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Chargers Week 18 Media Availability

Friday, January 5, 2024 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

INTERIM HEAD COACH GIFF SMITH

On if he 'pays attention to potential player incentives' and if those impact this week's game:

"Yeah, you see some of that. I know that [RB Austin] Ekeler has a thing, but I hope that he has 300 yards [on Sunday]. We're not limiting him, we're going to ride him. He's a great player. It'll be fun to see him perform."

On OLB Tuli Tuipulotu's ankle injury:

"He rolled his ankle. We'll see how it is in the next 24 hours. He's a tough kid, and I'll leave it at that."

On if Tuipulotu is a 'game-time decision':

"We'll definitely look at it and everything."

On if LB Daiyan Henley will 'play more' following LB Kenneth Murray Jr.'s game status of 'doubtful':

"That's the plan going into the game, yes."

SPECIAL TEAMS COORDINATOR RYAN FICKEN

Opening statement:

"We had a good week of practice, I think. Our guys are excited about this opportunity here on Sunday. I do want appreciate and thank you guys for everything that you've done over the course of the year. With that said, we'll go ahead and open it up with any questions."

On the 'level of frustration' following the field goal that was blocked last week:

"It's just another kick that we need to go ahead and learn from. In terms of the operation, the kick and the protection, we have to make sure that we do a great job and we don't take any play for granted. I don't think they did, it's just that we have to be able to execute a little bit better. I know that those guys know that's the task at hand. We'll be better. Then, to follow that up and kick a big-time kick at the end of the game — a long one, as well, 50-plus [yards] — to executed that, because if you don't execute that one, then we don't have the opportunity to go ahead and kick that onside. That's what we've talked about all year, just making sure that consistency, and whatever the previous kick was — good, bad or indifferent — we have to make sure that we move on and execute the next one, and I think they did that."

On the fake punt attempt and if LB Nick Niemann 'would have had the first down if he doesn't bobble the ball':

"If he doesn't bobble it, I think it's there, but it's tough to tell what would have happened — would've, could've, should've. We always say that we just have to make sure that we do our assignment, execute our assignment. We don't want to rush it. He knows that. We've moved on. I'm not afraid to go ahead and do another one. He knows that, the team knows that. No problem. We move on to the next play. I think that the guys played well after that."

On if Niemann 'started running before he secured the ball':

"Yeah, a little bit of that, getting an opportunity. He's been great for us. He was bummed, but we'll move on to the next one. You don't know what could have happened on that. They might've still made a great play, and they did a great job doing it, but they're excited for any opportunity when they get out there to execute it."

On the onside kick attempt:

"It just didn't go our way a little bit. It popped out a little. Thought we had an opportunity to go ahead and recover that and extend the game for our team, and, hopefully, put us in a position to go down and score. I think that [K] Cameron Dicker] did a great job with the kick. We had the guys there in position. Maybe it bounces our way next time."

On how the onside kick attempt 'unfolded' being the unit's first onside kick attempt since Week 2 of 2022:

"I thought it was exactly what we thought was going to happen and I thought we executed to the best of our ability and gave ourselves an opportunity. Put it on their end to go ahead and make a play, and that's what I thought we did. Forced their hand a little bit."

On the 'thought process' when 'designing' an onside kick attempt:

"It's mainly going to depend on the situation, more of the team, on who we're playing. I think each kick of those, we gameplan that just like we would any other play with any other team. It's going to be really team-specific, in terms of that and how we can attack and give our players the best opportunity to be successful with that, without giving away too much [laughter]."