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Chargers Week 8 Media Availability

Thursday, October 28, 2021 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR JOE LOMBARDI

On his evaluation of the offense over the bye week:

“Some things that we want to emphasize would be to continue to develop our screen game and play-action game, keep getting the quarterback on the move. Those were two of the major takeaways.”

On if the loss to the Ravens was a ‘hiccup game’ for the offense:

“I hope so. It was one of those days. When you have a day like that, you don’t think anyone really did anything great. The game-planning probably wasn’t good enough. The play-calling probably wasn’t good enough. When we did have a chance to make some plays, maybe we didn’t. Everyone had their hand in it. I don’t expect that will be a trend, but we have to work hard to make sure it isn’t.”

On if he preferred to have a game like that in October, rather than December:

“Yeah. Those days happen sometimes in the NFL. Shoot, [New Orleans] stomped Tampa last year in a similar type of game, and then they went on to win the Super Bowl. We felt like that it wasn’t unheard of where we would have a game like that. You trust your process. You know that you have good players. You hope and work hard to make sure that it doesn’t happen again.”

On QB Justin Herbert being ‘out of sync’ against the Ravens:

“It’s tough. They did a good job. There were maybe some pressures that we hadn’t prepared for because we hadn’t really seen them. There were a couple where they came free on a cover-zero where they have us out out-manned. The other ones, a guy came free early and got a sack. Technically, we should have had it picked up. But, because we hadn’t practiced it, someone missed their assignment. The next time that they ran the same pressure, we picked it up. It always helps to practice what you’re going to do. But, defenses are smart, and sometimes they will give you some un-scouted looks. You hope that your rules take it into account. If it did, on the one where they came free, where we should have had it picked up, as a coach, you’re always kind of saying, ‘Well, we didn’t give them that look.’ So, part of that’s on us.”

On if Herbert’s performance was due to being presented with ‘un-scouted looks’:

“Certainly, you can feel unsettled as a quarterback. One thing that I look back on, self-critically, is that it’s my job, as a play-caller, to find those calls that get us on rhythm. Looking back self-critically, there were some things that we could have done to help get that engine started a little earlier.”

On Herbert ‘not being able to scramble’ against the Ravens:

“There are a couple of things that can happen. One might be the scramble lanes. They did a good job with their rush plan. Is there a place for you to escape to? That’s always an issue. He’s trying to play smart and keep really bad things from happening. We’ve all seen the quarterback try and do something too much, and instead of an incompleteness or a four-yard sack, it turns into a 12-yard sack. He’s just trying to play smart in some of those situations. That doesn’t mean that he’s not going to do it in the future. One thing about him, I really do trust his instincts in the pocket, knowing when to escape, when to throw the ball out, when to just protect it and, maybe, take the sack and avoid turnovers. Nothing there that I was critical of him for throwing the ball away or taking a sack in that game.”

On the depth at running back behind RB Austin Ekeler:

"I think that all three of them are good players. I wouldn't say that I'm disappointed in any of them. Austin gets highlighted, so sometimes we're not getting enough reps to really make a fair judgment on how those guys are doing in games, because Austin's getting a heavy load. But, I think it's a work-in-progress to really see who that guy is. I think it's three good candidates, though."

On WR Mike Williams:

"He brings a lot of talent, size, strong hands. Good route-runner. Smart player. He's been making plays for us and getting open. He was the seventh pick in the draft for a reason. We're glad that we have him. I think it's just a good player doing the things that good players do, and a quarterback that knows how to find him and deliver him the ball."

On Williams' development:

"I think that's a big thing. I know that there's a narrative out there about Mike and his new role. I think, in a lot of ways, he's the same player, he's just been healthy for the most part. He did miss practice going into the Baltimore game. That's never helpful, obviously. But he's back healthy, feeling good out there practicing. I think health is a big part of it. I'd love to take credit that we've brought this player into this new role and really got him going, but there are a lot of factors that go into it. I think he's the same player. He's a guy that I've always had a very high opinion of. The numbers are increasing, I think that health is a big reason for that."

On receiving part of the credit for Williams' development:

"I think that he deserves the credit, Justin [Herbert] deserves the credit and his health deserves the credit. I'll take it, but I probably don't deserve it."

On what he is looking to improve in the screen game:

"I think calling them in the right spot. There were some games early where maybe we didn't feel good about the screen game as much because of the way a team rushed or something. We had some success in the Cleveland game. We had efficient screens against Baltimore, but that close to being big plays, just getting the timing down to where those five-yard gains turn into 20-yard gains. That, and then also calling them in the right spot and having the right screens up every week. Just having just a little bit more focus on that."

On the Patriots defense:

"They're well-coached, obviously. [Patriots Head Coach] Bill [Belichick] has been there forever and they've always been good. They've always been smart. They don't beat themselves. They're very specific to each team that they play. They have a structure and a philosophy, but there are a lot of nuances to how they play each defense. They're heavy up front. They have big edge-setters. They're going to funnel your run game inside. They know how to play their coverages. They know where they need help, and they help where they need help. They're very smart. One of the hard parts is really trying to predict exactly how they're going to play you. You have to be flexible in your gameplan with this team. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts. They're just a smart football team that forces you to play smart. If you don't play smart, they're going to expose you real fast."

On evaluating the Chargers' game against the Patriots last season:

"I think that you watch that. [WRs] Mike [Williams] and Keenan [Allen] were both playing, so you watch closely how they treated them. There are new players for them. They are so they're so good at knowing their personnel. Just because they played the Chargers a certain way last year, well there may be different corners in there, so they may not be able to do something that they did last year, or maybe they can do more, based on how they feel about their players. There's certainly information that you're trying to glean, but also knowing that it's a new year for both teams. Always ready for the unpredictable."

On Patriots OLB Matthew Judon:

"We played Baltimore, I think it was back in 2018 when I was in New Orleans, and he was there. Just a guy that I remember being very concerned with back then, and that hasn't changed. He's a heavy guy. He's a pass-rusher, physical, but he has some slipperiness to him. He's good in the run game. It was a really good signing for them."

On the offense's efficiency on first and second down:

"Our first down offense is ranked 20th, or whatever it is, so I think that we can do a better job of trying to stay out of third down. Just running the ball better and being smarter with some of our pass game in the early downs to be a little more efficient."

On if the Patriots' defense still reflects their scheme from 10, 15 years ago:

"They're so good at knowing who their people are and developing their game plan and their philosophy around who they are. When they had [former Patriots CB] Darrelle Revis, you kind of knew what their philosophy was going to be — he was going to cover their second-best guy and then they were going to double the best guy. They don't have Darrelle Revis, but they do have good corners. Maybe you don't see as much of that as you did a few years ago. Their evolution every year, based on their personnel, is something that has always been impressive. They know who they are, they know who you are and they know how to put a plan together that gives them the best chance to win."

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR RENALDO HILL**On facing the Patriots:**

"We know it's going to be really challenging. Watching them last week, they were really clicking. [QB] Mac Jones was playing well; the running game was going so we know it's going to be a tough task. But our guys are up for the challenge, and we'll be ready to roll."

On Patriots QB Mac Jones:

"He doesn't get on the perimeter and use his legs in that fashion, but he will step and be able to buy time. Be able to look for those escape lanes on the inside. We still have to be disciplined in that area as well. It's a different game, we have to prepare our guys differently for Mac Jones."

On what he learned in the bye week:

"We tried to look at it from a coaching standpoint, early. We really scraped it from the ground up. We tried to go back and talk about how we want to play certain things at each position. Once we got that talked through with the staff, we made sure we went and did that with the players as well. Everybody has a clear understanding of how [Head Coach Brandon] Staley wants it done so we're all speaking the same language. A lot of times bye week allows you to do that, where you can go back and make sure that we're clicking on the same things. So things don't get pushed off to the side, making sure we're all clicking on the same page."

On the cornerback rotation:

"We always have a competitive room. We have a lot of good guys that've earned reps. It allows everybody to be involved with the game plan — it keeps guys fresher. You get to see it from the lens of the sideline, so that when you're in, you know what to anticipate. We're going to need everybody if we want to move forward, and I like that it allows everybody to be part of the game plan. It's not waiting for an injury, you're ready to go when you're called."

On choosing who plays corner:

"It depends on how the game is moving along. We'll get a feel for it and a lot of these guys have earned time to play. I think it'll be a game-by-game situation."

On the Patriots performances through Week 7:

"It's letting you know through six weeks that they're finally getting a grasp. They're starting to get comfortable with their young quarterback and it's showing. It definitely lets us know that we have to be ready. We can't come out slow, we have to start fast, and we have to play within our defense."

On Patriots QB Mac Jones' processing skills:

"Looking at him in general he's doing a good job operating with that offense. The quarterback is really connected to [Offensive Coordinator Josh] McDaniels, they're tied at the hip and you see it. He's going through, he's making all the checks and he's getting those guys in and out of the huddle. He's operating at a high level; he's understanding where the pressure's coming from, you can tell that he's ready to go on gameday. He's doing a good job operating that system and he knows where to go with the ball, and he gets it out quick."

On what DL Justin Jones' return means to the defense:

"More depth and having a guy who can play the run game. A guy who the other guys are comfortable with making all the checks and calls. I think it allows the other guys to play faster. In his time away, we've been able to develop some depth, so it'll help us with game experience. It'll help us moving forward."

On the development of the run defense:

"We're taking it week by week, continuing to build. We know where we sit in the NFL as far as the rushing. It's going to be week-to-week and we just have to keep improving. We know one week won't solve it; we know it's going to be a process throughout the whole year. We're going to stay on task with becoming a better run defensive team."

On factors contributing to a faulty run defense:

"It's a combination of things, but at the end of the day, this bye week was great because it allowed us to zero in on the fundamentals. Where we need to be, hand placement, where are the help-defenders. All of those things tie into good run defenses. Making sure we all play together in unison. That's when you see it express itself. You're going to see runs that break, but the biggest neutralizer to that is guys running and getting to the ball. We have to make sure we tie all those things in together in order to be a better run defense."

On self-scouting after losing to Baltimore:

"Playing the Ravens, a different style was a learning experience. It's not one where you push it off to the side or think you can move on. Because if you want to be sitting in the playoff race, you have to go through those guys again. We have to make those adjustments, be prepared, and get ready for those guys if we continue to handle business down the stretch."

CORNERBACK CHRIS HARRIS JR.**On the Patriots offense:**

"It's the same thing I've faced since I've been in the league, just without [Buccaneers TE Rob] Gronk [Gronkowski] and [Buccaneers QB] Tom [Brady]. It's a little different, but I feel like [Patriots QB] Mac [Jones] plays a great game. I think for a rookie to come in and to learn this offense is very difficult. To be able to make the checks, make the throws, he's been able to do that. I'm impressed with how he's playing as a rookie quarterback, and this is definitely going to be a challenge."

On self-scouting in the bye week:

"I think we were third in pass defense, so we were very happy with the way we were playing — we forced a lot of fumbles. We were able to get some picks, but we haven't been able to recover a lot of them. That's one thing we made emphasis on — trying to make sure we recover these fumbles. Of course, first and second down being able to stop the run better, that's something we put emphasis on. If we can do that, we've been great on third down, we've been getting off the field. Great at pass and great at not giving up explosives. If we continue to do that, tighten up our run, we are going to be very styled on defense"

On Patriots QB Mac Jones:

"He always has the ball out fast. From all the games that I've watched, he makes fast, quick decisions as a quarterback. He doesn't take a lot of sacks; he'll take what you can give him. The Jets, it was kind of hard to watch that game. They put up 50 points, but all the other games he's very quick. He makes quick decisions; he's tried to take more shots as the season went on."

On the rushing attack against Baltimore:

“Going against that type of offense, you aren’t going to see that many type of run offenses like them. With the quarterback, a great fullback number 42 [Patrick Ricard], a great offensive line. This [Patriots] offense is totally different than playing a Baltimore offensive running game. Even compared to the Browns and the Cowboys, a lot of the other teams we have seen already, this is totally different. We feel confident to be able to finish strong the rest of the year.”

On if this game is a ‘rematch’ against the Patriots:

“That’s something I’m definitely thinking about. That’s something I’m definitely reminded of — they kicked our butts last year. Everybody knows. They killed us on special teams — they beat us really bad in all three phases. Everybody knows that, and we are aware of what happened last year. We have to try to stop them because they’re gonna try and do the same thing.”

On CB Asante Samuel Jr.:

“He just has to continue to grow. In the NFL, playing corner, you have ups and downs. You’ll have some hard periods; that’s part of playing corner in the league. He just has to continue to push through it, continue to be consistent. I think he’s doing a pretty good job.”

On the first half of the season:

“I knew just looking at the schedule in the beginning of the year, you knew you had to start out fast. We couldn’t get behind, especially in this division. That was major for us to come out 4-2. I think we’re tied for first — well, they gave it the Raiders because they have one more win. We need to come out fast; we know it’s a strong division, strong conference. It was major for us to come out 4-2. I think once you get to November, that’s when the real football starts, around this time into October-November. That’s when the NFL kicks in. That’s when you start to see guys fall off, or take their team to the next level. We are about to see which direction we’re headed.”