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## Chargers Media Availability

**Monday, December 6, 2021 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.**

### HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

**On OLB Joey Bosa's health status:**

"Joey Bosa is cleared of a concussion. He's day-to-day. We anticipate him being at practice on Wednesday."

**On RB Austin Ekeler's health status:**

"Just a lot of bumps and bruises from the game. He'll be at practice Wednesday."

**On DL Justin Jones' health status:**

"Justin is banged up. He's got an ankle and a knee sprain. He's day-to-day, but we anticipate him being at practice, in a very limited fashion, at the beginning of the week."

**On DL Linval Joseph's health status:**

"Linval Joseph should be at practice on Wednesday."

**On if CB Asante Samuel Jr. remains in the league's concussion protocol:**

"He is, but he is approaching the end of it."

**On OLB Chris Rumph II:**

"We really like coaching Chris Rumph. When we drafted him, we knew that this guy was going to be a developmental player, from a strength standpoint, but from a pass rush production, versatility standpoint, this guy has instincts for the position. This guy really knows how to play the game. He gives you special teams value, which is rare for an edge player. We feel like his body will change in time, but he has real NFL play-making ability. That will express itself even more fully when his body catches up. I think what you saw yesterday is a guy that can really play the game. This guy can play the game. He really understands his job. He plays with far more experience than his brief 11-game career would suggest. He's grown up around the game. He's the son of a coach. He comes from a really good family. He has awesome makeup. He's just been improving every single week. He finally got an opportunity to have an extended role in the game. I think that you saw that he has commanded the gameplan and that he's a fearless competitor. I think that he made a couple of huge plays on special teams for us. He's been a really a three or four-core special teams guy for us the whole season. We're excited to coach the guy. He has a lot of work to do in his game, but, yesterday, I think that he had three quarterback hits. He had the sack. He just gives us a lot of versatility, too. We like coaching the guy."

**On 'designer' blitz packages:**

"I think that we definitely want to activate some of the designer packages as a result of getting your playmakers in premium positions. You really want that for all of your players. But when it comes to pressure packages, you want to get your guys that can pressure the quarterback in those positions and you want to do it in a variety of ways. That's what we've always tried to do. This year, because of different personnel groupings and injuries and stuff like that, I think you just saw yesterday, that stuff that we've always had in our arsenal, stuff that we did last year and in other places that I've been, we felt like in that game, with Joey [Bosa] going out, in terms of pressuring the passer, that we would have to use some of those pressure packages in order to be effective. We felt like, from an identification standpoint, that it would give us an advantage, in terms of who they're counting as a known rusher. Then, get our guys in play-making positions. I felt like we did it in a variety of ways yesterday with a variety of people. I think all of that is sort of a fancy way of saying that we played really well on first and second down. When you get into known passing situations, because you've played really good first and second down defense, or you've gotten to a 24-point lead because your offense is playing at a high level, now you get to play the game on your terms. That's probably one of the few games that we've really been able to do that. You can see the effectiveness of those packages when they happen. That's always been the goal for us this year. It's been more of a fight to get to that point, but I really like how our guys executed yesterday."

**On 'his grade' for QB Justin Herbert's sideline tackle on the interception return:**

"I'd rather us not turn the ball over. That's what I would start with. What I would finish with is that it's a very interesting position to be a quarterback in that circumstance because if there are a bunch of guys in the way, his safety is of utmost importance. You have to be careful about how you coach the guy. But, all of us that played that position know that you have to go get the guy down. He was just doing what his instincts told him. He does what all good players do. He's a football player, not just the quarterback, if you remember. He's a football player. What football players do is they go make football plays. That just happened to be the play that he needed to make. So, he took a good angle, finished with his near leg in the ground and it looked like he had a little bit of power on contact. We definitely don't want him in that circumstance, but I think that we all saw that he is a competitor. He did what he had to do in that circumstance. I felt like it was a pretty good display of form tackling. Maybe we'll incorporate that in some of our teach tapes in the future, but we're hoping to avoid that circumstance, for sure. I think it was more an example of a guy doing what he had to do."

**On forcing the Bengals into third-and-long situations:**

"I think you have to assess the protection plan of the team that you're playing against, snap that throw. There are a lot of times you could blitz a guy and it doesn't have any chance of getting there. Then, when you do rush five guys, you know that there's a coverage element to who you're playing against. You have to assess your matchups within those covered systems. I think that what we were able to do yesterday is play a lot of different types of coverage systems behind that pressure, whether it's zone pressure, man-to-man, simulated pressure. I think that that's the other key element to pressuring, the covered system behind it. From a protection standpoint, you're going to attack the protection and try to create matchups with your play-makers rushing, but then there's an element to who is actually covering and who are they covering, and what's on the other side of the football in terms of how they're protecting it? When you go into each gameplan, there's a variety of different ways that you can go, but a lot of it is predicated on who's on the other side of the football. Do you feel like it gives you an advantage? I felt like it gave us an advantage yesterday. I think it featured some of our premium guys in getting them doing those jobs, which is always a goal of ours. But, I think that when you have that element, when you've shown that element, now there's that preparation for it, which is a good thing for you. Then, now you're trying to play that chess match moving forward. I like the way that we executed because I felt like, yesterday, we played with a type of variety. We played with a lot of the personnel groupings and the coverage systems that I'm used to playing with. Like I said, I felt like our entire defense executed yesterday."

### **On the performance of the offensive line:**

“Well enough to get us a 24 to nothing lead. Early in the game, we were really able to get control of the game because of how we were playing up front. I felt like the way they played in four-minute, I liked the way that we ran the football in four-minute when it was a known running situation. I felt like those guys really did a nice job. In that middle area, when there were some sacks, it definitely wasn’t all on the O-line. If you watch the first one, [RB] Austin [Ekeler] has got to break out on the option where we can get it to him, instead, he kind of hooks up and then [QB] Justin [Herbert] doesn’t have anywhere to go with it. Pass protection is such a team operation, but I feel like our offensive line is really coming together. I think getting [G] Matt [Feiler] back was really big in the game. I thought you saw his impact, overall, on our football team. [T] Storm [Norton] and [G/T Michael] Schofield [III] are competing well. [C] Corey [Linsley] and [T] Rashawn [Slater] are as steady as can be. I felt like, offensively, we were able to get into a really nice rhythm at the beginning of the game. Even though we didn’t run the ball, from a numbers standpoint, for a ton, I felt like we definitely were effective when we ran it. I feel like that’s a good thing.”

### **On coverages that the Bengals’ defense presented to find receiving matchups in the deep part of the field:**

“They were playing a lot of nickel groupings to really everything. When you’re going to play nickel defense, to be able to have a chance to stop the run, most of the time you’re going to have to get into an eight-man front, when you have five DBs on the field. Whether they were playing single-safety man or single-safety zone, they got into a lot of those eight-man fronts with single coverage outside and in the slot. So, we were able to access the deep part of the field in some of those instances. On [WR] Mike’s [Williams] sort of helicopter play on the sideline, when he out-jumped [Bengals CB Mike] Hilton, they were kind of in a quarters [coverage] version that kind of plays out like man-to-man, where the nickel has Mike man-to-man. It was a double move from the slot. The play kind of got extended and Justin [Herbert] gave him a chance. That’s what we felt like could happen in that game. Now, they ended up adjusting as the game went on to play a lot more two-deep zone, like a true two-deep zone or a Star pressure and play two-deep zone behind it. I felt like, early in the game, they were trying to play us straight-up, and then we were able to access the deep part of the field on them.”

### **On the special teams units improving and what that says about Special Teams Coordinator Derius Swinton II:**

“It’s been a fight on special teams because of all of the different combinations. I think I’ve talked to you guys about the attrition on defense, in terms of just a lot of in and out on defense. Well, because of that in and out on defense, it’s been in and out on special teams. It’s been a fight to get our personnel right into figuring out who truly are our best guys and get them doing the right jobs. We’ve tried to incorporate a lot more starters in special teams as the years gone on; [LB] Kyzir [White], [LB] Drue [Tranquill], [TE] Stephen Anderson, guys like that. I feel like that’s really helped us. He’s stuck with it and tried to create a culture there of fundamentals and assignments, where these guys can really hone in on their assignment and get good at it. Then, you can’t minimize the impact that [WR] Andre [Roberts] has had. Since we’ve acquired Andre, I just think that there’s a lot more confidence in the return units. That element that when you have a returner back there that you believe in, how that impacts the people blocking for him and the leadership and the experience that he’s brought to the table, I think that’s been big, too. I think that yesterday was definitely our most complete performance, from a punt coverage standpoint, like protection coverage. We had consistent gunner play. [P] Ty [Long] was punting the football at the right location, except for the one that he kicked into the end zone that I was disappointed about. But, our return units were fantastic. We were connected at the first level and second level. Then, Andre did a nice job of setting them up. [K] Dustin [Hopkins] made his kicks yesterday. The two field goals really popped off of his leg. Those were two really, really good kicks for us. We’re just going to keep getting better. I think that you’re really seeing our kickoff team play with confidence. [LB] Amen [Ogbongbemiga] really showed up yesterday, Chris Rumph [II]. You’re seeing a lot of these young guys really come alive. [LB] Nick Niemann, [CB] Kemon [Hall], guys like that — we had Wich [CB Davontae Harris] in the plan yesterday. A bunch of guys I’m leaving out, probably — [TE] Stephen Anderson, [RB] Justin Jackson, guys like that that are playing really good football for us. We have [TE] Tre’ McKitty playing wing on punt, which has been big. I just think that it’s been a work-in-progress. For those guys to have a performance like that in a big game like that, where you go into a road game against a playoff-contending team and then you show your stuff, I’m hoping that that’s a big confidence builder for us.”

**On the defense having a ‘win the game’ moment:**

“We’ve really been just focused on us. I feel like we’ve been improving each and every game since the beginning of the season. I told you guys after the bye that I felt like, in the run game, our guys are a lot more confident in their technique and their assignments. I feel like that’s expressed itself since the bye against some really good running teams. Yesterday was no different, was no exception. You’re talking about the third-rated back in the league, from a yardage standpoint. In my estimation, he’s one of the top runners in the league. This guy is a really complete player. I feel like that aspect of our team is really improving. I feel like on third down yesterday, we had some tough third-down losses. We still need to continue to cover and play with more technique outside when we’re in good leverage situations because when you watch that tape, we’re still in premium leverage situations. We had some losses that I’m not a fan of right now. But, what we did yesterday was we rushed the quarterback at a high level because of how we were playing on first and second down against the run. We were able to affect the quarterback, and then that led to the takeaways. Then when you score on defense because of a very well-executed play and you finished with a touchdown, and then you have a red-area takeaway on a very well-executed covered system, as a coach, that means that you know that your players are improving. I feel like you have to play team defense in this league in order to be as good as you can be. I thought you saw all three levels of our defense make plays yesterday; first level, second level, third level, run defense, pass defense, third-down defense, red-area defense. You saw those impact plays. We’re going to just continue to stay at it, keep fighting hard to improve. There’s still a lot of ball left. There’s still a lot that we can improve on, as you guys saw yesterday.”

**On if ‘there were going to be opportunities to take advantage’ of Bengals QB Joe Burrow due to ‘his youth, their offensive line and getting consistent pass rush to make him more vulnerable’:**

“I think that this Joe burrow guy is kind of like our guy. They play like they’ve been playing for a really, really long time. He’s really, really sharp. On first and second down, it was really tough to hit the guy. His snap-to-throw on first and second down is one of the quickest in the league, in terms of getting it out quick. They’ve had a bunch of leads this season, so they haven’t really had to come back as much as others. Just like any quarterback, when you have to come from behind and you increase the volume of throws, now you put stress on protection, those variables do add up. Then, he was out two starting lineman. He just showed real toughness yesterday, too, with his finger and all of that. I felt like what we did yesterday was we played the game on our terms as a team. You can see the advantage in that. Then, for us on defense, it wasn’t just exclusive to our offense scoring a bunch of points, it was the field position that that our special teams created, the amount of momentum that that side of the football created. When you have Amen [Ogbongbemiga] go down there on kickoff and have a big splash play, when you have Chris Rumph make a splash play on punt, when you have these big things happening for you, when you have Andre [Roberts] splitting people on returns, that has a residual effect on defense. Even though Andre [Roberts] split them on a return that instantly impacts our offense, well, that instantly impacts our defense, too, because of the field position. I felt like it was a team when that way. That skill group yesterday, going back and just watching the film on the flight and this morning, again, it’s a very complete skill group. Those three receivers are as good as you’re going find, as a trio. Then, I have real respect for that runner and that quarterback. There’s a reason why they were 7-4 and really in first place in the [AFC] North, or whatever it was. I was excited that we had a quality performance against a quality opponent.”

**On preparing for two games in 11 days:**

“Behind the scenes, a big part of our performance team’s process, with our strength and conditioning staff, dietetics nutrition, and then athletic training, we’re going to have a postgame operation ready for them at the stadium, where there’s going to be a postgame routine that they’re going to go through to make sure that we get those bodies taken care of right away because of the short turnaround. There’s been a lot of detail and planning. The synergy of those three phases of the operation, working together to put that together, has been a highlight for me. I feel like it’s demonstrated that type of communication that is necessary. Hopefully, it’ll be a winning edge for us and that these players see the level of detail that’s going into their performance and their well-being. I’m excited to see it take shape live, but I know that we’ve been working hard for it. Then, the way that we practice this week will also impact that next Thursday. I’m glad that I was able to go through that experience last year with [Rams Head Coach] Sean [McVay] because, like you said, it was at a very similar time when we had to go Arizona to New England. Really, we flew from Arizona back home. New England, actually, was here in L.A., and they actually had more sleep than we did because they were staying here in L.A. I was used to that turnaround. I’m glad that I was able to go through that experience because I learned a lot from it.”

**On stopping the Bengals' two-point conversion attempt:**

"The play before, we had the substitution error, which I was fired up about and which I take full responsibility for. I wasn't going to take a time out there. That's not the time to do it. We kind of had a taste our own medicine there. We got the right grouping in there. It just shows real toughness. It was a direct run with a runner that's really, really good. You saw a lot of people knocking people back, playing with the right technique and playing with a lot of the fire that you need to in that circumstance. That feeling of 24-22 versus a tie game, that was a big, big play in the game. I thought that it showed real guts by our defense."

**On preparing for the Giants:**

"All you have to do is watch [Giants RB] Saquon Barkley's NFL highlight film, his college highlight reel. Go watch [Giants WR] Kenny Golladay. Go watch [Giants WR] Darius Slayton, who I played against last year, [Giants TE] Evan Engram. Go watch [Giants QB] Daniel Jones run the football for 90 yards against Philly last year. All you have to do is watch the film and the respect that you have to have. The Giants defense is a defense that I really respect. I think [Giants Assistant Head Coach/Defensive Coordinator] Patrick Graham is one of the best defensive coordinators in the NFL. This guy is a really, really good coach. Last year, with the Rams, we played them. Their front is real. It's a really, really good front seven. [Giants DL] Leonard Williams, [Giants DL] Dexter Lawrence, they have a rookie from Georgia, [Giants LB] Lorenzo Carter. They have a lot of good players over there on that team. They're extremely well-coached. They're really good in the kicking game. They're a really good team. I don't know how anybody could think like that because all you have to do, in the NFL, is turn on the film and you're going to see a bunch of players that deserve your full attention. That's where our focus is right now; it's on the Giants. They deserve our full attention. I know last year where I was at, it was down to the wire. They ran a two-minute drill and we beat them at the very, very end. [Rams CB] Darious Williams had a big pick for us. That was a tightly contested game. I have a lot of respect for them. They've been in a bunch of tight games this year. The film will speak for itself, to myself and all of our players."

**On his approach to punt placement and field position from the punter's standpoint:**

"You want your guy to be aggressive and shoot his shot. But, there's a reality to where we kick the ball, and then what a touchback means, in the reality of field position. If I'm going to err on that, it's not going to be deep. Just like you would say, 'Hey, when you're throwing a nine route [deep pass] to a receiver, don't overthrow him where he doesn't have a chance to make a play.' Well, it's the same thing in that punt. You have to give your guys an opportunity to make a play. We have to make sure that we give our guys an opportunity there and that it isn't a perfect kick that if it takes this wrong hop, then it's going in there because it's that close. We need to make sure that we choose the right club that gives our guys an opportunity to go make that. We all know the percentages between that lost field position, between inside the 10 [-yard line] or the five, and then out, where it ended up. Those are the margins that we're talking about in the National Football League. We have to make sure that we go execute that."

**On third down defense:**

"There were some really good and some where we have to play with better technique or we got leverage on a route. Whether it's Vato [CB Michael Davis], whether it's T.C. [CB Tevaughn Campbell], whether it's [CB] Chris [Harris Jr.]. They made a nice pass into a two-deep zone where Nas [S Nasir Adderley] hit the quarterback on a two-deep simulator, which is a good play on them. Kind of a bang-bang deal. They were in an empty [set], quick game, kind of a slant on third-and-four that we could have played tighter. It was good execution by them. We need to make sure we play with proper technique and leverage on third down because we will play a lot less plays if we can execute property. We have shown that when we execute properly, that our rush will come alive and we'll get off the field or make something big happen. We're a work-in-progress. I think we have settled in to who we are and now we have to do what we have to do better down the stretch and really make sure, from a detailed standpoint, assignment and technique, that we have that level of execution. What I liked yesterday on third down was our guys were playing with a lot of energy. I feel like they really had command of the plan. Our losses were tough losses, I mean [Bengals WR Ja'Marr] Chase shoved a Vato on a stop-route, which is tough down on the NFL — they have to call that. Certainly, they called Keenan for less. We have to make sure we bow up there. The downs that we lost — the one play we have to eliminate is 33-yard run after catch when [Bengals WR Tyler] Boyd catches a bunch pattern against man to man. We have to rat safety and middle safety that take a really bad angle, on an eight-yard, well-executed play goes for 33 — that does not sit well with me, that's not who we are. If we take a couple better angles, then we would have had a better chance to be successful. We're a work-in-progress, but I thought we competed a lot better yesterday and made a lot more big plays on third down."

**On the matchup between CB Michael Davis and Bengals WR Ja'Marr Chase:**

"I think you answered your own question there, my friend. I'm not real fired up on how he started the down. I loved the way he competed till the end of the down because that's traditionally how football is — if you compete to the end of the down, something good can happen for you. I think what they were doing yesterday — they were trying to set him up outside to take that inside release and pop back out. That is an adjustment that you have to understand during the game. I think that he made that adjustment as we went on. That guy is a quality player and I think what you have to understand is that in that technique you have the nine, you need to be on top of the nine. You were not on top of the nine, you were behind it. We have to learn from that. I think fundamentally from the line of scrimmage we can be a lot better. Like I said, we are working with this guy. Vato [Davis] is working hard and he is still at the beginning of this NFL thing — I know you guys may not like me saying that, but that is the truth of him learning how to play NFL corner. There is a huge set of experiences that he is yet to tap into as an NFL corner — I'm talking a real NFL corner. He's working hard at it, he's competing and I really like the way he has responded. We are going to stay with the guy. He's getting better every week and we'll continue to sharpen him up, polish him. I really like coaching him, he's shown some resilience here the last couple weeks. I like when he is out there, that is for sure."

**On two-point conversion:**

"We're looking for 24 [points] there, not 23. We're trying to make it that kind of game and some of those two-point defenses you have to have an anticipation of what they have played. It felt like that would be a good play to activate and create a little energy and fun for our team. It's also good football, I felt like we executed that play well all week — I think all of us had a lot of confidence in the way it looked during the week and felt like the timing worked out well. [WR] Keenan [Allen] threw a really good pass and then [QB] Justin [Herbert] finished the rest. And what that does for your team — you guys saw — go see the reaction of Justin, his teammates and our sideline. There's also that residual, too. I like that and it's part of the fun of the game. We're going to try and make that a part in our program."

**On WR Keenan Allen:**

"Keenan's a guy that has many talents. This guy's a scratch golfer and all that. I haven't seen him on the basketball court yet, but he's a guy that can do a lot of things. He's got a high-level skill set. He's telling me that he can play DB, we'll see if that works out some day. In junior college we did that a lot, with guys going both ways. We'll see if that happens for him in the NFL. I think when you run those plays, you want to run them with people you trust. I feel like he's a guy you trust because there's an element of like, 'What if it was covered,' or, 'Hey, what if, what if, what if?' You want the ball in the hands of someone that can make a good decision and Keenan certainly did that for us."

**On Allen being placed on Reserve/COVID-19:**

"He's day-to-day right now, and hopefully we'll have some good news on him in the next few days."

## **OUTSIDE LINEBACKER UCHENNA NWOSU**

### **On what led to his sack-fumble and fumble recovery:**

“It was just technique. That’s something that we preached about all week, just being able to hone in on our technique and our assignments. Once I was able to get that ball out, I stayed with the play and was able to recover it.”

### **On improving in run defense:**

“We feel great about that. Any time that you hold a team like that, especially with the running back they have, [Bengals RB] Joe Mixon, who is a very explosive running back, to be able to hold him under his average and hold him to three or four yards per carry, it’s amazing. That’s what we practice. That’s what we preach. That’s what we hang our hat on. We’re very prideful about that. We just have to keep going. We have to use this game as fuel to build off. We put it on tape, so people know exactly what we can do. We believe that we can do it. If we just keep honing in and keep that the main focus, keep the main thing the main thing, we’ll be able to keep this going into next week.”

### **On Giants RB Saquon Barkley:**

“A great challenge. He’s another dynamic runner who is very daring and dangerous in the open field. He is just like the rest of these good running backs that we’ve played. We’ve played some good running backs — [Vikings RB] Dalvin Cook, [Bengals RB] Joe Mixon, [Steelers RB] Najee Harris. This is another good test of what we can do. Looking forward to another good challenge ahead.”

### **On yesterday’s defensive gameplan:**

“Going into the game, the gameplan was to stop the run. That’s what we haven’t been doing too well. These last couple of weeks, we’ve been doing pretty well, but that’s what our main focus was, stopping the run. Once we stopped the run, we knew that we had them. That’s how the game kind of went. We stopped the run early. We got after them early. Then, we were able to pass rush and get guys involved.”

### **On his two sacks yesterday:**

“On the first strip-sack, I was able to get the tackle, work his edge. Credit to the secondary, those guys held up in coverage, which gave me that extra second that [Bengals QB] Joe Burrow had to hold the ball. It gave me an extra second to get there and get that strip-sack. Rush and cover work together. When the DBs are covering well, we rush well. When we’re rushing well, the DBs are covering well. It’s all a testament to each other. It all goes hand-in-hand.”

### **On what has led to ‘his recent flourish’:**

“That Baltimore week, going into the bye week, is really when I figured out, ‘Hey, I can do this.’ I’ve settled in a little bit more, wasn’t really trying to push everything. I know [LB] Kyzir [White] mentioned about contract years, so guys are thinking about what is in the future. I can say that that was kind of getting into my head in the beginning, but once I settled in, knew what I was capable of doing and trusting my path, my coaching and my practice habits, it just all fell into place. It’s starting to come along. I’m starting to get into a rhythm now. Hopefully, I can keep this thing going.”

### **On if he is currently ‘playing the best he has in his career’:**

“Absolutely. I was talking to Brandon [Staley] back in OTAs and he was telling me, ‘You can play in this system. You can do it. I believe in you.’ It’s all starting to come to fruition. I’m starting to trust the process a lot more now, getting into a rhythm. Hopefully, we can keep this thing going.”

### **On his mindset when OLB Joey Bosa departed the game yesterday:**

“Losing Joey, that’s a big loss. He’s one of the premier pass-rushers in this league. Any time he is not available, it’s a huge loss for us. It’s the next-man-up mentality. We have a lot of guys that are able to contribute — [OLB] Chris Rumph [II], the rookie, getting his first sack, that was huge. [OLB] Kyler Fackrell got constant pressure on the quarterback. He might not have gotten a sack, but he affected the quarterback by getting pressure. I was able to contribute a little bit. The D-line stepped up. We had interior guys getting sacks. Everybody stepped up. It wasn’t just one guy. The next man has to be that guy. Everybody, collectively, came together and did their part.”

## **LINEBACKER DRUE TRANQUILL**

### **On limiting Bengals RB Joe Mixon:**

"I don't know if we did anything differently. I thought that we played really assignment sound. I thought that we played physical at the point of attack. If you throw on the tape, I think that the disruption that you see from our defensive front, it was creating opportunities for [LB] Kyzir [White] and I, [S] Derwin [James Jr.], Nas [S Nasir Adderley] and those second-level players to kind of fill downhill and make plays. It was fantastic. It's something that we're going to have to keep up here these next few weeks."

### **On the defense's performance yesterday:**

"When you just look at the overall performance, we had our backs against the wall a couple of times after some turnovers and held them to some field goals — gave up a couple of touchdowns when we could have held them — but I just think, overall, the turnovers, the physicality that we played with and, for the most part, keeping a roof over the coverage, and then with the physicality in the run game, I think that you could make that point."

### **On 'not looking ahead' to the Chiefs in two weeks:**

"If anybody's looking ahead, I don't think we're in the position to do that. I sure hope not. Every game is so important. The AFC is so tight right now. If anybody's looking past the Giants, we're in trouble."

### **On improving in run defense yesterday:**

"I think that when you look at the statistics, the statistics don't always tell the full story. Strategically, how we were playing the game, it was to put a roof over the coverage and eliminate explosive plays — make offenses drive down the field, and then play great red-zone defense. You don't want to be the 32nd-worst run defense. That certainly caught our eye. We've made some changes. I think that we've just emphasized technique more than anything; technique and assignment. Once guys have understood those things more, it has allowed guys to play more physical, play faster. It's certainly helped our defense here in the in these last few games."

### **On using 'designer looks' to create pressure in the pass rush:**

"I think the most important thing was stopping the run on first and second down and getting into those third-and-long situations, where we could call those pressures. If you look at weeks prior, we've kind of been in third-and-medium to third-and-short situations, where it's kind of 50/50 calls and you can't really get those designer packages on the field. I thought we did a great job of stopping the run on first and second down, which put us in those situations."

### **On the outlook for increasing usage of 'designer looks':**

"I just think that we have a lot of good players that bring a lot to the table. We have 15, 16 guys [on defense] that could be starters in this league. When you have that, you can roll in different packages, you can get different bodies on the field, you can get different things going and it confuses the quarterback. I think when you look at my sack specifically, [Bengals QB] Joe [Burrow] wasn't thinking that I was coming. He was sending the guys to the right, he slid [the protection] to the right, from our right, and I got the free run there on the quarterback. Just being able to confuse the quarterback, make it difficult for him to identify at the MIKE [middle linebacker], it only gives us a competitive advantage there on third down."

### **On the 'level of competition' on the defensive unit:**

"It's one of our pillars that [Head] Coach [Brandon] Staley talked about early on back in the spring; competition and relationships. We're certainly building that. [General Manager] Tom [Telesco] and Coach Staley are doing a great job assembling a roster where there is that competition and that depth. Guys have to fight for that every single day. I think that once people get comfortable, that's the easiest way to go towards mediocrity. That's not what we're trying to do. We're trying to build something here. The way you can do that is to put people in competitive environments where they're forced to be their best self."

### **On the increased pass rush:**

"I think we did a great job of stopping the run on first and second down. Once we got up big, we put them in passing situations. We knew that they had to pass catch up. Once we got into those known passing situations, our edge guys, our D-linemen were really able to pin their ears back and get to the pass rush technique that they really want to get to."



**On Staley's pursuit of 'having a game where the defense wins the game for the team':**

"He mentioned it briefly in our defensive meeting. I think that when you look at the Browns game, our offense really kind of pulled us out of the mud there and was really able to win that game for us. I felt like, defensively, we really wanted to put on a performance, down the homestretch here when it's crunch time, when it's playoff time, when every game matters — be in a game where the defense has to pull us out of the mud. We weren't able to do that, and that got highlighted last week at Denver when we weren't able to create those turnovers to swing the swing the pendulum back in our offense's favor. I felt like we were able to do that yesterday when the offense was turning the ball over a little bit. We were able to kind of counter back and get some of those turnovers to get the ball back to Justin [Herbert] and prevailed there in the end."

**On hosting three of the following four games at SoFi Stadium:**

"Honestly, I feel like we've played really well on the road and haven't had our best stuff, for whatever reason, at home — the games that kind of come to mind; Dallas, the Browns. We played well against the Raiders. Then, the Steelers game, not having our best stuff there in the third quarter. I think it's a challenge more than anything if we can play well at home and if we can be that team that is notorious for protecting their house."