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## Chargers Head Coach Brandon Staley Media Availability

Monday, October 2, 2023 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

**On QB Justin Herbert 'not missing any time' due to his finger injury:**

"He's a tough customer."

**On an update regarding TE Donald Parham Jr.:**

"No update. Same as yesterday — wrist. His status will be determined going into the Dallas week."

**On if Parham had an X-ray on his wrist:**

"Yes."

**On if he 'can share the results':**

"No."

**On the performance of the cornerback group yesterday:**

"I thought that the group yesterday had a really quality performance, I thought they all did things that really allowed us to play team defense at a high level. I thought we executed our game plan and made a lot of winning plays. That group played really well together in the secondary. I'm really proud of that group's performance, the preparation. That's two weeks in a row that I felt like the guys have really given us a strong chance to win the game."

**On if the cornerback personnel is 'pretty set at this point':**

"Everything is week-to-week in the NFL."

**On his evaluation of the special teams units after watching the film:**

"A group that needs to improve. Kickoff coverage was poor. Our first two punts were poor from the punter. Our punt return unit, we gave up over 50 yards in net punting. It's a tough punt when [Raiders P AJ Cole] goes with those sidewinder select, it's a good punt by them. It's a tough one to get to. We lost a lot of field position yesterday. Just need to improve."

**On WR Derius Davis' performance yesterday:**

"I thought that he handled it well. I thought that he was an asset for us. He provided a lot of playmaking yesterday, both out of the backfield and at receiver. He continues to improve. He's going to make some mistakes, but he's an important player for us. As you guys can see, he gives us that difference-making explosiveness in both ways, whether it's on offense or in the kicking game. He has the right makeup. We just have to keep coaching him. But, he improves. He's really good on game day — his demeanor and just his ability to handle in-game adjustments. Pleased with him and just have to keep improving."

**On the 'thought process behind kneeling it out at the end of the half':**

"Had a great half, and we were going to go in feeling like it was a great half."

**On 'if the typical bye week self-scouting process is changed at all this season with the early bye week':**

"A little bit, where you just have so much in front of you, I think that it's a little bit more projecting and anticipating what you're going to be. Maybe a little bit more think-tank of what we want our team to look like here in the weeks after the bye, and then projecting to the end of the season, instead of saying, 'Hey, I have all of this assessment for like half the season, where I have eight or nine games of inventory to look at.' We have a much shorter inventory to go by. But, I think that we can also kind of use it as a, 'Hey, we have four games, but we also have six weeks of training camp. Let's take a look at it that way. That's an eight-to-nine-week body of work. Now, let's anticipate into the future.' It's a little bit different that way, for sure. You're trying to spend the time the same way. Just making sure that when you get into game week for Dallas, that you have a pretty clear approach. A lot of that is the state of your team, from a health position, as well."

**On what he 'wants the team to be' after the bye and into the remainder of the season:**

"You take that first month of the season and you try to figure out who you have, really trying to iron out your personnel and how you want to use people. I think that that is probably what is on our mind the most, just making sure that we're maximizing our group. Are we utilizing them in the best way possible? For example, for a young player, how his role is at the beginning of the season isn't going to be what it is middle to the end of the season. How are we going to get him to that point where we're maximizing him in that way. We've had a lot of examples of that since I've been here and at other places. Based on the current state of your team, how to maximize the scheme identity, probably, on both sides of the ball. Just try to take this time to do that, and then put a good plan going into Dallas."

**On 'what is on the top of' his 'list' this week:**

"Res. I think what is top of our list is just rest and making sure that we get a fresh group going into Dallas, that's hungry and that is ready to go play a quality game against a quality team. In these first four games, I think we've played in a lot of tight games, tough games. I just think that for us, right now, the number one thing is rest. That way, we can come back next week, when we get into practice, and just make sure that we're headed to a good week of practice before Dallas."

**On if the team 'plans to primarily utilize shotgun moving forward' due to Herbert's finger:**

"I think that we're trying to change it up as much as we can, the quarterback's location. I think you can see all of that moving forward."

**On CB Asante Samuel Jr.'s interception at the end of the game and what the directive was in terms of him returning the takeaway:**

"If we're not tagging the situation, with the green dot, in terms of like, 'Hey, this is a No mas situation,' meaning, we're not trying to take this out, this is an end of the game, get down type situation, which it wasn't, then our guys are assuming, let's go. We have to continue to coach better and in that way. It wasn't the same circumstances. The interception in the end zone versus Miami, that's like a different circumstance. But, you can never talk about it enough. Certainly, we're glad that Asante [Samuel Jr.] made that play. Next time, he will give us a little bit more breathing room going forward. I don't know if he would have been able to make it the whole way [laughter], but we'll keep talking to our guys the best that we can in those situations."

**On additional updates regarding S Derwin James Jr., OLB Joey Bosa and RB Austin Ekeler:**

"No updates."

**On S JT Woods:**

"No updates on JT [Woods]."

**On 'all of the games coming down to the wire this season' and if the team 'has improved':**

"We definitely improved as a team. Really proud of the way that the guys finished the game. I thought we had the right intensity in the game, from the first whistle for the last one. All of these games in the NFL are close. This isn't college football where Georgia is playing UAB or Austin Peay. I don't know why it's such a surprise that all of these games are close. That's just the way the NFL is. You have to be ready to play them as they come. When it gets tight, you have to execute down the stretch, which is what we did. I thought that it was a quality win for us, especially considering the amount of players that we had out, especially the amount of new players that we had going in. I was really proud of the depth and the next men up, and I thought that those guys really gave us winning performances in all three phases. I thought it was a tough win against a division team. I think it gets us heading into the bye [week] with good feeling."

**On specific areas of improvement:**

"In order, starting fast — first drive, touchdown, explosiveness. Defensively, we played a dominant first half. Scored 14 points off turnovers, 17 points in the second quarter. I thought our situational defense was outstanding — third-down defense, red zone defense, two-minute defense, just to name a few."

**On 'new players' that 'impresses' him yesterday:**

"[S] Dean Marlowe and [S] Raheem Layne at safety were fantastic in the game. [WR] Simi Fehoko did a nice job for us at gunner. That was exciting. He made two really nice plays at gunner, coming in there for us. Those guys kind of come to mind. [C] Will Clapp, I thought, give us a winning performance at center."

**On if the offense 'attempted a quarterback sneak similar to the style that the Philadelphia Eagles prominently utilize':**

"It was certainly the idea."

**On OLB Khalil Mack:**

"He's been rushing like that all year. We were able to create more opportunities for him because our guys did such a good job on the running back. As you guys know, it's the second time against a big-time back that we've held them in check. I was excited about that. That gave us more opportunities to rush. I thought our disguise in the secondary bought an extra count for him to get there. Then, he just won his matchups. He looks healthy. His angle, his takeoff. The variety that he was playing with, he won in a lot of different ways. I think he could have had more production. He was around the quarterback a lot. He was very disruptive. He had a tipped pass. He was around the guy even more than just the six sacks. It was a complete performance by him, one that I'm not surprised about at all because he's capable of that. There are very few who are capable of that type of performance, but he's certainly one of them. As you guys know, yesterday he was part of history, both NFL and Chargers."

**On the success of the third down defense:**

"Rush and coverage. Mixed it up. Played with the right variety. Just guys playing together. Playing the scheme right, making sure we took care of their threats on third down and attacked the protection. I thought the guys played together well on that down."

**On success for the defense on first down setting up third-and-long:**

"Yeah, that's the whole key. Just being able to get into a rhythm where you can rush and you can get those third-and-six, seven-pluses. When you can kind of get into that rhythm, you can mix it up. The rush has come alive. I think we've rushed the passer really well the last three weeks. We need to continue to build on it."

**On if the Raiders took away the fourth down play or if it was poor execution:**

"Probably a little bit of both."

**On fourth-and-short moving forward due to QB Justin Herbert's injury:**

"I'm sure we'll take that into consideration, yeah. We're always going to do what's best for Justin Herbert."

**On if recent results on fourth down calls 'factor into' decisions of whether to attempt fourth down plays in the future:**  
"We're just going to make sure that we take a hard look at the situation in the game and then the matchup in the game, and make our decision accordingly."

**On WR Jalen Guyton could return to practice next week:**  
"We will update you when we open up that window, but he's progressing."

**On S Dean Marlowe and S Raheem Layne:**  
"Dean and Raheem Layne were the two starters. I thought that they both were really solid in the game. I think you saw all of Dean's experience. Just the natural disguise, the communication. He's urgent. He's a bigger guy. He's physical. He's been around a lot of quality secondaries. I think, being in Buffalo with [Bills S] Micah Hyde and [Bills S] Jordan Poyer, that group of guys who I have a lot of respect for. You can just see that he plays in a system that's similar to ours, in terms of the safety position. I think it really helped us yesterday. I think you saw the advantage of an experienced player. Then, Raheem, I mean, we like this guy a lot. He's improved every year. He's one of our best special teams players. They both tackled really well yesterday. I think they had the right respect for the deep part of the field. I really with Dean would have finished that post-overlap because it could have been a special, special day for him. They both had great play-style. They were physical, rugged, communicated well. They were well-prepared. I thought [Defensive Passing Game Coordinator/Secondary Coach] Tommy [Donatelli] and [Assistant Secondary Coach] Will [Harris] did a great job of getting them ready, and [Defensive Coordinator Derrick Ansley] DA. They gave us a winning performance yesterday."

**On the offense in the second half:**  
"We just didn't get into a rhythm. It started with field position. We were backed up right away because of the punt. We didn't have great field position, so from a momentum standpoint that was a factor, where in the first half — that second quarter, we had two takeaways that really set our guys up in good position and our guys capitalized. I thought our guys really finished and capitalized. Just didn't get into a rhythm in that second half. I think it was about rhythm and did not get any of those runs off that were able to kind of make a dent in the defense. Then, from a pass protection standpoint, we just didn't protect at a high enough level in the second half and, obviously, we had a turnover. Just wasn't our best stuff. We'll learn from it, but I thought what that said, that drive to finish the game, it said a lot about our group. I thought that group, just hanging tough. You know, you go through a stretch with a couple of three-and-outs, an interception, a fourth-down stop. Our guys didn't let any of that affect them on that drive. Our guys kind of hung tough, then Justin [Herbert] hit that ripper to [WR] Josh [Palmer]. That's what you're looking for, is a group that's mentally tough. Stretches like that happen in the NFL, where you kind of come up empty. We did not come up empty in the biggest moment of the game. That was my takeaway from the group. I liked the way that we really capitalized in that second quarter. I liked the way we started fast in the game. I liked the way we finished. That kind of third quarter, beginning of the fourth quarter, that's where we need to focus on."

**On adjustments made by the Raiders defense:**  
"Their edges were really disruptive in the game. They played a lot of different DB groups. DBs were in different locations, so from an identification process, there was some of that going on. We just need to be better. It's all 11. It's not just our O-Line and tight end groups. It's the runners included because we had a couple of opportunities, I think, for some big runs that we didn't read out particularly well at running back. Just have to go back to work and find the consistency there. There were some good plays, for sure, to build off. I thought [RB Joshua] JK [Kelley] had a couple of good runs. [WR] Derius [Davis] had a couple of good runs. [RB] Isaiah [Spiller], a run or two. We just didn't have that level of consistency throughout the game."

**On the decision to take more snaps from pistol or shotgun following Herbert's injury:**  
"Just the communication between Justin, [Offensive Coordinator] Kellen [Moore], [Quarterbacks Coach] Doug [Nussmeier] and myself, making sure that we're ball secure and that we were doing what's best for him in that situation."

**On yards after contact in the running game:**

"I think the mindset of the runners and the mindset of the O-Line, tight end group and the receiver group that's blocking for them. [WR] Derius [Davis], is obviously going to help your run after contact totals with him having a big one. I thought [RB Joshua] JK [Kelley] had a couple, as well, where he was able to get a couple of explosive runs after contact. Going into the game, we felt like the running game was going to be, probably, the biggest storyline. Obviously, our side versus their side in the game, that proved to be a critical part of us winning that football game and having control of the game. I'm proud of the guys. We've had to do this by committee without [RB] Austin [Ekeler] being there. I think our guys have done a nice job the last two weeks."