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Chargers Head Coach Brandon Staley Media Availability

Monday, November 27, 2023 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

On his evaluation of the performance of the defense last night following the unit's personnel changes:

"I thought that those guys gave us a chance in the game. I thought that they really competed well. I thought that they executed the game plan, both from an assignment and technique standpoint. That's a quality offensive football team that we played. As I mentioned, they had scored 30 [points] five games in a row. Those guys all, I thought, practiced well and gave us the best chance. Hopefully, we can build off of that performance."

On DB Deane Leonard's performance last night:

"The thing that stands out to me is that he really competed in the game. I thought that he stayed mentally tough. He gave up a couple of completions on the backside there, but just never let that affect his state of mind. I thought that he got better as the game went on, I thought that he got into a rhythm and I thought that he was aggressive. I thought that he was mentally sharp, he made some really good tackles. When he missed some tackles, he missed them back to his leverage, missed them back to the help and to the pursuit of the defense. I also thought that he was really good at gunner, too. Despite starting at cornerback, I thought that he was still able to maintain that high level outside as our gunner. There is going to improve on, fundamentally. Like all players, you have to improve. We felt like it was a winning performance from him."

On if Leonard's performance last night was 'noticeably better' than his performance in Week 10 against the Lions:

"It was better than it was in the Detroit game."

On S Jaylenn Hawkins:

"Did work on him coming out [for the Draft]. He played for [Falcons Head Coach] Arthur Smith, who is a really good friend of mine, and played in some good defenses. I thought that he was well coached, he has a good background in the secondary, in terms of how he's been trained. We were looking for a guy that could deepen our secondary. He has played a lot of football in the NFL. He's a young player, but he has started a lot of games, and has played on special teams. Just felt like he has really good athleticism for the position, he has good size. He's been really good to work with. We wanted to make sure that he knew our system before we put them out there. We wanted to make sure that he truly understood how we play, there's a transition that needs to take place. But, he was proving himself on the practice field and proving that he deserved an opportunity. I thought that he did a nice job for us yesterday."

On if there will be 'continued competition in practice' for roles within the secondary:

"I think that it is going to stay competitive. It's going to stay competitive, but those guys that played in the game, they'll certainly be first in line."

On an injury update regarding WR Quentin Johnston:

"No news to report. X-rays were negative and things like that. He should be at practice this week, just a little bit sore."

On Johnston not returning to the game 'based on the flow of the game':

"What I meant about the flow of the game is that he had an injury that we didn't feel like, within the flow of the game — where him going into the game was going to give us that best chance, we didn't feel like he was 100 percent. At the end of the game, we felt comfortable with the guys that ended up playing. Not an indictment on Quentin [Johnston] at all. No storyline there, at all."

On determining if Johnston would return to the game:

"He was cleared to go back in, but he was clearly not 100 percent. It was still bothering him, to an extent. Just felt like rolling with those other guys was the smartest thing until he felt like he was good enough to go. It was just a combination of trainers, coaches, flow of the game, all of that type of good stuff. He's sore today, but he should be able to practice this week."

On a further explanation regarding the determination:

"He was cleared to come back into the game, but he was not 100 percent. We felt like, until he was 100 percent, that we were going to go with the other guys in the game. If he practices this week, then he will be right back out there versus New England. It wasn't because of a lack of confidence. Quentin [Johnston] will be out there if he is able to be out there."

On if he was 'satisfied' with the offense's performance last night:

"No, we turned the ball over four times. You're going to have a really difficult time winning against a team like that. That is where our focus is. Weeks 1 through 11, we were the top team in the NFL, in terms of fewest amount of giveaways. To give it away three times, and one of them happen in the red area, it's going to be challenging to win. We have to start there, with our ball security, with everybody who touches the football. Then, work from there."

On if the offense was 'properly prepared' for the Ravens' pass rush:

"Yes, we were prepared for their pressure packages. They do have an extensive pressure package, and one that is effective, because a lot of guys who are doing the pressuring are outstanding players. You're going to have pressure in known pass [situations] against rushes like that, just like people do against us. There's going to be tough parts of the protection where they're attacking a certain type of protection or a certain player in protection. It just takes all 11 guys in order to make it happen. Those ones at the end of the game were a [cover] zero type of pressure, where they're bringing one more than you can block. There are seven guys coming and you have six [protecting], so you have to be able to create a solution quickly, or keep more guys in to protect. We'll continue to do a good job of giving our guys clarity, but there wasn't anything in the game that we hadn't really seen, we just need to do a better job of executing. I have to do a better job of making sure that it happens."

On Johnston:

"It was a rib injury. Your ribs affect how you breathe. He plays a position where you have to reach in order to catch things, so it affects the position. He was cleared to go back in the game, but there was apprehension on my part of putting him back in there until he felt good enough. That is the storyline. He made it out of the game OK. The X-rays were negative, as I mentioned. He should be back on the practice field this week. If he is ready to go, which I think he will be, then you'll see him out there."

On Offensive Coordinator Kellen Moore:

"Outstanding teammate. One of the smartest coaches that I've ever worked with. Outstanding leader, play designer, communicator. I'm extremely happy that he's with us."

On the rushing offense:

"My expectations are for us to continue to try and find solutions to be a little bit more consistent. I think how we run the ball, it just hasn't happened yet, in terms of saying, 'Hey, that's what we do best.' There's been a lot of changes at tight end, at running back, at receiver. We just haven't found, I think, that consistency in that phase. Sometimes that happens within a phase of your team, whether it's the run game, passing game, pass protection. We're going to keep working hard at it. Our guys are committed to doing that. That's all we can do."

On adjustments made within the offensive personnel based on injury:

"We've had to make a lot of adjustments based on some of the personnel attrition. I think any time that happens, you lose some players like [C] Corey Linsley, who's one of the top engines at center, in the middle. Just starting with Corey, he's one of the top players at his position in the whole league. Then, you lose two receivers like [WR] Mike [Williams] and [WR] Josh [Palmer]. Then, [TE] Gerald [Everett] is out for some time, as well. It's going to impact how you run the ball. Not to mention that [RB Austin] Ekeler was out for a chunk of time with his ankle. I think, for all of those reasons, we are kind of where we are. We're going to continue to work hard at it and, hopefully, as personnel stays the same, you can lean into what your guys do best and we can improve down the stretch."

On OLB Khalil Mack:

"This is going to be one of the top seasons he's ever had. In 2018 when I was with him, I think he should have been Defensive Player of the Year that year. Had we not held him out of those two games, I think he would have been. He's playing at an elite level, as well as I've ever seen him play. He looks fresh. He looks healthy. You saw the way he rushed against a \$100 million tackle last night. He's been doing it all year. He has 13 sacks. It's a historic achievement — one of two players in the history of the National Football League to have 12 sacks with three different teams. He's going to get to 100 sacks. You're witnessing one of the special players that you guys have ever watched."

On the first timeout of the game:

"It was a miscommunication. Needed to get an EDGE guy out of the game. It was loud. It was one of those, kind of, unfortunate game-time things. I take full responsibility."

On WR Alex Erickson:

"He's been a glue guy for us. He's a guy that can play different places and make things right. He gives you some return value, too. Just a guy that's really, kind of, helped us with some of the receiver attrition that we've had. With [WR] Derius [Davis] having such an important role as our punt returner, he's able to handle that fourth receiver duty and keep people on the move. He's been steady for us."

On if WR Derius Davis will continue to handle return duties:

"Yeah, that's the direction that we're headed right now."

On WR Joshua Palmer and C Corey Linsley:

"No updates on Josh [Palmer]. Corey [Linsley] is doing well."