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Chargers Week 14 Media Availability

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OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR JOE LOMBARDI

On if QB Justin Herbert is experiencing a 'cumulative effect' regarding sacks over the last few weeks:

"No. Not physically. I think sometimes in a game when you are feeling that, you are trying to get the ball out quicker. Maybe it gets sped up, but physically no. I think he is fine."

On if there is 'anything in common' with the sacks:

"I think there are a number of factors. We have to get guys open faster. There has been a lot of shuffling of the O-line and then facing some pretty good rush teams. It's a combination of things, but certainly something that we are aware of and need to be better."

On how Herbert has handled opposing pass rush:

"Good. I think the first thing is when that is happening, you want to make sure you are not turning the football over and he has done a good job of that. He has made a few plays, but we just have to protect better and get guys open faster."

On the Dolphins' pass rush:

"They have a number of good rushers, but certainly on the edge, they have [Dolphins LB Bradley] Chubb. Then, [Dolphins LB Jaelan] Phillips is the guy that really flashes to you and is strong inside. We're going to have to be on the screws with our protection plan, for sure."

On the blitz rate of the last three opponents:

"Spags [Chiefs Defensive Coordinator Steve Spagnuolo] does it a lot. [Cardinals Defensive Coordinator] Vance [Joseph] blitzes a lot. They blitzed a little bit more. There were a couple of pressures that when you don't handle them well, people are going to try to keep doing it. It's something that were going to have to show that we can handle. We have had some good reps of it and then just a couple of times where the running backs have to fit in inside and take that A or B gap rusher out, which two weeks in a row, we have kind of failed at that. We have to prepare the guys better and get that part fixed."

On if the increase of blitz is 'due to the offensive scheme':

"I think with [Spagnuolo], it's what he does. Obviously, Arizona does it a lot. Then last week, I think they saw the Arizona game and heated it up a little bit more than normal. We have to prove that we can handle it."

On having three rookies play on the offensive line against the Raiders:

"I think those guys are battling. There was a number of in-game adjustments that happened, guys moving around. [G/T Brendan] Jaimes coming in. Losing a player for a few plays here and there. So just the continuity, that gets difficult. I think we trust all of those guys. When they are in there for practice for the whole week working together, it's one thing. Then when all of a sudden pieces are moving around, it becomes more challenging."

On having ‘so many moving pieces’ this season compared to last season:

“It’s obviously a lot easier when you don’t have all of those adjustments. It’s part of the job. Everyone has to deal with it. It’s kind of business as usual in the NFL in some ways.”

On if the offense has adjusted away from ‘advantage calls’:

“I think there is some of that. I think it is still something that is part of the offense and maybe the looks haven’t been as plentiful as they were last year. We have had a number of them, but probably not as many as last year.”

On ‘if the decreased advantage calls is a result of defense’s adjusting’ or ‘if it is due to the absence of WR Mike Williams’:

“Probably more of the former. A lot of them are like, ‘Hey, we have access. Go rip it out.’ Maybe you are not getting as much and that may be part of not having Mike [Williams] in there or [WR] Keenan [Allen] in there for certain snaps where they are a little more comfortable tightening up on it. Maybe bad luck. I don’t know. The plays all have answers. If it’s there, we take it. If not, we have a run call that, hopefully, we can get some yards on. It hasn’t been as plentiful as last year.”

On if the running game is causing the decreased number of advantage calls:

“I think that could certainly be a factor, but those will all get taken down as passes. It doesn’t excuse the whole rushing performance, but, certainly, that helps loosen things up.”

On if he has been ‘caught up of the intrigue’ of the 2020 NFL Draft quarterback class:

“No. I don’t.”

On if he ‘checks in’ on the performances of Dolphins QB Tua Tagovailoa or Bengals QB Joe Burrow:

“No, not specifically because they are in the same draft class. You keep track of the league and see how everyone is doing. I don’t have it in that category of these three guys that came out in the same draft class.”

On how he has ‘approached’ potential playoff scenarios with Herbert and ‘managing the expectations’:

“I think it’s just part of the position, regardless of where you are in the season or what is going on. There is so much pressure on that position. I don’t think it’s anything unique. He is a mentally strong guy. You focus on the task at hand and leave all of that stuff to the TV talking heads and whatnot.”

On the route combinations of the fourth-and-12 play call in the fourth quarter that led to a WR Keenan Allen touchdown against the Raiders:

“Well, it’s a play on third-and-longer where you are hoping for zone [coverage]. It’s kind of a guy spotting up across the way and you are reading the underneath coverage for squeezes and whatnot. We certainly have guys that we are hoping win versus man and the rush got to him, he scrambled and the guys engaged in their scramble rules. He was able to make a play. It’s a heavy tendency in those down and distances to get a softer coverage and they came and played man. We had to battle it out.”

On tracking potential tendencies:

“We are always keeping track of our tendencies. We’re trying to mix up passes and runs, but we are aware at certain times, certain situations we get the, ‘Hey, we’re running more often in this situation than normal.’ You are always trying to keep track and mix it up.”

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR RENALDO HILL

On defending for the potential of passing explosives last week against the Raiders and how that can benefit this week's plan:

"Pretty much, the gameplan was to put a roof over them. But, you also have to be aware of the run game. We have to try to get a good balance of playing over the top of them and playing some single-high where we can stop the run. When we're in our one-on-one battles, which they got us on a few, I thought that, early on, we battled. I thought that Vato [CB Michael Davis] did a good job against them. At the end of the day, just not enough plays containing their threats. We just have to continue to focus on it because we have another challenge of two really good receivers coming in here. That's going to be the challenge, this week, to get it done."

On Davis' progression:

"We challenged him big time this offseason. He didn't flinch with any of the things that we mentioned, or said that he needed to improve on. I think that he attacked it head-on. He's been a professional all year long and it's showing up in his play. He is a guy who is constantly working on his game. You're starting to see it come alive right now. We're going to keep lifting him up. He's been playing well against some good opponents these last couple of weeks, and we're going to need him even more this week. We're happy with how Mike [Davis] is playing. We just have to keep it going with him."

On his level on confidence in the safety combination of Alohi Gilman and Nasir Adderley if S Derwin James Jr. does not play on Sunday:

"Very confident in those guys. They have game experience. I think that they play well together. You can hear their communication out there with those two, they're echoing it. I think that they know that they need to do a little bit more of that if Derwin [James Jr.] is not there, so the more that they can emphasize it and have everybody on the same page, I think that is going to allow those guys to play at a high level this week."

On 'why the defense hasn't come together the way that they expected':

"A handful of things. Obviously, the injury bug is one. You're piecing in a lot of guys that are in and out, but at the same time, we try to prepare for this by having guys, in the offseason, making sure that we're having them do work at multiple spots, just in case things like this happen. A lot of times, it's getting the reps that you need for those guys throughout the week. Our guys are committed and committed to trying to finding a way to get it done. I think that has to be our approach. We still have five games left and we want to try to put on a good performance here this week and try to see if we can get it to come together. We did it at spurts, and we're just trying to see if we can make it become a complete game for us."

On the pass rush:

"When you're missing a lot of pieces, you're trying different ways to try to create it. The other thing that you're trying to do is just make sure that you keep bodies in front of [the quarterback] so that he can't step up and throw. We have to find ways to generate it. We're going through our roster, on the defensive end, and seeing who can express themselves in the pass rush and just try to create as many possibilities as we can. Try to do a little bit more five-man rush, but when you do a five-man rush, it opens it up for less coverage on the back end. We have to try and get as much speed and physicality attacking the quarterback on those third-down rushes. That's what we've been trying to focus on this week; who can make that happen? We're going to see if we can put out some good players up front that can get that done."

On the impact of not having OLB Joey Bosa for pass rush and the impact that has on OLB Khalil Mack:

"When you lose Joey [Bosa] on the other side, teams are able to either set the protection that way or get some double-chips and double-nudges that way to isolate Khalil [Mack] over there. We have to do a good job of making sure that we know that, and then try to bring something, maybe, from the other side, or just internally. We have to try and mix it up enough, and try to move [Mack] around to free him up. We have to definitely emphasize that this week. The best part about it is trying to get into those pass-rushing situations. If we can do that more, I think that it would allow us to move [Mack] around and get him some access to some freedom so that he can get to the quarterback."

On the Dolphins' run game:

“Similar — not as far as the personnel — to when we went into the Arizona week, they were maybe top-five or top-6, as far as fewest rushing attempts, and they did a really good job of expressing the run. We have to make sure that, Miami being in that similar mold, that they’re going to run the ball. We know that [Dolphins RB Raheem] Mostert, any time that he gets the ball and gets some daylight, he can take it for a home run. We know that [Dolphins RB Jeff] Wilson [Jr.], he is capable. We saw him in our scouting report from San Fran, before he got moved to Miami. We know that he is also capable. We know that he is a really good back. He can do multiple things, running it inside the tackles or outside. We have to make sure that we take care of those backs and make sure that we take care of the run game first. We know that is a tough task, even when you have two receivers out there. But, we know that it all starts with the run game because if they can express that, then it opens up so much more. There is definitely going to be an emphasis on stopping the run and putting them into some tough passing situations.”