

TRANSCRIPTS

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Chargers Head Coach Brandon Staley Media Availability

Monday, December 4, 2023 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

On the performance of the defense yesterday:

"I thought that we played for four quarters. I thought that that was evident on the film, that our guys really competed. Sometimes, defensively, in a game like that where there's not a lot of momentum in the game, where you just have to keep going back out there and getting stops, I thought our guys just did what it took to win the game. I thought we made a lot of big plays in the second half to get the job done. I thought, in the second half, we made some big-time stops — the last two possessions, turning them over on downs. I thought we made some big plays in order to get the job done. We pass rushed well. Our coverage was really tight. I thought that our leaders really played well yesterday. I thought that [OLB] Khalil [Mack] was outstanding in the game. I thought that [LB] Eric Kendricks was outstanding in the game. I thought that [OLB] Tuli Tuipulotu was fantastic in the game. I just thought that it was a good game from the start to the finish. It wasn't a premium performance, from my vantage point. We can still improve. I think that we missed too many tackles. Our execution was good, but I think that we can tackle better than what we did. Just really proud of the guys. To get a shutout in the NFL, it's really tough — really, really tough. For our guys, it's something to build off of."

On the defense 'clicking' at this point of last season and if he 'sees any similarities' between that unit and how the defense has performed as of late:

"We still have work to do, for sure. I felt like the Chicago game and the New York game were steps in the right direction. Green Bay, for most of the game, and Baltimore and this game, I thought that those were close to the performances that we are looking for. But, it's been two weeks back-to-back where I felt like we've given ourselves a really good chance to win the game. When you can settle in on some combinations, that allows you to create consistency. We've had good consistency in the front seven, and we've been trying to search for that consistency in the secondary, and it's been pretty good the last two weeks."

On CB Essang Bassey and how he has played at STAR:

"He has good pace in the slot. He can see. He has been trained in this system. I just think that he has the right temperament to play in there. He has a really good processor, can really see and feel the game. Then, in terms of just slot coverage, he's a guy that has the right pace to stay with the quicker receivers in the league. Also, he has enough strength to stay with some of the bigger guys in there, too. He's just been steady for us, giving us steady nickel play. He's playing with good technique. That's what we've been in search of."

On 'drops' on offense and how that has impacted the offense:

"Definitely not good enough the last couple of weeks. What's interesting is that a few weeks back, we did something in front of the team, where we had the fewest amount of drops in the league, and that had been a big point of emphasis for us. I think that our drops, and then the giveaways, are two areas where we felt like we were really excelling through the first chunk of the year. These last couple of weeks, it just hasn't been good enough. It's collective. It's focusing on technique, it's playing fast. It's just making sure that you're playing fast, you're not overthinking it. You just go back to your training, and our guys need to do that — that is going to create the consistency for them. Some of the guys who you've been covering for a while, I think that they have proven that they have good hands, but it's really focused on technique and fundamentals. I think all of those guys have good hands, we just need to make sure that we knock those down. Much like we focused on the turnovers last week, we'll be focusing on holding on to the football and running through the catch. Again, not in a 'slow-it-down' type of way, but more in a 'speed-it-up' way, being strong with the ball and playing fast and trusting your game. I'm sure that we will improve there."

On OLB Tuli Tuipulotu forcing a fumble and recovering the fumble for the first time in his career:

"They were getting close to being in scoring range, field-goal range, for sure. Had a slot pressure called and Tuli [Tuipulotu] just made a play. He did a good job of reading the play. He has teamed up with this Khalil Mack guy and [OLB] Joey Bosa and learning how to go take the ball. He's a physical player. He's a playmaker. We needed that."

On the offensive run game and RB Austin Ekeler:

"The run game is collective. I wish that it could be just one area, but it's really the entire group of 11 guys, from the receivers blocking, tight ends blocking, O-line, quarterback, running backs staying on their tracks and trusting their reads so that it times up with the sequence of the O-line. We just have to create more consistency there, and then good things will happen. We know that Austin [Ekeler] is a good running back. We just haven't found any rhythm in the last couple of weeks in the run game. Just need to keep after it and keep working hard in practice."

On 'setting up' Ekeler 'to become the weapon that we've seen':

"I think that we've missed on a couple opportunities to do so, where you have plays called for him and it doesn't go there. There have been a couple unfortunate drops there where we feel like we had some space to do something with it. But, there's no question that we're trying to get him the football. We're a better team when he's the weapon that we know that he is. We have to keep going back to the practice field and trying to get him integrated in the plan."

On if Ekeler's ankle sprain from earlier in the season is 'a thing of the past':

"Yeah, I would say that it is a thing of the past."

On an update regarding WR Joshua Palmer's recovery:

"He's progressing. No timeline yet, but he's making progress."

On if the offense's 'low point total as of late' is 'due to the drops or the defenses you're going against':

"I think that it is a combination. I have a lot of respect for Baltimore and New England. You guys have seen New England, they've had three performances in a row of holding their opponents under 10 [points scored]. I think that that's a good group over there, as is Baltimore. But, I think that you always start with yourself. I think that there have been good drives going. Yesterday, I feel like, the drops were kind of a killer for us. Then, I felt like, yesterday, there were a couple of third-down runs, that we felt like had really good chances of being successful, that we didn't end up making. It just wasn't good enough yesterday. The good news is that we're moving the football, but it's not resulting in points. I think that if we can hold on to the football, I think we would feel differently about our day. The conditions were what they were, but I think that you'd feel a lot better if you had two more scores there and you're able to win a little bit cleaner. Just keep focusing on the group and finding our rhythm and timing, and it's run game and pass game. But, the one thing that I think that we can build off of, I said it after the game, was no turnovers and no sacks [allowed]. That was a good thing coming out of the game. I think that gave us a chance to win the game."

On 'getting into a rhythm of run and pass' offensively:

"I think that within drives, it's making sure that you're not doing anything that prevents you from moving forward. I think that we've had a lot of good drives going over the last couple of weeks, but we haven't been able to finish those drives, whether it's third down or a drop or a turnover. We've had a couple of redzone turnovers — against Green Bay and Baltimore, that really hurt us. I think that it's just us executing a little bit cleaner. Then, you're going to see the type of production that we have shown throughout the season. We just have to keep working hard in practice."

On if Offensive Coordinator Kellen Moore is 'everything that you expected him to be':

"Definitely. A great teammate. Really, really smart. A good communicator. He does a really good job with our staff. He's really good in front of our players. I think that he has done a good job of adjusting to some of the attrition that we've had. When you lose your starting center, and then two of your top receivers — that's one of the reasons why I had so much respect for him from afar, being able to do what he did with [Cowboys QB] Cooper Rush, a couple of seasons prior to that, that lost [Cowboys QB] Dak [Prescott] for the season, and they had a lot of attrition on their O-line and in their backfield and receiver group. I know that he's a guy that is really smart and that can make adjustments. I'm just really happy that we have him."

On LB Eric Kendricks' performance yesterday:

"I thought that he was around the ball the whole day. I thought that he was really physical in the game. I thought he tackled extremely well, made some big plays in pass rush, and then made a couple of big plays in pass coverage. I felt like he was around the ball the whole day. I really felt like his energy stood out on the field. I thought he did a great job leading the guys on the sideline coming off, really encouraging our offense and just being that 60-minute type of player. For me, it was one of the best games that he has played for us."

On facing AFC West opposition in four of the final five regular season games:

"They're going to mean so much down the stretch here because you have the division meaning and then you've have the conference meaning. All of these games are very impactful, in terms of positioning yourself where you want to go, and you always start with your division. It's going to be tight here down the stretch. We have to focus one at a time."

On WR Quentin Johnston's performance yesterday and 'bouncing back':

"I thought that he had a quality game. I thought that he improved from the Baltimore game to this game. He had that big third-down catch on the corner route, had a couple of tightly contested in-breaks that I thought were really nice catches. I felt like he had a good game. He had the one drop that, obviously, he's going to take full ownership of on that one, but I definitely felt like he was productive in the game and helped us win it."

On TE Donald Parham Jr. 'having drops over the last couple of weeks':

"It's unfortunate. He just hasn't had his best games over the last two, but he's been a productive player for us. Just have to get that timing and rhythm back, playing fast. I think that the elements yesterday may have slowed him down a little bit, just trying to make sure that he was, probably, overly ball secure. There was the one that was a tougher contested catch, which was a big-time throw by [QB] Justin [Herbert]. He just has to focus on his fundamentals, trust his fundamentals, especially, in a game like that yesterday, and just get back to work."

On P JK Scott's performance yesterday and the support of the punt coverage unit:

"It was a career game for him, the most [punts inside of the 20] in a single game in Chargers history. Definitely a bright spot for us. I think that our gunner play in the last two years has really improved. I think that, in turn, has made JK [Scott] a better punter. They're forcing fair catches, even though it's good hang time, their coverage is also a component in forcing the fair catches. I think that we've had good gunner play the last two years. It's been consistent gunner play. [LS] Josh Harris, the consistency of Josh and who he is in that operation, how critical he is in that operation, I think that has allowed us to be very consistent in that phase."

On his alma mater, Lake County Perry High School, winning the Division V Ohio High School State Championship this past weekend:

"It was really big. I made a video as part of their send off to the to the State game in Canton. A bunch of guys that I play with did, as well. There were guys like [Jaguars TE] Luke Farrell, who played at Ohio State and is now playing in Jacksonville, some of the better players in our history. To have them go 15-0, it was really special to some of the guys that I played with, the people back home. It's not very common anymore where a public school and wins a State Championship, so really proud of those guys, really happy for them. A bunch of my buddies, my twin brother, were all texting back and forth. They were all sending pictures from the game and videos from the game. A couple of my high school coaches who are now retired were on the sideline at the game. It was one of those things that brought a lot of different eras together. Just really cool, a small town in the state of Ohio winning a State Championship. Proud of those guys, the best ever."