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## Chargers Week 2 Media Availability

Thursday, September 16, 2021 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

### OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR JOE LOMBARDI

#### **On the offensive line's performance against Washington:**

"They did a good job. There's a lot of practice time that goes into it. They've been working together — not in game situations, but in practice, and that counts. That's why we do it. I was really proud of the way that those guys performed."

#### **On T Rashawn Slater's performance in his NFL debut:**

"I think that it says a lot. We had high expectations for him, but it's good to see it validated. Your comment about how you know what you're getting when you draft him, you're always hoping — we thought that we knew — so just the combination of his talent and his character really makes that margin of error a lot smaller. I remember the first day that he was out in the field back in the spring and [Run Game Coordinator/Offensive Line Coach] Frank [Smith] coming over and saying, 'Man, this kid is something else.' He kind of popped right away. It's good when your draft picks work like that. It's certainly a credit to our scouting staff. They've done a good job for a number of years with those early draft picks. It was fun to see him perform like that."

#### **On Slater 'having success' in his NFL debut:**

"It starts that he has really top-notch ability, but there's a lot of guys that have that kind of ability. I just think it's his work ethic, his character, his smarts, all of those factors that you see in great players. I don't want to crown him as the next Hall of Famer yet, it's one game, but it was an impressive game against a really good caliber of opponent. He really did well."

#### **On 'building confidence' through the use of 'quick passes' early in the game:**

"I think it all helps. Justin was playing with a good clock in his head. He has a great instinct for realizing when the pocket's compromised and he's got to get the ball out. Also, receivers were getting open quickly. It's a collaborative effort. The receivers did their part. The O-line did their part. The quarterback did his part. All of those guys working together led to a good day in pass protection."

#### **On the offense going 14-of-19 on third down and the 'validation in his offense' that provides:**

"It validates the players we have. There are a lot of teams in this league that could have gotten in those same situations with those same plays and not had the success that we had. It was the players. I was hoping not to have 19 third downs. You would like to skip those third downs and kind of go from first [down] to first [down] or second [down] to first [down] more often, but when you convert, it is your chance to get another third down and convert that one. I would like to not have 19 third downs again, but those guys just played so well. Like we said, it was a collaborative effort — quarterback, receivers, O-line — that makes that possible. The play calls are what they are, but I think it's the guys that really made it work."

#### **On 'believing' in WR Mike Williams in the intermediate passing game:**

"He's big. He's got good hands. He's physical. I don't see any reason why he can't make those plays. I hope I don't have to apologize to him if his yards per catch come down a little bit. He still makes those plays, he made a couple of really big time catches down the field, and so that part of this game is not going away by any stretch. But, it's good to get him work. He can get open quick, like a lot of those guys, so let's allow him to do that."

**On potentially experiencing a ‘gratifying’ feeling after the game, based on the offense’s performance:**

“Yeah, it was good. I think that we had a good rhythm. I think that the guys executed. Those two runs that kind of went for a little bit longer really helped. [QB] Justin [Herbert] was just getting it to the right guy who was open. It was good. I wish every drive could be like that. It’s always nice to get a game going on the right foot, so it was comforting that it happened like that.”

**On WR KJ Hill Jr.:**

“He had three catches. It was a hot day, and sometimes up in the box, a receiver comes out and one comes in, and you’ve already called the play and you’re like, ‘Ah, I thought [WR] Keenan [Allen] was going to be in there,’ so it’s good knowing that he can jump in there and make those plays. It’s a credit to him. We have a lot of trust in him. It gives you confidence moving forward that he’s a guy that you can count on.”

**On the Cowboys defense:**

“They caught some bad luck with their defensive ends. Those were two guys that certainly concerned you. But, there are NFL players filling in their roles, so there are guys that we have to block. They’re a fast team. One of the concerns is, that we don’t have a lot of film on this new coaching staff, so there a lot of unknowns going into the game. They have some pressure packages that bother you. You don’t have a lot of film to really vet exactly what they’re doing to get your rules down. Preparing against a new staff where you don’t have a season full of film on them is always a stressful thing. They’re down a couple of players, but they have plenty of good players. This No. 11 [LB Micah Parsons], their rookie, is physical, fast. We all know what his skill level is. They still have a lot of problematic defenders over there.”

**On if the coaching staff is evaluating tape of Cowboys Defensive Coordinator Dan Quinn’s defense when he was head coach of the Falcons to prepare for this week:**

“We looked at it. There’s a little bit of carryover. With any defense, there’s carryover. When you look at the limited film that we have with Dallas and you look at Atlanta, the tendencies aren’t quite the same. It’s too early, really, to tell. You’re watching scheme. There’s really none of the players that you’re going to face on Sunday that are on that tape from the last couple of years in Atlanta. Where are you going to spend your time? We’ve certainly peeked at some stuff, but not as much as I thought we would.”

**On if any of the run plays called last Sunday against Washington were set to be for a particular running back, but based on personnel changes, ended up being carried out by another running back:**

“It changes. Some plays when I say generic, it means that anyone can be in there for that play. We do tag personnel groupings, like, ‘Hey, I want to make sure [RB] Austin [Ekeler] is in the game for this one,’ or, ‘[RB] Justin [Jackson] is in the game for that one,’ or, [RB] Larry [Rountree III] is in the game.’ We will have tags. As guys are trying to keep their guys fresh, you’re like, ‘Alright, I’m good,’ but when I call this personnel grouping, I have to make sure that Austin is in the game or Larry is in the game. We do that with receivers, too, so that we’re not caught off guard and have the wrong guys in there for a small number of limited plays. For the most part, those guys can roll in and out.”

**On if any players displayed ‘how rewarding’ it was to close out the game against Washington on the final offensive possession:**

“Not specifically in relation to you anything that’s happened in the past. I think any time that you have a drive like that, and keep your defense from having to come back on the field, and you can seal our game, it’s gratifying. I think people were happy, but nothing in relation to guys who’ve been here versus new guys. I think that everyone was real pleased that we were able to close out that game. I feel like we contributed to the win that way.”

**On RB Larry Rountree III’s performance against Washington:**

“Good. He had some good physical runs. On that first drive, he had a nice run. I think that he was clean for the most part. I can’t think of any mental errors, which is good for a rookie. It was strong. Strong performance for his first game.”

**On if he was 'OK with the hole' that Rountree ran through for a 13-yard gain on the offense's opening possession:**

"I was happy with the results. It all worked out. It's not a perfect game by perfect players. Those guys are playing hard. When you do that, good things will happen."

**On how 'contagious the process is' when converting third downs consistently:**

"I think that it builds a little momentum. When you're mixing up the protections and the tempo of the throws, the snap counts — we did a really good job, even in the silent cadence, of drawing them offside a couple of times. The big thing for me is when you feel like your protection is holding up. It gives you confidence. That pretty much held through the whole game. When you're in the second half, and you feel like we've been holding up in pass protection, I think that builds confidence, certainly for a quarterback and the coaches and the guys on the field. It was good."

**On how 'rewarding' it was to see WR Keenan Allen excel in his role within the offense last Sunday against Washington:**

"It's good. It's not surprising. Early on, even before I got here, I could tell that this was a guy with great instincts. A lot of times, you'll say, 'Hey, listen, here's the concept of this route, you and [QB] Justin [Herbert] figure out how you guys want to run it.' There are even times where Keenan will do something and I'm like, 'I might have done that a little bit different, but I just won't say anything to him because I don't want to mess with him.' He's going to do the right thing almost always, and it's probably going to be better than what we would have coached him to do. Let him go work. I just tell Justin, 'Listen, you're in control of him. If he does something that you don't like that you can't anticipate, you need to let me know and then we'll go from there.' Justin's like, 'No, that's exactly what I would have done. I liked it. I could anticipate it.' That's a hard thing to develop if they don't have those instincts and feel for each other."

## **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR RENALDO HILL**

**On S Derwin James Jr. and CB Asante Samuel Jr.:**

"The biggest thing is being silent in our scheme. The things we can go out and execute gives those guys calmness. We have to do a good job of that early on. It's still the second week. We can still sprinkle in some new gadgets here and there. We just have to play sound football, let our guys do what we do in our scheme."

**On S Nasir Adderley:**

"I thought he played physical, I thought he played tough. There are some areas we can correct, and he'll build on it. He did everything we asked. He communicated well. He ran the show back there. All his stuff is correctable, we'll get that fixed. But him flying around, being a cornerback back there, he did exactly what we wanted him to do."

**On areas in which Adderley can improve his game:**

"It's mechanics we work during our individual period. There are corrections there, just as there are on any other play. I'd love for him to go high point the ball and try to get the hands over his head. That's one correction we can make. Him playing fast and hard and getting to the ball, we know good things are going to happen the more opportunities we get in that. It's just learning an example from that when we play."

**On Adderley's 'hands-up' mentality:**

"That's what you try to emphasize. It's either going to be a ball for me or incomplete for that guy. It's something we're continuing to work on with all our guys. When we play, we'll be better from it."

**On defensive improvements:**

"Just continuing to jump from week one to week two. Continue to execute in our defense. We know there's going to be mistakes. It's nothing we felt like they did that we hadn't seen in practice. It's just going out there and executing our game plan. Continue to get better in all areas. We know we'll do that moving forward. I don't think it's a big deal, what can be expressed in our defense. I don't think they heard us in any major way. We know if we're not tracking the things we didn't do well, teams are going to try to get those. We're just trying to make those corrections moving forward. Try to be a better defense."

**On preparing for the Cowboys' running game:**

"We'll expect them to try to get the run game going. That's their guy [Cowboys RB Ezekiel Elliott]. We know once the run game is going for them, everything else opens up. Even though they had a big day passing [against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers], I think it opens up more variables for those guys. We expect them to get the run game going and use their big back, back there."

**On preparing for the Cowboys' passing game:**

"We want to continue to be shell-y back there, try to make it difficult. We want to make these quarterbacks have to search the defense out. Try to search the coverage out. We can do that. We think it'll make our jobs easier in the back end. That's the biggest thing for us, not trying to give up the explosiveness, explosive plays. Keeping the roof over our defense. We're constantly working on that. We know they have the weapons out there and we just have to do a good job this week early on. Continue to move the downs around."

**On S Derwin James Jr. missing practice:**

"It's still early in the week and we're evaluating [S] Nas [Nasir Adderley], as well. There are some other guys who have had some nicks and bruises. We just have to continue to roll with how the practice flows. If those guys aren't practicing, we just have to have the next man up. It's still early. Things can change moving forward. We're just going to be ready to go."

**On James Jr.'s role in the nickel package:**

"He's playing the star position. We feel like we can do multiple things from that spot. It's a position that's interchangeable. It's a different person in groupings and we try to do different things inside. I think it just makes us flexible and multiple. That's what we want to be."

**On using a QB spy in the passing game:**

"You lose a guy in the rush. Sometimes when you do have a spy, he could get caught up in the traffic of the rush, and those quarterbacks can scramble out of the pocket. We're going to try to explore as many avenues as we need to. We'd love to be able to run our defense and do a good job with our rush plan. We just have to make sure we touch all our bases. We'll continue to do that as we game-plan in the meeting room with the coaches."

**On if he prefers not using a spy:**

"It lessens the opportunity for those guys up front. It gives him more time to operate. If that's the case, where it's a situation where he's hurting us, it may be something we have to go to. I wouldn't rule it out completely, but we want to make sure we have a good rush plan and be able to use those guys. Try to play coverage in the back end with our guys."

**On CB Asante Samuel Jr.:**

"Nothing's too big for this guy. He gave up the one pass interference, we lined the play back up again; it's not a big deal. He went out and he played a hell of a game in the season opener. You thought teams might try to give him a lot of volume, he was prepared for it. He was ready to go. I really enjoyed how he played. I'm expecting him to take another jump this week."

**On the linebacker-defensive linemen rotation:**

"I thought it was good. Those coaches, [Run Game Coordinator/Outside Linebackers] Coach [Jay] Rodgers, [Defensive Line Coach] Giff [Smith], they do a great job of making sure we have the right people in at right times. Making sure we're rolling the guys around. I'm really happy with how things are going with those guys, coaching those guys, and getting the right people in the right spots at the right times."



## **OUTSIDE LINEBACKER JOEY BOSA**

### **On preparing for the Cowboys' running and passing games:**

"I mean it's a combination. We know [Cowboys QB] Dak [Prescott] is a really talented quarterback. We have to make sure we keep him in the pocket. That's kind of the story as a D-line in every week, not letting the QB make plays with his feet, escaping out of those big gaps. Our rushers are going to have to be sound. We are going to have to work together. Obviously, they have some weapons, but I think if you neutralize Dak, then he won't be able to get the ball to those weapons. It's still a talented group, you have Zeke [Cowboys RB Ezekiel Elliott], [Cowboys WR] CeeDee [Lamb], you have [Cowboys WR] Amari [Cooper], so there's a bunch of different options. It starts with us up front, being able to not take these high rushers and open up those big gaps and just rush in sound as a group before."

### **On defeating Washington:**

"It was great. I was proud of the offense, the way that they held onto the ball and finished the game like that. I don't really remember being a part of something like that for a few years now. Just to see them with that much time on the clock, being able to pick apart that defense, move down field and run out the clock was really impressive. Just have to clean up some things here and there with some penalties on both sides of the ball and I think it wouldn't be as close of a game as it was. It seems like every game around here is super close, and to be able to come out with the first win in one of those tight games, I think it meant a lot for us."

### **On facing off against Cowboys RB Ezekiel Elliott, his former teammate and roommate at Ohio State:**

"It'll be awesome. Last time we played against each other was in practice [at Ohio state] and we didn't take it easy on each other then, so I am sure we won't this weekend. It will just be good to see him. I saw him a bit this offseason, it was good to reconnect. He's, obviously, done an amazing job. He's part of that Dallas franchise, he's really the face of it all, along with a few others of his teammates. I am really proud of him. We have come a long way from the dorm rooms back in 2013, so it will be cool to be out there with him."

### **On which of the two roommates was 'messier':**

"I am sure [Elliott] said me, but we were both pretty terrible. There is not a winner on that. I remember stepping over boxes to get to my couch and being like, 'Ah, whatever, I'll figure that out later.' Luckily, that has changed over the years. No more pizza boxes and everything laying around."

### **On his path to the NFL and what aided the preparation process, particularly during his time at Ohio State:**

"Yeah, I was talking about that yesterday, the difference between me and my brother [49ers DE Nick Bosa] coming up with my dad and the competition that he went against versus the competition that we are able to go against. It breeds excellence — kind of a corny line. Being able to go against [Detroit Lions OT] Taylor Decker, [Carolina Panthers G] Patrick Elflein, all those guys in the offense of line that are now all starting for an NFL team. Then, to have a coach like [Ohio State Associate Head Coach/Defensive Line] Larry Johnson and all the other guys there that were technicians and really knew what they were talking about when it came to technique and how to play the position. I think it was an advantage for sure."

### **On getting one-on-one matchups in Week 1:**

"They didn't chip a lot, which I'll take that. This game, it felt very similar to the game I've always played — kind of lining up, getting my hand down and rushing the passer. I think that I didn't drop [into coverage] one time. I had coverage once, but it was a run [play]. It was another game out there. I'll take all of the one-on-ones I can get. If you don't want to chip me — they caught me once with a good one, but I think I took advantage of most of my opportunities there."

### **On Cowboys T Tyron Smith:**

"He's a freak. He's 6-foot-5. His arms are 35, 36 inches long, or whatever they are. He's a veteran. I think he's in his 11th year. He's a smart player. He's just a freak athlete, a technician at left tackle. You see him get beat but then he comes back with his inside arm and is able to recover. He gets out of some crazy positions. It's a guy that if you're hesitant and you don't bring a plan and a good get-off every time, you're just going to get locked down because once he gets those clamps on you, it's kind of game over. We're going to watch as much film as we can on him. Obviously, the backup right tackle is going to be in, so we are going to have to attack that side, as well. But Tyron is a great player."