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## Chargers Week 17 Media Availability

Thursday, December 29, 2022 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

### OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR JOE LOMBARDI

#### **On his 'approach' over the final two regular-season games with a playoff berth already secured:**

"I think we are trying to find our rhythm a little bit. We have had some good drives over the last few games, but we haven't been real consistent. The guys that have been coming back, getting them worked in and just finding our rhythm. We are approaching it like any other game. We are trying to win these games and get the best game plan together, but also focusing on finding our battle rhythm a little bit better so we can be more consistent."

#### **On 'if time on task can help the offense find their rhythm':**

"I think so, and just playing a little bit better and practicing a little bit better, getting the guys working together. Some of that rhythm may be that you had coming out of training camp, finding that again. You are not getting as many reps this time of year as you were early, but hopefully, with piling on another week of practice, we'll get there."

#### **On the growth of OL Jamaree Salyer and G Zion Johnson:**

"Good. Jamaree [Salyer] was kind of thrust into a position we didn't anticipate him being in. I think he has performed as well as can be expected. Zion [Johnson] — I say it every time I am asked about him — physically, he is outstanding. He can win his one-on-one battles. I think he is learning to handle some of the stunts and movements better. I think he is progressing. I think they have been doing good, and I just expect them to get better."

#### **On the selection of play calls in particular situations:**

"It just depends. If the sneak is there, he will take it. If not, we have a play designed for the defense that we would anticipate them being in, if the sneak wasn't there. There is some of that. Sometimes, I think in that first one where, if it is the one I think you are talking, we were just trying to get up to the line of scrimmage and snap it. We have had some success with that and, obviously, we didn't on that rep. Every game is different, but a lot of times the quarterback has the option to sneak it if it is there."

#### **On if he is 'worried about the offense':**

"No. We want to score more points, and we have been scoring. We think we are in a good position. I anticipate that we'll perform well as the season closes out."

#### **On the running back rotation of RB Austin Ekeler and RB Joshua Kelley:**

"We don't want Austin [Ekeler] to take too many hits. We want him to be healthy, especially as we get into the playoff push. I think Josh [Kelley] has been playing well. Austin probably got a little north of where we wanted him this last game by maybe two, three, or four touches. We have a lot of trust in Josh, so we will balance that out a little bit better, I think, moving forward. We had a few more runs this game maybe than normal and I think whoever our third running back is, it was Larry [Rountree III] this last time, probably could have got him in for a couple of touches, as well."

**On if he scripted the first offensive drive after halftime:**

“Yeah, it’s not a big deal. We always tell [Herbert], ‘Hey, here are the plays we are looking to start the half with. Here is what we like.’ I gave him the specific two or three plays that we were going to start with. Obviously, we didn’t score a touchdown, so I guess it didn’t help.”

**On if there was frustration in not scoring a touchdown from the scripted plays:**

“You are always frustrated when you don’t score, but not specifically any more so than any other week where you don’t get going in the second half very well.”

**On WR Keenan Allen and ‘where being a veteran shows’:**

“I don’t know if it is related to how many years he has been in the league or just the football IQ he has, but he is always doing the right thing and can direct other people. He has a good grasp of the offense and he has great instincts when he is out there. I am sure he is better in Year 10 in those things than maybe in Year 1, but I also think that is the type of player he is. Just a smart, intelligent guy that gets football. I think that is part of his DNA. I am sure as he has more experience, it’s probably even more so.”

**On ‘if Allen could have his football IQ in his rookie year’:**

“Well, probably not [*laughter*]. But there is an instinct that some players have. Some guys just catch on early, they just have a feel. They are running through a zone and they are like, ‘Hey, I am open and I am stopping’ Other guys just don’t have that same instinct and it’s hard to teach. Guys can get better at it and I am sure he has. I bet you year one he was pretty instinctive as well. I am sure it has grown, but I think it is just part of who he is as well.”

**On ‘gadget plays’ and ‘knowing the right time to call one based on offensive production and the defense’s look’:**

“I think a little of both. You are always looking for something on film to give you confidence in it. On the play we ran, you are looking for, ‘Hey, when the ball gets tossed, are they consistent in flowing to the ball? Is there going to be waiting on the quarterback?’ Some defenses, they peek the quarterback a little bit better than others. You are looking for film evidence that it is not going to be a disaster, but all of those plays do have a little bit of top turnbuckle — I am using a wrestling term — there is always risk involved. A lot of it is just getting a feel for the right timing. I don’t know if that is an actual thing or we just tell ourselves that to feel good. That was a close one. That could have gone bad, but [RB] Josh Kelley made a great throw with a guy in his face. We didn’t quite get that first block to get the play going as well as we wanted to. It actually was better in that situation throwing it back to Justin [Herbert] than he ever was in practice with a clean throw. It was good on Josh [Kelley] to get that throw off. Then Justin, obviously, made a great throw and [WR] Keenan could have made that turn a little bit better, but it is nice when those work.”

**On ‘if the gadget play has been in the gameplan every week’:**

“We have probably had it in maybe half of the game plans. It is hash-dependent. I want it to be on the right-hash and third-and-one in the right part of the field. Those situations don’t come up every game, and so you are looking to call it, it just doesn’t quite work out where you feel confident calling it in a situation where you are short yardage. We got to that point and called it and it worked. It was good.”

**On if the offense ‘will try anything new and experiment in the next two games’:**

“Maybe. I don’t know any more than in a normal week. I think these games are important. I think we are still fighting for playoff seeding, and so I think we are going normal as always as far as just focusing on winning the game. I think that every week you are looking to expand the playbook a little bit and try some new things, so I am sure we’ll continue with that.”

**On if his experience with former Saints Head Coach Sean Payton ‘helps him with preparing an offense in games where the team has already clinched a playoff spot’:**

“I don’t know. I am trying to think back. Obviously, we knew we were going to the playoffs some years, but my memory is we were always fighting for seeding. Maybe the 2018 season. We had clinched the No. 1-seed early, a game or two early. I don’t think we’re in that position here. We have clinched a playoff berth, but you have a chance to get the fifth seed, and we could be the seventh seed, I guess. I haven’t looked at all of the scenarios, but I think it is important for us to continue to try to get better and play well and keep on a winning streak because I think that confidence of winning games, I think if we can win this game, I think that’s four in a row. If we can win the next game, that’s five in a row. I think that goes a long way in having that confidence going into the playoffs. I think we’ll just continue on with our process and go business as normal.”

**On ‘designed pocket movement’ and if the offense ‘is at their best when that part is working’:**

“It gives you the best chance to get the ball down the field. It can give [QB] Justin [Herbert] some extra time in the pocket and give our receivers time to get downfield on some possible shot plays. It is easier to design some of those based on the front of some defenses than others, just how the edges look and whether they are going to allow you to do that. Some teams, I think, you look at them and you feel like, ‘Maybe we can be more consistent getting guys out fast and getting the ball out of our hands.’ Other teams allow you to block it up maybe and give your quarterback more time. I think it is a week-by-week thing, but whenever we feel like the game plan allows us to give Justin [Herbert] those looks, I do think that gives us a chance to be more explosive.”

**On if ‘designed pocket movement’ was included in the gameplan against the Colts:**

“The one he got sacked on was just a traditional naked [boot], so it wasn’t like a setup. Show naked, but set up in the pocket and go deep. That was just a traditional boot-out that everyone has. From my understanding of your first question, it wasn’t one of those. We usually have five or six of those in every game plan. Sometimes you call them all, sometimes you call half of them. It was definitely part of our plan for the Colts, but we didn’t hit them like we were hoping.”

## **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR RENALDO HILL**

### **On OLB Joey Bosa being Designated for Return from Reserve/Injured:**

“Excited for the opportunity if we can get Joey [Bosa] back. He was out here today. Going through it, day-by-day, but I’m hoping, Sunday, if everything goes well, that we will have him out there.”

### **On Bosa’s impact on the defense:**

“The energy that he is going to bring. You know that he is going to be able to get to the quarterback with his pass rush, take some of the chips off of [OLB] Khalil [Mack] that he has been experiencing all year. He’s able to move guys around to different spots and try to free up some guys. He opens up a lot of things for different people on this defense. That’s when you really want things clicking because you know that they have to account for all 11.”

### **On Mack’s performance in the first three games of the season with Bosa playing, compared to without Bosa:**

“I think that you could sense a little more freedom. ‘Maybe the chips are going to Joey [Bosa], and maybe if I’m getting free to the quarterback, then maybe they’ll flip and flop.’ They really have to pick their poison when both of those guys are out there, and I think that they both know it. When it’s their chance to get their opportunities, I think that they make the best of it. They know that they need each other in order for those things to take shape.”

### **On improving on third down over the last three weeks:**

“I think that it’s just been the continuous work. We’ve been harping on it all season. We know that early on, it wasn’t clicking for us, but I think that the guys have been coming in with a sense of urgency to go out there and get it done. That’s just really what’s showing, a lot of ownership. Those guys are enjoying the moment, not really saying, ‘Hey, it’s the calls,’ just us going out and executing. They’re taking ownership of it.”

### **On third-down defense ‘coming together at the right time’:**

“It’s work, and you don’t get tired of it — those guys don’t get tired of it. We know that it’s still not perfect to this day. We do know that we’re executing better. We want to continue to strive to get better. We see areas where we can still improve on the things that we did this past weekend. I think it’s motivation for those guys to want to get off the field, want to get the offense opportunities to get the ball back so that they can score points. We know that it takes both units doing their job. Our job is to get off the field on third down.”

### **On Rams QB Baker Mayfield:**

“They’re going to do a good job of making sure that, Baker [Mayfield] is comfortable with the play-calling that’s going in. He’s a talented guy. He does a good job of executing. You can tell that he feels comfortable with the plays that they’re running. They’re making it work. They look really good out there. His numbers are really up these last few weeks. Really, only missing four shots last week and scoring two TDs, they’re really coming alive. When Baker’s confidence is high and he feels comfortable with the things that he’s doing, we know that he’s one of the top in the league, and that’s what he has been showing these last few weeks.”

### **On the Rams’ offensive efficiency when RB Cam Akers is producing at a high level:**

“I think it takes it to a whole other level. I think it’s all predicated off of the run game coming alive, that you can really set up to play-action. When you have a speedster like [Rams WR] Tutu Atwell on the outside that can stretch the field, when you get really get that running game, and [Cam] Akers is taking advantage of it, I think it really takes shape for that offense.”

### **On LB Kenneth Murray’s role development:**

“Part of it is him being comfortable, him and [LB] Drue [Tranquill] working together all year long. We went back and looked at a lot of things that made him successful at Oklahoma. Early on in the process, it was let’s get him going forward, let’s get him comfortable in that that setting. I think once we kind of did that, a lot of stuff started to take off for him. He was a guy, when you watched the film, if you allowed him to go forward, he was very disruptive. Once we kind of got that disruptive trait going, I think everything else kind of started clicking for him.”

**On when the coaching staff ‘went back’ and evaluated Murray Jr.’s college tape:**

“For us, it was the offseason. Coming in, having him already being here, we just wanted to make sure — we knew that he was a first-round talent and those things that made him successful — but what do we have in our scheme to really express that and get him going? I think that those are the things that we’ve tried to focus on. Once we can get that going, we knew that he would kind of fall into the scheme. It helps build his confidence and get him going with the things that highlight his traits.”

**On if he had ‘an extra bounce in his step’ with Bosa back at practice today:**

“I have a big smile on my face [*laughter*]. Any time somebody mentions Joey [Bosa], I just know what it brings to this team. To add him with Khalil [Mack] up front, with the way that [OLB] Kyle Van Noy has been rushing — [OLB] Chris Rumph [II] — it makes those opportunities of things that you think that you can do and want to do, I think that it makes it come alive a little bit more, knowing that you have Joey. Everybody has to deal with him. So, yes [*laughter*].”

**On CB Michael Davis’ development:**

“He has put in the work. This offseason, we really challenged him hard. We really looked back at his film and found which areas he can get better. He didn’t blink an eye. He just put his head down. Even the times that we couldn’t spend with him, he was still checking in on us daily to see what he can do better. He’s just a worker. He’s just a grinder. He can take it, if something that is not nice is said to him and be ready to apply it. Some people can’t do it, but he took everything that we said and he put it into his work. It’s really showcasing on the football field now.”

**On Akers:**

“Talented running back. When he’s going, it’s really tough because even those times where I looked back last year — either when he returned from injury or was out and came back — any time that he gets going, I just think that it takes their offense to a whole other level. It’s all predicated on the run game. When you have those skill guys on the outside, I really think it opens up for him because you have to load the box up and you really have to be attentive to him in the game, as well as the screen game. He’s effective in space. We know that he’s a guy who can make big plays, and that’s what he can do when he’s really rolling.”