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Chargers Offseason Media Availability, Phase Three

Monday, May 22, 2023 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

On opening Phase Three of the offseason program with the team's first OTA practice today:

"It was a good first day. It was great to be back with the guys. The guys have been working hard, kick-off your football with the young guys and establishing how you practice and working on your technique. Really proud of the guys being here. This group has really come together nicely this offseason. We're excited about getting going this springtime."

On OLB Joey Bosa being in attendance for today's OTA:

"I really appreciate all these guys being here, because it's voluntary. I think it says a lot about the culture that we have. Your culture is your best players and the example that they set. Certainly, [OLB] Khalil Mack sets a high standard, and I think that [S] Derwin [James Jr.] and Joey [Bosa] are part of that. For Joey to be here, I think that it shows all of these young players what it takes to be successful, that you have to be here with your team to improve. We know that Joey has such a specific routine with his brother in Florida. For him to be here, Day 1, really excited about that — and all of the guys who were here because that's how you improve, you improve as a team together."

On if any update is available regarding a potential contract extension with QB Justin Herbert:

"No updates."

On 'the current state of the situation' with RB Austin Ekeler:

"The current state with Austin [Ekeler] is that he's one of the top backs in the league over the last two seasons. He's been a captain for us. We really have the utmost respect for him and the situation. It's been respectful on both sides. Looking forward to this spring. We'll give you guys updates, if there are any."

On if he 'anticipates' Ekeler's presence at Veteran Minicamp:

"My expectation is that he will be here, for sure."

On WR Mike Williams:

"Mike Williams has been here in the springtime and he has been doing a really good job for us."

On if Herbert is 'ahead' of 'where the team thought he would be' in his recovery process from surgery on his non-throwing shoulder this offseason:

"I just think that he's on track, he's on pace. He's been able to throw more and more. He's on that throwing progression and he's working himself for training camp."

On players that could potentially be dealing with injuries at this phase of the offseason:

"Anybody that is not out there, we're just trying to get these ready to play, for training camp and then the regular season. If they're not out there, there's probably something minor in nature. If there is something major, you'll know."

On if the team will conduct joint practices with the New Orleans Saints during training camp:

"Yes, we will practice with the Saints during training camp, Week 2. Two days before the game — it's a Sunday game, so I think that we will practice Thursday and Friday of that week."

On working with Offensive Coordinator Kellen Moore:

"It's been fantastic. I think that Kellen [Moore] has done a great job with the offensive staff, him and [Quarterbacks Coach] Doug [Nussmeier] coming in here. They fit right in with our staff, our culture. They've been great with the players. He has such a great way about him with the group, both players and coaches, and it was good to finally get out on the grass. You prepare so hard for a practice like today, and to kick it off, I thought it was clean operation. You really rely on his experience, that he's done this before. He's just been great for all of us to team up, a new perspective. I'm really excited that he's part of our team."

On if he had a prior relationship with Moore:

"I knew of him. My first game as a defensive coordinator with the Rams was against him. I think we grew closer throughout the years. We knew some people in common. Then, when we played them last year in the practices during training camp, I think is when we really started to develop more of a personal relationship. We stayed in touch throughout the season. I think we have so much in common. When this opportunity presented itself, I think it was a natural fit for both of us. Learning about how we see the game, it's a partnership that I'm really looking forward to."

On the signing of DL Nick Williams:

"We had Nick [Williams] in Chicago. He did a great job for us on that team. He was with [Defensive Run Game Coordinator/Defensive Line Coach] Jay Rodgers both years, '18 and '19, when those defenses were really, really good. He just gives us a lot of interior defensive line versatility. He's played any of the middle three [interior defensive line positions]. He has been on a lot of really good fronts. Last year, he was with New York [Giants], in the middle with [Giants DL] Dexter [Lawrence] and [DL] Leo [Leonard Williams]. He's one of us and he is going to make that group deeper going into training camp."

On WR Quentin Johnston:

"He's a simple guy. He's a hard worker. He has fit in well. He has showed all of those intangible qualities that, I think, made him a captain at TCU. He's learning a lot, there's a lot to learn. He's done a really nice job out there fitting in with the group."

On WR Keenan Allen's appearance on The Masked Singer:

"We showed the group that [*laughter*]. We showed the group that about three weeks ago, whenever his swan song was on the show. I was stunned at how good this guy was. I couldn't believe what I was hearing and that that was actually him. What an opportunity that he took advantage of. Now, we just have to get him to sing the National Anthem before the game, see if he has what it takes in front of the whole world with a lot of pressure on him [*laughter*]."

On how the team has 'responded' to how last season ended:

"I think you see it with the attendance that we have here today. This is a hungry group. I think that the whole offseason has been really business-like. There's been that right vibe, where there's a lot of familiarity, you're not onboarding like a brand-new team, bringing a lot of guys back. A lot of guys are invested from that game, and it's going to mean a lot more when you were at that game. For a lot of guys who have been with us now two years, or with the team even longer than that, you're going to bring back a hungry group. We're excited to take the field today and take full advantage of this springtime heading into training camp."

On how he would 'assess' where CB J.C. Jackson is at with his recovery process:

"I would say same as these other guys. He's progressing well. We're trying to build them up to get ready for training camp."

On James Jr.'s 'ability to play Star' and how that impacts the secondary groupings:

"It's an advantage, for sure. That's one of the things that he does best, is play closer to the ball. He can play Star or Money. That gives us a lot of flexibility in how we want to play because has a lot of those hybrid characteristics of a defensive back or a linebacker. We feel like we have a good group that coach at that position, but certainly having his ability to play there is a weapon for us."

On his 'hope and expectation' for Mack and Bosa in 2023:

"I think Joey [Bosa] said it to you guys. Number one, their relationship. They know each other so much better. I think that's important. The respect they have for one another, I've really enjoyed watching that grow from afar. That was certainly the hope when we traded for Khalil [Mack]. I think what we saw last year in training camp, at the beginning of the year, is that those two guys playing together are special tandem. It's rare that you can find two players of that caliber that you can get together. Our goal is for those two to get to play together. We know how productive they are. They're both perennial Defensive Player of the Year candidates. They both can play at that level and we expect them to play at that level. Excited for those guys to to have another crack at it this season. This spring, I'm looking forward to both of them being out there."

OUTSIDE LINEBACKER JOEY BOSA

On his offseason:

"It's going really well. I've been able to really just focus on my training. It's weird to be feeling in shape at this point of the year, but I'm feeling really good. I know I was talking a lot last year about how it was the best I've felt. It was true at the time, but I think I got used to a lot of the chronic pain that I was in, so it was hard to judge where I really was. Kind of getting back to work this year, it's been fun to put up some times running and stuff. We're getting back to the old me or whatever you want to say. Yeah, it's been going really well. I've been able to stay really consistent this year. It's going to be good getting out here, getting some football movement and all of that stuff, being with the guys. It's been going really well."

On dealing with his body physically as his career progresses:

"Obviously, you're going into year 8, you're going to be dealing with pain. But, with my groin, obviously, the surgery I had last year and coming back, it was still not 100 percent. It's something that's going to take time, being able to talk to my brother with the things that he had to deal with post-injury and the things that flare up and give you issues in the offseason. There's definitely some things here and there, but for the most part, I'm feeling really good. I've been able to stay on a really good routine, being able to stay consistent and not having to adjust each day based off how I felt, whether it's my groin or whatever it is. Anybody walking down the street isn't completely out of pain. Everybody is dealing with something, but I'd say relative to some of the years prior, I'm definitely feeling good."

On being at Organized Team Activities:

"I mean, the coaches telling me [*laughter*]. It's no problem. I am in a pretty strict routine down in Florida training with my brother [49ers DL Nick Bosa]. There's a few moving pieces, obviously, with that other than just myself. My dad's manning the helm back in Florida with my brother. He's handling his training for the next few weeks. It's no problem being out here, being able to get with the guys and be out here a little bit early. I'm actually excited to see how much I can kind of hone my football technique because I'm really feeling good, physically. It's the first time I've been out here this early in a long time. It is just a tough transition with the six-hour flight and all of that, but it's not a big deal. Obviously, it's going to be great being out here with all of the guys on Memorial Day Weekend. Not that it's a partying weekend [*laughter*], but it'll be a nice, long weekend and maybe get dinner with the guys and all of that. It's exciting. It was a few coaches contacting me, but [Outside Linebackers Coach] Giff [Smith] always voices his opinion that he wants me out here during this time. It's just, like I said, I'm in a routine. It takes a little bit to up and head out. It's not that big of a deal."

On LB Eric Kendricks:

"I mean, it means a lot [to add him to the defense]. I can't say that I've watched a lot of him over the years, but to get a guy with experience — I don't want to be the old guy in the room, so it's nice to have [OLB] Khalil [Mack], nice to have the older guys to kind of show us the way and show us what it takes to get to those final games of the year. I haven't really gotten a chance to talk to him much. Obviously, being out here early and being here as the year goes on, we'll get to know each other and get to talk more. Having good players in the middle takes a lot off us guys [on the edge]."

On playing with OLB Khalil Mack and the way the season ended:

"It was great last year, even the short amount of time that we were together. Obviously, it was unfortunate that we didn't get more time to play together. I don't know, I think just focusing on each day as it comes. I haven't really been looking back to that game or thinking about things that were said on that plane. I've just been kind of taking the days as they come, trying to take the most of it and setting my goals a little shorter. Just trying to reach those goals every single day. Obviously, being with a guy like Khalil, I think he's coming back from his foot injury a few years ago, he's feeling much better. We both have our weight up again. I think we're both in good shape. Khalil and I, off the field, I think we've grown close just in the short amount of time that we've been together. I'm excited to keep it going. I'd say he's definitely part of the reason that I came out early. I feel obligated to do my stuff when I have him watching me, have him counting on me. It's nice to have that. I feel like a guy like [former DL] Linval Joseph, I've mentioned it before — like I said, to feel obligated to these guys, to do your best."

On if he's changed his offseason routine:

"No, I just think getting back to what my routine is and what we've done in the past — not taking things off because I'm not feeling good and this or that. Just staying very consistent with everything that we've been able to do. Nothing new. Nothing too new, just getting back to the stuff that we know."

On if he uses playoff loss as motivation:

"Like I said, I really haven't thought about it that much. If you're not motivated to win and to play, then this is the wrong job for you. If you need to be digging into some dark past to motivate you for tomorrow, then you're already lost, I think. Like I said, just trying to take it one day at a time and not think too far ahead and not go backwards. Just take it one day at a time. I feel like when I get to the end of each day and I'm able to accomplish that, I'm really happy with my progress. Those days just stack. Before you know it, you're playing in a Super Bowl. I think that's going to be my mindset going into this year."

On the feeling surrounding the playoff loss:

"I think it's everybody's job. I don't think one single person is going to be in charge of 100 people's minds on the sideline. I think it's something you work and talk about all year, and practice all year. There was a lot of emotion and a lot of things that went into what happened last year. I don't know. I think it's something that we're going to have to talk about throughout the year and be mentally prepared for. I think it's everybody on the team. If it's one person, it's going to grow. The negativity is going to grow on the team. If it's positive, then that's going to grow. Like I said, I really haven't been thinking back too much about that day. Not really reflecting on it too much."

On if he's given advice to QB Justin Herbert surrounding a potential extension:

"No, he's the kind of guy you'd want to be going through this process. I don't think it's the first thing on his mind. I think what he's focused on is getting his work done and coming in each day, like I said, and making the most of it. He's going to get what he deserves, obviously. He's a superstar. Maybe I will have a conversation with him these following days, but I don't think that's something that's stressing him too much. Obviously, it's probably in the back of his mind a little bit, but if I know Justin, I know he's just focused on studying his playbook and making sure he's ready to compete out there at practice."

On if he's given advice to his brother, 49ers DL Nick Bosa, surrounding a potential extension:

"No, no comment [*laughter*]."

On if he and Mack have scratched the surface on what they're able to accomplish as a duo:

"Yeah, we were out there for six or five games together? I think we were really growing close together during camp. We kind of feed off each other in the rush. I know when I went down, obviously, it kind of was a big shock for me, obviously, and for Khalil and for Giff [Smith] and all of those guys in the room. We had been working so hard all camp and we have an idea of how we're rushing together and this and that, so it obviously throws us a curveball, including Khalil. I think the more time that we're out there together, the more comfortable we're going to be together and the more that we're going to understand each other when somebody is doing something in the rush. Like I said last year a bunch of times, I think we complement each other well. Once we get more reps and more time together, it'll start being non-verbal communication out there. We'll really get a feel for each other and when a guy is going high, a guy is going low. I think we have the opportunity to really get to a special spot between us two."

On rookie OLB Tuli Tuipulotu being 20 years old:

"Yeah, we'll I'm getting close to 30, so it's not something I like to think about too often. 20 — good times, good times. Ignorance is bliss."

On working out with his brother in the offseason:

"It's great. It's pretty quiet out there, I have to say. It's just two guys focused. Usually, it's a lot of bugs, humidity and all of that. It's not the most exciting mornings ever, but I think there's just this, like I said, non-verbal communication where you see a guy just push it a little bit more and you can feel it between each other. It makes you want to work that much harder. I'll tell you one thing, if you're not feeling good one day and another one is out there just feeling good, it'll definitely piss you off and motivate you to work a little bit harder. We're kind of used to it at this point. It's been a great routine for years now. I definitely don't take it for granted that I have a guy like that to work with."

On Defensive Coordinator Derrick Ansley:

"We'll see. I've had one meeting so far, about 10 minutes. Not a great feel, but we love him. We know he's a good coach, so I'm sure he's going to do a great job this year."

OUTSIDE LINEBACKER KHALIL MACK

On sitting courtside at Lakers games recently:

"It's been pretty cool. A cool experience to see the guys up close, watch some playoff basketball."

On if he has had any conversations with Lakers F LeBron James:

"No, not too much. They've all been pretty focused [*laughter*]. Not too much talking on the sidelines."

On his offseason:

"It's been good. We have had some real productive days out here with these guys. Just stacking the days."

On if he has 'reflected' on how last season ended:

"I try my best to forget, but remember why we're in these processes. Try to get better every day. All you can do is use it to fuel the fire to get better this year."

On the amount of time he utilizes to 'get away from football' in the offseason:

"This year was different for me. I was able to get back to it. Last year, coming off of surgery in November, it was different. The process, I was able to get into the flow of things, play a little basketball here and there [*laughter*]. Just get my body moving a little bit more. It's been pretty good so far."

On practicing with OLB Joey Bosa again:

"It's cool. It's always good when you have Joey B out there, man. A lot of knowledge. A good friend, a good dude to have around in the locker room and the meeting room."

On if he 'had much of a chance' to play alongside of Bosa last season:

"No. That's one of the things that we talked about when we got on the plan, I think that it was in Jacksonville, we were like, 'Man, just give me one more.' That's what we're looking forward to."

On if he the public 'has seen what they can do together':

"Not even close. I think that it was three games in last year [when Bosa was injured], Week 3. Just can't wait to get out there with this guy. Not talk too much, but get to work."

On how he is feeling right now:

"I feel pretty good. I was coming off that injury last year. Being able to get into it and get into a regiment faster and run and do all of the things that I would normally do during the offseason, it feels great."

On the addition of LB Eric Kendricks:

"We were just talking about it. Talk about knowledge and the experience of having him in the middle, you can already hear the voice, and the power and inflection in his voice, whenever he is calling the calls and putting people into position. It's going to be great, it's going to be fun playing with him."

On OLB Tuli Tuipulotu:

"Tuli [Tuipulotu] is a quiet dude. I didn't realize that he was 20 years old [*laughter*]. Yeah, quiet. It's strange being in this position, being so much older than these guys [*laughter*]. He has a quiet demeanor, but he's a smart dude. He learns fast, has fast hands. It's going to be fun playing with all of these guys, especially the young dudes."

On if playing with the younger players 'makes him feel old':

"Lowkey [*laughter*]. When he said 20, I was like, 'Ah.' I was 23 [years old] when I came into the league. It's different, but it's going to be fun."

On using last season's ending as 'fuel for a positive':

"The only positive thing about it is that it was last year, last season. Have a lot more to look forward to, knowing where the potential is and all of that, which is neither here nor there. Can't focus on it, even though it is hard. It's one of those things. Me and Joey [Bosa] were talking about it, it was like a bad dream, like a nightmare. Waking up from it and just putting in the work to make sure that it doesn't happen again."

On his level of comfort with the team after one full season in Los Angeles with the Chargers:

"Of course it matters, especially when you have a routine — I have my Pilates lady that I go to, she's been getting me right, and all the other stuff. Food places, I got my chef in place. It's just a routine thing. I have my kids situated. It's new. Getting in that routine of knowing what to do and where I am going to be and what I am going to do throughout the week, it's much-needed."

On 'not having to figure that all out' this year:

"Yeah, it feels very good not to have to figure all of that out, for sure."

On if he has been playing basketball this offseason:

"Technically, I can't say that [*laughter*]. I try to get out and do a little something."

On if he plays at a local park:

"No, I can't go to the park [*laughter*]. I have to play on wood, man, I'm getting too old [*laughter*]."

On Derrick Ansley's transition to Defensive Coordinator:

"He pulled me in right away, we had a conversation. We chopped it up. You could tell that he's excited to be in that position. He is going to make the most of it, as well, and try to get the best out of all of his guys on defense."

On QB Derek Carr joining the Saints:

"That's strange [*laughter*]. It looks awkward every time that I see him with the Saints logo on. Don't they come this way to practice sometime soon? That's going to be fun going against him. It's strange how everything works out over time."