

# TRANSCRIPTS

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## Chargers Week 3 Media Availability

**Friday, September 24, 2021 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.**

### HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

#### **On OLB Joey Bosa:**

"I think we're going to list Joey as questionable. [RB] Justin [Jones] is doubtful. They both have been working out with our training staff. We're going out a lot more after today. Both of those guys are still up in the air. Then we're going to rule [CB] Chris Harris [Jr.] as out for this game."

#### **On Bosa's ankle:**

"It's responded well. It is football stuff, it's not anything serious or long term. It's sore, for sure. It's definitely loosed up as the week's gone on. Today he did even more than he did yesterday. We're just trying to be careful. I think with him and [DL] Justin [Jones], those guys have earned the right to be closer-to-the-game type decisions for us. He's definitely improving; both guys are really improving."

#### **On his 'closer to game decision making' about Bosa:**

"It's a real case-by-case basis. No two players are the same. I think he's one of those players I have full confidence in, and I'd say the same for [DL] Justin Jones. Those guys have played a lot of football in the league and have been awesome with the game plan. We've been able to get them out there in walk-throughs. I think the way we do things, the walk-throughs matter a lot for us. That gives them the chance to maybe not practice during the week, but still have a chance to play in the ball game. We'll see how it goes."

#### **On if playing a division rival is easier on players that miss practice:**

"That could be the case. I think with Kansas City, although [OLB] Joey's [Bosa] played against them, their personnel's a lot different. The O-line that's been blocking him over the course of his career there is much different than it is now. They basically have five new starters. They still have a lot of the same pieces from a skilled position standpoint, but teams change a little bit from year to year. I think with us, we really try to keep the focus on us. If he has full command over what he's doing, then we feel good about him being able to go play against whoever that team might be. Because he has command over our game plan. That's the big thing like, 'Hey, does he know what we're doing?' I feel like both those guys [OLB Joey Bosa and DL Justin Jones] have been able to do this week, and we'll see where their health is tomorrow before we leave."

#### **On the 'gap and a half' philosophy:**

"There are a lot of different ways to play in the NFL. If there was one way to play, we'd all be doing it. My belief system is to play really thick and physical on blocks, because I know that has a real impact on what's behind you. That style of play contributes to how we play behind the D-line from a coverage-system standpoint. There is an adjustment because the scheme before was much different. They're opposite of us. They're more of an attack, gap, penetrate-type team. There's a little bit of a learning curve, just as there is with our secondary. If you're more of a man team and you play zone, or vice versa, there's always a little bit of an adjustment. I think that we're still in that process of unpacking a lot of those details of the fundamentals. That's why I put all those things up front on me, to be able to teach it better, explain it better. Put them through more scenarios. I think the more these guys play together and play those techniques, the more they're going to have command over them. It's not an ability issue."

**On elevating DL Joe Gaziano in Week 2:**

“Joe did a good job in the game for us coming in. He gives us versatility. He does give us some pass rush in there, and he does have the ability to actually go on the edge if he had to, if we were ever to play some four-down stuff. All three of those guys are doing well. [DL] Forrest [Merrill] had kind of a little bit of a toe thing last week, too. All three of those guys are competing hard, but right now we feel like [DL] Joe [Gaziano] is that guy for us. But it’s ongoing, and I’m glad we have all three of those guys.”

**On players responding to his ‘teaching better’:**

“Our guys are all in. That team that we just played is a really, really good offense. All you had to do was take a look at their first game and who they played; and the defense they were playing against in that first game. I know the defense we had last year when we played them in our first game, we didn’t have our best stuff. We didn’t look like the same team that we looked like at the end of the year when we were the number one defense in the NFL. I felt like there were a lot of really good things in the game. Specifically, we held them to a really low point total. That team traditionally scores well into the 30s. And when you hold them to 20 — really 17 — I felt like that was really outstanding. We were able to put a roof over the coverages for the most part. Make it really tough on them. And then in the run game there were a lot of instances of really good run defense. Against a good team, it takes just a couple of plays — including from me — where you unpack some yards that you could’ve avoided. By just playing together more and learning more, those things won’t happen as we go. That’s why I put the ownership on me. We have to continue to put these guys through all these paces. When you’re at the beginning of something, you’re going to have some things like that. Our group is really fun to coach, and they improve every time they go out there. I know that we have the right character guys to be coaching. As it relates to the scheme, if you talk to our players, they feel more confident every single day. We give better at teaching it, and I think we’re going to keep getting better as we go.”

**On the score of the game against the Cowboys:**

“We felt like the end of the game was a better reflection of how we played. 20 points was on the scoreboard, but we just felt like if we were to play that team several times, we’d be able to live with that point total. That team is such a prolific team. I felt like in that game, if we’d finished that job in two minute, we would’ve been really happy about our day. Our group on defense is a work in progress, but I feel like our guys, every time we go out there, they feel a lot more in command of what we’re doing. As we go this season, we’re going to get used to playing together. I think you’re going to see good things moving forward. We play a lot of tough teams offensively this year. and every year. There’s a lot of really good offenses. You have to get your feet on the ground playing against other people, seeing other styles. When I say you get better as you go, the more you unpack the NFL, the better you get at playing against the NFL. All these different styles you’re going to face is only going to help our team moving forward. As a group, we’re seeing stuff for the first time together.”

**On stopping the run in the ‘two-high safety scheme’:**

“A light box would be if you’re playing with limited people in the box. Like against a one back if you were in a six-man box, if you’re in a two-back set with a seven-man box. We don’t do that a lot. We play with an eighth defender that’s included in the run fit. He just may be coming from farther than what people are used to. Where normally when you see an eight-man front, you have eight guys lined up there, ready to stop the run. They’re lined up that way. We play a lot of eight-man fronts, they’re just coming from farther away. What that does is gives us the illusion of disguise and we can unpack different post-snap rotations as a result of it. When people talk about lighter boxes, it might start out as a light box, but it’s not ending up as a light box. And then there’s sometimes in some games where you want to do that. Where, ‘Hey we really want to devote a lot of our resources to the passing game.’ It’s a balance of both. In the runs from last Sunday, those were all good run structures of us that we just need to play better.”

**On early-down efficiency:**

“I think a lot of that is penalties and going backwards. That EPA [expected points added] gets distorted when you take penalties into account. That’s when you take a look at some of our passing play numbers and some of that, it gets affected by two 40-plus-yard gains getting taken off. Those would have been touchdowns, which also affects your EPA from a data standpoint. I know that we’re moving the football. I know we only punted one time last game, in the entire game. We didn’t punt very much in the first game. We were 14-for-19 on third downs and set an NFL record for over the last several years. I’m very happy how we’re moving the football. I think that we’re running the football better than I thought we would at this point. I really like how we’ve come together. We need to continue to do that so that we have balance in terms of the types of runs,

in terms of the types of passes. I feel like — in terms of the passing game, as you guys know, passing the ball on first down gives you a much better chance of being successful. I felt like we've been able to balance that, too. What I see out there is a difficult offense to defend. Now, what we have to do is, from an operational standpoint and a penalty standpoint, for sure — your point is very well taken. Down in the red area, making sure we finish drives with scores. To your point, when you talk about first-down efficiency — I think our first-down efficiency in the red area is a more specific place for me that our focus has been on."

#### **On the Chiefs special teams:**

"I think, coming into a game like this — an underrated part of this team has been special teams over the course since [Chiefs Head Coach] Andy Reid has been there. When we played them in Denver in 2019, I saw it live. This team can really run. They've organized their team to have a lot of team speed. They have really good returners and they've had good specialists. When you unpack special teams, when you have good specialists and when you have good returners, that usually is a very good place to start from a formula standpoint. Their special teams coordinator, Dave Toub, is an excellent coach. A lot of people have learned from him. He's been outstanding. I came from the Bears and he was a big fixture on those great [former Bears Head Coach and current Texans Associate Head Coach and Defensive Coordinator] Lovie Smith teams with [former Bears WR/KR] Devin Hester and all of those great special teams units that they had. We have full respect for this team. Like you mentioned, their specialists are good players. That's going to be a big part of the vertical field position in the football game."

#### **On correcting penalties:**

"I think everything that you're doing as a coach is always teaching, leading and competing — you're doing all three of those things. That's what, to me, the definition of a coach is — a teacher, a leader and a competitor. When you're talking about penalties, the teaching aspect comes from is this a technique issue? Is this something fundamental that is physical? Is this something fundamental from a scheme standpoint, where your technique is affected by what you're supposed to do? Then, how are they officiating the game? Maybe some of the penalties are a mechanics issue. Maybe it's more operational like getting in-and-out of the huddle, making sure that we get set. All of that good stuff in terms of mechanics. Are our play calls getting in on time? Are we communicating effectively enough within the huddle? Are we leaving too quickly or are we leaving too late? There are all of these little things to unpack when it comes to teaching. Then, I think that you have to show them other examples, too, from around the league — which is what I really enjoy, is being able to teach from past experiences from where I've been or throughout the league, was it last night in the Thursday Night [Football] game? There's so much that I think we all can learn from. I think the more that you can explain things to your players, the more clarity they will have and the more that they will be able to execute for you. I think through two weeks, I'm not excited about where we are but I know it's just the start. I know that our process is good. Now, we have to put that process into play and make it happen on the football field. I think what's good about our football team right now, whether it's coaches or players or our staff, is that we know where we are right now and we know where we need to go. We've had a good week of practice so far and that's all I can ask for."

#### **On calling the defense as the head coach:**

"I've loved it. I've loved every part of it. I think that's something I was looking forward to being a head coach was being able to impact all three phases of the game and the game management side of things. I think you're always going to get better as you go. I think from a communication standpoint, I've been proud of how we've communicated. Last game, I think, was a good test for us because there was a lot more happening in that game throughout the entire game. I felt like we made really good adjustments. I felt like we made really good adjustments, specifically defensively in the second half and played the way that I know that we can play. I felt like there were some good things. There was a two-point play decision. There was a fourth down decision. There was some two-minute at the end of the half — we didn't want to give them the ball back at the end of the half. Strategically, that's a really good offense and we knew we were going to get the ball at the start of the second half. We had that unfortunate penalty on the field goal, but I was proud of how we kind of unpacked that despite some of those penalties on that last drive, which affected the end of the half. You're constantly going back and you know that you can't call a perfect game. You know that, but what you can be proud of is what your intent was and are you good with how that unfolded. Then, once it's over with, I think that we all learned, in every game, what you can go back and do better moving forward. I think me being a brand new head coach, you have to learn quickly. That's what I'm trying to do is learn as fast as I can. I think there are just going to be so many things that happen for me, but I know I'll be ready for them."



### **On the rushing offense:**

"I think that you have to go into each game and know you can't play every game the way that you want to play it. You have to go into every game the way that you need to play it. That's different. I think when you have [QB] Justin [Herbert], you have a real luxury because there's so much that he's capable of. I think when you go into each game plan, what may be best for Justin may not be what's best for the team overall, depending on where we are in the other two phases. What I think that the running game does for a quarterback is that it gives you some breathers. You don't need a good running game to be a good play-action team, but what you need the running game for is the physical element of the game. There's a physicality to the game that's real. If you're just a passing team, there's a physical element to the game that the defense doesn't have to respect. That's the truth. The data will tell you that you don't need a run game to play the pass. You don't need that, but what the running game does for you is it brings a physical dimension to the football game. What the running game does that the passing game does not, is that that running game forces the defense to play blocks and to tackle. That happens on a run play — you must play blocks and you must tackle. In the passing game, those things don't have to happen. You don't have to play as many blocks and you may not have to tackle based upon [an] incomplete [pass] or not. So, what the running game does is it really challenges your physicality. That's why I think the running game is important to a quarterback because it's going to allow him to literally have more space to operate when you do throw the football. It's not that you need the run game to throw it, it's just what it gives the rest of your skill players. There's the truth of the run game from point A to point B — that is a quick way to gain yards. It's from point A to point B, it's a direct line. To turn your back and hand the ball off or from the shotgun, it's a more direct line. I think, with Justin, the great thing that you also have in the run game is that you have a dual-threat. You have a dual-threat from the shotgun. You have a dual-threat from under center. A guy that can truly make you believe what's happening in the run game. That's what I think we've been able to do a good job of through two games, is really make our runs look like passes both in the shotgun and under center. We're going to try to continue to make that a big part of our game moving forward."

### **SPECIAL TEAMS COORDINATOR DERIUS SWINTON II**

#### **On the punt coverage's improvement from Week 1 to Week 2:**

"Well, we've only punted three times. Officially, on the books, only twice. It was fine last week. We had the one opportunity, they fair caught it, they got a penalty and returned the ball to the offense, which was good — the way that they got it, not great. I think with three reps, it's hard to evaluate. In practice, we're getting as many reps as we can. We'd like to not keep punting a lot. That's a good thing. That means that the offense is on the field and scoring points, getting into scoring range, kicking field goals. It's been good, but it's hard to evaluate when you get three opportunities in two weeks, but hopefully it keeps that trend going. Hopefully, we don't increase those numbers too much."

#### **On WR KJ Hill Jr.'s decision to return a punt after he caught the ball inside of the Chargers' five-yard line:**

"It was a great decision. Did you not see it get out to the nine-yard line. It's better than being at the five. The thing would have checked up. He saw the blocking. [CB Tevaughn] T.C. [Campbell] had them blocked, [CB] Kemon [Hall] had them blocked. He had a lane. Unfortunately, he ran into T.C., who was trying to block the next guy. We had a lane. Getting out to the nine [-yard line], I think that the offense liked it better than being at the three. He made a decision, and like I said, we trust his decision-making. It was good. It wasn't a negative decision. He takes his last peek and he's like, 'Nobody's around me, this guy's not that close.' We had them covered up. He saw color and he got vertical. That's the best of the situation. We wouldn't be sitting here if it was a 97-yard touchdown, so the decision was good. He didn't get tackled for a loss. He got positive yards. In that situation, it helped us get from backed up. Making those decisions, getting a feel for it, he has a great feel for those things. I think that it was a good thing, based on that one return."

**On the Cowboys' thought process on the punt that Hill returned:**

"Yeah, they were trying to pin us. Our corners are trying to cover those guys up. You're trying to just read it, as a returner, and go, 'Alright, is this thing going to check up, is my corner blocked, is their gunner free?' A lot of people drop their gunners early, we didn't. We felt like we could block them. [CB] Kemon [Hall] hold them a longer. We were fine. it's a feel thing. Do I take this lane? He took it. If you watch and slow it down from the end zone copy, you'll see that we have the thing blocked up on the right side. If he doesn't bump into T.C., who was trying to block for him, I think that we end up getting more yards than that. We all have the same philosophy. Peel is on the eight [-yard line], but it's also game situation — how do you feel doing it? He has a very good feel. As I told him, you want to catch it a little cleaner, so that it isn't stumbling, but he got positive yards, so that was a good decision."

**On if it's a bigger risk letting the punt bounce, rather than catching it cleanly:**

"The football is not a circle. It's not going to get on the ground and go up, so we'd love to predict that when it hits the ground, it's going to go in the end zone. We've seen multiple times — I mean, the team up north, they have a punter that wherever it hits. What does this punter do? How does he hit the ball this week? It's a lot of factors. As the week goes on, we keep watching and say, 'How does this guy hit it? What does the ball do? Does it bounce up? Does it go in the end zone? Does he hit a spiral? Does he hit it end over end? Those things go into his decision-making each week.'"

**On if he wants the punt returner to always field a punt that is destined to land inside of the 10-yard line:**

"It's all situational football, based off of what you know the fact that I just talked about — hang time, the gunners, are we blocking them well, are we up in the game, are we down in the game? Those things all go into factors. It's no catch-all for returners. It's not like high school where you put your heels on the eight [-yard line] and if it's over your head, then let it go. What if we have everybody blocked up and it's a clear lane? You talk to him about all if those things during the week. We talk about who their guns are. How do they play this plus-50? You talk about those things. What's the hang time? We chart all of those things. All of these things are going to factor for your returning to go into the week saying, 'Alright, how do I make the best decision for the team, given the situation?' We can say, but then we go and look at number 10 [Chiefs WR Tyreek Hill] for them. He gets the ball at the five-yard line, he goes in end zone, spins around, then he has a 90-yard touchdown and everyone's like, 'Oh my God, he's the greatest thing since sliced bread.' Just made the same decision that KJ Hill made. But, we look at the result It's not just a catch-all. It's just decision-making based on the factors, and also how they feel, their confidence and their ability. Managing that within the game, if you're down or if you're up. Because they've been up a few more times in the last few years, 17 [Chiefs WR Mecole Hardman] and 10 [WR Tyreek Hill] have a little bit more leeway to do those things. I think you've seen them just taking it out from nine [yards] deep on kickoff. You've seen them catch it inside of the five [-yard line]. Those things come into play. A lot of factors come into it."

**On if the returner can judge how a ball is going to land based on the flight path:**

"You can tell how it is. Like, a spiral will hit the point nine times out of 10. But, if it's indoor and you know that it's going to hit the fat of the ball, but you don't have a clue that if it hits the ground, where it's going to go. You just don't know. You're trying to judge it, but at the end of the day, if it hits the ground, you don't know. It's a factor of watching the film. Just a feel thing, really. It's hang time, too. If that thing's up there 4.5 [-second hang time], then the chances of when it hits, them being down there to down it, now that one, they weren't all the way in his face, they were behind them, so he felt like, 'Well, they're not behind me to down it, so I could probably take this out. Nobody's in front of me.'"

**On what he could have done differently on Cowboys K Greg Zuerlein's game-winning kick:**

"We applied pressure. If you go watch 29 [DB Mark Webb Jr.] for us — just go back and watch. He made a great kick. We schemed it up. We had an opportunity. The guy made a great kick. Think about this thing, everybody's bagging on this guy a week before. I told you guys, he's still a good kicker. Everybody was like, 'Fire this guy, get rid of him.' Let's not overreact. He's a good kicker. He's made a lot of good kicks. He did, he responded. They had confidence. Whether they meant to let 30 seconds run off and do that, we don't know. But, he stepped in and made a 56-yarder. You have to give credit to him. It's tough to block kicks in the NFL, it is just tough. You look at numbers, talk about onside kicks and recovering those, it is tough to block kicks. We had the best scheme possible. It's tough. We had the best scheme, we didn't block it, but the kid made a great kick."

**On 'how close' CB Asante Samuel Jr. was to blocking a field goal:**

"Close. He has juice off the edge. That's why you see him, [DB] Mark Webb [Jr.], [OLB] Chris Rumph, those three guys on the edge there. All three of them bring something different in our different rush packages. Asante just has a really good feel of bending the edge. We had talked about it during the week. It's like, 'Hey, man, this is going to be there.' You have to be willing to trust me. He just has a different feel for that. We don't rush them every time, but when we do, he really has a good feel for going."

**On his teaching methods for blocking a kick:**

"If you want to get into it, we can go through the whole thing; one, two, three [steps] is getting vertical, then four, five, you're bending, then six, seven, you're in heaven. He's not 6-foot-2, so he's not a guy that can just run through it like [Rams CB] Jalen Ramsey can, just run full speed, then you long enough to block. You bend, and you're trying to put your body flat. Imagine, when you were a kid, that you're coming home and jumping on your bed sideways, that's really what you're trying to do, land on your side. If you jump vertically towards the kicker, it's a penalty. It's really bending, get your hips sideways, getting flat and getting your hands extended. You're trying to get your outside hand extended because your body's longer. You're not long if you go here because you're short, you bring your hands there. We just talked about bending there, getting that one hand and trying to get extended there. That's really what we talk about, as far as bending. I've been around probably one of the best guys to do it, [Vikings CB] Patrick Peterson, and everything I just said he doesn't do it. He just doesn't. He goes, 'I'm really fast, I get off the edge, I go and I block kicks.' You can't coach some of these things. I guarantee you that if you go ask [Chiefs WR] Tyreek Hill how he returns touchdowns, he's like, 'I get the ball and I go, and I go really fast.' I have all the techniques in the world, but at the end of the day, God gave them gifts, and the good players use their gifts. Asante [Samuel Jr.], I can't coach him on how to get off faster. He has a really good get off, he just has a feel for it."

**On if he would have wanted Samuel to dive for the field goal block:**

"He just felt like, 'I came off and he was going extending,' He got the hand, he was just right there. If they know that the ball is already gone, they're like, 'What am I diving for?' It's just a feel thing. He knows how to do that. Sometimes you have to tell him to not lay out, because if it's fourth-and-three, I don't want you to get a running into the kicker. You don't want to get a penalty. It's just a feel thing."

**On K Tristan Vizcaino's performance through the first two games:**

"Good. Two weeks in, I think it's been good. He would tell you that he would want that kick back, right? What I really love is that he responded and he put us in a position to have a two-minute drive on defense, get the ball back and get them a game-winner. We had that opportunity. That's hard. We focus on the one that he missed, but at the end of the day, for him to bounce back in the second half, he came back and knocked that one down. That's been good. Kickoffs, their average drive start last week was the 21-yard line, which is great. He gives us hang time. He gives us direction. We can do so many things with him. His first two weeks were really good. I think that he would tell you that he wants to keep improving. It's a marathon. He's just going to keep improving. It's pleasing. He's going to work. That's what I love about him, he's going to work, and he's never satisfied."

**On if Vizcaino has the leg strength for a 59-yard attempt:**

"Yeah, I think so. We're not out here kicking 59-yarders every day. If we do the math, a 59-yarder, the spot would be from the 49 [-yard line]. If we did miss it, but he got it far enough, the head coach would be pissed that the ball is at the 50-yard line, so that's why people don't attempt those. That's why you don't see it a lot in those situations. End of half, with that clock, yeah, you probably would, with his leg, in a dome. Traditionally, you don't. I can play quarterback and at least hand it off three times, get us across the 50-yard line, then you can flip the field. Hypothetically, yes. I don't know. That'd be a decision for the head coach. The numbers say that in that situation, if there's three seconds left and you kick it, yeah, you go for points. Who are they going to put back there. If it's this week, if you go for a 59-yarder and you're short, and you have number 10 [Chiefs WR Tyreek Hill] back there, it's a different thing. Just a different monster. It's so many factors. That's why I ask if we're in hypotheticals because now I can get into a whole other world of thinking — do we go in field goal formation and let Tristan [Vizcaino] punt it down there and they don't have a returner back there. Now, we pin them down and we can get a safety with three seconds left on the clock. That's why I joke about hypotheticals because we can go down a rabbit whole."



**On how often they practice short field goals:**

"Every day. We like short and long ones. PATs are fine."

**On practicing covering kicks that could potentially be short:**

"Our field goal block team practices returning long field goals that end up short. Our field goal team always covers field goals 50 yards, even though he has a leg big enough, we want to get in the habit of that. If you're playing buffalo in December and the ball is going to hang up there, even on 40-yarder — I've seen that in Buffalo, you get that thing and hangs up there, put a returner back there. Our field goal team always practices 50 yards or more, covering it down just in case they have somebody back there. Our field goal block team, every week, we practice field goal return where we put a returner back there, we have a return off of our field goal block. That's situational football. That's stuff that we look at every week because you just don't know. We look at the situations in that game. We had to think about, 'OK, what was our last punt return call going to be if we stopped them in minus territory?' Different things like that. I was thinking, more than anything when we called the timeout, I'm thinking, 'This is a 56 [-yard field goal], [Cowboys K Greg] Zuerlein last week didn't look great. Should I put Nas [S Nasir Adderley] back there? Should I put D.J. [S Derwin James Jr.] back there if he kicks it short?' So many factors. I have many factors going through my head at that moment. I want to block it, but if he kicks it short, I want to return it because it's the last play of the game. Can we return this thing, then maybe it's a walk-off. So many things that go into it that you do practice throughout the week. The return thing is every two weeks, every three weeks, just making sure that they're fresh on those things, but it's those things that you have to think about because you never know. You look at this team [the Chiefs] and what they do. They're not conventional all of the time with their returns. They had a squib at the end of the half with a reverse last week. I just looked at Marshall last night, Marshall did the same exact play and everyone is calling them geniuses. All Baltimore did was give the ball off. Marshall didn't and they scored a touchdown. It's just so many factors on special teams that you have to account for. They have a great scheme. It's the same in every area. [Chiefs Assistant Head Coach/Special Teams Coordinator] Dave Toub has been doing it a long time. We showed some non-HD film, which scared the hell out of some of these players. You look at his track record. The list goes on and on. He's been doing this for a long time at a high level. I'm showing them that he's done reverses, fake reverses, throwbacks. Our guys have to be ready for all of these situations, especially a team in Kansas City that's done it, and the coach has done it, for a long time."

**On if S Nasir Adderley was 'ready to return kicks' against the Cowboys, based off of his injury from the week prior:**

"I think he was ready. We have a rotation. As the game goes, we see where it is. As I say, the depth chart is the depth chart in certain weeks. What are we doing? Are they going to give us a kick of the ball? [Cowboys K Greg] Zuerlein decided early in the game — you saw the first kickoff, it was in Row 12. When a kicker says that he's not giving you one, are you rotating a guy just to put him on film? [RB] Larry [Rountree III] started the game. It's not to say that if they would have put it in play, that's what we would have done. This guy this week, they've covered less than like five kicks this year. You have your scheme. Nas, he's getting reps, but you can't start both of them. Then, you just have to have a feel for the game. Same thing as on offense and defense."

**On when the team is prepared to attempt an onside kick:**

"Always. Always ready for those things. We always have things up. It's always communicated. We're trying to get to 11 to make it a three-point game, so we knew. We were ready to kick the field goal. We were ready to go for two. We're always ready. We have special plays up on every phase every week, so we're always ready in case we get called upon in certain scenarios. We have them pre-loaded. If this scenario comes up, and it's a perfect storm, we'll do this. We have onside kicks, surprises, every week. Kansas City, we have a surprise every week, just like I'm sure they do, just in case those things come up. We always have those things ready. When we went for two, we kind of ran out there and were like, 'OK, we're going for two,' and then we came back off. At the end of the game, we were thinking that we might have gone for that fourth down, but then we go out and kick it. We're ready at any moment's notice. It's just having that open line of communication. I'm on their line, I'm on both lines talking, just making sure that we're on the same page. 'Hey, what do you want to do here? Do you want to get points? Do we want to go for it? We're always ready and we always have different things up every week.'"

## **LINEBACKER KENNETH MURRAY JR.**

### **On containing the Chiefs offense:**

“They definitely have a lot of playmakers which everyone knows. They do a wonderful job putting together a scheme and running their plays. We understand that they have guys between number ten [WR Tyreek Hill], number 87 [TE Travis Kelce] and 15 [QB Patrick Mahomes] that can make plays. We have to be able to be disciplined and play a great game for 60 minutes. That’s what it’ll come down to, us playing for 60 minutes — or however long we have to play for — playing well to get this win.”

### **On Chiefs QB Patrick Mahomes:**

“When that guy gets out of the pocket, he creates and he makes plays. It’s definitely been an emphasis for us talking about our rush plans and how we’re going to get to the quarterback. Making sure we stay disciplined in that. It’s going to be a big key for us.”

### **On how the linebacking core can improve against the run game:**

“We just need to be better. I think me specifically, I feel like I can be better at stacking and tracking. It’s just what it comes down to, covering the runs. We didn’t fit the right way so it’s really just trusting our safeties will be there in the box, fit in and use your help. Other than that, it’s just continuing to get better as a team and grow. At the same time realizing it’s just one week and being able to bounce back and get ready for this week.”

### **On the light box scheme:**

“Linebackers, we always want it that way. As LBs, we feel like we can control the box with just six guys. That’s something our position coach [Linebackers Coach Michael Wilhoite] preaches to us all the time. It’s something that we take pride in. It’s something we want to get done. Being able to take care of the run game with these six guys in the run it, that sets us up for a lot in the back end. You have your eyes on receivers, and then being able to play a complimentary defense. For us, we take a lot of pride in being able to play a six-man box. For us to be as successful as we want to be, we have to be ready to do that. It’s something we look at that we need to do.”

### **On his ankle injury:**

“When it happened, it hurt. As it went on, I got some x-rays and it started to subside, I took a bunch of pills. At that moment, it was just me doing whatever I can to get back, go in there and play. I don’t want to miss any time. I’m not a guy that’s ever really missed any time. Just getting back into the game, getting back to the work.”

### **On if he re-injured the same ankle as the one he hurt in preseason:**

“It was the opposite ankle, which is crazy because it’s my first time ever really having these kind of ankle deals in my career. Having one in the scrimmage was pretty bad, and then this one is kind of the same deal. Still minor, but at the time it happened, it hurt. It’s been a big emphasis for me, trying to strengthen my ankles and stay up on my rehab. “

### **On the type of ankle injury he sustained:**

“They were the same deal. If you watch the film on the first one, I was running and my foot just kind of twisted. And then with this one, I was coming down on a blitz and I saw it was a run. I was trying to slow up and play the run, move in that direction. And my foot just kind of got caught and tweaked again. It’s just being able to fix that and get stronger.”