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Chargers Media Availability

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HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

On LB Drue Tranquill's contribution to the defensive unit yesterday:

"I thought that Drue was really outstanding in the game. He's been practicing really well, like we've talked about the last couple of weeks. We just wanted to make sure that this guy got in the football game. Against that type of team — it was a hot day — we wanted to make sure that we had a really healthy rotation, but Drue has definitely earned the right to be out there. I felt like I didn't do a good enough job in those first two games of getting him in the ballgame. We feel like all three of those guys [LBs Kenneth Murray Jr., Kyzir White and Tranquill] are quality players. I felt like we needed all three of them yesterday to be able to defend that team. I feel like Drue was outstanding in the game. I thought that he flashed. I thought that he was in control, running the show. I feel like he tackled extremely well. I felt like he played the way that he has been playing for us. I feel like having all three of those guys play was an advantage for us yesterday."

On how playing time will be distributed amongst the linebacker group moving forward:

"It's probably a combination. We just feel like we have three starting-caliber players. When you have a situation like that, I think that it's incumbent upon you to make sure that those guys get in the game because they've earned the right to be in the game. We just want to make sure that we do a great job here of making sure that our good players are out there playing for us. Having all three of those guys play for us is going to be a good thing for our defense moving forward."

On early-down efficiency improvement in the red zone offensively:

"We wanted to make sure that we had the tempo into second down as a part of our plan down there. I think that we were able to unpack that on the touchdown to [WR] Keenan [Allen] and really start off first down by running the football with physicality. I felt like that sequence, in particular, was a favorite of mine. The throw to [RB] Austin [Ekeler] where he was kind of uncovered, we wanted to make sure that incorporated some motion down there to really kind of unpack some information for the quarterback and really get the back going down there, because I think any time that you can activate the running back down there and have all five eligible receivers down there as weapons, I think that's always a tough cover, defensively, when you have to operate with all five. The back is a good place, I think, for you to gain efficiency down there. That's normally a matchup that you're going to like. I felt like that was a really good play-call by [Offensive Coordinator] Joe [Lombardi]. I loved the design there. I felt like we had something good to the strong side — they kind of over-rotated and left Austin uncovered. It gave us a really nice opportunity there. Later in the ball game, I really liked the way that we ran the football down there, too. Especially in the fourth quarter, I really liked the way that we ran the football. As I mentioned, I think that has to be a part of your strategy down there, having some runs with pass solutions, whether it's from under the center or in the shotgun. I like the way that we trended. You need to score versus that team. The one time that we did not score, it certainly was our own doing with the procedure issue."

On T Storm Norton's performance yesterday:

"I felt like Storm improved a lot. We actually talked about it in the team meeting about an hour ago, just the response from him. I think that [Cowboys LB] Micah Parsons is going to be an outstanding player in the league. But as we all talked about, I think a lot of it was fundamentals. I thought he attacked this fundamentals last week — [Run Game Coordinator/Offensive Line Coach] Frank Smith and [Assistant Offensive Line Coach] Shaun Sarrett went back to work, [T] Bryan Bulaga being a great resource for him — [C] Corey Linsley, [G] Oday [Aboushi], [G] Matt Feiler. This is how you respond. I have as much respect for [Chiefs DT] Chris Jones as any interior rusher. I had A.D. [Rams DT Aaron Donald] with the Rams. I think Chris is one of those top two or three inside players in the league. He's certainly one of the premier interior D-lineman in the league, for sure. I felt like Storm really responded yesterday by his fundamentals, his technique. Obviously, there are going to be some against that guy where you don't win, but I felt like Storm really competed in the game. He gave us a chance. I think that's an exciting sign for him and a lot of young guys like him, to respond from a tough day and come back. I felt like he allowed [QB] Justin [Herbert] to really have some clean pockets in some big moments yesterday."

On WR Mike Williams' production:

"I tip my cap, number one, to [Wide Receivers Coach] Chris Beatty, our receivers coach. When you have guys like Mike and Keenan [Allen], earning their respect and their trust, and adding a couple of things in his game, where we feel like, 'Hey, a couple of things in your game, we can really activate. We think this is going to create even more production for you.' Then, when you dive into [Offensive Coordinator] Joe Lombardi and [Passing Game Coordinator/Quarterbacks Coach] Shane Day, within our passing attack, with Chris [Beatty], this is how we're going to design this offense and really get Mike in situations that are advantageous for him — from a matchup standpoint, getting him to be running the right routes against the right guy. The type of chemistry that he's been able to build with Justin [Herbert], you put all of those factors into play. I think that's how you want to do things for all of your guys. When I was in Denver in 2019 — number one, let's go back for a second. What he did to Alabama, like way back when, when he was at Clemson — because I know a lot of the guys on that staff at Alabama, I'm close with a lot of them — what he did to those guys in that game against those guys, I was a really big fan of his back then. Then, when I was in Denver in 2019 and we had to go defend these guys, we had to come here and defend these guys. Keenan Allen grabs your attention. Everybody knows that Keenan is this gangster route-runner, one of the premium route-runners, but then you see this Mike Williams guy — I mean, he's 6-foot-4, 220 [pounds], he can climb the ladder, has body control, can judge the ball deep, and then he's on these in-breaks. I just remember thinking, 'This is a real issue, guys. A real issue.' Then, you have [Austin] Ekeler coming out of the backfield. I just remember that catch he had against us in 2019 at Denver, where he just came down from the heavens. We had him perfectly covered and he just came down from the heavens, and I just remember thinking, 'This guy is a really good player.' Now, getting to know the guy, I've gotten closer to him as a person, too. I feel like we've been able to really establish something. We're at the beginning. I'm just excited to uncover even more. Certainly, without Mike Williams, our production wouldn't be where it is. He's really been fantastic through three games."

On if the offense was 'taking another chance to score' at the end of the first half:

"No, we were not."

On the defense's approach to the final drive of the first half:

"We wanted to make sure that we were in a good play call there. It was third-and-15, we just wanted to make sure that we took a peek — we call it a snapshot, we wanted to take a snapshot of the play call and get a look at what was going to be expressing itself, from a formational standpoint, where their people were going to be, in terms of how we were going to play that situation and in terms of if we're going to play coverage or pressure here. It's one of those tricky down-and-distances. Are they going to go for it or try to check it down and play small ball? We were just trying to make that determination and get into the right play call defensively so that we were in a good defense there, structurally, at the end of the half."

On RB Larry Rountree III returning the kickoff out from deep in the end zone near the end of the first half:

“Basically, you’re just trying to split it there at the end of the half; just give your kickoff returner a chance to split it. You know that if he doesn’t, you’re just going to take a knee and end the half. But, if you just take a knee, then it’s kind of over with. That’s too far to go. We just wanted to be aggressive in terms of him maybe being able to split it. I know that it’s eight yards deep and it didn’t work out that way, but you want to give your kickoff returner a chance, then, obviously, take a knee and get out of the half.”

On advancing the ball, post-interception:

“A big point of emphasis for me is if you study takeaways of where you land, and there doesn’t seem to be a guy around you, you don’t really know where people are. When you get up, you’d be surprised how many turnovers the offense forces because you’re not aware of your surroundings. What I told these guys, and what we have made a big emphasis on from an education standpoint, is if you have a takeaway and you don’t know what’s happening — like we would say when you’re in the city — when you’re in the city, it’s about ball security. If you’re in the country and no one’s around you, and you’re positive that no one is around, then I have a scoop-score mindset. I’m going to be aggressive on the return. What you’re seeing nowadays is these guys get up when they are not sure of what’s around them, and then they get the ball stripped from them. When you have possession, when you get a takeaway, one of the worst things that can ever happen is if you give it back to somebody. We’ve talked about in those 50/50 situations of staying down. I think both of those situations were that way; where they didn’t really know who they were around. We just want to stay down and secure the football.”

On WR Joe Reed:

“Joe had surgery on his ankle. He’s rehabilitating his ankle.”

On if Reed’s injury is long-term:

“It is going to be longer-term, yes.”

On WR Mike Williams:

“I feel like Mike has the label of just being a deep ball guy. A guy that just plays outside the red line, specifically. I’ve never seen him that way. This guy is a power forward; this guy is really a three. To me, he’s like a three or four in the NBA. I want this guy on more inbreaking cuts. I want this guy on the basics, the digs — specifically, the slants. When you have to defend the nine-route against the guy who can climb the ladder, the route that you must compliment a 9-route with is a slant. He’s a 6-foot-four, 220 pounds; this guy’s a power forward. He’s going to box you out most of the time and it’s just tough on us defensively. We wanted to get him more on these inbreaking cuts, also putting him in the slot some. When you’re playing against a smaller, nickel-type defender, he’s got size on the guy. Just expanding his location on the field to where he’s not just a boundary one. Moving him around within the formation, and that would allow [WR] Keenan [Allen] to move. I felt like that would be an advantage for us, offensively. Mike’s been awesome. Mike’s a simple guy, but he’s just an easy guy to just talk football with. He’s just a ball guy, he will do whatever you ask. I’ve enjoyed coaching the guy.”

On illegal motion penalties:

“[Offensive Coordinator] Joe [Lombardi] has been fantastic from an operational standpoint. I’ve been really pleased with that part of it. What it comes down to is when the clock is coming down a little bit, how you practice it is in ideal timing in terms of the play clock. If it’s not ideal timing, [you think], ‘Hey, we need to speed this up’. What we have to be able to get to is that final formation sooner. We have to do a good job practicing it. That’s why I put this on me. We have to do a better job coaching that — putting them through [the motions of], ‘Hey, we’re breaking the huddle at ten. Now we have to go out, get set and send motion.’ There’s ten on the clock, the motion is already on the go. We just have to get to the final formation, so that we can get set and run this football play. That is what happened, certainly on the 4th and 4. [WR] Keenan [Allen] caught that shallow cross; that was a bummer because I felt like we had an awesome play call there. I just have to do a better job coaching. We’re going to keep working those mechanics because motion has been tremendous for us this year — both in the run and in the pass game. We have to continue to do that, to put pressure on the defense. [When we’re] down in there tight, we have to be better on the goal line shift.”

On 'aggressive' play-calling:

"Our opponent is a huge factor in the decision-making process. I think our opponent, where we are from a health standpoint as a team, and then the weather conditions. All of those things determine the decision-making process you're modeling. Those things were on display yesterday, in a number of different incidences. Whether it was the two-point play at the end of the half end or of the game type of stuff. We were aggressive, but we tried to be sound with our decision-making process, not reckless. When you're playing probability, everything is a gamble. We're trying to play the percentages. We are trying to use numbers to make informed decisions. We trying to do that the best we can. There was a lot at play yesterday — the offense that you are facing, the wind, which was crazy, fierce — all those things come into factor to how you are going to play the game. We weren't perfect, but I'm proud of our process."

On facing the Raiders:

"We're going to treat each game like it has a life of its own. This team's a really good team right now. They are playing with a lot of confidence. It's starting with their quarterback; they've really surrounded him with a lot of weapons. Weapons outside of receiver, weapons at tight end, weapons in the backfield. On defense, they've really tried to give that team some ammunition to play with. From a personnel standpoint, they are just a lot better equipped to be more of a complete team. They're doing a really good job of coaching on the defense side of things, changing the culture on that defense. They are playing hard; they're playing sound football. We have a lot of respect for their coaches on both sides of the ball. That's why they are 3-0, because they got really good coaches and really good personnel. It's going to be a good football game. I'm excited to dive into the preparation."

On the Chargers performance in a 'hostile environment':

"The [University of] Mount Union game, during my last year at [John] Carroll [University] comes to mind. We played really, really well on defense — lights out. Our offense played really well. It was just one of those things where at the end, it was still a tight game. It reminded me of that game. Regardless of how that game would have unfolded, if to were turnovers like that or not, it was going to be tight. Both teams are such quality teams in terms of personnel and coaching. We were comfortable being in that space. We knew how the game as going to go, and what we needed to do, in order to impact the game in a way that was going to give us a chance to win it. Our guys responded well to our blueprint. But also, going into every game, you have to adjust to the flow as it is happening. You have to make those adjustments in real-time. You know how you need to play as the game is moving. I felt like we did that as a team yesterday. We followed the blueprint, but we adjusted just like you always need to. Then have to finish the game playing your best ball. I felt like we did that. We weren't hanging on against that team. We finished the game plan, our brand of ball, and I was excited on how we finished the game."

On Herbert's relationship with C Corey Linsley:

"Any time you're firm up the middle, whether it's offense or defense, it gives you a chance to be successful. From a quarterbacking standpoint, if you have places to step up as a passer, that always gives you a great chance. If you take before the snap, those guys working together from an identification standpoint allows you to get into the right play calls. Whether you have kills or alerts within the play, also, it gives you a chance from an operational-tempo standpoint of being able to say, 'Hey, do you want to go fast, do you want to go slow?' All those things from a pure mechanics standpoint. He's got so much experience. And then, from a pure performance standpoint, when you have one of the best centers in the game playing, it's going to help you play better as a quarterback. I love those guys teaming up because when you play in a hostile environment like the one we just played the other day, you need those two central controllers to command your offense. I'm glad we have both those guys."

On the Chargers offense compared to the Chiefs offense:

"You have to score to beat that team. I like where our offense is because we have a balanced offense. We can hurt you in a lot of different ways. We have runners. We have wideouts. We have tight ends. We have a quarterback. Our O-line's coming together. That's what you need in order to play the type of offense that you need to play against that team. You have to be a complete offense to play against them. Depending on the circumstance, you may need to run it or throw it in order to win the game. I feel like that's what we're trying to build here on all three phases of the game to be a complete team. The offenses I know that are the most dangerous to defend are complete offenses, where you have to worry about a lot of different people. You have to worry about the quarterback, and then you have an O-line that plays together at a high level, and

then they have high-level coaching. That's certainly what we're trying to build here, and I felt like our offense played well enough yesterday for us to beat that team. The way that team's played over the last four years since [Chiefs QB] Patrick [Mahomes] has been the quarterback, you really have to score the ball in order to win."

On calling his players 'gangster':

"I think that sometimes how you say things makes people know exactly how you feel. There's just sometimes you have to use certain words to really describe appropriately so that it has people's attention. That's why I do what I do. I don't throw it around loosely — I try to use it for the people that deserve it. When I say that, I mean it. For people in football and people that watch sports, competition, that has a certain implication. It's a good one."

OUTSIDE LINEBACKER JOEY BOSA

On his injury:

"My foot's feeling better than it did last Monday, that's for sure. We're moving in the right direction. I was surprised that as the game got going, it felt pretty good. When the game is close and the adrenaline is pumping, you don't really think about it quite as much. I definitely rolled it one time when I stepped on a tackle's foot. That did not feel good. But it recovered pretty quickly, and I was able to finish."

On the plane ride home after yesterday's win:

"It was really exciting. We discussed it a lot on the bus ride over. We were talking about it a lot on the plane. It was a mild ride, didn't get too carried away in there. I got some rest when I got home. I got home pretty early, and I was able to get to bed early. It's a long season and you can't get too high or too low with any win or loss. You have to keep your head straight and dissect it for what it is. Of course, we're super happy we were able to go in there and pull off a win early in the season. It's a long one."

On the benefit of using a therapist for his mental health:

"I've talked about it a bit. It's just great, whether he's helping me with my meditation or anything. Just being able to have someone to be able to open up to. I feel like a lot of people — especially in our profession — compartmentalize things and keep things inside. When you have so much on your plate, and the stressors of your family and everything outside, including football. It can definitely build up. It's just great being able to have somebody to talk to if you don't have somebody. Especially it being a professional and helping me with my meditation. And just emotionally, I'm dealing with a lot of things that I'm sure a lot of people deal with that are in my profession, too. It's been a really important tool for me."

On the defense's performance against the Chiefs:

"That was just a punch-in at the ball. It was a huge emphasis all week, all year, really. When you watch the tape, it wasn't an accident. Those guys were really making it a point to punch at the ball and go at the ball. We came up with it four times. Being able to keep [Chiefs QB Patrick] Mahomes in the pocket. Keep a tight pocket on him and make him get rid of the ball quickly really had an effect on him. He threw the two picks with pressure. It was a testament to what we've been working on with paying attention to the ball. We just really made it a point this week to go after it. We said we wanted four, and we got four."

On CB Asante Samuel Jr.:

"He just knows how to make plays. It was a great play by him yesterday. Pass rush and pass coverage go hand-in-hand. Being able to have a good secondary that are making plays like that, and giving us more time up front, works together. They go hand-in-hand when we're playing together."

On facing the Raiders on *Monday Night Football* in Week 4:

"Monday night is always fun. Getting an extra day to recover is also fun. Getting to play at home is going to be a good time, I'm going to have my mom out here again. She's going to be out in California all season this year. It's super exciting — a great chance for us to go back-to-back with two division wins. We're going to dissect this game today and then get right on to the Raiders."

On when he knew he was clear to play against the Chiefs:

“After I went out and warmed up. Friday was the first day I knew I had a chance. I wasn’t sure about it, but I got progressively better every day. Just treating it during the week was an everyday thing. I was in a boot the first couple days. But Friday I went out, I was able to get a little run on the field and thought, ‘Alright, I have a chance. I’m not sure, so I’ll travel out there.’ Before the game, I went out on the field, did a little warm up, did a few pass rushes and thought, ‘Alright, I can do it.’ That was pretty much the decision there.”

On being able to play against the Chiefs despite missing practice all week:

“For the starters, the main thing is being ready for Sunday, no matter what. If it takes you until Saturday or Sunday to get ready, then that’s what it’s going to take. [Head] Coach [Brandon Staley] understands that, not every game you’re going to come out clean; there’s going to be bumps and bruises that you have to deal with throughout the week. Unfortunately, I don’t like missing practice. I feel like I’m much more prepared when I get to practice. I feel like I execute better [in the game]. The fact that I was able to get out there and perform, especially early in the season, I only missed a few days.”

On his performance against the Chiefs:

“I was surprised how good my foot felt as I got going, which allowed me to break free and just play. When you’re only missing a few practices, I was grinding through camp and the last few weeks. I’m still fresh from all the work I’ve been putting in. When you miss two or three weeks in a row, that’s when you start getting a little rusty. You definitely don’t want to keep missing time. I feel better than I did last week, so I don’t plan to miss anything this week.”

On the defense’s gameplan going into Week 3:

“I think we just had a really good game plan going into this. We didn’t run too many calls; we ran a lot of nickel yesterday. We really didn’t get into the bag of calls we had. We thought the most important thing was limiting [Chiefs QB Patrick] Mahomes. Keeping him in the pocket and not letting him make wild plays with his feet, getting out of the pocket and watching it down field. He definitely tried a few times and it’s always nerve-racking when he launches the ball down-field to [Chiefs WR] Tyreek [Hill]. We did a great job for the most part of limiting all of them.”

On S Alohi Gilman’s interception:

“[Chiefs QB Patrick Mahomes] He shook me a little bit, but I was happy I missed him because we were able to get the ball. That happened a few times yesterday, where there was a missed tackle and then we were able to capitalize with the turnover, with the punching at the ball, with the interceptions. You don’t see him make those wild throws like that and being able to come up with four turnovers is huge.”

On LB Drue Tranquill:

“I watched a little bit of the film last night on the way home. He definitely showed up. I hate to share my sacks, but he definitely deserves half. It was an awesome rush on the guard that he had. I think all the linebackers have been working hard at that rush position at the guard. It’s been working well so far, and I think they’re getting comfortable as we get going. Other than that, I feel like he was flying around, side to side. I know he’s a great player. He’s still coming off that injury from last year. But I think as the year goes on, he’s just going to keep getting better.”

On former Chargers Defensive Coordinator Gus Bradley currently coaching for the Raiders:

“I’ll have to shoot him a text this week. I thought we had a great relationship. I really appreciated the guy he was, the kind of energy he brought. I obviously love where we’re at now, where we’re headed. They’re 3-0, they’re obviously doing something right over there. It’ll be great to see him on the sideline.”

On what they developed from the loss to the Cowboys and applied to the win against the Chiefs:

“We were able, as a team, to put it behind us and work on the great plan that the coaches had for us this week. We know they had a good plan to win, and we didn’t want to dwell on the loss. We made mistakes with tackling and other things — I can’t really remember at this point, it feels like it’s a million years away. I can’t take anything specific, but we were able to put it behind us and did a good job with our playing this week.”

On Head Coach Brandon Staley nicknaming him and S Derwin James Jr. ‘warriors’:

“The way Coach Staley treats us and speaks about us is always really impressive. I think he appreciates all the things we do as players. Derwin is like, ‘Yeah, my shoulder just dislocated.’ Acting like it wasn’t anything big. His shoulder actually came out of his socket, and he just popped it back in and came running right back out on the field. We all know the kind of guy we have with him. He’s an absolute warrior. But to know our coach sees the hard work and the sacrifice that we make and put in really means a lot.”

On DL Jerry Tillery:

“He was another guy that showed up on film a lot when I was watching bits and pieces of it yesterday. I think he’s coming along well from two years ago. I think he had flashes last year but he’s finally in a position that I feel like he’s most comfortable in. He’s just going to keep improving during the year. He’s a great pass rusher. His length, his flexibility, I really think he can be a special player. He wants to be, and he’s really been working on it. With the addition of J.J. [DL Justin Jones] back this week, I really like how we’re looking inside.”

On the challenge of facing the Chiefs:

“It’s always going to be like that with the Chiefs. They’re an unbelievable team that have been doing it for a long time. They always seem to come back with something. When we went in at half when it was 14-3, we knew it was going to be a battle. It’s never over at the first half with that team. [Head] Coach [Brandon] Staley said it himself, ‘They’re going to make a run, and when they make a run, that’s when we have to come together and play our best ball.’ We needed every single one of those turnovers to get the game. We were talking about getting four and we got four. It was still barely enough. Hopefully, we can capitalize on a few more moments and minimize a few of the mistakes we had. If we do that, we can pull it away a little bit sooner than the last second.”

On containing Chiefs QB Patrick Mahomes:

“We knew we weren’t going to be able to rush how we want to. Being able to work one-on-one’s, ins and outs. We know Mahomes has incredible feel in the pocket, incredible vision. He’s able to feel when rushers get high or get under. He’s able to get outside of the pocket and that’s when he makes plays happen. During the week, I wasn’t able to practice much, but the rush plan together as a D-line was to stay power. Keep them in the pocket, rush four as one. I think we did a really good job with that. We definitely let him out a few times, got high a few times, but it seemed there was always somebody covering — coming out with the hand in his face almost the entire game. I think Jerry was a huge part in that. The calls from [Defensive Line] Giff [Smith] and [Run Game Coordinator/Outside Linebackers] Jay [Rodgers], the stunts that we ran up front helped a lot mixing it up. Being able to always have somebody in his face was really it.”

On shifting to the interior of the defensive line in certain pass-rush situations yesterday:

“[Head] Coach [Brandon] Staley came up to me and asked me about that play before that down. He said, ‘If you want it, let’s do it.’ It’s a play we ran a couple times yesterday. It’s a good package we haven’t run too much. We’ll see if we keep running it, it’s definitely a possibility.”

On copying the playstyle of former Chargers DE Melvin Ingram III:

“I’ve taken pointers. We ran some of the bank look where we were both on the same side. We actually ran a similar look together like that. Yesterday was more of a straight rush look, but there’s more variations that we have from it.”

On his injury:

“It’s just a foot sprain. It’s getting better, it’s a bit sore from being on it yesterday. It’s definitely feeling better than last week.”

On if his foot injury ‘caused him to roll his ankle’:

“No, I rolled it and my ankle is swollen. Technically, it’s a sprained foot, but it’s one big puffy deal.”