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## Chargers Week 14 Media Availability

Friday, December 9, 2022 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

### HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

#### **On injuries defensively and the challenge that the Dolphins' offense presents:**

"It'll be a big challenge for us, regardless of if we had all of our players out there. They have a very good skill group. They've been prolific scoring the football, moving the football. Our guys have had a really good week of practice. I know that if we have to go into that game with some different guys, then they're going to be well-prepared, and that we put in a gameplan that gives them a chance to go out and compete. This is a very good team that we're playing."

#### **On if DB Ja'Sir Taylor will fill CB Bryce Callahan's role if Callahan does not play:**

"That would probably be the direction if Bryce [Callahan] cannot go, yes."

#### **On S Derwin James Jr.'s potential to play on Sunday and, if he does not play, how much that impacts the unit:**

"You may scale back some groupings, for sure, where they were kind of specific to Derwin [James Jr.], but we'll see if that happens. Our guys that are going to go out there have played in games. We know how to use them. We know the group that we're playing against. We're going to try and play to the strengths of the group, like we always do. Again, we're going to give them a gameplan that they can go out and compete and execute. I've been really pleased with the way that we have practiced this week. I'm excited to see our guys on Sunday night."

#### **On 'personnel of dime sub-packages' due to injuries:**

"It could be a combination of players, in terms of what six-DB grouping — whether we would bring in another corner or a safety, I think that would probably depend. [S] Raheem Layne, [S] JT Woods, [CB] Kemon Hall, all of those guys have been trained in our six-DB packages. I guess you'll see on Sunday night."

#### **On if T Foster Sarell will start at right tackle:**

"Yes, Foster [Sarell] is going to start. [T] Trey [Pipkins III] is going to, probably, be another week."

#### **On 'if the offense hasn't gotten as much production on advantage calls' this year compared to last year:**

"I think that's fair to say. Last year, it was a big part of our operation. Certainly, those are guys that do that at a high level. You're always trying to build in those types of plays. Sometimes, it's the look. Last year, there was a lot of production in that phase — the RPO phase, the movement phase — that when a lot of things happen to your team, you're changing a little bit. You cannot just be same as. We've had to make a lot of those adjustments. Hopefully, when we can get this group back together, we can finish the season playing our best football on offense."

**On 'losing that part of the offense' and the impact that has had on the run game:**

"When you have premium players on the field, it creates more space for others. It's about spacing and it's about respect of all 11 on the field. When you have [WR] Mike Williams, [WR] Keenan Allen, [WR] Joshua Palmer, [TE] Gerald Everett and [RB] Austin [Ekeler] on the field, there's the respect for all five players and it creates more space for everybody. When I say everybody, it's all of those guys; the quarterback, the line. It just creates more space. It's going to be exciting to get this group back. Our big goal is to play a football game in this game, to play our best in this game. Put together a good plan for this game and go execute. It's been a good week of practice with this team. We're excited to go play."

**On 'coaching the mental side' of a 'late push' to the playoffs:**

"If you look at the construction of this team, we have a lot of guys who have been there, we just haven't had guys that have been there with the Chargers. That was the goal for us, to bring in as many people who have that type of pedigree to our organization. Then, the challenge for us is to do it together here. When you look at our team, we have had players who have done that, but the challenge is to do it here and do it together. That's what we're searching for. It takes time for a team to come together. When it happens during a season, it is always different, depending on how the season goes. I like the group that we have out there because I do think that we have the experience, I do think that we have the caliber of players to win this week and to win these games down the stretch that you need to win. It's your team coming together, though, to utilize all of that experience that they have to make it happen here."

**On QB Justin Herbert's 'development of chemistry' with Palmer and WR DeAndre Carter with the absence of Allen and Williams this season:**

"With things that have happened to our team, it creates opportunities for others. [TE] Gerald [Everett], DeAndre [Carter] and Josh [Palmer], those guys are having career years. That's something that you're excited about. When you talk about silver linings, the truth of the season is that those guys have had to step up, and they have stepped up. They haven't just been out there playing, they've been playing well for us. Then, when you get your guys back, now they have even more confidence in their game and you, probably, have even more confidence in them in activating them in some ways that maybe you didn't before. Those guys have really held the rope for us this year. I'm really proud of those guys. Hopefully, we can get this group back together. D.P. [TE Donald Parham Jr.], I don't want to leave him out. If we get everybody back together here down the stretch, hopefully, we can play the way that we're capable of."

**On if Parham will be activated off of Reserve/Injured; Designated for Return tomorrow:**

"We're going to see. We wanted him to practice this week and get a full week of practice, then we'll make those determinations. If not this week, then soon."

## **WIDE RECEIVER KEENAN ALLEN**

### **On the possibility of WR Mike Williams returning to the lineup on Sunday:**

"It would be good. We would have another weapon, another guy who can make big plays for us. When it comes down to it, he can be one of the guys that can make a big play for us."

### **On 'if every game is now a must-win':**

"Yes."

### **On 'if it is a daunting task for every game to be a must-win game':**

"No, I don't think so. You come into the season wanting to win all 17 [games]. Same mindset."

### **On if the offense is 'under more pressure to score' with injuries to the defense:**

"I don't think it's pressure at all. I think it will just be knowing the task at hand. We'll have to complement each other even better, play a better game and execute better than we have been doing."

### **On his message to teammates regarding 'an upcoming playoff push':**

"This is when you become a professional. You show up every day, like I said, you leave everything on the line and you never give up. You fight to the end. It's what we signed up for."

### **On 'keys' for the offense on Sunday:**

"Being prepared for their scheme. They run a lot of blitz packages, a lot of different ones, a lot of different sets. They are great all over the field."

### **On if he is '100 percent healthy':**

"Yes."

### **On if he has 'realized' that he and Williams have not played a full game together yet this season:**

"Yeah."

### **On the impact of Williams to the offense:**

"A great deal. It's going to be amazing because [WR] Josh [Palmer] has been a guy who has been making plays for us week-in and week-out all season with me and Mike [Williams] being injured. You get all three of us on the field, and now you have to double [coverage] me and Mike or maybe even Mike and Josh. Somebody is going to get a single [coverage] that we really like and it's going to be fun."

### **On WR Joshua Palmer's growth this season:**

"A great deal. Like I said, he's been having to play the number one role for — what week are we on? How do we still have five games left in Week 14? Oh it's 18 [weeks], now [*laughter*]. That's why. He's been the number one guy for about 12 weeks now. That, in itself, gives him the experience to know what he is up against. Now, he comes back as the, probably, number three now, when me and Mike get back. It's going to be easier for him."

### **On Dolphins CB Xavien Howard:**

"I would imagine he would follow me or Mike [Williams]. He'll do his thing. He's a great cornerback."

## **QUARTERBACK JUSTIN HERBERT**

### **On WR Mike Williams returning to the lineup:**

“Any time you have Mike [Williams] back out there, it’s huge. Whether he plays or not, we’ll see in the next couple of days. Just having him back out there, the energy he brings, it’s always good for the team.”

### **On if it has been ‘limiting’ without Allen or Williams:**

“It’s always a tough situation when you don’t have those guys out there. They are two of the best to do it. Any time you have those guys out there, something special is going to happen. Having one is much better than having none. Those guys have fought and competed. They are both trying to get out there as fast as they can. Whatever happens, happens and we’re thankful to have those guys around.”

### **On how much the offense has ‘lost advantage looks’ with injuries to Allen and Williams:**

“I think it’s something that we could always do a better job at. Like you mentioned, we did a pretty good job last year of finding those freebies and just getting some yards. We have done our best to do that this year. Not having Mike [Williams] and Keenan [Allen], it kind of puts stress on our offense, but those guys have done a great job, when they are available and healthy. They are doing everything they can to get back out there. Any time you get those guys out there, it definitely opens up the offense.”

### **On if the ‘decreased opportunities for advantage looks’ are due to the injuries of Williams and Allen:**

“When you miss Mike [Williams] and Keenan [Allen], I think the defense is able to play you differently. Having those guys out there, it kind of opens up your playbook and allows defenses to have to deal with that. When you lose those tough matchups, it’s kind of tough. Just having those guys around, it opens up our offense. It gives us more ability to do some things because those guys are two really special, talented receivers.”

### **On if defenses can ‘take away advantage looks’ if either Williams or Allen are available:**

“Yeah, that’s the tough part about the NFL. If you are going to one guy, they are going to double him, and you have to find other guys to win. That’s why [WR] Josh [Palmer] and [WR] DeAndre [Carter] have done such a great job of stepping up and finding those, and beating those, one-on-one matchups. It’s been great to have those guys.”

### **On if there was a ‘silver lining’ to developing chemistry with Palmer and Carter with Allen and Williams missing games due to injury:**

“I think that’s definitely a good way of looking at it. You have to find a way to win. When you are down those two receivers, like we mentioned, Josh [Palmer] and DeAndre [Carter] Dre, [TE] Gerald [Everett], they have to step up. Josh has done an outstanding job this year of stepping up and becoming that one receiver. When you get all of those guys healthy and back, Josh, he will continue to do his work. He will be great on the practice field, out in the game. We trust him. He’s comfortable. It’s been great to see from him.”

### **On C Corey Linsley:**

“He is a leader. He has done such a great job with that offensive line group. He has seen so much football. He has seen so many different fronts, coverages, that he has such a great feel for the game, especially in our run game. He’s able to get up to the line of scrimmage and get going. That’s one of the biggest things for our offense of just going up there and playing fast and playing fearless. It’s definitely good to see him back out there practicing this week.”

### **On the difficulty of opposing defense’s pass rush over the last three weeks and adjustments made:**

“I feel like we have done a pretty good job of watching film throughout the week and having a pretty good protection plan. We can always be better. Like we said, last week, the Raiders, they brought some stuff that they haven’t shown all year. We did our best to adjust during the game. We weren’t perfect, but we made some steps. That is something that we’re going to have to look at, last week, and say, ‘All right, how can we avoid that going into the next week?’ We know that Miami has done a great job of disrupting the passer and bringing those rushes. Being able to watch as much film as we can, have a good protection plan and going through every single look that they might potentially bring, It will help in the long run.”

**On if seeing 'new looks' is 'part of the NFL':**

"It's part of the plan of having answers and knowing where can I get the ball off quick if they bring more guys that we have to block. Just knowing where your hot answers are, knowing where to get it out to and knowing, especially, where they are coming from. If they do come from the left, kind of drifting to the right, maybe being able to buy yourself some time to get the ball off. Just knowing that and having a good feel for that, I think that helps a ton, too."

**On 'what it would mean for the team' to make the playoffs:**

"I think it would mean a lot for us. We have been through a lot this year; ups and downs. Those guys, they haven't flinched at all. 6-6 is where we are at. There is a lot of football left to be played — a lot of opportunities — and it starts this Sunday. Guys are thankful for the opportunity to be here, to be able to work and play football and do exactly what they have always wanted to do. For us to be around here, I know guys are enjoying the process of getting better and looking forward. Had a good week of preparation and excited for Sunday."

**On if what it would mean for him, personally, to make the playoffs:**

"I think it would mean the most for our team. I think so highly of our teammates and this coaching staff, this organization. That's what they deserve. We're going to do everything we can to win and go out there and play our best. All you can control is your attitude and your effort. I know that, every week, these guys have shown up and gave their best. That's what I am really thankful for."

**On if he saw the ending of the *Thursday Night Football* game last night:**

"I, unfortunately, did not watch it, but I heard it was impressive."

**On if he can 'envision' Rams QB Baker Mayfield's 'scenario':**

"It's definitely not easy. I have a lot of respect for him, to be able to step in that quickly and get that done and get the win against a really good Raiders football team that we played last week. A lot of respect for that decision and that week of practice."

**On if having Allen and Williams available will 'allow him to get the ball out quicker':**

"They have a really good feel for things like that. Keenan [Allen] has been around so long that he has been able to see those pressures. If they are bringing more guys than we have to block, he's [a] friendly [receiver] and is able to kind of give our eyes and get the ball off quick. Definitely having those guys out there definitely helps"

## **OUTSIDE LINEBACKER KHALIL MACK**

### **On the challenge the Dolphins' offense presents if DL Sebastian Joseph-Day does not play:**

"It's always challenging when you lose guys like Sebastian [Joseph-Day], understanding what he means to the interior of our defense. It's just going to be all hands on board and making sure we have guys coming in that can come in and make an impact right away in the run game."

### **On the potential of being without S Derwin James Jr. on Sunday:**

"Like I said, guys have to step up. Understanding the situation, you have to guys come in that play ball and play ball and be noticed in a good way. Not saying that they can't play at that level, but understanding the situation and coming in and giving us a chance."

### **On if potentially playing without James Jr. 'puts more responsibility on him to be more vocal':**

"When you think about the flow of the game and talking, it's more action-based. You have to be more action-based and getting the guys fired up in that way. He will be missed out there, from that standpoint, from a vocal standpoint, but also understanding how football works, you have to make plays to kind of get the guys going. That's going to be my mindset going into the game."

### **On his message to teammates regarding 'an upcoming playoff push':**

"Ultimately, for younger guys, you can't really put the pressure on them when you say stuff like, 'Make a playoff push,' and all of these different things. You have to say things like, 'Winning the down,' or, 'Winning your one-on-ones.' Just doing your job. That's all we have to do, give ourselves a chance. That starts with just winning one game at a time. Just focusing in on the Dolphins and understanding the game plan and understanding the scheme that they have and the players that they have, as well. Just going out and executing at a high level."

### **On the 'feel of the team' this week with WR Keenan Allen and WR Mike Williams both at practice:**

"It's always great when you get two great players back. I know [QB] Justin [Herbert] is excited this week, as well. Just understanding how the game works, you can't really focus too much on the positives, in a sense, when you think about getting the guys back. I'm thinking, solely, about how I can be effective and how the defense can be effective in holding this team to being a low-scoring team. They average a crazy amount of points per game. It's on us to hold it down and be an asset to the offense."

### **On if he 'saw something' in Herbert at practice that 'makes him excited':**

"No, I am saying from the standpoint of having both of his major weapons out there. I know it's going to be fun for him. Just understanding the game of football, I can kind of guess that he's going to be excited."

### **On if Herbert was 'doing cartwheels':**

"No [*laughter*]. Can he do a cartwheel?"

### **On Dolphins QB Tua Tagovailoa:**

"He's a quick-release guy. He knows where he wants to put the football. The challenge, I feel like it would be for the defensive backs, is to get him off of his first ready and try to give us a little time to get there because he does get rid of that ball quick."