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Chargers Week 6 Media Availability

Friday, October 14, 2022 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR JOE LOMBARDI

On the unit's performance in the run game last week:

"It was great. It makes it so much easier on everyone involved when you run the ball well. It's good. It's encouraging, but every week is a new week. It doesn't guarantee anything for the future."

On how the offense was able to execute the run game:

"It's going to be the same answer as when it doesn't go well. Everything involved is a little bit better. The plan was really good. I have to give credit to Nuge [Offensive Line Coach Brendan Nugent], [Assistant Offensive Line Coach] Shaun Sarrett and [Tight Ends Coach Kevin] Koger. They really came up with a good plan and then blocked it well. The runners, they came to play. You could feel that early. I think everyone involved was responsible for it."

On RB Austin Ekeler's performance over the last two weeks:

"You, obviously, see him, but you also see the production that's been happening the last two games. It's not like in the first three games where he's doing something bad or wrong there. I don't know if I can put my finger on it. I think the running game is often dependent on everything around you and if you give a good runner like him a chance, he's going to make good things happen. Every play is different. There are a million variables in every play. We had a play where they really defended it well and he just broke a tackle and went for 15 yards. Other plays, they may have mis-fit it or it was just a really good scheme that was blocked up well. Every play is its own entity that has a different explanation for it. Whatever you attribute it to, I did feel on Sunday against the Browns early on I was like, 'Man, this kid is on fire and ready to play today.' I'm sure he was feeling good and feeling it. We've all had those days where we're in the zone and I think that was where he was on Sunday."

On how the unit's success in the run game impacts future opponents' game planning:

"I think confidence is such a big thing in any endeavor, so, hopefully, it builds a little confidence. I don't think the stats showed it as much, but I felt like we were running the ball effectively against Houston as well. You hope that it can keep going. Just like when you have a couple of weeks where maybe you didn't run the ball too well, you don't want to create this feeling of, 'Well, we'll never be able to.' And when you do run the ball well for a couple of weeks, it certainly doesn't guarantee anything. One thing I've learned in football is that every week is a process and you go through the process and you give everything you can to the planning and the practice and putting thought into it. Again, just because it worked on Sunday doesn't mean it will work this Sunday. We're back to square one every week."

On RB Joshua Kelley's impact on last Sunday's game:

"A lot like Austin [Ekeler]. When he had his opportunities, he did well with them. He's a guy that always runs hard. When things are blocked up well for him, he hits it and he's going to maximize those runs. He's a very consistent runner from that aspect as far as how hard he runs, how quickly he makes decisions. When it's going well, it sure shows up."

On if Kelley has 'earned more playing time':

"I think so. Like we talked about earlier, he feels like he is the hot hand. We'll keep along that path, I think."

On WR DeAndre Carter's route on the fourth down in the fourth quarter and if he could have 'sat down':

"There are times where he has that option. When you have another slant coming outside, you don't want to crowd up. He's kind of mandated to stay on the move there."

On if the route would have been different if WR Keenan Allen had been playing:

"Maybe he would have throttled a little bit. I wish I had that call back. I think if anyone is to blame, it's me. Probably a better play-call in that situation. They, certainly, were anticipating it and jumped inside. I kind of told [QB] Justin [Herbert], 'Hey, just feed [WR] Mike [Williams] here.' He was a hot hand, let's just throw it to him. Regardless of what happened, I think I screwed it up and he was throwing to Mike because I told him to."

On if Herbert 'looked at Carter first' in the fourth down play:

"A couple of things going on there. Technically, that read is inside-out. Rarely does the inside receiver get the ball in that situation, but you're also trying to hold your eyes. It was cover zero, so it didn't matter, but just muscle memory is like, 'My eyes are downfield at first on that play.' I think he was throwing to Mike [Williams] regardless because of what I told him."

On the cornerback defending Williams on the fourth down play:

"Corner just jumped in. Mike was trying to fight. We've had plays like that where Mike's kind of just on his own, taking it deep and Justin hit him. I think that situation was, 'Hey, this is the higher percentage is running a slant versus a go.' Obviously, not the way they played it. He was trying to work inside on it."

On the opinions of the decision to go for it on fourth down in the fourth quarter:

"Usually, I don't pay any attention to it. I just felt guilty because I felt like I could have made a better play-call and everyone would have thought it was the smartest decision ever. I'm taking full blame for that one."

On going for it on fourth down late in the game two weeks ago, and how that relates to last week's decision:

"There is a lot of discussion about analytics, and I think they are important and it's smart to use them. We've all doubled down on 11 when the dealer is showing a six [in blackjack] and lost a hand, but it's still the right thing to do. Afterwards, you wish you hadn't because you busted or the dealer beats you. I think you have to make good decisions. There are two things involved. Is it the right decision to go for it? And then, are you putting your guys in the best play in order to convert? There are a lot of things involved in it. I always like it when we go for it on fourth down. I'm for it."

On what he feels he should have called:

"I'm not going to tell you because I might need it for the next game."

On 'getting Herbert on a bootleg':

"That's a good point. What they were playing, they were in desperation mode, so cover zero. The naked sometimes can be a little murky because there is someone coming right at the quarterback's face. Nothing bad happens does include an incompleteness when we talk about those plays and that's certainly not something that we were looking for in that situation."

On 'if he anticipated the slot corner to drop down':

"The play before they had played cover zero. You reference that Kansas City game, game three last year, as we were driving on that last drive, they were bringing cover zero and we just kept throwing three-step. It worked then. The corner I think on Sunday was intent on, 'All right, whatever happens here, I'll give you the go route, but I'm not giving you a slant route.' I think it was a really smart play by him."

On WR Joshua Palmer:

"I think he has shown real toughness and knows that we need him and he's working through it. I think he is doing good. He hadn't had the explosive plays, but he had a lot of important catches. Just a guy that we trust a lot and works hard. I think there are bigger things ahead for him as we keep going."

On if Palmer will have more success when Allen returns:

"I think when Keenan comes back, I think it's going to help everyone. He's such a huge factor, especially on third down. We've been doing a good job staying out of third-and-long. We just haven't done as good of a job as we are used to converting on a lot of those third-and-mediums, third-and-shorts. He's a big part of us being successful at that. I think the other guys have been doing well, but he's obviously the best at that kind of thing. When you get the best back, I think it will help everyone."

On the Broncos' offense:

"I haven't been paying close attention to what is being said about them. I think when you have good players and you have a good process, a lot of it is just figuring out the formula for what is going to help this group of players. You may have a quarterback and a group of receivers and you know exactly how to cook that meal. You have these ingredients and then you can switch out a couple of those ingredients and there is a good meal to be made. You just have to figure out how to cook it. I don't know [Broncos Head Coach] Nathaniel [Hackett], but I do know people who know him and everything I know about him is that he is a really good coach and we know [QB] Russell Wilson is a good player. I'm sure, given time, that those guys are going to figure it out."

On QB Justin Herbert's play so far this season:

"Really good. I think he's feeling better every week. The thing that he is doing so well is protecting the football. We're not getting sacked and I think a big part of that is, obviously, the offensive line and the tight ends and the running backs and the receivers getting open. He bails us out of a lot of situations with just the clock in his head and getting rid of the ball if he feels if the protection is breaking down. Just keeping us out of bad situations, he's tremendous at it. When he has the opportunity, we know that he makes just incredible plays. I think he's doing fantastic."

On what Herbert can improve on:

"I think we can say that about all of us. There is always something that we can improve on, but I think that he is playing at a real high level."

On Broncos OLB Bradley Chubb:

"It seems like every team has got him, but he's just a hard guy to block. He has the measurables, the speed, the get off, the rush plan. The hard thing about him is that he lines up on your right, he lines up on your left. You're never really sure where he is, and so it's hard to formulate a really airtight protection plan because you're not sure where he's going to lineup. He's a game-disruptor, for sure."

On TE Donald Parham Jr.'s acclimation back into the offense:

"I think good. I think this week was a lot better than the week before, specifically referencing what we saw in practice and I think he's just going to get more confidence. He had a long layoff, and so he's getting his battle rhythm back and expect to see his role increase and his production increased, for sure."

On how the Broncos' defense has changed under the new coaching staff:

"Similar. They come from the same tree, so to speak. Probably a little more variation in the personnel groupings they use, which is a big challenge. It's almost like you're preparing for three defenses in one with this group. It's a lot like our defense, as far as preparing for that. The hard part is there may be plays that you favor versus different personnel groupings that they are throwing in. With the shot clock running down, you can't always — you're anticipating a certain defense, a grouping, and all of a sudden there is another one. You've called the play, and so you have to be smart with your plays. If they block up and are sound against all of the different looks that they can give you."

On the red zone offense:

"I wish it were better. I think we've had chances. I always look at scheme versus execution. I think that we've put ourselves in some tough situations with some pre-snap penalties. Maybe some throws that could have been caught that were dropped. I think the process is good. I think it's going to pick up and we're going to feel better about it. When you get down there, you want to score touchdowns and not field goals."

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR RENALDO HILL

On his assessment of the defense's performance through the first five games:

"I think that it's still a process. We're still growing, still adding those seven new players to the defense and making sure that we keep fine-tuning every screw in this defense. It's growing, we're learning from our mistakes and we're heading in the right direction."

On limiting 'explosive plays':

"You find a silver lining in that it's all fixable. We got hit on a few plays, and everybody would want those back, but we know that it takes a complete unit in order for us to go out and execute, I think that's the one thing that we're finding as player and coach. It's important for us to keep going and attacking it out on the practice field. The more and more times that we can get reps — whether that's in walk-through, making sure that we're tied in together — I think that those opportunities will happen less. We're going to keep growing. Hopefully, we like the product at the end of the day. It starts this week."

On CB J.C. Jackson's transition to the scheme and unit:

"I think that's a process, too. We're going to keep growing. We have to continue to maximize those guys' strengths and what they do. How many opportunities can we get J.C. [Jackson] to get up there in press [coverage]? Obviously, we want him to do that, but we also have different things in our scheme that allow him to play off and work with others. We're going to try and do everything that we saw him do in New England that made him Mr. Interception. We're going to try to maximize that as much as possible so that he can go out there and play at a high level. We know that that will help our defense as a whole."

On Jackson's Instagram handle featuring 'Mr. INT':

"You hear it around that that is the title [laughter]. It's been spot on, so we want to make sure that we can get him playing back at that level."

On if he refers to Jackson as 'Mr. INT' in meetings:

"No, not in meetings [laughter]. I can't give him that much, I have to keep the finger down on him [laughter]."

On Jackson's coverage techniques and if his ankle injury impacted his performance thus far this season:

"It's going to be a process. He came off of that ankle surgery, gave it a week out, then jumped in at Kansas City. There are, probably, still some side effects of that. He's definitely improving each week. He's getting back to his old self. He's spending so much time, whether they're in special teams, working with [Secondary] Coach [Derrick] Ansley on his press mechanics and all of those things. We challenged him, even after that first half. He played a lot of off [coverage] in the first half. The second half, we felt like that story was a little bit different. He got there in press and challenged a little bit more, and it looked a whole lot better. That is what we have to continue to do. He's going to mix it up, as a corner, but we know that his strong suit is getting up there and pressing."

On Broncos QB Russell Wilson:

"Russell [Wilson] is a Super Bowl champion. He's still finding his rhythm within that scheme. A new person moving into a new scheme, but he has command. You know that he knows what he is looking for, having experience in this league. He still can make all of the throws. His 9 ball is still one of the prettiest in the league. The more and more opportunities that he gets, with him and [Broncos Head] Coach [Nathaniel] Hackett, in that system, and they get it grooved out, we know that good things are going to happen. Right now, they're playing good ball on defense and they're keeping the games close. We all know Russell — if he gets going, it can be a scary movie. That can happen at any point, so we have to make sure that we're prepared and ready to go."

On the challenges with facing the Broncos' offense:

"We have to go out and play our game. We're expecting the best Russell [Wilson]. We know what he is capable of. He's done it in the past. In our eyes, and our believe is that, he is going to be the guy that is ready to go out there on Monday night, in front of the whole world, and get it done. We have to make sure that we're taking care of what we need to do in order to play some good football on our end."

On CB Bryce Callahan:

“He’s just a calm player. He’s confident. He’s been doing that slot cover since he came in the league, and has been in this system for a long time. He definitely knows what he is doing. We feel like he is a quarterback at that position, especially when you have new pieces and younger players on the outside of him. We think that he provides some calmness in his play. He can kind of help those guys with what to look for and to make those pre-checks early so that we can go out and play fast.”

On S Alohi Gilman starting at safety last week and S Nasir Adderley’s role moving forward:

“He earned that spot. He earned some reps. He’s been practicing hard and doing everything that we’ve asked. We have to be accountable to our defense. It’s hard when we haven’t been showing that. We put it in competition. Competition brings out the best in us. That week, Alohi [Gilman] won out. We’re going to keep doing it, moving forward. We think that is going to help our defense. We just know that we have to be accountable to this whole scheme, not just one individual.”

On ‘why it hasn’t clicked’ for Adderley:

“I don’t necessarily know if it hasn’t clicked. It’s the process of being a young guy in the defense and learning his way. Sometimes, when you step away, or you get removed, you find a different way to approach it. We’re hoping that is what is going to come to light, that he finds his way and approaches it. Like I said, we’re going to keep opening up the competition each week for those two so that we can put the best guy in that position on the field.”

On OLBs Kyle Van Noy and Chris Rumph II have performed at EDGE across from OLB Khalil Mack:

“I think that they’ve done a really good job, including [OLB Derrek] Tuszka. It’s going to take those three guys in a rotation because they each bring something different, whether that’s Chris [Rumph II] and his pass rush, Kyle [Van Noy] and his experience and ability to set the run on first and second down, then [Derrek] Tuszka has just been a smart, smart player in this short time that he’s been in here. We think that it’s a combination of all three of those guys stepping up and helping this defense. They all bring something different. We’re going to keep rotating those guys. Hopefully, we can get [OLB] Joey [Bosa] back at some point. We’re going to keep rotating those guys. I’m hoping that their continued growth will happen at that position.”

On ‘teaching the pass-rushers to not fall on top of the quarterback’:

“We emphasize it, whether that’s throughout training or in spring ball, the things that we have to do. When it does approach, like the past couple of weeks, we try to make sure that we put that emphasis back in place so that those guys know. You hate to get off the field on a third down, then something like that happens. We’re just trying to make our guys aware that we need to do the right things.”

On what DL Sebastian Joseph-Day ‘could have done differently’:

“He was close. It was the call. We just have to let [Joseph-Day] know that if the ball is out, just put the hands up. We’re going to learn from it. We’re going to continue to learn from it. It happened to us. We would hate for it to happen if we fell on the quarterback, so we just have to keep addressing it. When those guys get close and the quarterback gets the ball out, just let up and put your hands up in the air.”

On Browns QB Jacoby Brissett ‘getting an Academy Award for his acting performance’ on the play:

“That’s how close it is and that’s how we have to address it to those guys. If they can sell the job, or anything of that nature, we have to make sure that we do the extra to protect ourselves.”

On ‘generating more’ out of the EDGE group outside of Mack:

“We have to keep putting our brain trust together up in the room upstairs, and then we have to mix it up, whether that’s different games that we can run to try to free those guys, we have to do that. Straight rush may not help, as well, so we have to make sure that we’re looking at all options to try to free those guys up, as well as Khalil [Mack] — we have to make sure that we’re getting all of our guys their options and looks so that we can affect the quarterback.”

On defending against the Broncos' 'explosive plays':

"They have a talented group. I've been over there with that group, with [Broncos WR] Courtland [Sutton], [Broncos WR] Jerry [Jeudy] and [Broncos WR] KJ [Hamler]. They can take the roof off down the field. We know that is something that Russell [Wilson] has done in the past at Seattle, so we have to make sure that we're doing a good job. That's always an emphasis of ours, making sure that we put a roof on the defense and making sure that we don't have those explosives, try to make them go the long way down the field. It's going to be an emphasis for us. We know that all it takes is one ball. We just have to play with good technique and fundamentals out there."