



Kansas City Chiefs vs. Los Angeles Chargers
Sunday, October 22, 2023
Week 7
Chargers Head Coach Brandon Staley



Q: What happened with pass coverage with Travis Kelce?

STALEY: “I just didn’t do a good enough job getting our team ready to play. We did not execute in pass rush or pass coverage in the first half. Far too many explosions and that ultimately is my responsibility. I didn’t do a good enough job. In the second half, we made good adjustments. We played much better, but there was a lot of damage done in the first half. We just didn’t do anything well enough in the first half.”

Q: Why didn’t you play man coverage on Travis Kelce in the first half as you did in the second half?

STALEY: “We played man in the first half, too.”

Q: Can you talk about planning a scheme to coverage the Patrick Mahomes and Travis Kelce duo?

STALEY: “They are a tough tandem, whether you play man or zone. I think a big factor in the first half were the loose plays by the quarterback. I feel like no matter what scheme we were in in the first half from a coverage standpoint, Patrick was able to create plays post-snap, outside of the pocket. We didn’t tackle the catch, which is a huge emphasis. It is my responsibility, and I didn’t do a good enough job.”

Q: Was it just not possible to make adjustments on the fly during the first half?

STALEY: “We were making them. We just needed to tighten them up as the game went on. I think our plan going into the game, we didn’t execute it well enough. In the second half, we did, and it was a lot better.”

Q: What was the plan for Travis Kelce?

STALEY: “We wanted to populate the middle of the field. I wanted to have as many people in the middle of the field as possible.”

Q: At halftime, what were the adjustments?

STALEY: “To populate the middle of the field with as many people as possible.”

Q: So, it was not an adjustment, more of a reinforcement of the plan?

STALEY: “Correct.”

Q: So, in the first half, why did that not happen?

STALEY: “We were just a little bit off in the first half. We were connected on pass coverage, and then there is a scramble and it goes to Valdes (Marques Valdes-Scantling) and we are on Kelce and then a 15-yard catch goes to a 50 yard catch. It was just that type of half. We just didn’t execute in the first half. We didn’t

rush them or cover them well enough. It was both things happening at the same time. Like I said, it is my responsibility.”

Q: Why are your defensive plans not working on some of the big players on opposing teams you have faced?

STALEY: “It is my responsibility. I am not doing a good enough job. I need to do better for our team.”

Q: What happened to your offense in the second half?

STALEY: “We just didn’t get into any rhythm in the second half. I liked the way we ran the football in this game. In the passing game in the first half, I thought we were aggressive. I thought we made big plays in the passing game in the first half, but in the second half, we just couldn’t get anything going. Drives just stalled out. We missed a third and short, and there were a couple of third downs that were close that just didn’t make. We just didn’t operate with any kind of consistency in the second half.”

Q: What didn’t you do a good enough job of as you say?

STALEY: “You have to tie it all together against this team. What they do a great job of is when you can have one thing covered and then Patrick will go off script and then what you had covered initially then gets open post snap. We tried to mix our rush plan five, four, six-man rushes. We did not have good rhythm in the first half, and in the second half, we had much better rhythm and we executed at a much higher level in the second half. That is the type of defense we are able to play when we do it.”

Q: Are there things we should have done that you realized in this moment?

STALEY: “The blame is mine. No one else. I just have to do a better job of getting us off to a good start in the game and that is not what happened. The first possession we were able to get them stopped, but then after that, we were on our heels. Asante (Samuel Jr.) got the pick, but then that score before the half was kind of a killer. Then we settled down in the second half and played well. Our first half on defense and our second half on offense just were not good enough for us to win.”

Q: Anything you can point to to determine why you can’t find consistency within all three phases of the ball?

STALEY: “It is frustrating. I can’t tell you why the season is starting this way, but it is. It is no one’s responsibility but mine. We have a good football team, and we need to reset. We have had two tough losses in a row, but we have a good football team and we just have to make sure that we keep it simple and we do the little things well. This is a good group of guys. It is a good football team, and we need to get back to work.”

Q: How crucial was it to have two takeaways on defense, but no points?

STALEY: “I felt like that was a big part of this game. When you play them, you attack the football. We were able to get two out there, and I thought the third one we had a chance on. We did not impact the game enough. We needed to. Those takeaways, if you score there, then that would have been a different ballgame. I think when you play this team, you can’t have two takeaways, and if you get them to yourself, you have to do something with it.”

Q: Why is Patrick Mahomes so hard to cover after these years of playing him?

STALEY: "He has a lot of experience. He is an outstanding player, and he has great chemistry with his receiving core and his O-line. I think the O-line is really underrated. They did a good job on us today. You give credit to him. He had a good game; you know him and Travis. We will get them again at the end of the year."

Q: With the pass rush, how much of it was Mahomes?

STALEY: "You know, it is tough. That is just the way he plays, no matter how you rush him, that is going to be part of the game. You just have to minimize the damage. When those off script plays happened today, there was far too much damage, especially in the first half. There were a bunch of big plays. It is easier said than done, but in order to beat them that is what you have to execute."



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Chargers Players



OLB TULI TUIPULOTU

Q: What happened to the defense out there?

TUIPULOTU: “We just started off with a bad first half. Then we made some adjustments in the second half. I think we really did a good job in the second half. We just have to find a way.”

Q: What’s the most frustrating part of being in these close games?

TUIPULOTU: “I think the whole idea of losing, that’s the frustrating part. There’s nothing you can do. We needed to go out there and execute like we did in the second half. I think in the second half we did a great job on defense. We just have to carry that on. We should have never started off bad. I think that’s pretty much it.”

S DERWIN JAMES JR

Q: How frustrating was it in the first half?

JAMES: “It was very frustrating. I felt like we weren’t playing complementary football. Because the offense was scoring points, and then we weren’t getting stops. And then in the second half, we had three stops in a row, and we couldn’t get points and our special teams gave up a play. There just wasn’t enough complementary football today.”

Q: Can you pinpoint why that is?

JAMES: “I feel like we all need to be locked in on what we need to do and go execute. I feel like everyone was having their moments in the game. The offense came out hot. We weren’t stopping them in the first quarter. We got settled in and started stopping them, but you can’t wait until the second or third quarter to get going.”

Q: Coach Staley said you need to reset as team. Do you agree with that?

JAMES: “Hell yeah. These last six games, we just need to flush them. We have 11 more to go. We have a long season. We just got to keep playing hard and keep playing hard. Right now, it looks bad. We’re still believing in each other. We lost two tough games to two bad ass teams that are going to be in the playoffs. We just got to keep playing hard and keep leaning on each other.”

Q: As the first half is happening, what are you saying on the sideline?

JAMES: “Let’s do our job.’ When I looked up and it was 17-17, I thought, ‘We already gave up 17 points.’ We kind of settled in and got better. But we can’t wait against a team like that. If you want to beat them, you can’t wait until the third quarter or fourth quarter.”

Q: As a defense, do you feel disrespected when guys like Mahomes and Kelce go off and have a great game?

JAMES: “Hell yeah, I feel disrespected. Because the gameplan is to take those guys away. We know who the best players are: Travis Kelce, Patrick Mahomes. We got to take them out of the game. We didn’t get that done today on defense.”

RB JOSHUA KELLEY

Q: What is the most frustrating part of this loss?

KELLEY: “I have been here for four years and losing to them [Chiefs] is never a good thing. It just sucks because it all feels very similar. It all plays out very similar. That’s the most frustrating part. I feel like we haven’t been able to stop 15 or 87 since I’ve been here. It’s tough, but I feel like there are some plays we should have made that could help us win that game.”

Q: How much are you guys searching for complementary football, right now?

KELLEY: “You just have to be consistent. I think consistency helps, for sure. I think, hopefully, we can be consistent and keep working on it and get better.”

Q: Head Coach Brandon Staley said you have to try to reset your season. How do you do that?

KELLEY: “We have to figure out a way to get some wins fast. We don’t have a lot of time. We have to figure out how to get some wins. Now we are chasing. We have to come back, locked in and ready to go. We have to try our best to get a win Sunday.”

Q: Any reason the offense was so good in the first half and not the second?

KELLEY: “You know, it’s tough. They make adjustments. You know how it goes. Sometimes you come out swinging and they come back and make their adjustments. We still had our moments. We had our chances. We just have to execute them next time.”

RB AUSTIN EKELER

Q: What is your mental state following the game?

EKELER: “I would say it’s no different than any other week, just focused.”

Q: Is there frustration after this game?

EKELER: “Yeah, there is always frustration, right, because you put so much work in to try to win the game. If you don’t then you are disappointed but regardless, you are still focused because you have to come back, win or lose. We are playing the Bears next week, and they don’t care if we won or lost. For us, it’s get back to work and make ourselves in position to win the game.”

Q: You paused for 20 seconds when I asked you about your state of mind following the game. Why was that?

EKELER: "I was just thinking of the best word to describe it.

Q: How frustrating, disappointing are you with the team's start to the season?

EKELER: "You can't escape it. The NFL, it's been ups and downs over my seventh year. It is the same thing every year as far as the ups and downs but guess what? You have to ride the waves. You have to find a wave where you can try to get on the front side of it, and that is exactly what we are going to come back and do this week. Hopefully we will put a better gameplan together and go out there and, hopefully, execute it better than what we did today and come out with a win on Sunday Night Football."

Q: Is there faith still in what Brandon Staley is preaching?

EKELER: "We have no choice, right? Yeah, we have faith. This is our team. This is who we are riding with. It's all the way to the end. Good, bad or ugly, all the way to the end.

Q: Brandon Staley took a lot of the blame for what happened today. Is that fair?

EKELER: "No, that's not fair. It's not fair. It takes a unit to go and win a game, especially against a team like that, that's been playing well. For us, we have to stay connected. I know he took the blame for us, but we have to play better as well."



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Chargers QB Justin Herbert



Q: What do you feel happened in the second half compared to the first half?

HERBERT: “I thought we came out well in the first half, moved the ball and got some points on the board. We have to execute better in the second half. It just wasn’t good enough. We’ve got to be able to put up points in the second half. Our defense came up with some big stops, so it’s up to us as an offense to go down and score. It just didn’t happen for us today.”

Q: Do you think they made any adjustments on you defensively that made things tougher for you?

HERBERT: “I think they’re always making adjustments. They played some good defense. They had some good things covered up. We did our best to move the ball, and unfortunately, we didn’t execute as well as we could’ve. There were some plays that we’d love to have back, some throws and some protections and things like that. I thought our coaches put us in a good position to play good football today. It’s on me, and it’s on our offense to be able to score points.”

Q: Do you think if you guys can figure out a way to where the offense and the defense are working at the same time, that things could look a lot different?

HERBERT: “I think that’s the goal of playing good football and having the offense, defense and special teams playing together. When you have all three phases playing together, you’re going to have a pretty good football team. It hasn’t happened for us yet this year. In the second half, the defense played some great football, got some stops, got some turnovers. It’s on us as an offense to be able to capitalize on those turnovers.”

Q: Do you know why you guys haven’t been able to put together a game where all three phases are working together?

HERBERT: “We just have to execute. Like I said, it’s on us as an offense to play complementary football. When the defense does get those stops, we have to go down and execute and convert on those conversions.”

Q: You were pressured at a high rate again today. Do you feel like that impacted you?

HERBERT: “It’s football. When they bring pressure, you have to be able to answer, you have to find completions, you have to get the ball out quick. I took some sacks that I’d love to have back. I thought our guys battled. The offensive line did a good job holding up and giving me time to get the ball off. We have to be better because of it.”

Q: This is the third time in three games where you guys haven't scored in the second half. Do you see any similarities in these last games that have caused you guys to get off to a fast start but drop off in the second half?

HERBERT: "It's just executing in the second half. It's football and we have to do a better job in the second half. We have to do a better job in the first half. It's all four quarters and we have to put that all together, or however long the game takes, until zero is left on the clock. Our offense has to keep moving, we have to keep converting and we have to do a better job."

Q: You had that interception that was tipped at the line of scrimmage. Was that just a good play or was there something you wish you had done differently?

HERBERT: "Maybe throw a couple of inches left or right so it doesn't get tipped, but that's a good play. They're standing at the line looking for those tipped balls. It's a tough play. I'd love to have that one back, but that's the way it went. I have to do my best to move or just avoid those tipped balls."

Q: How is your finger? Did anything happen during the game that didn't allow you to use your left hand as much?

HERBERT: "Yeah, the splint came off. I was handing a couple off from my right hand."

Q: Did your splint get fixed during the game?

HERBERT: "Yeah, it did."

Q: Is your finger impacting you when taking snaps under center or in the shotgun at all?

HERBERT: "I don't think in terms of how I'm handling the football. I think just being able to use both hands is essential. I think we've done a good job of handling it and putting a cast on it and taking care of it."

Q: Do you feel compromised at all out there?

HERBERT: "I'd love to not land on it. It's one of those things I don't want to put in harm's way. I'm doing my best to lock it up, protect it and stay out of trouble."

Q: With the losses and the injury combined, is this stretch of football any more challenging than other stretches in your career?

HERBERT: "Football is tough. Whether you're winning or whether you're losing, it's a tough sport and it requires tough people. We have a tough locker room. It hasn't gone our way the last couple of games, but no one is going to panic or quit or give up. I know we're going to attack practice this week the same way that we have each week. I'm looking forward to the challenge, the opportunity. It's been a tough week, but we're going to be better because of it."

Q: [Head Coach Brandon] Staley said that the team could use a "reset." Do you agree with that and what does that mean to you?

HERBERT: "I think it means that we have a new challenge, a new week of football. You can't let your last one effect your next one. We're going to watch the film, move on and learn from it. We'll attack the Bears on Sunday."



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Chiefs Head Coach Andy Reid



OPENING STATEMENT: “Alright as far as the injuries go, Nick Bolton, has a dislocated wrist so they’re working on that now and we’ll see how it does. He really had a heck of a game up to that point. The fans were incredible. What a day in GEHA Field at Arrowhead Stadium. Beautiful day first of all and then you add the noise there with the Chargers having to use a couple times out and illegal procedures and so on that they had going against them. Congratulations to Dante Hall too for going into the (Chiefs) Hall of Fame and the alums that were back here. We love having you all back and supporting the Chiefs. Listen, second half from our defensive standpoint was a shutout. (Defensive Coordinator Steve) Spags (Spagnuolo) is doing a great job with design and the players are playing their hearts out. I give credit to all the coaches there on the defensive side but when you have a shutout going against that crew, that’s quite a deal. Batted balls all over the places. Charles Omenihu, it was great to get him back in the mix or just in the mix. He never was in it, so it was a good deal there. He had a sack and a blocked throw. Five sacks by our defense (which) was tremendous, and the list keeps going on. Responded after the turnovers. Beautiful job there. Offensively a good day, I mean a real good day. Again, (Offensive Coordinator) Matt Nagy puts together the game plan. It was a beautiful game plan. I really – that defense is special with some of the players that they have there and their (Chargers) head coach (Brandon Staley) is calling the plays and he’s a heck of a coordinator and head coach but he also knows exactly what he’s doing with the defense. So, with that, Pat (Mahomes) had, obviously, had a big day with over 400 yards. (Travis) Kelce keeps getting better with time. Taylor (Swift) can stay around all she wants (laughter). Rashee Rice, I mean we’ve witnessed this now. You’re watching him grow right in front of us here and then (Marquez) Quez (Valdes-Scantling), the old man of the group, he had a big day today. The third down percentage, any time you can be six-for-11 on third down with the pass rushers that they have is something and that tells you that the offensive line did a pretty good job. (Offensive Line Coach) Andy Heck and his crew really did well with it. I thought all the offensive coaches likewise had a nice day. (Assistant Head Coach/Special Teams Coordinator) Dave Toub had a plan for Mecole (Hardman) and the guys blocked their hearts out for him and he busted that punt out there and he came back and had a big catch so welcome back Mecole. We only got him here on Thursday, so we’ll keep adding stuff to his menu there. Anyways, with that (the) time’s yours.”

Q: You talked about knocking the rust off for Charles Omenihu, what allowed him to be as effective as he was tonight after six weeks?

REID: “Well when I say he wasn’t in the mix I mean he hasn’t played a game for us other than preseason. But what he did, on the six weeks off he kept himself in shape and you had a chance to see that today. Now is he going to be sore? Yeah, he’ll be in the cold tub for a while tomorrow but he’s a nice addition to the mix there.”

Q: You were kind of joking about Travis Kelce getting even better. Is he getting better with age?

REID: "I think both he and Pat (Mahomes) are on the same page - that's a challenge, you know, that's a challenge for defenses. I know they work on it. This isn't a secret. So, they're working on those things. That's when I say (Offensive Coordinator) Matt (Nagy) and (Pass Game Coordinator) Joe (Bleymaier), all the guys that are involved in that pass game (and) putting together things, it's quiet a tribute to the coaches and then for those two going out there and executing like they do. He might be getting better with age, you and I can't say that, Adam (Teicher) (laughter)."

Q: The Chargers had a lot of tempo in the first half. How did you see them respond in the second half?

REID: "Nobody hung - they weren't hanging their heads, they kind of figured it out. We had a plan for it and then they got us a few. When I tell you - I mean that's a good offense. But the guys figured it out and you look at the stops in that second half and the pressure on the (Chargers) quarterback (Justin Herbert). That was an unsettled position for him today. The guys got after him a little bit. Whether they were sacking or hitting him he had people around him all the time."

Q: On Patrick Mahomes and Travis Kelce's ability to be off script. How much would you say is schemed up?

REID: "Yeah, well I'd tell you it's probably both. It's a combination. They kind of know where the green lights are and where the red lights are with the flexibility of the play, and they utilize it. Long yellow light, right?"

Q: What does it do for your offense to have more guys involved today?

REID: "I think it's great. We just got to keep growing here. We got another AFC West team coming up this next week here with Denver and they'll have another plan for us. But the guys - they're working through all of that and this is a new road that you have a chance to play a team twice. That's a different thing. They know you and you have an idea about them, now what do you do. I'm saying for the young guys. They're getting better, Neal (Jones). They're getting better."

Q: Do you feel like the offense found their best rhythm today?

REID: "Yeah, I'd probably say yeah. It was a productive day. We still got to get rid of some of these penalties. We get rid of a couple of those things and we'll really have something going. I thought we were productive. It was a great plan and with the takeaways, some of the little mishaps there with the penalties then and you've had a pretty good day."

Q: How difficult is it for Mecole Hardman to come back and jump right back in?

REID: "Yeah, it's a tough thing. He's been away for six months or so and going through all of their (plays), learning that offense and then coming back to this. (It's) not easy to do but Mecole's real smart. He's a smart kid, innately smart kid and so it wasn't hard for him to jump back in and pick up a few things that we had in the game plan and roll with those."

Q: On the importance of answering a takeaway with a takeaway.

REID: "Nice drive. I was telling (Executive Vice President of Communications) Ted (Crews) that those are - when you have those it's hard to come back and use those plays. You've used them to get there and you kind of throw them out the window with turnovers and penalties and that. For us to come back and do what we did after that was a good thing."



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Chiefs HOF Inductee Dante Hall



2023 CHIEFS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE WR DANTE HALL

Q: What does it mean to receive this honor?

HALL: “Everything. It meant everything. I think the greatest part about this honor is getting everyone I love the most, in one general area. Having my kids to be able to witness that, I just really can’t even put it into words.”

Q: How did you feel when you saw your name being unveiled?

HALL: “(I) literally had chills running through my body. The emotions, overwhelming, I just tried to keep it cool, compartmentalize, and just keep it within. But, definitely felt – and the love from the fans as well.”

Q: Did you ever dream about this moment?

HALL: “I’m going to be honest with you, I never did. I was just happy to be drafted, happy to have had the career I had, and I was good (with that). My biggest legacy will be a father. I have four kids, so that’s really what I’m striving to be, the best dad. This is just icing, with the candles on top.”

Q: Now that you’ve been out of the league for a while, what would you tell the younger Dante Hall?

HALL: “Great question. I really don’t go back and think because everything happened the way it was supposed to be. If anything - I’m going to be honest with you - nothing. I love my journey, the good and the bad.”



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Chiefs Players



WR MARQUEZ VALDES-SCANTLING

Q: Can you take us through your touchdown reception?

VALDES-SCANTLING: “We had a play called, and I was on the other side of the field, (Mahomes) got some pressure and I worked with him and ran to the other side of the field. He saw me and we made eye contact. I said, ‘Hey, throw me the ball,’ and he threw it to me.”

Q: Mahomes said he called that play incorrectly. Were you aware of that?

VALDES-SCANTLING: “No. it sounded right to me. I think he might have called the protection wrong for the running back or the chip, so the back might have gone to the wrong side. I think one of the defenders might have gotten underneath the initial throw – I think the initial throw was there – but with the pressure, he just kind of got off of it and I just kept working with him.”

Q: What does it mean to see WR Mecole Hardman contribute today?

VALDES-SCANTLING: “It’s great. Obviously, we traded for him for a reason, he’s a hell of a player. Me and Mecole have a great friendship that stayed true even when he left. He was one of the first guys I talked to when I got here. Being able to bring him back and enjoy his energy – he’s a loud one. He’s energetic, and his play shows. He’s electric, and you saw that today.”

Q: What have you seen from WR Rashee Rice since Week 1?

VALDES-SCANTLING: “Just growth. I think he’s doing a really good job of just doing what he’s supposed to do and making the plays that he’s supposed to make, not trying to be anything that he’s not. You see a lot of rookies come in and try to do too much and can’t figure out the right thing to do and the wrong thing to do. He’s just been doing his job and it’s been paying off for him. He’s a quiet kid who listens to what he’s told to do. He always wants to learn. He’s always taking notes, and it shows. Obviously, Pat trusts him to keep giving him the ball.”

Q: What’s the biggest indicator to you that the offense is showing progress?

VALDES-SCANTLING: “We scored 31 points, I guess that’s the biggest indicator. Obviously, that’s our standard for what they’ve done in the past and what we did last year. What our standard is as an offense, we just have so many talented players from top to bottom in every position room that you think we should be able to score 30 points every week. That’s always our goal – to be the No. 1 offense and win games.”

Q: We know you get frustrated when you don’t get the ball. After a game like today, how are you feeling?

VALDES-SCANTLING: “There’s no frustration, we’re winning games. Obviously, as a receiver, you want the ball every play. If you want to say I’m frustrated, then you can say I’m frustrated every play where I don’t get the ball. We’re winning games, and I don’t take it too far. You’re never going to see me throwing tablets on the sideline if I don’t get the football thrown to me. Obviously, there are plays where you’re like, ‘Hey, I could have gotten this one,’ or whatever it is. But there will never be any visible frustration. Anything like that gets handled inside the building, you won’t ever see me frustrated outside of it.”

Q: Some guys use the phrase, ‘I’m just working until my number is called.’ That seems like it’s been your career.

VALDES-SCANTLING: “Yeah, man, that’s the way it goes. Obviously, I’ve had a pretty long career, and I’ve averaged 20 yards a catch my entire career. There’s going to be games where guys don’t want me to get big plays, and that’s just the reality of it. They’re going to do anything they can to stop me from going one-for-80. They’ll let Travis (Kelce) or whoever catch 10 balls before they let me catch one. That’s just been the name of the game. I’ve been one of the better deep threats in the league my whole career. I take it with pride, and I see the respect that I get from defenses across the league.”

Q: What enables Kelce to do what he does when the Chargers are obviously focused on him?

VALDES-SCANTLING: “He’s the best tight end in the NFL, in the history of football. There’s not really much to say past that. He’s the best to ever do it. You can know what he’s going to run, and he’s still going to get open.”

Q: Can a game like this create a domino effect for you?

VALDES-SCANTLING: “I don’t know. Obviously, I want the ball every play, if I can get all 60 passes thrown to me, I would. I don’t know. We’ll see what happens next week, we’re going against a good defense that held me to no catches.”

Q: When Justin Watson goes down, is there a message you have to the younger guys in the receiver room?

VALDES-SCANTLING: “No. I think, in that room, we’ve all been in that position to rally around guys. At the end of the day, we’re so unique with how we operate as a receiver room – I don’t think a lot of teams do it how we do it with the versatility of having seven guys who can go in at any time. You’re going to see three or four guys active on our roster – maybe five – so we have seven or eight guys up every week. It’s just the next man up and go when your opportunity is in front of you.”

DE CHARLES OMENIHU

OPENING STATEMENT: “First and foremost, I just want to thank God for allowing me to be out here today. Not playing football for the last six weeks has probably been the hardest thing that I’ve ever had to do. Being able to come out and help the team win, I truly have no words. I want to thank Coach Reid, [General Manager Brett] Veach, Bino (Director of Player Engagement Ramzee Robinson), Joe (Defensive Line Coach Joe Cullen), (Executive Vice President of Communications) Ted (Crews) the whole d-line, the whole defense, the whole Chiefs organization and Mr. [Clark] Hunt for the support for the last six weeks.

Q: What made these last six weeks the hardest?

OMENIHU: “Not being out there with the guys. In my career, I’ve only missed maybe two games. When I first got to the league, I was inactive for Week One, and I may have missed one other game. I haven’t ever really missed games before in my life. Missing those six games, the season gets going and you just want to be a part of it, especially coming in and trying to be a piece of a puzzle that’s already been put together. It was eating at me. Thank God I’m back and was able to help the team win and win a divisional game.”

Q: What stands out to you as the difference in the second half compared to the first half?

OMENIHU: “We just tightened it up a little bit. That’s a good team over there. They’ve got a great quarterback and they’re smart. We just tightened it up, and it helped getting the turnovers. We just helped by getting turnovers and the offense was running.”

Q: What stood out to you as you watched this defense for the last six weeks?

OMENIHU: “We looked like guys who were swarming, guys who run to the ball, guys who are attacking the ball. You’ve got guys who can rush. Mike (Danna) is having a hell of a year, along with George (Karlaftis), Chris (Jones) and Derrick (Nnadi) were plugging up the middle. Felix (Anudike-Uzomah), Turk (Tershawn Wharton) and Malik (Herring) were turning it up. Just watching those guys work and perform, I just wanted to come in and add to it.”

Q: How did it feel to be as productive as you were in your first game?

OMENIHU: “They trusted me and brought me in to add more to the fire that is already here. I’ve got to go out there and be productive, that’s the name of the game.”

Q: How did this game compare emotionally to other games in your career?

OMENIHU: “Throughout the week, I was super calm. This morning, I woke up at 6:15 in the morning all charged up. I told myself that I had to turn it down a little bit. Coming out and seeing the fans, that got me rolling again. After that, I just told myself that I’ve done this before and it’s a game. I play better when I’m mellow.”

Q: What was going through your head in the moment that you got the sack considering everything you’ve been through the last six weeks?

OMENIHU: “Thank God. It’s only God, truly. It was a surreal feeling. Working with Chris [Jones], I felt him getting up the field and wrapped him. The first quarterback hit was close. I could feel like it was going to be one of those type of games where you’re going to be active. Getting the sack was probably the happiest moment of my career, honestly, and doing it with a new team, in a home game, a big game. I kept asking around the building saying, ‘This Chargers game is a big one, huh?’ So, I just kept that in mind.”

Q: After that play, I saw you grab a few teammates on the sideline. Can you take us through those emotions?

OMENIHU: “A lot of those guys knew the intricacies of what I was going through mentally. Willie (Gay) had a similar situation where he had the same type of deal. He was talking to me all week, keeping me encouraged. Some of the guys, like I said, knew how I’ve been feeling. Those guys embracing me was a big thing for me.”

Q: What have you taken from Joe Cullen throughout this process?

OMENIHU: “Joe is an excellent d-line coach, first and foremost. Joe has helped me as far as pushing myself all the way to the brink. Concentrating on the little things. In practice, he’ll make me go back if I’m not concentrating. Taking it into the game, concentrating on your rush, the rush is never over. He’s very detailed and he wants d-linemen who can put the quarterback on the ground. He stresses that a lot and also stresses stopping the run. He’s a guy who is going to push you all the way to the wall and past it.”

TE TRAVIS KELCE

Via NFL on CBS

Q: What did you see out there in the first half that made it so easy for you?

KELCE: “It was not easy at all, it was a challenge and that’s hats off to this defense (the Chiefs defense) and having to play against them every week and then 15 (Patrick Mahomes) just doing what he does, everyone is making it easy on me.

Q: On your touchdown at the end of the first half was that one of those unscripted plays or was that how it was drawn up?

KELCE: “No, that was not (unscripted), that was the play that was called and I ran it how it was called. It just got caught above my head, and I’m not going to lie, it got a little uncomfortable there for a second. I was praying that I didn’t fumble that thing at the goal line.

Q: On having Mecole Hardman back and what the return did for the team?

KELCE: “It means everything. You can feel the energy from that guy (Mecole Hardman) being in the room. I don’t know how he got out of New York, but I’m so glad he’s with us. Obviously, he came up absolutely huge for us there in the fourth quarter, not only just the punt return put a huge first down catch. I’m just proud of him, happy for the guy that he’s back with us and I’m glad we got him for the rest of the year.”

Q: How are you celebrating this one?

KELCE: “Just going to go ahead and enjoy this with family and friends and get ready for next week in Denver.”

S BRYAN COOK

Q: How would you describe this game for the defense?

COOK: “I think the biggest word I can use is perseverance. They (the Chargers) are definitely a talented team, strong team (who) were going to give us their best shot. They got us with a couple of big plays in the first half. We came back and put the last little details in and came together as a team. The chemistry and the confidence are a big thing we’ve been harping on this year. We were able to finish it for the dub that’s the most beautiful part of it and after that I’m great.”

Q: How did it feel to get your first career interception?

COOK: “Beautiful. I bobbled it, but it still counts, it still counts that’s all the matters. They say they come in bunches, so hopefully I will be able to get my bunches soon because I’ve been itching for some. It’s a blessing though, it’s a blessing for sure.”

Q: How big is it to get wins against division teams and continue to separate from the other teams in the division?

COOK: “The biggest focus is ourselves, making sure we come together as a brotherhood as a team and keep building chemistry and confidence. At the end of the day, all that matters is what we do, not what the other team does. At the end of the day, we had mistakes out there, we came together as a team and made successful adjustments. I think moving forward we just have confidence within each other to do that. It doesn’t matter for us opponent wise because at the end of the day we have to focus on ourselves and execute what we need to do. Definitely some tough games ahead of us, looking forward to those challenges. At the end of the day it’s a blessing.”

WR MECOLE HARDMAN

Q: Did you expect to be able to contribute right away?

HARDMAN: “I was going to be on the special teams part of it for sure. As far as offensive wise there were a couple of plays in for me just to get my feet back wet and just work me back in. My role will probably keep increasing a little bit as the weeks go on. I didn’t fall off, I kind of knew everything when I came back. Just ready to work now.”

Q: How much different is everything coming back?

HARDMAN: “There’s not too much different. A little bit of terminology is different but other than that it was fine.”

Q: Can you describe your big punt return and the juice that gave the team?

HARDMAN: “I thought I could have returned it for a touchdown but then I look at the video and I did the right thing. I just wanted to give my teams some momentum. He (Chargers P JK Scott) had been kicking it high and short the whole game and finally I saw one I could return and made the most of it.”

Q: Were there any nerves today?

HARDMAN: “No, not really. Just more excitement for real. I’m happy to be back out here and be back with these guys and excited to play again.”

DE MIKE DANNA

Q: What was the biggest difference in the first and second half?

DANNA: “They were moving the ball down the field, running, hurry up, they were getting a couple leaky yards – passing yards. We knew what we had to do coming out of halftime, just put the hammer down and figure it out, figure it out so we could go home with a win.”

Q: What's the task at hand going to Denver next week?

DANNA: "It's another division game, it's an important game. We have to go in there and face this opponent, we have to handle business. Like I said it's another divisional game, it means times two in this conference so it's an important game, an important week. We have to handle business."

Q: What was it like having Charles Omenihu back and have a full compliment of defensive lineman finally?

DANNA: "Oh man it was fun. All of us are versatile, we're all playing inside or out, getting us all on the field is huge every single one of us can rush. Being able to ball with them all for the first time this year was exceptional. I'm looking forward to keep on doing it, keep on stacking the reps and getting better with the guys."

Q: What does Charles Omenihu bring to the defense?

DANNA: "He (Charles Omenihu) brings veteran, he's a dog. He knows the game of football in and out. Like I said (he's) versatile, he can play three-tech, he can play D-end, he's got range in this game. Having him as an addition now is huge, he's going to be able to make a push in this d-line room for us."

CB L'JARIUS SNEED

Q: You guys controlled a good offense today, what made you so successful as a defense?

SNEED: "As a whole. The front line did what they did and, on the backend, we held them down. That's a good football team coming in. Despite their record, they are a good football team."

Q: How did it feel as teammates seeing Drue Tranquill get a sack against his former team?

SNEED: "That's big for him, coming from there, we praise him. Also, the big play he made down the middle of the field as well."

Q: How awesome was it to see the Mecole Hardman punt return?

SNEED: "It was big, his first game back and what he did today. He came out and played well."

DT CHRIS JONES

Q: Drue Tranquill seemed fired up, what did you see from him against his former team?

JONES: "Of course. When you're playing against your old team, there's always some extra fire some extra motivation to succussed. Especially when you're a guy like him who was doing so well over there and come over here to a division rival."

Q: On adding Charles Omenihu back.

JONES: "He's amazing. A tipped pass for an interception, the sack. I think the main thing about Charles (Omenihu) is getting him to play, staying consistent, if we continue to get that effort from Charles, we can be a dynamic defensive line."



Kansas City Chiefs vs. Los Angeles Chargers
Sunday, October 22, 2023
Week 7
Chiefs QB Patrick Mahomes



Q: How does Travis keep getting open?

MAHOMES: “It’s a lot of things but I think the main thing is the way he’s able to recognize coverage and adjust on the fly. We always talk about it, but it’s something that you can’t take for granted. It’s almost like he’s playing Madden like he can read the coverage and stop in the windows and be open and be on the same page as me at all times. He did a great job, it seems like he does it week in and week out and that’s why he’s the player he is and why he’ll be a hall of famer one day.”

Q: How much of the time are Travis Kelce’s routes scripted and how much does he improvise?

MAHOMES: “It’s hard to say because even though it’s not technically scripted the way, we talk about it throughout the week. If you look at the one where I kind of throw it in the middle of the field right between people, we kind of discussed like if that guy flies out, just be in that window and I’m going to throw it. I think by practicing it and doing it in practice I have confidence he’s going to do it in the game. I always joke around with him I’m like, ‘Man just take a rep off in practice,’ but he doesn’t want to, he wants to be out there all the time. I think he understands how important it is to build that chemistry and that’s what makes him so great.”

Q: What did you see out there on that third down with Mecole Hardman?

MAHOMES: “The first third down, I missed him. He actually read it well, he saw a linebacker pushing to him, I saw the corner outside but Trav (Kelce) was going to take that guy out of the way so he actually saw it the right way and I missed him. Then the last one was cover zero and he used his speed, getting through traffic and making a big catch to get that first down. It’s impressive because he didn’t have the season that he wanted in New York but to be able to come back, have confidence, not be down on himself, and know that whenever he gets his opportunities, he’ll do the most with it. Then obviously the punt return really put the game away, so another piece we can add to the offense and that speed is hard to replicate.”

Q: Was this your proudest performance as an offense this season?

MAHOMES: “I would say so far. There’s still just little things here and there, the first drive, the penalty, it just hurts. When we play big games like this, those could be big. Then the second half, just here and there little miscues here and there. If I can hit Rashee (Rice) on that one where they’re triple teaming Travis (Kelce), he’s probably going to score so just little things here and there that I have to get better at but we’re definitely taking steps in the right direction. I’ll just say the interception, no one look at Quez

(Marquez Valdes-Scantling) because that's who I was supposed to be throwing it to and he was probably – would have had another touchdown.

Q: Is Travis Kelce getting better as he gets older?

MAHOMES: "I think the way he's (Travis Kelce) able to recognize coverages is probably even better I mean he's played against every single team and every coverage and every way to try to take him away so he's able to recognize that and dissect it on the fly. Younger Trav would've scored on that one touchdown, I'll say that. But other than that, I think he's doing a great job of finding ways to get himself open and having these monster games.

Q: On Marquez Valdes-Scantling's touchdown.

MAHOMES: "He (Marquez Valdes-Scantling) actually was the first read. In all honesty, I called the running back was supposed to go out the other way and I called it the wrong way and so it ran underneath Marquez (Valdes-Scantling) but it actually opened up everything else to the right. I scrambled out to the right, he did a great job of working with me and then I threw the ball – I think those runs are starting to work now that the defenses are coming up when I scramble. I was able to get the ball to Marquez and he got in the endzone, he had a good game today and I have to continue to find him because he's getting open and I have to continue to find ways to get him the football."

Q: The defense adjusted in the second half on Travis Kelce. How did you adjust?

MAHOMES: "Third down they did a good job, they were going to double him (Travis Kelce) at least and if the running back stayed in, they were going to send a third guy in there. They were very conscious of Travis but it opens up other things, we just have to be able to hit and connect on those things and we did at certain points but if we can continue to get better at that, I like the one that Rashee (Rice) – if I can hit him on that and we get that big touchdown, it'll can take defenses out of that and so we have to continue to prove that and that's stuff that we can get better at as the season goes on.

Q: How did you feel about your offensive line against Khalil Mack and Joey Bosa?

MAHOMES: "They were great. They were great in pass protection. I've said it seven times to them in the locker room. Other than that third and super long, they kept me clean and a lot of pockets whenever I was going one two three back to one type reads and so they played their tails off, they battled and the second half they found a way to just grind out yards in the run game. That's a great defensive front and the offensive line accepted the challenge and played a great game."

Q: What was the vision on the play where you started to run but then found Travis Kelce up the field?

MAHOMES: "We actually talked about it on the sideline after. I saw him but couldn't find the angle to make the throw to him. The offensive line did a good job and I was able to step into the pocket which made it easier to float it to him. He was kind of the second/third read to him on that play, I looked at the first two, they were covered and then I saw Travis and I just wanted to find a way to get him the football and so he did a good job of finding that open space and I was able to get the football to him."

Q: On Travis Kelce's ability to get open.

MAHOMES: "He does a great job of whenever he's open, he doesn't get himself covered. I say that, and it sounds funny but a lot of times if you're supposed to run a route a certain way, they're going to keep

running the route and they're going to go through the window and in this offense, (Head) Coach (Andy) Reid gives them the freedom to – if you're open stay there, don't get yourself covered and run the route like we've ran in practice a thousand times, he does a great job of that. It sounds simple but it's something that he's really mastered."

Q: What allowed you to be able to find so many different receivers today?

MAHOMES: "I think guys stepped up. If they're going to focus that much on Travis (Kelce), obviously we're going to still try to throw him the football in certain areas but other guys have to make plays. Guys stepped up and made a lot of big plays, big catches, and I think that's what our offense is going to continue to be. Obviously there is still going to be a big dose of Trav, the player that he is, but if we want to continue to get to that next step of an offense and a team, we're going to have to let other guys make plays when it counts and I thought the guys did a great job of that today."

Q: What carryover from practice to games are you seeing from Rashee Rice?

MAHOMES: "He's just learning. Not only from me but from Travis, from Marquez, he takes in information well, he learns and we continue to give him more and he continues to get better and better. He's obviously a physical player, I think you can see that but the way he's able to start recognizing coverages and get himself open is starting to really translate and we'll continue to get better and better and if I can hit him on that one route, it's even a bigger game. I think he's done a great job but he can't be satisfied he has to continue to get better if he wants to be the player I think he wants to become."

Q: When you worked with Rashee Rice in the offseason, what stuck out about him?

MAHOMES: "I think the biggest thing I can tell – I mean obviously you see the physical stuff and everybody has the physical stuff but when I have those passing sessions in the offseason, I think y'all know, I'm talking through stuff with the receivers, I'm talking about recognizing coverages and stuff like that. I can tell that even though he didn't know, because he hasn't played in the NFL, he had a good grasp of feel, he understood how to kind of settle in certain areas and if he made a mistake, he would fix it the next time. I think that was the biggest thing that I saw with him. I mean obviously the physical stuff is there but the way he was able to comprehend and do stuff and adjust on the fly, I think that stuff is what is going to – what makes you great in this offense and I think he does of it."