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## Chargers Week 6 Media Availability

Thursday, October 12, 2023 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

### HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

#### **On trading CB J.C. Jackson:**

"We just felt like this was the best course for our team. There was a body of work to go off of. We felt like this direction was what was best for our football team."

#### **On 'what led to the trade':**

"There's a body of work to go off of – two years' worth of a body of work. We just felt like this was the best course for our team."

#### **On if 'body of work' is 'specific to performance on the field or off of the field, as well':**

"In all ways."

#### **On the Cowboys:**

"I see a team that's won 12 games two years in a row and have been deep into the playoffs. A team that has some of the best point differential in the league. They've had a lot of big wins this season. They had a tough game [last week], just like all of us do, but this is a very complete football team on offense, defense and in the kicking game. It's a team full of premium players who have experience together and an outstanding coaching staff."

#### **On the Cowboys 'not pressuring as much last week:**

"Last week was a different game. When you get behind, you're not going to be able to rush because they're going to run the football. It's one of the top [defensive] fronts in the league, in terms of pass rush. They're very disruptive. They have a lot of players that can rush. They can rush from the outside, the inside. They have linebackers who can rush. That's led to a lot of takeaways and points for them. They have definitely been one of the top takeaway units in the league the last couple of years. That's definitely going to be a point of emphasis for us."

#### **On the secondary:**

"We believe in that group. That group is where we've played our best football as a team since we've been here. We have full trust in those guys. Those guys have played really well together. Now, they get to play together full-time."

#### **On QB Justin Herbert and 'how much his finger impacts the gameplan':**

"It won't have any effect."

#### **On if Herbert's finger 'is something that will have to be schemed around':**

"No."

**On Herbert playing with the injured finger and relating this injury to his injury last season:**

"You guys just talked to Justin [Herbert], he's a player out there and he is going to do what is best for himself. He is going to continue to be aggressive. It's a much different injury than the one that he had last year."

**On WR Jalen Guyton:**

"Progressing. No timeline."

**On OLB Joey Bosa:**

"Progressing. No timeline."

**On C Will Clapp:**

"He's steady. He's really smart. He has toughness. He has experience. He was in a good offense in New Orleans. He's been playing quality football for us since he's been here. He has a really good command of our scheme. He knows how to work well with others. Him and Justin [Herbert] have good chemistry together, as well. He's been a steady force for us. I thought he played well in the last game."

**On Jackson:**

"I'm not talking anymore about J.C. [Jackson]. We're moving forward as a team, and that's behind us."

**On having an 'early' bye week:**

"You can control when your bye is, all you have to do is take advantage of it. That's what we tried to do: get as much rest as we can and be ready to go for this week. I thought, based on who was out in that Vegas game, that it came at a good time for us. But, no matter when you're bye is, things even out in the end, so you just have to take it as it comes. It's about Dallas this week, having a good week of practice and making sure our group is ready for Monday night."

**On the offense and third-down pass protection:**

"You said it, there are going to be some games that skew the data. Four games isn't a very big sample size, in the league. We'll see, more than halfway through the season, what those numbers look like. But, each game has a life of its own that way, each third down. Again, just because there's pressure, that doesn't mean that that's affecting the outcome for us. There's going to be pressure in the NFL, these fronts and these pressure packages are really good. You're going to have to face it. [Herbert] has done such a good job of that, since he's been the quarterback. We've done a really good job, as a unit. That's a big part of how we play, our protection plan, and how much we put into it. [Offensive Line Coach] Brenden Nugent, [Assistant Offensive Line Coach] Shaun Sarrett, [Running Backs Coach] Derrick Foster and [Quarterbacks Coach] Doug [Nussmeier], I think that's the biggest part of your deal, when you are trying to protect your quarterback. We'll continue to get better. Now that Will [Clapp] is in the fold, that chemistry is going to take shape. It's going to be big in this game because Dallas is a really good pass-rush team."

**On 'how the Cowboys' offense has changed' compared to past seasons:**

"They have the same players. They have an outstanding O-line. They have outstanding skill players. Their three-receiver grouping is going to be as good of a three-receiver grouping as you're going to see. [Cowboys RB Tony] Pollard is an outstanding back. It really starts with [QB] Dak [Prescott] and the type of experience that he has, as a player. He has accomplished so much. There are not too many looks that he hasn't seen. A very complete offense. We're going to have our work cut out for us."

**On if he 'still looks at the tape' from the 2021 matchup against the Cowboys:**

"We take a look at it, for sure. Most of those coaches are still there and a lot of their players are still there. You'll take a look at it. There are a lot of elements from their offense that they want to keep. They've been a very successful offense for the last four years, one of the top offense is in the league. There's a lot of offense there that is still in place."

**On 'the biggest challenge' when facing Cowboys LB Micah Parsons and DE DeMarcus Lawrence:**

"DeMarcus [Lawrence] and Micah [Parsons] are one of the top tandems in the league. I've had so much respect for DeMarcus for a long time. He's kind of one of those underrated superstar rushers. I know that in coaching edge rushers, he's a guy that we've always watched. He's kind of like Joey [Bosa], he's an outstanding technician. He can rush from either side. He can rush with speed or power. His hands are outstanding. Micah has proven that he's one of the top players in the game. He's one of these guys that's definitely risen for that level of being one of the top players in the league. He's one of these guys that is a very complete player, run and pass. He has an outstanding motor. Then, they have a lot of guys in the front that can rush inside and outside, and that gives them a lot of flexibility in how they play."

**On Offensive Coordinator Kellen Moore's 'familiarity' with the Cowboys and 'how that might factor in' this week:**

"It's just the game within the game. It's not uncommon in the league where you have matchups where you know the other side a little bit. Outstanding coaching staffs on both sides. But, it's going to be about the players on the field, the players and how they play. There are going to be two good teams on that field on Monday night."

**On practicing with crowd noise:**

"Just being prepared, that's all — just like we normally do. Every time that we practice, we do that to get ready."

## **QUARTERBACK JUSTIN HERBERT**

### **On his finger:**

"It's feeling good, thank you."

### **On taking snaps 'under center':**

"I think that's something that we'll probably address later in the week. I'm just seeing how it feels and doing everything I can to rehab and get ready for the game on Monday."

### **On the bye week:**

"It was good."

### **On if he had a surgery on his finger:**

"No."

### **On if he's consulted with outside doctors or specialists:**

"I would consider our doctors specialists. I think they've done a great job taking care of us. I've talked to them and talked to the trainers. Just with the team."

### **On his finger:**

"Whether it did or not, I think that would be something that anyone would like to keep personal at that time."

### **On if he has to make any adjustments with his finger:**

"I don't think so. I think the game two weeks ago, we were able to kind of get back into it. Whether I was running the ball or whether I was throwing the ball, I felt pretty comfortable out there. I thought the training staff did a great job preparing us and taking care of us. I felt safe going back out there. I think there's so much going on during the game that you're probably not going to be worrying about it too much. I think you're just going to be worried about not getting tackled or not taking those hits. Whether it's a scramble, it's about being safe and getting down. That's in the back of your mind."

### **On facing the Cowboys:**

"We actually haven't seen too much pressure from them all year. They do what they do and they've done a really good job of that. They're able to kind of switch it up. They're really well-coached. They've obviously got some really talented guys on that side of the ball. Whether they do pressure or whether they don't, we have to be ready for what they do. They're about as talented as it gets. We'll have to watch as much film as we can to have any shot on Monday."

### **On Cowboys LB Micah Parsons:**

"He's one of those guys that you have to be aware of wherever he is on the field. He's as good as it gets. Whether he's on the left side, right side, inside or outside at linebacker, they do a great job of moving him around and doing a bunch of different things. He's a very talented player. He plays incredibly hard. We have to be aware of him wherever he is on the field."

### **On RB Austin Ekeler:**

"He's a very talented player. He's a huge part of our offense. Any time you get him out on the field, he's a big contributor to our offense."

### **On Offensive Coordinator Kellen Moore:**

"I think every experience you get is beneficial. He has a great feel for offenses and defenses. He's done a great job of communicating with us what he expects, what he sees and all of the things that go in through a game plan each week. It's been great to hear from him."

**On C/G Will Clapp:**

"I thought he did a great job of stepping up. He's a talented player. He's done such a great job the past couple of weeks, of learning from [C] Corey [Linsley] and kind of being his shadow, just understanding everything that goes on with our offense. As soon as it was his time, he stepped up big-time. We feel really confident with Will at center."

**On if he has taken any snaps 'under center' this week:**

"Have I? No."

**On if he will take any snaps 'under center' this week:**

"Probably not if I don't have to. I think that's one of those things that you don't really want to put your hand in danger. It's something that we'll probably approach later in the week."

**On if plays that require him to be under center will be 'taken out of the game plan':**

"No, I don't think so. We have some under center plays. I think it's just something that, as the week goes on, it gets better and better, and we'll approach that later."

**On if he could wear a glove on Monday:**

"I would assume that I'll probably wear a glove on Monday."

**On if a glove would be for protection or to help grip the football:**

"Probably a little bit of both. To cover it up, to have a grip. I think that does help on the off-hand."

**On taking snaps out of shotgun:**

"Just catch it and manage the play."

**On the bye week:**

"Kind of being here for treatment. Doing everything I can to help get it right and get it ready for Monday."

**On the red zone offense:**

"I think there's a lot of room for improvement, as well. I think we have done some good things on offense in the red zone. It's important to score touchdowns down there when you get those shots. I think we've done a good job of that, but we can always be better. I could be better at quarterback, complete more passes in the red zone to be sure that we're moving the chains, but I've liked what I've seen so far."

**On if there's anything that can be drawn from the 2021 matchup or 2022 joint practices with Dallas:**

"I think you can watch that film. I think it's good film. Things that you can see, things that they did, things that we did well, as well. They're kind of a different team and have swapped some pieces out. Still, they have some same guys and are really talented. It is good film to watch. Probably more so the game film. That's not a bad idea to watch the practice film."

**On playing on Monday Night Football:**

"I think it's just another great opportunity to play football. We're the only game of the night. There's a lot of excitement for it. Being ready to go, getting out there and having a good plan, I think that's important. It's just another opportunity to play football."

**On his finger:**

"I think it gets better every day. It's nice having the bye week to get our bodies back. I think it's getting better every day."

## **SAFETY DERWIN JAMES JR.**

### **On trading CB J.C. Jackson:**

"Things just didn't work out how we needed to work out, for both sides. I feel like it was what was best for both sides. Like I've said, we wanted it to work, it just didn't happen. That's what happens in the NFL."

### **On defensive continuity:**

"It builds rhythm. As a player, I feel like the more you're in there with the same guys, it's going to build that rhythm and that trust that we're going to need. The sky's the limit for us if we come together and play the way we need to play."

### **On facing Dallas:**

"We need to come out and play. You can't look at the vulnerabilities. I'm pretty sure they're going to be pissed off about how they played [last week]. We just have to come out and play. We know we're going to get their best. They're going to get our best, too."

### **On facing a team after they've had a large loss:**

"Overall, when you get embarrassed — as a human being, anybody that gets embarrassed, you're going to respond. There's always going to be that urgency to respond, we know that. We'll be ready. It doesn't matter to me."

### **On the early bye week:**

"It was very beneficial. Definitely beneficial for me. I feel like I healed up pretty well over the bye, for sure. It helped get some of my guys back out here on the team that we're going to need to carry us for the rest of the season. It's going to be fun."

### **On being a full participation for practice:**

"I'm good to go."

### **On if he was close to playing against Las Vegas:**

"Last week, if the game was on the line, I could've played for sure. I feel even better this week. We don't play until Monday. I know that I'm going to feel even better come Monday night."

### **On the Dallas offense compared to 2021:**

"It's a lot different. They had [former Cowboys RB Ezekiel] Zeke [Elliott] and [Cowboys RB Tony] Pollard combination. It's a lot different with the younger backs that they have with Pollard. [QB] Dak [Prescott] and [WR Michael] Gallup, some of those guys. We just have to be ready for them. They spread the ball around. They're kind of balanced, so just be ready."