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Offensive Coordinator Todd Downing

Q: Was it just a rest day for Marshawn Lynch today?

Coach Downing: "Yeah. You know, we've been doing that as the season goes on. [Head Coach] Jack [Del Rio] has a great plan for taking care of some of the older guys. It was just giving him a little time to recuperate."

Q: What did you see from some of your backup wide receivers in last week's game?

Coach Downing: "They did a great job in preparation throughout the week. That's one of the things that jumped out to me. We didn't really have any mental errors from them. They caught the ball well. They did a nice job of executing all of their assignments, so I was very pleased with that. They've carried that over to this week so far in two practices and the walk-through that we had on Tuesday. They've done a nice job of picking up where they left off. So, I'm excited to see what those guys can do."

Q: What does Jared Cook's flexibility do for you in times like this?

Coach Downing: "It helps a lot. He's been more and more comfortable as the season's gone on – moving around at different spots and understanding our route tree and things like that. So, we're excited to amp him up as well."

Q: When you're without players like Michael Crabtree and Amari Cooper, how does that change things for you?

Coach Downing: "Our scheme doesn't change too much. We might change some formations so we get different players in different spots and highlight some skill sets, try to help the young guys by asking them to do things they're more comfortable with. But other than that, we expect it to be a 'next man up' type of mentality. I know you've heard that a lot from Jack and Derek [Carr] as they've spoken with you but we truly mean it. We expect guys to be prepared and be able to step in. We don't anticipate it drastically changing how we do things, maybe just a little tweaks in formations or personnel groupings."

Q: How about like Sunday when it happens on the fly?

Coach Downing: "Yeah, that can create some challenges if you're unprepared, but those guys did a nice job of filling in. They really did. So, once we got a series or two under our belt and really had some confidence and comfort that they were going to be where they were supposed to be, we were able to just kind of get it rolling a little bit."

Q: Is there any reason as to why Cordarrelle Patterson has been in the backfield less as of late?

Coach Downing: "He's played a little bit more of receiver in recent weeks, actually lining up and getting an extended route tree in the slot and a little bit outside. So, we're looking for different ways to keep him involved. Obviously, he had a huge, huge catch the other night in the game to ice the thing. So, we're looking for any way we can get the ball in his hands and he's certainly a playmaker. So, we'll continue to uncover every stone we can and try to feature him where and when we can."

Q: What areas of Johnny Holton's game have you seen the biggest improvement in?

Coach Downing: "Much more natural with his catching. His hands are a lot more confident than they were last year and in previous practices and such. But, he's really done a nice job of detailing his route running. He gets his depth, he comes out of his breaks better. He just looks more comfortable. So, I think having a year to really refine his receiver skills and fundamentals has helped him and showed out."

Q: How do you feel like you guys were able to run the ball on Sunday even though the average yards per carry were low?

Coach Downing: "We started really efficient. I think we really had a nice yards per carry going on early and, as I've talked to you guys about, you get in game situations that give you the ability to run the ball more, it's also going to be the same game situations that brings a harder defensive front to run against. So, as we got going in the second half, you guys had been calling for more carries from Marshawn, he got some work as we were in four-minute, but it's going to be against a loaded box and it's going to be against a defensive mentality to take away the run. That was



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a really good defense we played and they were really stout against the run, so we're not expecting to come out of a game like that with five yards a carry or something ridiculous. We understood what we needed to get done and we feel like we accomplished enough to win."

Q: That was the most carries Lynch has in a while. How has he held up with the workload?

Coach Downing: "Yeah, he's doing well. And I think we're able to still have the change of pace mentality with the other two and give Marshawn his breathers, you know? But we wound up with well over 70 plays which gave us a chance to sprinkle those guys in, keep Marshawn fresh and then be able to go to him late in the game. So, that seems to be a formula that worked well."

Q: What's your perspective of the fight and losing Michael Crabtree?

Coach Downing: "I think everything we do around here Jack preaches working for your teammates and being a dedicated teammate and working to win. We certainly want to do the things that help us not only get on the field but stay on the field. I guess I'll leave it with that."

Q: It must have changed the game plan quite a bit once you lost him.

Coach Downing: "Just need to make sure that guys were able to go out execute their assignments with the same type of timing and urgency that we would've expected had the top two receivers been in there. Again, those guys prepared very well throughout the week, those young guys did. [Wide receivers coach] Rob Moore and [assistant wide receiver coach] Nick Holz did a great job with them, getting them learning the game plan and all of that. It certainly was a confidence builder for us to see those guys go in and not miss a beat."

Q: How would you describe Seth Roberts' season?

Coach Downing: "I think you could pick any player on our offensive roster or coach on our coaching staff and say we've had some variance of an up and down. I think that's probably a fair label to put on all of us. But Seth is an extremely hard worker. He has great resolve and grit. He has not missed an ounce of that throughout the season. He has tried hard. He has put forth the effort. His assignments have been pretty good from and overall standpoint. I think that you're just seeing him just start to hit his rhythm a little bit. Excited to watch him down the stretch here."

Q: What do you see as his strengths?

Coach Downing: "He's a very tough, tough, competitive player. Gritty, he'll go in there and block and stick his nose in there. He's stronger than you'd think. He doesn't get bumped off the top of his routes very often. He's a guy that you can depend on in clutch situations. Historically he's had big play in big times for us. Whether it be the third-and-long conversion right after the fight that kind of got us to calm down a little bit or whether it be a game winning touchdown a couple years ago in Tennessee. He's the type of guy that you can rely on in big moments."

Q: Have you seen progress in running the ball more?

Coach Downing: "Yeah. I alluded to it a little bit earlier. You need the right game situation, the right number of plays to be able to hit some of your landmarks. For us in the Denver game, we were able to accomplish that because we were winning. Produced early offensive and were able to get some points on the board which allows you to stay balanced. Then we got four minutes at the end of the game where we were able to add to the carries there. All that feeds into it, game situation feed into, but I said I think when I got the job we want to be very balanced. That's something we're always aiming to level out."

Q: Is there something about doing well when you score fast?

Coach Downing: "We always want to start fast, but there are certainly times we're going against maybe a high-power offense on the other side of the ball. Or maybe it's a defense that you know once you get them on their heels a little bit, you can attack. But that's certainly a goal of ours all the times, is to start fast. Anytime we get the ball coming out of the coin toss, we want to go score points."



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Q: What are your thoughts on 'My Cause, My Cleats'?

Coach Downing: "I think it's outstanding. I think it's a really cool initiative that the league did. It gives guys a chance to highlight things that are important to them. Maybe not just join a cause on a list or something. Watching these guys go around take pride in the cleats that they're wearing. [Equipment Manager] Bob Romanski doing such a great job of painting them up is kind of a neat thing to see. It provides a window or a glimpse into these guys off the field. Derek [Carr] gets to tell his story about Dallas and his surgeries. Guys are out there with breast cancer awareness cleats like EJ [Manuel] telling his mom's story. It's neat to experience that and see them get a venue to show it off."

Assistant Head Coach – Defense John Pagano

Q: You guys shadowed receivers more on Sunday. What did you like about that?

Coach Pagano: "I think it always plays into player's strengths and seeing some things we could take advantage of. I think anytime... because I've always believed in that in the past of being able to put guys on certain guys. Sometimes it works out if the receivers are left and right, but if they're moving around, it's an opportunity that gives us a great advantage, I think. [cornerbacks] Coach [Rod] Woodson did a great job of getting those guys prepared to be able to do that because you have to truly hear the call. You have to focus, you have to see where the guys are and go get lined up."

Q: What did you see from Denico Autry on Sunday?

Coach Pagano: "Played fast. All 11 played fast. He played with some great strength in the middle. Did a great job of rushing the passer to be able to get those sacks. Had one sack that was, can't coach. It was straight man. I mean lifted the guy up and threw him down. It was a great rush by those guys. The attention that our edge rushers get between 52 [Khalil Mack] and 51 [Bruce Irvin], it gives those guys inside to be able to push and do the things they need to do. You can't say enough about what [defensive line] Coach [Jethro] Franklin did this past week of getting those guys ready to go for that."

Q: How big is it for the secondary to get David Amerson back?

Coach Pagano: "Oh, it's always good. Injuries are part of the game, but getting guys back is a huge plus for us."

Q: What do you feel like you're able to accomplish by moving Khalil Mack on the line?

Coach Pagano: "I think the biggest thing is not knowing where he's at. Having the opportunity for him to move around so they don't always know he's right there on the right side. You get a lot of things. That's usually his side where he rushes, so it gives him a chance to get different looks. He's smart enough to be able to do those things. When you have a player like that you take advantage of it and you move him."

Q: How do you grade the overall format? Are you pleased with what you saw?

Coach Pagano: "Yeah, we won. They played fast. They played hard. I thought our run defense was... We had excellent fits and situational football. Being able to pressure the quarterback. I think the guys are more disappointed that the opportunities that they left out there on the field. Our main goal is winning that game. We have our next challenge with the Giants. We have to go out there and play fast again."

Q: Where there any concerns with the fourth quarter play?

Coach Pagano: "Yeah, you don't like giving up touchdowns, so that would be the biggest concern. At the end of the day, you have to make a play. The opportunities are always going to be there. Somewhere at some moment when that guy has that opportunity to make that play, you have to catch it when it hits you. You have to cover in those situations. I think we learned a great deal of being able to be out in those situations to how we're going to handle it. How are we going to react? Most important play is the next play regardless of what happened before. I think they're starting to understand that whole process. They got two scores on us. We have to go back out there. We have to defend again. Offense did a great job of converting on that third down and not having that. I think the whole defense



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in that game didn't want to give up two scores right there at the end, but that's football. You better go make a play when the opportunity arises."

Q: Would you like to see more snaps for Obi Melifonwu?

Coach Pagano: "Well I think so. You always want guys to do things. I'm one if I'm feeling something or I like something in certain guys, we're going to go with them. If it's in a situation like that and certain calls, it just worked out to where in some of our sub packages we're going to move him around a little bit more, but just never got that opportunity for him. He's got a big responsibility for us as a young player of learning and getting in there. Keep growing. He's a rookie. The more he learns this defense, the faster and better he's going to play. He's going to be called upon. He's going to have opportunities again. This past week, he didn't have those opportunities."

Q: How surprised were you to learn you weren't going to be facing Eli Manning and what do you think of Geno Smith?

Coach Pagano: "Things in this league are never surprising, but we're preparing for both quarterbacks. Until I see who's under center for the snap or who is back there or in the second quarter or third, you have to. You always have to prepare in this business for another runner or wide receiver or quarterback. You have to look at those things. I think it puts a little bit, because they're so different and unique where one is a pocket passer and one is going to be the guy that is going to move out of the pocket, scramble ability. That we've faced Geno in the past. We just have to be ready for both of them."

Q: What have been your impressions of Jihad Ward and Shilique Calhoun?

Coach Pagano: "Still growing, learning. It's really been fortunate for us to knock on wood that guys that we have our guys that have been there. They work hard. They practice their butts off. A lot of times with guys in that situation to our special teams. Special teams overtakes some of those guys that are 60 linemen or fourth or fifth outside backer to where we're always working those guys to prepare. They do a great job in the meetings and learning. When their number is called upon, you have to be ready for those guys to go get it. Until then a lot of times how you're going to make it in this league is your contribution for special teams and I think just those opportunities where other guys have been called upon and other injuries in other spots where you get overloaded in other areas. They're doing a great job. I'm excited about them moving forward in these next couple of weeks."

Q: What makes it difficult to prepare for two quarterbacks as opposed to just one?

Coach Pagano: "You have to be ready for everything. You have to have a rush plan prepared for one guy. You have to have a rush plan prepared for the other guys – the coverages, certain things, where they throw. You're looking at film, you go way back. When I faced Geno, of our defenses, what type of throws that he does, what types of things that he's seeing. You just work all that. We're no mind readers out there. They're going to run something. They're going to hand the ball off. He's going to throw an out route. It's just what type of different movements, probably, by a quarterback's skill level."

Q: To say play fast, everybody is trying to play fast. What does that mean to play fast?

Coach Pagano: "The first element is taking the thinking out of the game. We don't want guys sitting there reading. We want [to] react to what you see and go. It's not a dumb question because you slow a guy down if the ball is snapped and in that process, he's thinking, looking and he doesn't know how to react to it. How do you play even faster? Coach is doing a great job during the week of having an understanding about the defenses that we're calling. We talked about it last week doing simple better. We can play fast be tackling, covering and communicating on a level to where you get the call, you go and we play."

Q: It seemed like Reggie Nelson had more hard hits this past game. Is that something you worked in?

Coach Pagano: "No, I think Reggie is always a fierce hitter. I think he had two great opportunities where he was in position. It's always about those where I'm at on the field position, the timing, for his ability to go make a hard hit tackling. To me, that goes to the preparation of [safeties] coach [Brent] Vieselmeier and [cornerbacks] coach [Rod]



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Woodson in the back end and having those guys in the spot. It's a game of angles. He had two great angles to where he could get a good hit on them."

Q: So his role didn't change or anything was asked differently of him last week?

Coach Pagano: "Play harder. Go hit and see ball, go get ball."

Q: What did you think of the interception last week?

Coach Pagano: "Oh, God. We celebrated. It was like the Holy Grail they brought walking over. It was outstanding. I wanted to put that ball on a pedestal. That's a great effort play by No. 53 [NaVorro Bowman]. You can't say enough of him filling in an A-gap, turning, running. The tight end was covered by Reggie. All of the sudden, he loops back inside, the quarterback throws it, but just the effort of 53, getting over there, hitting it, tipping it, Reggie keeping it alive and that ball being able to fall. That was a great ball. I touched it. I made sure I touched it. That thing was awesome."