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Chargers Media Availability

Monday, December 27, 2021 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

On yesterday's game:

"I didn't think that we executed well enough on defense in any phase. I didn't feel like we played the run well at all; we did at times, but very inconsistent. We were not very good at the point of attack, and because we were not good at the point of attack, our second level didn't know exactly where to fit. We had some missed tackles in the secondary and that was disappointing. We had a lot of opportunities to be a lot better than that game and just didn't execute well enough at all in the run game. In the passing game, there were far too many explosive plays. The two-minute at the end of the half was really disappointing, just that whole sequence of the defensive penalty on second-and-14, then you give up a double-move for 35 [yards], and then you give up a nine [route] when you're playing off coverage. That whole sequence was really disappointing. Our third-down defense wasn't good enough — didn't rush well enough, didn't cover well enough, didn't execute well enough. Then, our four-minute [defense] at the end of the game, we were in an eight-man front knowing that they're going to run the ball and third-and-three and we have a misalignment and we don't stop the run. On the next play, we have a chance for a tackle for a loss for minus five [yards], we miss it and it ends up going for 36 yards. We just didn't have it yesterday on defense and couldn't find the right combinations. We just didn't play well enough. Then, on offense, we had three drives end in field goals. I felt like we moved the ball at will but just did not finish well enough in the scoring zone. That played a big part in our scoring total. Any time you lose the takeaway margin three-nothing, you're going to have trouble winning a game. That was the formula yesterday that allowed them to win the game; turnovers and not scoring the ball on offense, and then on defense, not doing anything consistently well."

On missing players due to COVID-19:

"It's a tough circumstance for everyone in the NFL right now. I think everybody in the NFL is going through a really, really challenging circumstance. We're trying to figure it out the best we can. Yesterday was just not our day."

On the final two opponents and how that impacts the potential of a playoff berth:

"We're not really worried about anyone else's circumstance. We're just worried about the Los Angeles Chargers. We play the Denver Broncos this week and that's where our full focus needs to be. We can't be worried about what's happening with anybody else, paying attention to anything else. We need to have our full attention on the Broncos this week. We have enough things going on within our own building that we need to be focused on and that's where it will be this week."

On the line-to-gain was a factor in deciding to attempt a field goal or go for it on fourth down yesterday:

"Yes."

On 'if the players he had out there' impacted his fourth-down decision-making:

"No."

On 'developing continuity in the secondary':

"We haven't had continuity in the secondary the entire season. It's been challenging to find the right combinations. We're doing our best to figure it out. We had some tough moments yesterday. We need to continue to stay with these guys, coaches and players. There's still a lot of football left and we're going to continue to try and figure it out together."

On LB Drue Tranquill:

"Drue Tranquill was not able to finish the game. He's day-to-day. X-rays were negative, but he's day-to-day."

On updates to the team's Reserve/COVID-19 list:

"List additions; you guys are aware of [WR] Mike Williams and [CB] Michael Davis from before yesterday. Mike Williams will be out for this game versus the Denver Broncos. [S] Nasir Adderley and [CB] Chris Harris [Jr.] will also be out for this game. [S] Alohi Gilman, [G] Senio Kelemete, [DL] Andrew Brown and [OLB] Emeke Egbule were added to the COVID list."

On C/G Scott Quessenberry's performance yesterday:

"Scott gave us a chance in the game. I know he was really excited for his opportunity. He was prepared for his opportunity. We had good operation. I felt like he gave us a chance in the game."

On if the decisions made on fourth down yesterday were influenced by decisions made last week's game against the Chiefs:

"Nothing to do with last week at all. Those decisions were just made based on the circumstance of that game. Fourth-and-seven, fourth-and-13, field goals were our best strategy there in order to score points. I was really proud of the way [K] Dustin [Hopkins] kicked the football yesterday. I thought he was a real strength of our team."

On 'if the players had the appropriate sting following last week's loss' and the team's preparation prior to yesterday's game:

"I thought we prepared well last week. That's why I said that, because I felt that way. My eyes saw that. We didn't have our sting at the game. We didn't have that intensity. We didn't have that energy to execute yesterday. It really happened in all three phases of the game. That's why we lost the game. I'm hoping that we'll learn a lot from that."

On CB Chris Harris Jr. describing the difficulty in 'playing defense with so many moving parts' following yesterday's game:

"I think what Chris is saying — and Chris has been a part of a lot of championship defenses and he knows how our defense works, and most great defenses — we haven't had continuity at any level of our defense this year. It's exacerbated in the secondary, but our front hasn't had any continuity either. We just had a lot of moving parts this year. We've really had to figure things out. It's been a challenging year and I'm proud of the way our coaching staff and our players have stayed connected. But it has been challenging, and we're still on that quest to find it. We're going to need to because there's a lot of challenges headed our way right now. We know that we can navigate it together and that's exactly what we're going to do. I know that we have the right man to do it."

On if 'the circumstances' have impacted developing continuity:

"The circumstances are happening and all we can do is address it head-on, attack it head-on and be able to adapt the best way that we know how. I know the caliber of coaching that we have on this staff; it's as good as anywhere you're going to find in the entire world. I know that the players on our team, that we have the right makeup on our team to figure it out together. We're going to be on that quest to figure it out. It didn't happen for us yesterday, but we get a new week this week against Denver. I know that we're going to attack at full speed, put a good plan together for these guys and give our guys a chance to go compete and win this game."

On if the team will look to add either outside players or current practice squad players to the secondary prior to Sunday's game against the Broncos:

"All of those things are possibilities."

On his demeanor following yesterday's game:

"I think I had the appropriate amount of respect for what just happened. I'm always going to be optimistic, that's who I am. I'm also realistic, that's also who I am. I thought that I gave that game, the postgame, the appropriate amount of respect that it deserved and the appropriate amount of candor that it deserved. I'm always going to handle myself on the high side of things. Yesterday was a tough day for us, for sure, and you just have to acknowledge that it was a tough day for us. Then, once that's behind you, now, you have to move on to what's next. That's the way that I'm built and that's the way that we're going to build our team. But we're also going to attack the truth head-on, and the truth is that we didn't coach and play well enough yesterday."

On the impact of DL Justin Jones not playing yesterday:

"I think he plays a key component in us playing at a high level because of a depth and rotational standpoint. [OLB] Joey Bosa is not at the game, [S] Derwin James [Jr.] is not at the game, you're talking about the guys that are impact players in your defense, not just rotational pieces or things like that, these are impact players in your defense. Justin means a lot to us, but the guys who were playing in that game yesterday, we had plenty of players yesterday to play better and we just didn't. I have to do a better job with this group. I know that the character of our guys is something that will never be in question. We just didn't play well enough yesterday."

On the run defense's performance yesterday:

"I just don't think that we had our edge at the game yesterday. I don't think we had our edge at the game. When you look at the film, we were in a lot of eight-man fronts, where we knew exactly the type of runs that were going to be deployed by that team. That's what they did. We were in a lot of run structures that are designed to take it away, but it comes down to technique, attitude and playing together, playing with that intensity, that energy that the game requires, that it demands, regardless of who you're playing. The NFL demands your full respect. I feel like we didn't have enough energy and intensity at the game yesterday. That's why we performed the way we did."

On if the team 'overlooked' the Texans yesterday:

"I think it was just one of those days. I know that we're not overlooking any team as long as I'm the head coach here. I've never overlooked an opponent in my entire life, from when I was a little kid to now. I will never do that because I respect the game way too much. Any player that gets in front of you knows that about me. Now, there's a difference between preparation and at the game, because I love the way that we prepared last week. There were a lot of circumstances, as you guys are all aware of, of what's going on, from the time we left for Houston until the time we played and then left Houston. But regardless of the circumstances around here, we're not going to act like a victim. When we're on the field playing, we need to play to our standard of performance, and we didn't yesterday. That's why we lost."

On 'adjusting his coaching' to 'get the new guys up to speed' in the secondary:

"I think one of the best things that we do, defensively, is adapt to who we have. If you take a look at the All-22 [film] and how we've performed based on who we have, that's exactly what we've done. Yesterday was a very clean plan for these guys. You'll see a lot of defenses that anybody could go out and execute at a high level, and that was a big part of the game plan, allowing our guys to go play fast and free. It didn't happen yesterday, but I think throughout the year, and particularly in the secondary, you have to do what's best for your team in both areas — up front and in the secondary — and that's the role of being a coach, making sure that you're keeping everybody in mind, not just a couple of people in mind. That's what we've tried to do the whole season, making sure that you're giving the appropriate amount of respect to both the run game and the passing game. You assess each matchup and know where the attention needs to go, and then you're playing that chess match. I feel like the added variables this year have made it a lot more challenging because you're not saying like, 'Hey, this is the way I want to play,' but that's just life. You have to play the way you need to play. That's what we've tried to do all season long, playing to the strengths of the guys who are out there the best we know how. I'm proud of the way that we approach each plan because I know that that gives our guys a chance to go compete."

On QB Justin Herbert's two interceptions yesterday and passes batted down at the line of scrimmage:

"The interceptions, I think that each has a story. What you're looking for is if they are a product of poor decision-making, and none of them are a product of poor decision-making. That's the one thing, as a head coach, that you're looking for. He's an outstanding decision-maker. For being a second-year player, he's a premium decision-maker. He's one of the elite decision-makers in the entire league as a second-year player. The batted passes, if you're going to throw a quick game, if you're going to throw RPOs, there's going to be some of that, where there's some traffic in the way. With the volume, I think that you're increasing people's chances by throwing those. It doesn't have to do with a load delivery — like when you scout a player, you look to see if he has a low delivery — he has a beautiful delivery. We just have to make sure that we're doing a good job at the point of attack, when we have those three-step drops or we have those RPOs, of being aggressive at the point of attack. But I don't think that there's anything more to it than that because he's playing, as you guys are seeing, at a high level, the highest level in the league, in my view. We're going to continue to trust him. He played very well yesterday, as well."

On moving forward past yesterday's game:

"I think that every circumstance is a little bit different. I think that you can't just have a one-size-fits-all. I think you have to react to the specific circumstance as it happens. That's what we did today. I feel like you have to address what happened, to me, in some shape or form. That's what we did today. I know that we're in position meetings right after this. I think that's incumbent upon you, as a leader, is to make sure that your guys know exactly what happened and why it happened, and then what you can do moving forward. That's what I'm going to try and do, communicate as clearly as I can so that after today, that we're headed full speed to Denver."

On the value of evaluating yesterday's game film:

"We're just going to make sure that the relevant examples from the game are the ones that we teach off of. There can be more than others based on what side of the ball or what position group, but we want to always make sure that with those big-picture items that we have to have right for the future, that we have them right. That's why we love coaching, to make sure that our guys have that clarity and that purpose moving forward so that they can perform their best."

RUNNING BACK JUSTIN JACKSON

On 'being unable to develop an offensive rhythm' yesterday:

"I am sure there are a few different factors. At the end of day, we just have to execute better than we did. I think that we moved the ball well. We just have to finish. Mike Dub [WR Mike Williams], not having him there is going to make a difference, but at the end of the day, guys just have to step up. We just have to be better. It just comes down to executing. I still feel like we're a great offense and that we can still improve. That's how I choose to look at it. We just have to keep working on that throughout the week, going into Denver next week."

On using the next two games to make a push for a playoff spot:

"That's all you can do. You can't sit here and think about the past. It's not going to do anything to help you in the future. We have Denver this week, obviously, a very worthy opponent. They're a team that we felt like we should have beat last time. We have to execute better this time around and make sure that we're on our P's and Q's. The playoffs start this Sunday, we have to come with that energy and go out there and get a win at our home stadium. That will be really important for us."

On 'missing players' yesterday due to COVID-19:

"You have to go out there and play no matter who is out there. If you are out there, then you have to go out there and play. That's my philosophy. That's how we have to be. Everyone is dealing with COVID, they were dealing with COVID, too. It's just a part of life. You can't sit there and make excuses. I definitely won't do that. I don't think we're going to do that as a team. We lost yesterday, we didn't play well enough, so we have to go out there and play a lot better. It's not going to take much, but it's going to just take being on the details now because we know what type of team we are. Just have to go out there and play better and beat Denver on Sunday. That's all that matters."

On his performance yesterday and his 'late-season surge':

"Just playing the game. The O-line did a really great job. It's fun. It's football. I just go out there and play."

On if he 'has established himself as the team's second running back':

"Whenever I get my opportunities, I'm going to go out there and play. That's all it comes down to. First back, second back, third back, I don't think about that stuff; I just go out there and play. When I get my opportunities, when I'm out there on the field, at that moment in time, you are the starting back. That's how I look at it. I just go out there and play. If I have the opportunity and honor to get my number called for a play, I want to go out there and put everything I have on the line every single play. That's how I've always played the game, with that joy and that love and that passion. That's how I will always continue to play the game. All of that other stuff, I guess that's for y'all to talk about and for people to speculate about or whatever. I'm going to go out there and play the game the way I know how to play, and that's with love, passion and grit, out there trying to perform the best I can for my team."

On the offensive line's performance yesterday:

"Great. They did a fantastic job. I think that we're in a really good rhythm right now in the run game. I love the way that those guys are playing up front. Even without one of the best centers in the league, we were still able to go out there and play really, really well, so I'm really proud of those guys. I love running behind those guys. We have to continue that for the rest of the season because that's going to be a big part of our success."

On Staley's message to the team following the game:

"We have to get back healthy, get our guys back and work to make the playoffs. We have a playoff berth on the line, so we have to stay together — which I know that we will because I have a lot of confidence in the guys in the locker room, a lot of love for the guys in this locker room. We're going to go out there and play with that confidence no matter who's out there on Sunday. Obviously, a lot of things are in flux, but if you have that jersey on your pads, your number gets called, you have to go out there and perform. That's my mindset and I know that's going to be the guys' mindset with this playoff game coming up on Sunday."

CORNERBACK ASANTE SAMUEL JR.

On recovering from a concussion:

"I've been feeling good, just been taking it slow — the team doctors and Coach Staley really wanted to take it slow. I appreciate them for that. Just trying to get back in the groove. I've been practicing, but they wanted me to take it slow."

On yesterday's game:

"I felt great. I was playing a game that I love and with guys that I've been working out with since day one. It was good, we just didn't get the win."

On if he 'had to change his game at all' heading into Sunday:

"Not really. Just trying to make plays on the ball. I have the same mindset."

On speaking with OLB Joey Bosa about properly recovering from a concussion:

"He talked to me. He was saying, basically, what everyone else was saying; take it slow. He opened his line up and said, 'If you have any questions, just call me.'"

On teammates checking-in on him:

"It felt good. When you're injured, emotionally, it's tough because you want to play out there and you've been working out the whole time. It has definitely been good, emotionally, with these guys helping me stay up and keep my spirits high while I wasn't playing."

On 'how close he was to playing' in the Week 15 game against the Chiefs:

"It was a game-time decision. Basically, the doctors just wanted to make sure and wait one more week because it was a short week. If we had played on Sunday, I probably would have played, but it was a short week, so they wanted to just be careful."

On the difficulty of watching a game from the sidelines:

"That's definitely tough. Being that we're so close to winning, that made it more difficult. I felt like we could have won. My teammates played a great game. A couple of things just didn't go our way. We definitely could have won that game, though."

On yesterday's game:

"It definitely hurts. It was a must-win game. I just felt like we didn't execute enough on defense to be able to put the offense in better positions. We just have to execute a little bit better."

On the defense adjusting to playing without CB Michael Davis:

"It was definitely tough not having Mike out there. He is definitely an elite corner and we needed him out there. Next man up; we still could have won without him, but we definitely missed his presence."

On being a leader in the secondary yesterday:

"Definitely. We had [CB Essang] Bassey out there; we just signed him a couple of days ago. [CB Davontae] Harris, he was out there, we just signed him a couple of weeks ago. [S] Alohi [Gilman] just came back, he missed four or five games. We were kind of just trying to get our feet back and playing with each other for the first time in a long time, me and Alohi, and we had never played with Bassey and Harris, so it was kind of new to us."

On improvements since the start of the season:

"Feeling more comfortable with the game. I won the Rookie of the Week [following Week 3], but I still felt like I didn't play a good game that game. I knew that I hadn't reached my full potential, I wasn't even close to it at first. I'm still trying to get there. It's still a climb. I'm still trying to adjust. I'm still a rookie, at the end of the day, so I haven't seen anything. Day-by-day, it's coming to me more. It's definitely getting better, day-by-day."

On areas of improvement:

“Getting the ball back to the offense, that’s my main goal each game. How can I find ways to get the ball back to them? Whether it’s a third-down stop or a turnover, just trying to get the ball back to the offense and [QB] Justin Herbert. I know good things will happen.”

On learning from experiences like yesterday with teammates in the secondary out:

“Every game is a learning lesson, whether you’re going against the Chiefs or the Texans. Obviously, yesterday was a learning lesson for the whole team that on any given Sunday, you have to bring it. Definitely, every week is a learning lesson. You have to go out there and play.”