s just noise. We’ll try to do that the best we can when we’re on the road.”

**On if CB Ryan Smith will be placed on Reserve/Injured:**

“We would have to do that, short-term. Then, we’d bring [CB] Kemon [Hall] back.”

**On Washington’s offense and QB Ryan Fitzpatrick:**

“I think the core of the offense is the same. I think that what they’ll do with him is you can truly maximize your gameplan because of all the experiences that he’s had. You can draw on some of the strengths that he’s had in his different experiences. The thing about defending Ryan is that you’re not going to give him a look that he hasn’t seen. He’s played extremely well the last three years. When I was in Chicago, that 2018 Tampa [Bay Buccaneers team] was first in the NFL in passing, when I defended him back then. And then last year, getting ready for Miami, he was playing well last year with Miami. I’ve gotten to see him up close throughout my time in the NFL. Not only is he a quality quarterback, but he’s a guy that takes command of the huddle. He’s a guy that everyone feels confident in. I think he has that nickname for a reason, because people believe in him. I think that was a good signing by Washington. I expect them to improve a lot at the quarterback position.”

**On Washington’s depth on the perimeter:**

“The [WR Curtis] Samuel signing was a really big addition for their offense. I know that [Head Coach] Ron [Rivera] and those guys in Carolina had a really high opinion of him. I know that when I was at other places, he’s a guy we had a lot of respect for. He’s gotten better as he’s gone on in his pro career. I’ve also got a lot of respect for [WR] Terry McLaurin. Getting ready from last year, I think this is one of the top up-and-coming receivers in the NFL. We put together a reel last year of him against some of the best cover corners in the NFL. We played them early last year, so we went back to the year before. This guy’s got real speed. He can run the route-tree from anywhere, outside, or inside. He runs hard. What that does is it puts pressure on you every snap defensively. I think that he’s proven himself in the NFL as being an explosive playmaker. He’s only going to get better. I’m a huge fan of his game. It’s going to be a big challenge for us. And then as it relates to the runners, these runners are good. Going into the plan last year, we had respect for both of them. The Buffalo rookie [RB Jaret Patterson] did really well in preseason — he’s a quality back, as well. They just complement each other well. They can pass protect. They’re real weapons in the backfield, catching the football. As that season went on last year, they became more and more dangerous. I know [RB Antonio] Gibson had over 1,000 scrimmage yards. That’s not surprising when we played them. Those are two real assets. [TE] Logan Thomas has had a tremendous career. It’s a great story. I defended him at some other places, but he’s really found a home there and is doing an outstanding job for them. Then, they’ve added some pieces up front, too. When I played them last year, they weren’t as healthy up front. But now, they brought in [LT Charles] Leno from Chicago. They drafted [RT Sam] Cosmi in the first round. They get [G] Brandon Scherff healthy. They’ve got a much more quality front to play against. I expect to see a much more dangerous offense.”

**On the team heading into Week 1 of the regular season:**

"I think we're ready for game week. That last practice we had was the first time that I felt like, 'OK, let's get on with it.' We were really pouring into our team. There's a lot of people that get bored with the preseason. I'm certainly not one of them because there's so much investment you have to make in your own team before you're ready to go play someone else. I've felt like, especially with this being year one in our program, that we really needed to focus on the Chargers throughout training camp. What was good about last week was when we had some of that good, healthy competition. It almost felt like we'd done this. Now, it's time to play somebody else, which is where you want to be. You feel like you've maximized your training camp. I know this morning guys got their rest and now they're ready for an opponent to prepare for. That's an awesome feeling when your guys are excited about game week. Now, it's time to get on to the preparation, and there's a lot of preparation that we need to get going on."

**On if the team had any players test positive today for COVID-19:**

"Not that I'm aware of."

**On how well he knows Washington Head Coach Ron Rivera:**

"I don't know him well. I know some people that have worked directly with him. I know that when I was in Chicago, how that organization felt about him. I know some people that were around him in the past — whether it was at Cal or other places. I know the integrity of him as a person, and certainly the cancer story. I think all of us were amazed by the job he did under the circumstances last year; taking that team to the playoffs in a COVID-19 year, a pandemic year, and then a cancer year for himself. It was also year one of a program. When he got to that place, there was a lot going on with that team. For him to change the culture, go through a COVID-19 year, go through a cancer journey, I think there's no better example of leadership than that. I've always had a lot of respect for him and his body of work at Carolina speaks for itself. This guy is a Super Bowl coach, he's an NFL Coach of the Year. I have a tremendous amount of respect for him and their whole staff."

**On COVID-19 protocols for road games:**

"The NFL sent a memo out last week with some of the updates. We're still going to have to travel in masks, on the bus and on the plane, and then all of the protocols that everyone's aware about in terms of unvaccinated versus vaccinated. All of us are learning so much about the close-contact tracing, what an important issue that is, and designing your ecosystem accordingly. Every day, we're trying to update and be as good as we can be; stay current and educate our guys. As we know, this is such a serious thing and little things can make a big difference. That's what we're trying to do with our team."

**On the team traveling on Saturday rather than Friday for a trip to the Eastern Time Zone:**

"In the past, West Coast teams traditionally would leave Friday. What we found at the last place I was at is that you want to establish your rhythm as much as possible. To do that, sleeping in your own bed Friday is important for staying on your sleep schedule. Then, waking up early Saturday morning, getting your meetings done with, get on the plane, fly there, eat, have your night meetings. Then, you wake up and you go play. What happens is if you go a day early, you get in there late at night, then your sleep schedule isn't the same. You don't sleep as well Friday night, because you're not sleeping in your own bed. So, you don't sleep as well Friday. Then Saturday, you're in the hotel all day long. Literally, all day long. There are real residual effects from that. What we found last year is that if you leave Saturday, you get to keep your sleep schedule Friday. And then Saturday, you still have your normal meeting schedule. You land, eat, have a reset, get re-wired. When you think about it, when we play on Sunday, it's almost like training camp practice — we're playing at 10 a.m. PT. We started our practices at 9 a.m. and we were on the field at 8:45. It's open your blinds, get some sunlight in, get a shower and go play. I feel like that was the best strategy for us moving forward, in terms of a health and safety, sleep-performance standpoint."

## **WIDE RECEIVER KEENAN ALLEN**

### **On Washington CB William Jackson III:**

“Physical. Obviously, they have [Washington S] Landon Collins back, bringing in some energy there. He’s is a great guy, a great athlete. I liked him in Cincinnati. I thought he played well last year against us. He competes well. A first-round guy, so you have to bring your A-game.”

### **On if playing in front of fans will have a significant impact after last season:**

“No, I don’t think so. Football is football at the end of the day for us. It will bring another level of energy and excitement, and just a different level of intensity.”

### **On any potential ‘rust’ by not playing in the preseason:**

“I don’t think so. We have been playing football almost every day since OTAs, so there’s not really any rust, I don’t think. The game speed will pick up. Everything will be faster. I think there just settling into the game speed will be the biggest thing.”

### **On the addition of the week between the final preseason game and Week 1 of the regular season:**

“Amazing. Big rest. [Head] Coach [Brandon Staley] always looks out for us, and then we get that extra weekend; I think that’s good for the player’s health.”

### **On how the team approached last week’s set of practices:**

“It’s like training camp with a little bit of focus. Like I said, you get an extra week, so you get a whole extra week to look at those guys and kind of pick up a gameplan — start focusing on things and start seeing what they are doing. You get a chance to look at it a whole week earlier instead of playing a preseason game and worry about getting injured, so I think it’s great.”

### **On a benefit of the extra week between the final preseason game and Week 1 of the regular season:**

“Rest. Rest, for sure. Like I said, it is a bonus week, so everything this past week was extra — even the reps that we were able to walk through, just looking at what they like to do. Little things that you don’t get to rep because it would have been a preseason week, so you just get that extra week and start to feel good.”

### **On being named a team captain:**

“A big deal. Obviously, it’s a big accomplishment for the guys to see you as a captain. Hopefully, I can keep that role up.”

### **On the group of players that were named team captains:**

“At some point in time, the team captains have to be the guys that make the plays. Take it for what it’s worth. To me, it’s a no-brainer who the captains are, but you have to vote, so it is what it is.”

### **On the wide receiver group:**

“Versatile. We have guys that can do everything. Obviously, me, then you have [WR] Mike Williams, the best 50-50 guy in the league. His route running is just getting better every day. His release moves get better every day. He’s just becoming a full number one guy. JG [Jalen Guyton], he can take the top off. He’s a speed guy. His routes are getting better, as well. [WR] Josh Palmer, he’s a guy that I was impressed in camp. Being able to come in and run routes — as good as he is, and as young as he is, he can run routes pretty good. His releases are good. He’s physical. He has a [Saints WR] Michael Thomas kind of playstyle. He’s physical. He’ll beat you up a little bit. [WR] KJ [Hill Jr.], he’s my guy. He’s going to come in and do what I do, and he’s going to do it well. He’s going to be effective. He knows how to play football. He was with [Ohio State Wide Receivers Coach] Brian [Hartline] down at Ohio State, so he has great knowledge of the game. We have guys that can play. Then, put us with [QB Justin] Herbert, [TE] Jared Cook, [TE Donald] Parham, [TE] Stephen [Anderson], [RB Austin] Ekeler out of the backfield, [RB] Justin Jackson — we have some numbers.”

## **OUTSIDE LINEBACKER JOEY BOSA**

### **On if he enters the 2021 regular season 'as good as he has ever felt':**

"I would not say that this is the best that I've ever felt, going into year six. I feel great. I think that I feel as good as I could, under these circumstances, of the wear and tear of my body over the last five years. But no, I feel great. I feel ready to go. I felt that this offseason, [Head Coach Brandon Staley] did a great job taking care of us. We just had three days off — that was much needed, I think we were all beat and moving around like a bunch of snails out there the last day of practice. I feel really good. Saying that I've felt better is just age more than anything, but physically, I definitely feel that I'm performing probably the best that I ever have."

### **On the start of the regular season:**

"I'm excited to play against some other people. We're all sick of seeing each other every single day. We're ready to get out there. It's going to be interesting to see just how it works, how the misdirection and all of the different sorts of things that Coach Staley likes to do, it's going to be interesting to see how effective it is against another team."

### **On Washington DE Chase Young:**

"He's great. I haven't watched much of him. I know that my brother's probably followed him more closely, they were together [at Ohio State]. I've met Chase a few times, he was a really nice kid — he really wanted to learn. I went out and did some drills with [Ohio State Associate Head Coach/Defensive Line] Coach [Larry] Johnson a few years ago and he was really attentive, watching it all and helping out with everything. I went to dinner that night with him, too, at Coach Johnson's house. He was a very nice kid. It was great to get to meet him. He's obviously one hell of a player, a freak athlete. He had a great rookie season. I definitely heard his name a lot last year. It's a testament to Coach Johnson, what he teaches and how we do things at Ohio State. He's a great player. I'm excited to see the matchup again with [T] Rashawn [Slater] and him."

### **On how he has helped T Rashawn Slater develop:**

"Me playing against him. I like Rashawn, I think that he's a really good player. He's a nice kid, so I've been trying to mess with him a little bit over the last month or whatever. As we keep going, I like to talk ball with the tackles, especially when they're good players — 'What did you see here with me?' Then, he can ask me, 'How did I get on this set? Did I give up this or that?' He's done a really good job of learning from his mistakes. When he beats me, I learn, and when I beat him, he learns. It was a great camp for both of us, I think. I think that he helped me a lot, to be able to go against a really quality player like he is. I think that he got better, tremendously, as the camp went on. Obviously, he was out for a little bit with that back, but he's feeling good now. There's not really any pointers that I can give him. I think that he's prepared. We've had a lot of great practices against each other. I think [Washington DE] Chase [Young] rushes similarly, in some ways, so he's going to have a little taste of it, but he's faced him — I don't know how many times in college. I think he is going to be prepared. It's obviously going to be a battle, though."

### **On new a new aspect of his game that's been developed since learning the new defensive scheme:**

"Mostly the dropping aspects that I have. I'm wide out there — I'm in a two-point [stance] a bit more. I kind of like being able to see things, be a little more relaxed in my stance. Other than that, I'm still playing similar techniques to what I've always played. The dropping assignments, and just seeing the whole offense, is definitely more on my plate."

### **On preparing to potentially drop into pass coverage:**

"Yeah, hopefully I'm not matched up on [Washington WR Terry] McLaurin, or they did something wrong schematically. That would not be a very good defense. If I have to, I'll do my best."

### **On Washington QB Ryan Fitzpatrick:**

"I don't think that I've faced him yet. He's a dynamic player. It seems like he's been around forever. He wins wherever he goes. I haven't watched much film yet on him, but he is a guy that can make things happen with his feet if he has to, so that's something that you have to be aware of. He's a good player. I think that this team is definitely a good team. Have to watch film first, still. I'm focused on the Chargers right now."