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## Chargers Week 6 Media Availability

Friday, October 15, 2021 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

### HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

#### **On WR Mike Williams' injury status:**

"Mike had some swelling from the game, just kind of normal football game stuff. We just tried to be careful with him at the beginning of the week, making sure that he's feeling his best for Sunday. We're going to know more later today, but we're hopeful that he plays."

#### **On S Nasir Adderley's injury status:**

"Nas is going to be questionable for the game. He has progressed. He kind of has a hip pointer. It flared up against Cleveland early in the game. He played through it. We've just tried to take our time with it. It's been kind of sore, so we'll see where it goes here in the next 24 hours before we take off. He's questionable for the game."

#### **On who will be the third running back this week:**

"Not yet. We had a good practice today. We're still deciding between [RBs] Joshua Kelley and Larry Rountree [III]. [RB] Justin [Jackson] is going to play in the game. We're going to be deciding between Joshua and Larry for this game."

#### **On LB Kyzir White:**

"Kyzir is our style of linebacker. I think that he's really physical. He's tough. He can tackle. He can see. I think that's one thing that I've really appreciated about him; he can see the game within the box. You need that at linebacker, someone who has that key to diagnose. He's a fearless competitor. He's done a really good job for us running the show at times in some of those one-linebacker defenses. He plays with a type of physicality, a type of toughness. He can get you the ball, too — he's a ballhawk, he really is. He can really go after the football. You can see that safety background kind of express itself at the end of the down when he's trying to go really hunt the football. I'm just so proud of him. I think that he's been a real bright spot for our defense."

#### **On if White playing safety in college is an asset to him:**

"For sure. I think that has become a lot more common. Over the last 10 years, for sure, that safety-to-linebacker transition — it normally starts in college, you see a lot in college, a safety that turns into a linebacker, but it's happening in the pros. We looked at some safeties a couple of years ago that we felt like could play linebacker. I think that you're always looking for that projection — can it happen, and how would they truly play behind the ball? Things happen faster at linebacker. At safety, you have more time and distance. When you're at inside linebacker, you're a lot closer to the action. Do they have those true 'behind the ball' instincts? Are they physical enough to take on blocks in the core? That is a real transition. He's just an example of a guy that is just a really good football player. He has real toughness, real physicality. We're just definitely glad that we have him, for sure."

#### **On if CB Asante Samuel Jr. will return to the starting lineup:**

"Yes. Asante will start in the game."

**On limiting penalties:**

"It's an important point. To me, it comes down to fundamentals and technique. I think that most of our errors can be traced back to fundamentals and our technique. From a procedural standpoint, I think that we've done a much better job, procedurally, over the last few games. I know at the beginning of the season, that was a thorn in our side, in terms of the pre-snap operational stuff. I think that we've done a much better job with our pre-snap stuff. From a technique standpoint, I think that's where we need to continue to improve, especially on offense. Then, on defense, we need to make sure that all of that stuff that's late, after the whistle — we've had a couple of late hits on the quarterback, we had Nas' against Vegas, which was kind of an aggressive penalty, an unfortunate one, the helmet-to-helmet. During the week, you're always educating your guys about the way things are being officiated, and from a fundamental standpoint, where we can improve — [TE] Donald's [Parham Jr.] hold on [Browns DE] Myles [Garrett] late in the game, that was a good example. Myles wasn't going to make that play. Did that hold need to happen? No. He was in good shape, and then as that down got extended, 'OK, now I need to let go.' That's a fundamental mistake. There are little things like that that go a long way, maybe having two or three penalties instead of five or six penalties. Like I've talked about, you have to play clean football against the best teams that you're going to play, or else your chances are going to decrease significantly. We have to continue to do a better job because there have been far too many for the way that we want to play."

**On who will start at linebacker next to White:**

"We're going to have [LBs] Amen [Ogbongbemiga] and [LB] Nick Niemann kind of split the duty there. I think that you'll see both of those guys in the football game. I'm excited to see those guys compete. We have a lot of faith in them. It's going to be an awesome opportunity to showcase what they can do, because this is a really good team that their first action is going to be going against."

**On if he has seen Ted Lasso:**

"No, I have not. [QB] Chase Daniel actually talked to me about it because my wife, Amy, and I are looking for a show. Amy's kind of on The Crown right now. I'm not really into that right at this point. We're looking for a show. Chase recommended that. I have not seen it yet. It's been the talk of many others, so I'm going to have to check it out."

**On being referred to as 'the real-life Ted Lasso' based on how he responds to questions:**

"I just think that I try to speak from the heart. I try to do the best I can to speak the truth and what I feel. I think that's all I'm trying to do. I'm not trying to be any different than I am in front of the guys and in front of my family all of the time. Hopefully, that comes across as just being genuine. I'm glad that people take to that, but I'm just trying to be myself."

**On the taunting penalty and how it has been officiated thus far this season:**

"Last night, we got to peek at some of the [Thursday Night Football] game. I know that Philly had one late that was really tough. I understand the emphasis of the NFL. I also think that it's really tough to legislate a motion in a game that's full of it. I don't have a perfect answer. I just know that it's tough on these players. It's tough on them. They have a really, really difficult job. It's a game that's based on the energy and emotion of competition — 22 guys going at it, a stadium full of 80,000 people. I think it's very challenging, I really do. My side is with the players, always. But, what we have to do, the best we can, is to show our players the examples of when it isn't the right thing. Normally, it's when you just want to be with your teammates. When you get into that one-on-one situation, or you're going at somebody else, that's normally when it happens. Just have to try to do your best. It's not easy. If it was easy, then you wouldn't see as many penalties as there are. We'll just see. We'll continue to try to make that a point of emphasis."

**On if the staff is 'trying to find' which running back is 'second juice' to RB Austin Ekeler:**

"I think that's fair to say. Because it's close in competition, just continue to let those guys compete. We feel like practice is important. Then, make sure that we get as clean of an evaluation as we get during the game. I thought that last week, Joshua [Kelley] had a couple of really good runs. Larry [Rountree III] has had a couple of really good runs. Justin [Jackson], when he's been in here, has done a really nice job. I think it's just finding that rhythm and that balance. When it's close, I think that you just have to continue to let them fight it out. Special teams play such a critical role in who your third back is, so we're trying to work through that, too. Who can add the most value on teams? I think that you're going to continue to see guys battle until someone takes the lead."

**On if the team's travel schedule has changed since the start of the season:**

"No. When we go to the East Coast, that will continue to be our mode of operation, leaving Saturday morning. I feel very strongly about that, in terms of tonight being a normal night's sleep in your bed, and then waking up in a normal rhythm and routine on a Saturday at the same time and keeping things the same. I think that is the best thing for us. I felt like when we did that the first week, that our guys — it was new to some of the guys, but I thought that they handled it well. The more that we do it, the more that it will just become the way we operate around here. I'm looking forward to seeing us doing it again tomorrow."

**SPECIAL TEAMS COORDINATOR DERIUS SWINTON II**

**On working with K Tristan Vizcaino this week after missing two extra points against the Browns:**

"Just fundamentals, getting back to the fundamentals. Keeping your head down through the kick, that's really what it comes down to. I think that he will say the same thing. We've made some adjustments and we worked all week at it. It helps that we won't be kicking in 17 mile-per-hour winds this Sunday, so that helps some. But, when you have one of the top kickers to go against, you take anything that you can get. He had a week of getting back to fundamentals. The two of them, he just pulled them. He didn't keep his head down. Just trying to get back to the fundamentals. You're going to go through that with a young kicker, just like any young player — we see it on both sides of the ball, young players are going to have their struggles during the season. You would rather have them early and now, so that when you're trying to make a run, he's had them ironed out. He had a great day kickoff-wise, so I'll go with the positives of that. He struggled with the extra points, but then you look at the last kickoff, he put it down there. It hung up there, then we tackled them inside of the 20 [-yard line] and ended up stopping them there. He flipped the field. The punt return then got it past the 50 [-yard line]. It's a complementary game. We don't want to focus on just the field goals. He knows that he has to be better with that, but the other parts of his game are also developing."

**On Vizcaino's 'strong leg' and his path of development:**

"You see that with a lot of young guys. You go back and watch [Ravens K Justin] Tucker early on in his career — and not to say that [Vizcaino] is Justin Tucker — but you watch a lot of guys early in their career, they're good at something, and maybe not good at something else, but they evolve over time. You could say that at any position. Young guys, you're looking at how they progress every week. It's not just a total wash. We always want to score points, but how is he affecting the game in other ways? Right now, I think that we're tied for seventh in the league on kickoff, what the opponent's starting point is. I think that's an advantage, having a kicker that can put it in the end zone at 4.3 [hang time]. When they have to decide if they're going to bring it out, that helps you with field position. It really does help you in crucial parts of the game. We're trying to evolve every week. All of the young guys that are playing, it's every week development. He would tell you that he wants to make those kicks, but we're just going to go back to the drawing board and just work our fundamentals every single week."

**On if it is difficult to 'stay patient with a young kicker':**

"No, not for me because I've been with so many good young ones. I was with [Panthers K] Zane Gonzalez in Arizona, and he struggled a little bit. Now, look at what he's doing in Carolina. I was with [Broncos K] Brandon McManus early in his career and all he did was kickoff. That's all he did for us, in Denver, at the beginning. Then, he became who he is now. [Cardinals K] Matt Prater wasn't young, but same thing, you stick with the guy — you see the talent, just build their confidence and work through it. You can't just pull the cord on them. It's like any player; if [QB] Justin [Herbert] threw a pick the first few weeks, we'd just say, 'Oh, hey can't play.' It's just one of those things. Is it more magnified because kickers don't get all of these opportunities like other players? Yeah, but if you stay patient because you know that it's a long game. If you understand that it's a long season and he has the talent — talent that is hard to find — and you look at the turnover in the league of all of the kickers that are going all over the place, you have to stay the course, especially when you have this much talent on the roster."

**On CB Ryan Smith's performance on special teams against the Browns:**

"It's a guy who has fresh legs, so that helps, but it's also what you saw on film and why we brought him here. He's a dynamic guy. He shows up around the ball. He's a guy that leads the other guys. He has energy. He's just looking for more on every play. On two of those tackles, they were not his play to make. He fell off and made a play. He forced the 63-yard net on the first punt because he was down in the returner's face. As we go, I think that he's going to get more and more every week. I told him that last week he was the new kid on the block, and now, this week, you know that they're going to be looking at you. That's extra availability and opportunity for other guys on the backside. I think that's the impact that he has and will continue to have. You can't go without staying, for a vet of his stature — and I've been with some good ones — these guys have the same mentality of, 'I am going to make the play, the play isn't going to come to me.' He has that mentality. It rubs off on the other guys. We give out Top Gun Awards, which is the best special teams player of the week on our team, whoever has most points, and he got it [last week]. They look at him like, 'Oh, how do I get that?' I think that he brings that competition to our group."

**On the gunners on punt coverage:**

"It's a three-headed monster with T.C. [CB Tevaughn Campbell], [Ryan] Smith and [CB] Kemon Hall. I go, 'Who is fresh?' Then, they just give me two of them. To have that, it's just like three backs in the backfield, three backs that are fresh. All three are talented, and all three are playmakers. It's fun, as a coach, to look over there and be able to go, 'Alright, who is fresh?' It's a good thing to have. They all want to make plays. It helps the punter. I think that [P] Ty [Long] is looking at it like, 'Man, if I just get the ball where I need to get it to, I have two guys out there that have a chance.' If they want to vice both of those guys, then we have good interior players that can run, too, which showed up on the last punt. We had no returns, I think, over 13 yards. That was good."

**On how LB Drue Tranquill not playing on Sunday will impact special teams:**

"Any time that you lost any player that plays four-core [special teams units], or three-core, and a leader — Drue has played a lot of football — any time that you lose a guy like that, it puts a little bit of stress on some of the other guys, but they're ready for it. I don't think that it is going to drastically change our whole picture, but I think that any time you lose a player that is a good player, it's going to change some things. I think that the guys are going to step up because we have players that are capable of doing it."

**On if the second missed extra point 'helped the Chargers' due to the Browns then owning a one-point lead:**

"No. I never want to say that not having points helps us. I don't want to say that. Does it change the way that they approach the game? Yes. But, you always want to have points. If you look at it and say, 'OK, we missed that.' We come back and don't get the two-point [conversion]. If we would've gotten the two-point, then it changes our kickoff. Do we kick it out of the end zone since we're up a touchdown instead of being up five [points]? Now, we're trying to make it a long field for them instead of giving [Browns QB] Baker [Mayfield] the ball at the 25 [-yard line]. If he has it at the 25 and he can only tie the game unless they go for two, your approach kind of changes. I think you look more at how the game is going, then it comes like that. You never want to say that not getting points help us or anything like that, but you really have to look at the game management and how you work through that."

**On Vizcaino's ability to 'move on' after a missed kick:**

"That was part of what I liked about him. He's an athlete. He has the mentality of, like, 'Alright, let's go to the next one.' He knows immediately what he did. I don't want to speak for him, but if you look at him, he has the confidence. He doesn't have his head down walking around. Some guys get a little down and you can see it physically on their faces. He has none of that. More than anything, he's pissed. He's like a normal skill guy. He's pissed off if he didn't do something right. That's what it is. You saw it on kickoff; he did a great job on kickoff. That lets you know, mentality-wise. Some guys let it snowball, but you saw on the kickoff that he did a good job. He has really been working this week, as every week, and I look for him to bounce back. We'll see what the wind does. It's always fun."

## **QUARTERBACK JUSTIN HERBRET**

### **On the Ravens' win last week:**

"It was an incredible comeback, and that's a very tough team. Like we've seen on film the last couple weeks, they're a really impressive team. They're never out of the game and as good as their defense is, their offense is on a whole other level. Both sides of the ball are incredibly well coached — they have some great athletes. It's going to take a lot from us."

### **On Ravens QB Lamar Jackson:**

"I think he's able to do everything — he can run, he can throw. I don't think his game through the air gets enough credit. He's able to throw the ball extremely well, and he's able to do everything. If the protection breaks down, he's able to get out of there and make plays no one else on this planet can make. I know that the defense is working hard and doing their best, watching as much film as they can to get a good beat for their offense."

### **On WR Joshua Palmer:**

"Josh Palmer has made plays. He's one of those guys that's worked really hard and picked up the offense very well. We feel really comfortable with him going in there, he's able to make plays. He's smart, he's physical, he's aggressive. He does a great job in the run game, block game, and he runs some really good routes. He's a guy we believe in."

### **On if he feels that he's 'in a groove':**

"We've just had a really good plan from the offensive line to the receivers, running backs — everyone's been tied in very well. Everyone's been really well-coached, and I think that's the plan for each week. It's always about the next week, no matter how the game goes. It's always about moving on to the next one. The running backs have done a great job at pass protection, the linemen have handled all the blitzes and fronts that teams have played against us. The receivers have made plays, and the tight ends, too."

### **On the Ravens' defense:**

"They're going to bring a bunch of different looks. They do a great job disguising bringing pressures and tricking you into thinking it's coming from one way and bringing it from the other way. They're really well coached, they play really sound football, and they have guys that fly around and play really good defense. A couple great corners, some linebackers that can really match the running backs — those guys play really downhill, and they can tackle very well."

### **On his ability to run the ball:**

"As long as we're scoring, that's the most important part. Whether it's me, [RB] Austin Ekeler, [WR] Keenan Allen — it doesn't matter. As long as we're getting in the end zone, that's the most important thing for our offense."

### **On Ravens Defensive Coordinator Don Martindale saying that he can 'throw a strawberry through a battleship':**

"I just hope he meant it in a nice way. I have a lot of respect for him and his defense. I just hope that he meant in a nice way."

### **On Martindale's metaphor:**

"I'm sure that I've heard stranger. I think that's probably a common term that maybe we don't hear too often. But I appreciate that, and I have a lot of respect for his team and his defense."

### **On the pace of the game potentially slowing down:**

"I don't think it's slowed down yet; I think it's still an incredibly fast game. The way the defenses play and how fast and physical those guys are on defense is never easy. I feel like we've had a plan each week, and we're always about getting better and continuing to improve. As long as we're being secure with the ball, not turning it over, and giving our guys a shot to have completions, yards after catch. That puts our team in a good position. My job is to always get the ball to the guys that make the plays. Just give them the ball, and they'll make something special happen. It's always about watching film, getting better, and learning from my mistakes. Experience is the best teacher."

**On his ability to scramble:**

"That's just one of those drills that we rep all the time — scramble drills. Guys know if the pocket breaks down this way and the quarterback escapes to keep it friendly, find an angle and be able to spread all five receivers so something good can happen. Keenan [Allen] has a great feel for that, and he sees the defender go low, so he goes high. It creates enough separation for me to give him the ball and he makes an incredible catch."

**On Head Coach Brandon Staley's remarks on former Raiders Head Coach Jon Gruden:**

"I haven't heard too much about it, but I might have to go check it out. He has had some incredible team meetings, so that doesn't surprise me one bit."

**On how he takes notes:**

"I always start with a blank notebook for teams we haven't played. You get teams like the Raiders and the Chiefs — teams you have played — and you already have a couple pages of notes. You can look back on those for coverages, pressures, things you've already identified. But for this Ravens team, I haven't played them yet. It's a fresh start for me watching all the film this week, getting a good beat for that so that we do have a good chance to win on Sunday."

**On Staley:**

"He's an incredible leader. He really knows what he's talking about. From day one, he came in here talking about relationships and building that trust with everyone. He's definitely established that early on in his career. He's one of those guys that we really want to fight for, we really want to play for. He has the respect of all those guys in that locker room."