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Chargers Week 9 Media Availability

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OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR JOE LOMBARDI

On his assessment of the offense:

"A couple of things. I think a lot of it is situational football. Just being a little better on third down, red zone and improving the efficiency of the run game. Three big areas of emphasis."

On 'fixes' for situational football on offense:

"I think we have had a little bit of shuffling guys in and out. Like I've said before, each group that you have based on the defense you're facing, it's just finding that right formula. Some of it is better planning, better play-calling, better execution. Everyone just picking it up a little bit in all three phases."

On if third-down production is affected by injuries:

"I think everything has something to do with it. I do think that we do have enough talent to be better. It's just everyone coming together, working a little harder and being a little better."

On WR Keenan Allen's practice status:

"I haven't seen the latest injury report. I know he is working in and feeling it out. I'm always instructed not to talk about injuries."

On the wide receiver corps if Allen misses Sunday's game:

"I think all of those guys have to be ready. We'll see what happens on game day, but like I said before, I think there is enough there to be successful. I think everyone who is out there practicing has to be ready. Even if you are the last guy on the practice squad, you have to be ingesting the game plan and be ready. Five guys could come up sick on game day, so I think everyone always has to have that mindset to be ready to go."

On his self-scouting during the bye week and if anything 'surprised him':

"No. Nothing that surprised me. [Offensive Assistant] Mike Hiestand, he does our self-scout every week, so he brings me a report. You're not waiting to the bye week to see all of those things. Nothing major jumped out at us."

On the team is changing its meeting plan:

"Slight changes. I wouldn't even say it's a change. There is always a balance you're trying to strike between group install and breaking up into your individual position rooms and doing install. We may be doing a little extra with everyone in there together, but it's not like a wholesale change or anything like that. Just little adjustments."

On what an adjustment in meeting plan can do:

"Just making sure that everyone is on the same page. Just changing it up just to give a little bit different energy to the process."

On the run game:

"I think some of the game flows. You fall down early and maybe you just have to be a little more patient with the run game. Some of these games, this last one, we barely ran the ball and you just kind of get into a throw-first mentality. I think a lot of it is let it get going. Sometimes, you get a couple of early turnovers, and you fall down early. I think, just being a little more patient with the run game and letting it get its footing. A run game often times, you run early and it's tough yardage. As the game goes on is when you start getting the more efficient, explosive runs. My big thing looking at it is just we have to commit to it a little bit more."

On if the run game is affected by the offensive line's arrangement after injuries:

"A little bit. I think we kind of know the players, so you kind of know what you want to favor. I think, like I said earlier, the plan is the plan and sometimes it just doesn't express itself because of the game flow or how I'm calling a game. [OL] Jamaree [Salayer] is a different player that [T] Rashawn [Slater], like you said. There are things that he does really well and we try to highlight those. We just have to give him a chance to get those plays going and let the plan settle in versus, 'Hey, we ran it 10 times and everything else was a pass.' The plan doesn't get a chance to express itself, so to speak."

On OL Jamaree Salayer:

"He's so strong. Once he gets his hands on you, you end up getting moved. A little bit like we talked about [G] Zion [Johnson]. He's a sticky blocker. Once he gets on, usually good things are happening. For young guys, I think the biggest challenge is just hitting movement and handling games and all of those things, but just one-on-one in a phone booth, that guy is strong and effective."

On producing more explosive plays:

"I think it's a combination of a lot of things. You're always trying to match the routes and the protection, make sure you have enough time. I think they'll come. I think some of it is some of the defenses we've been playing have been keeping a roof on it. It's a good point and it's something that we're always working on to try to increase that."

On if he 'lobbies for players at the trade deadline':

"No. We're working on our game plan. So, we let the front office and head coach handle all of that stuff."

On his familiarity with Falcons Defensive Coordinator Dean Pees:

"I wasn't in New Orleans when Dean Pees first got to Atlanta, but [Offensive Line Coach] Brendan [Nugent] had some experience with him. You lean on that a little bit. We have so much film anymore. Some of the process of figuring out a defense, if you have been through it before, it certainly helps. It can make it a little more efficient."

On QB Justin Herbert checking the ball down:

"I think we can find a couple examples where maybe there was something they didn't get to, but no I don't think it's like a global problem with Justin. I think he is just fine."

On Herbert progressing through his reads:

"I think there are a lot of things that go into it, obviously. There are a number of times where he's got such a good sense of, 'Yeah, I could wait for this thing. But if I do, this three-technique is coming free.'" One of his strengths and one reason we don't get sacked a lot is because he's got such a feel for what his timing in the pocket is. We could go through the season and find a couple of times where he probably had the time and could have waited, but overall, I think he has great instincts for those things"

On the Falcons defense:

"They have a lot of moving pieces, like we do. You see a lot of different numbers in there. You just see them kind of solving problems as they get new pieces in there. Whether it is safety or corner, they have been dealing with a lot of injuries. They are a very multiple defense — they do a lot. A lot of different personnel groupings to your different personnel groupings. There is just a variety of things that you have to prepare for. It's a little bit complex that way. They play hard and play sound."

On adjusting to in-game injuries:

“The biggest challenge is, you know, that you have practiced and every play kind of has a player in mind or players in mind and just trying to figure out while you are up there, ‘Who is where on this play now? I know what I want it to be and it’s not that.’ Just going through the call sheet up there in-between drives and figuring out, ‘Okay, what do we want to highlight here based on who we have healthy and who has practiced it? Do these plays fit the skillsets of the guys that are currently playing?’ We talked about a formula, I think the hard part is the injuries in-game because that formula now has changed. Going into the game, we always feel good about who we have because the plan fits those guys.”

On Allen:

“You are always disappointed when any player is hurt, but those guys are working through it. There is no use crying over spilt milk. You just get going on the next challenge at hand and work with who is available.”

On Allen’s influence and leadership on the receiving corps:

“I think it’s the same as when he is healthy. There is a lot of energy from him. He’s just such a cagey, smart player and just his leadership with those guys, given his insight in how to run a route and helping them learn the game plan, all of those things. It’s always top-notch with him.”

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR RENALDO HILL

On his assessment of the defense following the bye week:

“We just wanted to make sure that we went back and looked over those first seven weeks of the season. Obviously, the run game, we wanted to address that. We wanted to address our third-down [defense]. We tried to make sure that we covered the areas where we’re not feeling where we should be or that we really needed the work in. We really tried to assess the week by looking at those areas and just trying to attack it, get back to our fundamentals and make sure that we’re all seeing it the same way.”

On the run defense:

“I think the biggest thing we did this week is that we made sure that everybody was in the same room when we were talking about the run game, so that everybody can go through each call, make sure that we can adjust and make sure that each level knows where the responsibility lies. I think that was important, hearing it from one voice and making sure that we were all on the same page and we are all hearing the same message. I think that is a good start. We obviously have to do the things out on the practice field and make sure that it’s registering to our guys.”

On DL Sebastian Joseph-Day’s performance thus far this season:

“There is always room for improvement, but the things that we valued when we got him here was his size, his ability to make plays. That is all there. Now, it was kicking back, just for everyone, to make sure that we cover those fundamental things that we all need to do and make sure that we are doing it the way we set out to do it at the beginning of the year.”

On comparing last year’s ‘fixes at the bye’ week and if they feel ‘different’ than this year’s:

“It definitely does. The personnel, the guys, the body types that we wanted to address in the offseason and their skillset, that’s all there. Now, like I mentioned, just cleaning up the fundamentals of what we do. Like I said, a lot of different people come from different places. There can be some carryover, but when you get that bye week, it’s a good chance to kind of settle in to make sure that we’re not veering off and doing old things and creating old habits. We’re making sure that we get back to good habits and playing good football.”

On the Falcons’ run game:

“I think they are spreading the wealth around. You have four guys with at least 50-plus carries. Those guys are all guys who can get downhill. Probably not the most elusive guys, but they are on their track. They do have good vision. They are making sure that they are sticking to their foundation, and their foundation, right now, is running the ball. It has been effective for them. You can see some games, they may be down three scores, but they are going to stick to it. That’s the one thing you can see, on tape, that they are holding on to, is that they are going to be a running football team and, regardless of how many scores they are down, they are going to continue to run the rock.”

On ‘potential vulnerabilities’ in the Falcons’ run game:

“It’s very tough. You’re looking at the fourth-best rushing team out there. Similar to a Cleveland team, they are very well-coached. They do a lot of things with misdirection. They do a good job of keeping you off-balance. This is one of those games where you try to just keep it simple and try to do simple things well because they have so many different packages with personnel groupings that they are just trying to wait for you to make that one mistake. We have to make sure that we are playing sound football at all times.”

On the Falcons’ usage of play-action:

“It’s all set up by what they do on early downs, of being able to be effective in the running game. That’s going to allow for those defenses to creep up. The vision is out there once you have guys committed to the run. It definitely creates the explosive [plays]. We talk about air yards, but even on their early downs, they are running the ball so effectively. They are hitting 75-yarders, 39-yarders, 50-yarders down the field, all set up by the run game. That’s where it can get taxing because you see guys creep up, creep up, and the next thing you know, on early downs, that ball is over your head.”

On S Derwin James Jr.'s performance this season:

"Obviously, big things happened with his deal in the offseason, but Derwin is Derwin. I always feel like he's going to be the same guy when he comes into the building, same guy on the field. He's just a playmaker. That's what you get. As far as his play, I think he would say, and we'll say, he can always do better. That's just what he wants to do. He wants to be the best at his position and we're going to try to push every ounce of it out of him. I think he's playing at a good level, but I'm pretty sure he would say he can do more."

On 'generating more turnovers':

"I think it's a combination of things. Obviously, trying to get them in a passing situation. That starts from trying to win on early downs, first and second downs, so that we can put them in those situations where they are passing, and play good coverage behind it. Cover up some windows and see if we can get tips and overthrows. Try to create rush opportunities, whether that's added on pressure with five men or however we do it, but we have to try to generate that. Ultimately, we have to try to get them in passing situations."

On Falcons WR Drake London:

"A talented guy. Obviously, you see his size right off the rip. He's a 6-foot-4 guy, but he's savvy. He has a little [WR] Keenan [Allen] in him when he is setting up routes. He's a multi-cut guy that can get in and out. When you see a 6-foot-4 guy, you usually don't tie that into his skillset, but he has it. What I like is that he is good even after the catch. We have to do a good job, even if he does catch the ball, of making sure that we corral him because he's made some guys miss. He's physical on contact after the catch."

On the challenge of facing Falcons QB Marcus Mariota:

"His ability to get out and escape. That's the biggest thing, that he can create and extend plays. You have guys covering, along with those play actions, that you create. If you have everyone tucked into the line and he gets out the pocket, it's just another time to cover for our secondary. That's something that we have to be aware of and we have to try and contain him because if he gets out of the pocket and extend plays, it can be a long day."

On what he learned about the defense in its response to injuries:

"They are resilient. They are going to keep fighting back, regardless of how outcomes have happened. I think we responded each week. I think in the Jacksonville game, we were able to bounce back and continue to fight, go on the road and win some road games. It's a resilient group and it's a group that wants to continue to get better. They know the expectations that they have for themselves. That's what they are working for every day."

On CB Michael Davis:

"Mike [Davis] has been strong for us. Obviously, his road has changed from last year to this year, but anytime he has been called on, he's been stepping and has been playing really good football. Now he gets more opportunities here, but he's been doing an outstanding job. I think he is just comfortable in the system now. I think him and Derwin [James Jr.] have a good connection, too, when they play next to each other. I know that's a guy Derwin trusts. Mike has earned everybody's trust on this defense."

On if he is 'frustrated' by the defense's performance in third-and-long situations:

"That reflection in the bye week is also looking at what gave us success in the past. I don't want to reveal what [Head Coach Brandon] Staley and I have done in the past that was successful, but it's more like looking back at some of that stuff, seeing if we have been doing those things in this situation. That's another way to get better, seeing what our calls are, seeing how we can help our players. We know Atlanta has been in a lot of those situations this year, third-and-11-plus, so we have to make sure that we're on board. They've already capitalized on those opportunities and we have to do the same."

On if the 'deficiencies' are 'coverage-specific':

"I think that it's a combination. You can never say that it's just one thing. We know that we have to execute better in those areas. The only way that I know how to do it is to put our guys in those situations and put them through it enough, letting them know that this is the down that we have to go out there and get it done."

On if there is a 'common thread' in the explosive plays allowed:

"That was one thing that we addressed in the bye week. It's going to take 11 guys on the football field, whether that's us creating levels, not being at the same level when the ball does split. We have to know that they have talented guys on the other side, but we have to make sure that we're doing enough on our end to make sure that the ball doesn't go for home runs. A lot of times, we saw that we all ended up at the same level. There were no levels in the defense where we could survive the down and get guys down. That was one of the things that was important. Then, we have to be able to create more pass rush, do all of the other things that everybody is talking about, covering, as well. It's just a combination of all. That's what we're constantly looking for, making sure that we take it out on the practice field and making sure that we can get it to apply to the gamedays."

On what causes the 'missing levels' on defense:

"I think it's an urgency. Like maybe if it's a four-minute situation, wanting to get the ball back, wanting to help the defense, it's us maybe doing a little bit too much. What happens is you normally start to creep down into those areas and the levels change. By the time that you know it, you're next to linebacker depth or a linebacker isn't stacking the defensive line that they play off of. It's a combination of us all making sure that we're doing those things to help us if we're in those situations."