

Chargers Offseason Media Availability, Phase One **Tuesday, April 2, 2024 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.**

HEAD COACH JIM HARBAUGH

Opening statement:

"Great to see everybody. It just feels good. It's like the start of the new year — Happy New Year. That's the way that it feels. It's like that first day of school, or a family reunion, or homecoming. Most people think that January 1st is the start of the new year, those who espouse to Christianity or Catholicism correlate it with the birth in Christ, but, us in football, today, April 2nd, is the start of the new year [*laughter*]. It was just a great day for football, for meetings and training. We're doing a lot of baseline training with our guys. Just to have it started, the coaches have been grinding, but it's about the players, though — they're the ones that bring the operation to life, and have really given us a lift. It just feels like there is a new lift and energy in the building. I see that eagerness in the players. Maybe that's just because I'm so eager, but I truly see it, an eagerness with our guys. A good first day."

On if the 'eagerness' is what 'everyone is anticipating':

"Yeah, I'd just say compare it — if you're an analogy person — to the start of the new year. That new year sense or that first day of school, homecoming. It's everybody back together. It certainly has the elements of all three of those things. I'd even compare it to having life now, like just finding out that your wife was pregnant — Hey, we're going to have a child, great. Just that bounce in your step."

On the first team meeting:

"We just got right into it, just got right into football — putting the schemes in, offensively and defensively. Then, the baseline training. [Executive Director of Player Performance] Ben Herbert is huge in this phase, Phase One. When I say baseline training, it's just finding out where everybody is, where's their baseline? What do they need improvement on? Just here to engage. One thing about Herb, you know that he is going to be there every day and he is going to be ready to train guys and have the energy to train anybody that's there. Just got right after it, got right into it. Tomorrow, we'll have a special teams meeting, but today, it was offense, defense, and then starting the baseline training in the weight room."

On if the team was 'separated by units':

"Yes."

On 'what the players will learn' about Ben Herbert:

"That he is the same person every day and that he is going to be there every day. He has a great wife. He has two great kids. He has two dogs. He has a truck. But, from the hours of six a.m. to five p.m., him and his staff are going to be in that weight room with the energy to coach, and make them better — he is in there for [the players]. It's anything and everything to make somebody a better football player. Then, it will be the mental and the physical. There was a bounce in [Herbert's] step, too, as well. But, then again, he's the same guy every day, and that's what I love about him. If I was going to have a team meeting today, what I would say to the players is that a lot of people say that this is about relationships, and the key to the relationship is to be yourself, be who you are, be you, do you. If you want to get a little bit better at something, just work a little bit harder at it. Whatever you do, don't get a big head. But, the main thing is that it has got you here this far. Today, tomorrow, be you. As I said, it's gotten you this far. Now, if you're having some trouble with the relationship, then look in the mirror and make some adjustments, but, right now, that's — in addition to those offense, defense and special teams schemes, and the baseline training — yeah, building those relationships are the other things that are going on."

On the value of Ben Herbert:

"We've been together, it's going on six years. I mean, we're like that, in terms of the philosophy, just doing anything and everything for the for the players. That's the overarching thing, the way that we see it, getting good at football, making them the best version of themselves, on and off the field. But, that comes with the notion, with the prediction, that, gosh, you got a guy here that's doing anything and everything in his power to make you a better football player. Then, you assume and predict that that person is going to do anything and everything to help the team. What's good for the bee is good for the hive, that's the rationale. That's the prediction."

On 'if establishing physicality starts today':

"We're really big on what you do speaks so loudly that we can't even hear what you're saying. What you do speaks so loudly. The rest is talk. I'm not going to talk, just talk about it. When you get to the point where the players know that they're physical, they're dominant, they've trained themselves to be there, in that place, then I won't have to get up here and say anything, they won't have to get up here and say anything. It'll be what they do. We think we can get there."

On his communication with General Manager Joe Hortiz surrounding discussions involving potentially trading the No. 5-overall selection:

"When does Joe [Hortiz] talk? The week prior to the draft? That's a phenomenal question for Joe Hortiz [*laughter*]. You get to go into as much depth as he'll go into a week before the draft [*laughter*]."

On the data gathered while 'establishing the baseline with professional athletes':

"It'd be like asking a player, 'How many times can you take 225 and push it off your chest?' They can give you a number, but how many times can you take 225 and pull it into the chest, stick it, release it — how many times can you do that? Not many know. They'll know the first question, but they wouldn't know the second. The back is just an untapped goldmine of lean muscle mass. We want them to know that we're going to know. In key performance indicators, what's your external rotation? What's your neck strength? Flexion? Extension? Do you want a steel rod in your neck or do you want a noodle? A piece of advice, you want that steel rod, a trunk where the roots go into the traps. It doesn't completely make you immune from concussions, but you sure would rather have the steel rod than the noodle. Balance, every part — toe to finger — you try to get ourselves in the best shape of our lives. Strength. Power."

On if this information is 'new' to the players:

"We just ask them. They're filling out a key performance indicator sheet today. Some do. Hey, I know. Or, question mark, I don't know. Guys will tell you, 'Yeah, I'm really athletic, coach. I'm a superior athlete, always have been a superior athlete. My strength and power has gotten better.' OK, now, let's combine superior athlete with strength and power, plus really knowing what to do within the framework of the scheme. Then, we have something. We have the best version of yourself."

On if he 'always had this approach to player performance':

"I guess that it's always been there, but it's only grown. Ben [Herbert] is an expert. Kind of what my dad told me to do, learned me from a very young age, that if somebody is the expert at what they're doing — a professor, a coach — then that person is the expert in what they're doing, they know better than you how to do it. If I just do what they tell me to do, then I will be successful. That's always been my mindset. Then, run across Ben Herbert, that's been my experience. There's nobody that combines the cutting-edge, scientific with the old-school, disciplined strength and conditioning coach like he does. He's the best I've ever seen or been around, as a player or as a coach. I hate to make comparisons, because somebody always gets diminished. Talk to Ben. Today, you can witness, I think that you'll be more than satisfied. But, yeah, definitely grown. As a player, I think what you're striving for is the player that plays within the scheme, really knows his job schematically, and can make the adjustments, make the calls, combined with a superior athlete. If somebody doesn't know what they're doing, and they are a superior athlete, they are probably going to get beat by the one who really knows what they're doing and is a really good athlete. Really learning what we're doing schematically and what each person's job is, and how it fits with all 11. Plus, going from good athlete to better athlete to great athlete to superior athlete, we're trying to make that combination because you can train yourself to be better, stronger, more agile, more flexible, more lean muscle mass, less fat — fat is the enemy of speed. So, we've had a lot of similar ideas about football. Bottom line, just trying to get better at football, trying to get really good at football."

On purchasing the shop-vac alongside of Herbert and if he has 'noticed any changes' in the weight room:

"It's cleaner [*laughter*]. It's very organized. You can tell the difference. Right away, when the guys walk in, they're going to know the difference. Ben [Herbert] is very much the kind of guy, and he told me stories of how it makes perfect sense, of when he was living alone — he's kind of like that guy from *The Accountant*, in the movie, Ben Affleck, he has one glass, one fork, one knife, one spoon. Now, he has four people in his family, they have four glasses, four knives, four forks, four spoons, four plates, four bowls. When I tell you that things are squared away, ship-shape, that's Ben Herbert."

On his attendance in unit meetings today:

"I got a setup with both. This week, the offense starts their meetings at 8:15 [a.m.], that goes until 10, and then they go into the weight room at 10:15. Defensively, they start in the weight room at 8, they go until 10, then they start their defensive meetings. I was able to be in both. That's the cool thing about being a head coach, you get to be around everybody and coach everybody."

On his 'feedback' from the players during meetings today:

"It was lively. Guys were teaching the different schemes. Offensively, very much a whole-part-whole. You're walking out of that meeting going, 'OK, there's a lot here.' It'll really behoove you to be in these meetings. Kind of like math, get it each layer at a time. I'm sure that a lot of guys are going to be doing some studying. It was good. I thought that our coaches did a great job in the offensive meetings, and same with the defensive meetings. We'll have special teams meetings starting tomorrow."

On his first three months of being Head Coach of the Los Angeles Chargers:

"They've been great. This is just true, it's been the best damn job I've ever had to start out with. I hope that it ends that way, but it's been a tremendous start. Hiring coaches, free agency — that's not just one day, that goes for a while — getting ready for the draft. Really excited about the coaching staff and the amount of work that has been produced over the last month-and-a-half. It's been a lot, they've done a great job. It's been locked, cocked, ready to rock, just needed the players to come in, and we got that today. It's been really good."

On the signing of CB Kristian Fulton:

"A starter-level corner in this league. Excited to get him with Ben [Herbert] and address some of the soft-tissue stuff. He has played at a high level, played at a starter-caliber. Good football player in a position of need."

On if this coaching staff 'is one of the largest in the league, and if so, why':

"It's a great question, because there are jobs that need to be done. Everybody is doing a job. There's a role for everybody. We have the coaches that are coaching the positions, but I also like to have coaches that are the next position coaches. I like to have guys that are just getting their start, then you make a pipeline that we're not going to have to go out and get coaches from other teams or from college. We just set up our own internal pipeline. There's a progression there. Coaches can come from anywhere, but just to get them in our system, because I do predict that there will be head coaches that come off of this staff, and then they like to go places, or guys will get opportunities to be head coaches from this staff, or coordinators. I think they call it self-sustaining, we really want to be that."

On the addition of Fulton and his 'assessment' of the cornerback group:

"Just getting a look at it now, you can watch the tape, you can watch the latest tape, the healthiest tape, and sometimes that's good. Then, the other time that is good is just getting them here and coaching them in our scheme, because you don't know exactly what they're being told when you're watching the tape. So, just getting with them, getting around them, you know? That process has just begun today."

On if anything 'impressed' him today:

"No, guys have asked me what this is like and what that is like, just go in and see how it hits you. From what I can tell, it was hitting them pretty good. Just chipping away at it. A good day."

On the attendance today for the first day of voluntary workouts:

"Really, just happy to be coaching guys. If they have the energy to come in and want to learn and train, then we're happy. That's our job. It's good to be able to be doing your job. It's more complete now. I feel like a coach again, coaching players."

On if he 'has a sense of what percentage of the roster is here today':

"No. It's voluntary, so I really don't. The media that I've been around in the past, they'll go dig through the social media and probably have a better sense of that than I will. I'm just like, 'Let's go, let's start working.'"

On if the players that are not currently here 'have materials to keep pace schematically':

"There will be a few. With technology, we have the technology that we can make that available, too. Anything and everything. Meet the guys where they're at. Fired up to be doing that."

On if any other positions on the roster are 'areas of need':

"Just finding that out. It's a great opportunity to find that out. I think it's us and a couple of other teams that started this week, and then more will start next week, and then some others a couple of weeks from now. You probably figured out, I was sitting on a spring, wanted to start the very first opportunity that we could. That all begins now, that's why it's such an awesome day, to be able to find out and meet guys where they're at."

On the wide receiver group;

"Excited to see that. Same for every position, it's been some good conversations, but like I said, now we get some action. We get to meet with guys and start on football."

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PLAYER PERFORMANCE BEN HERBERT

On the opening of the offseason program:

"To say I'm excited, and I was excited for today, would be an understatement, I think, because the key is that I'm here to meet and to work with the guys. I think today, the cool part about it was that opportunity was afforded. It was my first time. There were some guys that I had met, up to this point, but it was my first time to be with the group — for them to feel me, for me to feel their energy and to start the dialogue of what we call training. The excitement, there's no doubt of my excitement. Ultimately, after I reflected on how today went, their excitement seemed to match mine. It was great."

On the imperative element of 'trust' in building relationships:

"There's no doubt. Especially in this environment, but I think in all relationships, you don't get second chances. When it comes, trust takes time. I told the guys, the offensive groups specifically, at the end of the workout, there will come a point in time where Coach Herb says, and based on the relationship that we've established, you know that that's in your best interest. Today, we started that process. I don't expect you to be there now. But, we'll get to the point where, when I give you advice, I'm not known for giving bad advice. If I don't know something, I stand quietly. I don't talk about things that I'm not certain of. But if I am certain of something that can help you, something that can help this team, I'm going to give you that information. That was the cool part about today, it was a chance for the guys to start to understand that I'm here for one reason, and that's to impact them. I said that I'm here to impact you in the most positive way, and, ultimately, to impact this team in the most positive way, and they felt that."

On his 'approach to player performance':

"I expressed this to the guys, as well — big picture I view it as training. The interesting thing about training is that I don't know if there are two people that view it the same. There are concepts that different people believe in that may match up, but I view training in this way, and this is how I told it to the guys. My first goal is to make you harder to break. People often may say, with training, we're going to break with a breaking down and build you up. My goal is not to break you, my goal is to make you harder to break. How are we going to go about doing that? How we train your neck and traps to protect your head. The most vulnerable areas of the body, in my opinion, in the game of football, are the head, right and left shoulder, right and left hip girdle, right and left hamstring, right and left ankle. Through your training, you have to be proactive at training those areas of the body. The neck work that I introduced today, the trap work, the four-part [rotator] cuff sequence to address the four rotator cuff muscles in your shoulder girdle, introduced them to some hip work, introduced them to some ankle work. These are things that are paramount. If you want to make a football player harder to break, your training has to be sound, in my opinion, and it's all my opinion, your training has to be sound in those areas. That's goal number one, make you harder to break. Goal number two, it has to do more with here, then like I say to the guys here — consistency, your ability to show up every day and repeatedly do what you are capable of doing. Consistency is incredibly valuable. Attention to detail. There's a way we do things and there's a way we train. We had two-and-a-half-pound plates we used today, and when they put those plates back — the plates are stacked and they're about 10 two-and-a-half-pound plates high — when they put them back, they put them back a certain way. It says ROGUE at the top of the plate. Every ROGUE is perfectly square, doesn't matter if it's the second plate or the 10th plate, it goes back precisely. No different than a DB's eyes or his footwork, or an offensive lineman's feet or his hand placement. Ways that we practice attention to detail. We train a certain way, but also how we keep the room. Just how we do everything, there's a certain level of detail involved in that. Then, emotional stability. You will never see me — some guys, Coach [Harbaugh] is one of them, Chris Hinton is a guy since we were together at Michigan — these guys, they've been around me, some guys for a couple of months. I don't change. Meaning, 'Coach Herb got the juice today, he's feeling good, he's happy, he's excited.' Well, then it rains and I feel a certain type of way. Or, like I told the guys, I have a wife, two boys, two dogs, I have a car with four tires. If I get a flat tire, I'm not going to take it out on you. If something happens, I don't change emotionally. When I walk into a facility, who you know me to be is who I am. Every day. It's never changed. This is my 23rd year. People that knew me in 1998 or 2002, would say that, yeah, today, I'm that same person. Emotional stability is incredibly important. Then, bigger, faster, stronger. I want to improve the range of motion and tissue in joint. I want to give you more pressing capability. I want to make you improve your acceleration, your top-end speed. All of these things, we call them key performance indicators, have to do with flexibility, mobility, strength and power, agility and speed. When you

think of those three things, they help make a guy harder to break, consistency, attention to detail, emotional stability, bigger, faster, stronger and more mobile and flexible. That's how you can describe our program."

On how he 'molded' that philosophy:

"Over time, what we all have are experiences. Our experiences lead us to believe, especially believe in certain things. What I've found is that bigger, faster, stronger, more mobile, you can have a group that has tremendous physical capabilities and not be successful. You can have a group that's consistent, your attention to detail is very high, their emotional stability is on point, but they're not successful. I think my experience has been, with success, when you have both of those, when you have a group that is capable, mentally and physically, it's highly likely it's going to lead to success. So, over time, I'm always just simply interested in finding more effective ways to impact the guys in a positive way. So, it leads you to discover that there are new tools and new technologies that constantly come out. It's my job and my staff's job to identify what those are, and then vet them, and then incorporate them, if we deem appropriate, if they're going to help the guys. Today, there are a number of things that they got exposed to that allows us to quantify capabilities. When we ask them to buy into certain things, neck training as an example, they know that we use the force strength [measurement], it allows us to quantify how strong the neck is in flexion and extension. There's a numerical representation. Guys can tell me how fast they run the 40 [-yard dash]. Now, they can say that, in neck flexion, my neck is 518. In extension, it's 385, or 711. But, then, no different than our [rotator] cuff work, when you can quantify something, it draws a level of attention to that, which then will show up in their desire and willingness to want to train those areas at a high level."

On the time frame necessary to 'figure out each player's baseline':

"The cool part about the questionnaire, like I told the guys today, is that I want to know what they know about their bodies and their capabilities. Because in training, there are often things that if you don't know, any of us, you can fall victim to pretty much anything. If you do know, you have a level of knowledge and awareness to decrease the likelihood of that happening. As an example, when you look at that questionnaire, what do you feel is your ideal playing weight? Then, most importantly, we don't, and I'm teaching them not to discuss it, it's not about weight. I want them to understand that the number on the scale is one thing, but I'm interested in lean mass. How much lean mass do you have? Do you know that number? You should. How much fat mass do you have? Lean mass up, if needed. Fat mass down, if needed, but don't step on the scale and feel any type of way when the scale, it just gives you a number. If I drink this bottle of fluid, I'm going to be one pound heavier. To some, they may get anxiety because they're sad about that. Or, they feel bad. If you're hydrated, that's a very positive thing. If you strip your body of fluid, it's going to impact you in a very negative way. Don't let the scale, we're going to use the InBody and we're going to use the decks to guide us, but that questionnaire — what's your ideal weight, how much lean mass, how much fat mass, do you know. The range of motion in your right ankle, your ankle mobility on the right side, you may either know that it's 16. So, that falls into an 'A' range, or it's four, that falls into a 'D' range. What's ankle mobility? We have to teach them those things, if they don't know. If I'm interested in pressing power. If I want to create space, or if I strike someone, and I'm going to keep space between the two of us, it's going to have to do with my pressing power. What's your pressing power on the right side? What's your pressing power on your left side? History tells me they're usually different, unless they're not. But, all of these things that we ask them, just to gauge, if you don't know, there's a box. If you don't know, just question mark it. Or, if you think it's elite, check the 'A-plus' box. Of, if you think it may be average, check the 'C' box. But, I want to get a sense for what they know, what they think they know, and then if that matches up, great. Then, we just start to fill in the areas. It's about making sure that they understand what we do, why we do it. Most importantly, how their time and energy given to us is going to help them be better at doing their job. That helps us build that rapport and that foundation so that, then, we can build upon that knowledge that is either present or not. I don't feel any type of way if they don't have the knowledge, it's our job to then give it to them, to teach them, just so they have a greater understanding of their capabilities. Where their capabilities are high, and most importantly, where their capabilities are low."

On taking a trip to The Home Depot with Head Coach Jim Harbaugh on their first day on the job:

"The Home Depot story. I told Coach [Harbaugh], we were leaving the hotel and I said, 'Hey, we have to stop at The Home Depot, I have to get a shop-vac.' He was just like, 'OK, we'll go to The Home Depot and get a shop-vac.' There were some other things that we needed to get. The room, when you walk into the room, any physical space — to me, if a space is representative of myself, it's going to be a certain way. It's going to be neat, it's going to be clean. It's just going to be a certain way. It's like a five-star hotel. You walk into a five-star hotel, it looks different, smells different, feels different. Every detail. When you walk into our training facility, it's just the pride that we take in it. We could occupy that space, it's not mine, I don't own it. But, I'm in charge of it, so it's going to reflect how I want it to reflect. So, I needed a shop-vac. We went through every inch, every inch, of that room, and made sure that it was just — I say the phrase dialed in, like we have to get it dialed, we're going to get it tight. So, I needed a shop-vac in order to do that. Coach, there we were, at The Home Depot. Loading the cart, we got the shop-vac, we got some Magic Erasers and some things that we needed, just to make sure that that room — if you guys walked in to that room, you would look at it and go, 'Yeah, it just presents a certain way.' And I take pride in that."

On the decision to join Harbaugh at the Chargers:

"Any time that you have a chance to build a relationship like I've had with Coach [Harbaugh], over the course of our time at Michigan, and then the situation he — I put in the work each day, but he, ultimately, put me in the situation, not only my daily working situation by, from a contract standpoint, he created those opportunities for me. You want to talk about supporter? A tremendous supporter. He put me in the situation that I was in. There are not many situations that were going to be better than that. When Coach decided to come here, the opportunity he presented, once we had that conversation about what it was going to look like, what it was going to be like. To have a coach, to work for someone and to work with someone like Coach, the conversation pretty much went like this — I looked at my wife, we talked through the details, which took probably five to seven minutes — then, I called Coach back, because the conversation I had with Coach took 30 seconds. We talked about things that were important to my family and I, he called me back and confirmed the situation that he was going to provide me with. Then, my wife and I, we discussed it briefly and I called back, and that was that. But, when you don't have to speculate how Coach conducts his business — the trust, the rapport that we've built, and the support that he has given me and how he has empowered me and my staff to do what we have done together — is significant. My desire to continue that, yeah, it was a no-brainer."

On what is 'different' about Harbaugh:

"People have asked me about Coach, because they know the rapport that we have built and the relationship that we have established, and I describe it as Coach, the game of football and building a football team, coaching a team, is very important to him. What I've always told people is if you see it that same way — if it's important to you, if the game is important to you and the people in the building, the players, staff and coaches, if they're important to you and you're just on the same page and you're willing to sacrifice and commit to what it will take to create the best version of that team and that organization, you're going to have a great relationship and great rapport with Coach. If you're not that way, it's probably not going to go well. He and I just, when we met, I interviewed with Coach and, right off the bat, there was a level of urgency and there was a level of commitment that he felt from me. He was a guy that I definitely have never — I didn't know him, didn't have the opportunity to work with him — but just the vibe, the energy, I welcomed that opportunity. Then, once we started to work daily together, it just became clear how he conducts his business. It is very easy to respect. I told the guys today that I've never — we talked about TED, There Every Day — I've been with Coach for six years, so six years and a few months, I've never seen, 'Hey, where's Coach today?' No, Coach is there every day. Every day. I've never seen him miss one day of work. I've never even had to ask, 'Where is Coach today?' You know where Coach is going to be and you know the mentality, most importantly, that he is going to show up with. It's very consistent. It's my job to match that. I welcome that challenge. It's been great for our relationship."

On 'urgency' and 'if that is something that this team didn't have before':

"No, you know what, I don't get into speculation of what they did or didn't have. Urgency, it's just what I know Coach [Harbaugh] has, and it's what I have. So, do the guys? Do they have it? They didn't seem to lack it today. That was the fun part. When we got done, the defensive group got done, the offensive group got done, they didn't seem to lack urgency. They wholeheartedly embraced, or at least it seemed to me that they wholeheartedly embraced everything. There was some communication, but the action that we put into place, their attention to detail and how they did things and their willingness to do was incredibly high. It was exciting, very exciting, to me."

On 'injury prevention':

"I describe it like this: I don't say injury prevention, I say decrease the likelihood of. When I say making them harder to break, here's an example. If when you strike someone or you get struck, which in the game of football is going to take place, especially at this level, the physical capabilities that guys have, you're going to strike someone or get struck. Do you want to increase the likelihood of the brain coming in contact with the skull? Which is how I describe a concussion. Do you want to increase the likelihood or decrease the likelihood of that? Everyone says decrease the likelihood. OK, so when I put my hands on you, and we're going to train neck flexion, where you bring your chin to your chest, you should feel — we can quantify it — but you should feel a certain way, you should have certain capabilities. You capabilities should not be poor because I think if you have a weak, unstable neck, you're going to increase the likelihood of that happening, in my opinion. So, if you're proactive in your training to impact the neck and flexion and extension, it's going to show up. History tells me — and I'm data driven, I love data, I love to make informed decisions, I don't want to speculate — history tells me that as their necks get stronger and more capable, when measured, you decrease the likelihood of that happening. For us, you either are impacting availability in a positive way, or you aren't. No different than the four rotator cuff muscles in the shoulder. When they're strong and stable, where your humerus comes into your shoulder girdle, those four rotator cuff muscles keep that thing locked into place. If those four rotator cuff muscles are strong and capable, that thing is going to be locked in there. When you strike something, it's going to decrease the likelihood of you having an issue. It's those areas of the body that we talked about earlier. When I look at decreasing the likelihood of injury, making them harder to break, training, it's not — and I said this to the guys — it's not pre-hab. People say, 'Oh, do this sequence of prehab so you don't have to rehab.' I just call it training — how we train the neck, how we train the shoulder girdle, how we train the hip, hamstrings, ankles, those are the things that are very important in our training, in addition to other things that people often view as important. You would hear back squatting, as an example. There's a time and place for the back squat, but it doesn't trump any of those other areas. The first goal for us is to make sure that, through our training, our training is sound of those areas, which will, history tells us, with our availability, that if training is sound in those areas, guys are going to be more available than less available, and that's the goal. For me, to feel a guy and to make sure that his neck is capable, I feel a lot better sending him out there, whether he runs down on kickoff or whether he's a quarterback or whatever the situation is, I feel a lot better about myself in the preparation we put in with the guys if his neck is strong and his traps are strong, his four rotator cuff muscles are strong and capable, his hips are strong and stable. That makes me sleep better at night and feel better, if that's not the case. We'll go through some of the data that we got today and we'll look through and we'll identify areas where there are deficiencies. Then, that's how we'll help with those guys. I always describe it as that's how we will help make them harder to break."

On how he 'earns the trust of the players':

"So if I tell you something, we don't have a relationship. I tell you something and it happens, then you go, 'Oh, you give me \$10, I'm going to give this back to you. Let me borrow \$10, please.' OK, yeah. Or \$150,000, if you had it. You would give me the money, we have a good relationship, I'll give it back to you by Friday at Noon. OK, Friday at Noon comes, and you have that money. Next time I ask you for the money, 'Oh yeah, Herb, what do you need?' Now, if it's two Fridays from then and you're coming to me like, 'Hey, I gave you this money, where is it?' That's probably not going to bode well for our trust. Not only if I tell you, 'Yeah, you'll have it by Friday at Noon.' Then, I may give it to you earlier, but you're not going to have it at 12:01, 12:07 and 30 seconds, you're going to have it when I say. If I do, then, what I say, I trust that what you say is going to take place, right? I told them this today, what you do speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say. Today, I only talked to them when I needed to talk to them. I want to show them. I want to show them things, and then they feel it. and then they go, 'Yeah, that's what he said.' Then, if they get a result, do this to improve that, and then that happens, that builds trust. What I say is what I will do. If I'm not certain, I won't say anything. If I'm certain, I'm

going to say what it is, then they get the result, then their trust in what Coach Herb says, it goes up. Then, you just build that each day. Now, you're with a guy, whether it's a month or multiple years, whether they want to hear it or not, they'll know that it's in their best interest in that when have I not told you something that you could believe in? You haven't. Oh, OK. So, just listen. But these guys, yeah, we're not there. We just met. So, we're working to build that and establish that daily. A week from now, it will be different. It's different right now than it was when we started the workout. They see me a certain way. My staff and I, we will just take and build upon that, each and every day, so that by the time that we get to training camp and we get to the season, let alone down the line, we're building that trust every day. It's incredibly important. But, there's no re-dos. So, that's why I say, if I know, I say, if I don't know or I am uncertain, I keep my mouth shut."

On the duration of this 'process':

"The process, the time spent, the time that we spend together, will have value. These guys, they realize it — I think they realize it, I'm confident that they realize it after day one. With each passing day, they'll reap the reward of what we do in that training environment. A week from now, they'll have improved. That's good business. If they give me their time and energy, and then a week, let alone by the middle of June, they're the same, that's not good business. Or, if they get worse, right? Because their time spent with me, I'll either help them — and, help them how? For a guy, it may be pressing ability, range of motion in his quads and hip flexors, that's where we're identifying. This first week, through evaluations, we will capture your capabilities. I don't get into the subject of like, 'I helped you in this way.' It's plain and simple, right? The capabilities either change, positively or negatively, or there's no change. I got asked a question once by a recruit's Mom. 'Coach Herb, has there ever been a guy that you've worked with that hasn't changed?' No. I say that in a very humble way. I just know that if they give me their time and energy, we're going to figure out what they need and we're going to give it to them. Then, down the line, they're going to assign value to Phase One, Week 1 and Week 2, then as we get into Phase Two, Phase Three, it's incredibly important that they reap the reward of what we do. Then, let that message carry the weight that it carries, or not. My job is to make sure that guys understand that, when they come into that environment, that there is value there."

On if he 'takes pride' in a 'limited amount of season-ending injuries' last season at Michigan:

"We had a roster of 145 guys. [Former Michigan OL] Zak Zinter broke his leg in the Ohio State game. Rayshaun Benny broke his ankle in the Alabama game. The rest were available. Maybe it's luck. Maybe it's the things that we do, impact availability in a positive way. I think the key is, it's a combination of both, potentially. I'm not really into luck. I like to control the things that I can control, which is why we emphasize the things that we emphasize in training because, over time, it has proven that our guys, especially the guys that are playing the most football, are available to do that. Every year, there are different scenarios that pop up, but the most recent circumstance, the Rose Bowl and, obviously, the National Championship, a high percentage of our best football players, and the guys that we need to win those games, were able to go out and compete for us."

TIGHT END HAYDEN HURST

On 'what was attractive' about joining the Chargers:

"[General Manager] Joe Hortiz, G-Ro [Offensive Coordinator Greg Roman], [Run Game Coordinator/Tight Ends Coach] Andy [Bischoff], getting back into the Harbaugh system — that's who drafted me and brought me into the league, gave me my first opportunity. For me, it was kind of a no-brainer to come here."

On the 'vision' for the offense:

"It's a lot of broad strokes from the Baltimore days — 2018-19, when I was there. They're reliant upon their tight ends, the receivers have to get open. It's going to be a hell of a run game [*laughter*]. It's just cool seeing that playbook pop up there, familiar words, just kind of getting back to my roots."

On running back Gus Edwards:

"He is downhill, physical, run right at you — which is, from what I'm understanding, first round of meetings, that's the mantra of this place. We're going to be physical, we're going to come at you. When you see us pop up on the schedule, it's going to be a long Sunday."

On Offensive Coordinator Greg Roman and 'how to build good run games':

"You have to be solid up front. You have to have smart guys all across the board — tight ends, offensive linemen, running backs. I think the most important part has just been that wherever he's been, it's just been a collective effort. When I was in Baltimore, those were two of the closest teams that I've ever been on, just guys fighting for one another. It's not that individualized stuff like you see in the NFL, it's really a family. It's a family. It's what I signed up for, playing for the guy next to me, giving it my all to make sure that he gets his job done. It's just a collective effort. I think that's the beauty of it."

On if it is 'obvious' that the team wants to be 'physical':

"100 percent. You can read it word-for-word off the PowerPoints. It's the Harbaugh mentality. Like I said, I played for [Ravens Head Coach] John [Harbaugh] in Baltimore for two years and it's the same sort of ideology. We want to out-physical teams, we want teams to fear us, we want teams to end up giving up in the fourth quarter, where we're just hitting our stride. I think that's where you get the most productive football, when you're just out-physicaling people."

On if there is a 'primary responsibility' for tight ends 'in this system':

"You have to be able to do everything. Obviously, besides quarterback, I think that tight end, in this offense, probably has the most on their plate with run game protection stuff and pass game stuff. You have to be on your P's and Q's. From what I know of Andy [Bischoff] and G-Ro [Greg Roman], there's not going to be specialized stuff, you have to be able to do everything. You have to be a well-rounded tight end in this offense."

On 'how different that was' compared to other teams and situations:

"Very different. I think this is Year 7 for me, team number five. Like I said, I kind of hit my stride in Baltimore. They drafted me for a reason — big, physical, fast. Then, I kind of got away from that in Atlanta. Cincinnati, kind of brought me back to that AFC North physicality. Last year was last year. Just happy to be here, back in a system that I really understand."

On Harbaugh:

"He's just very positive. A lot of coaches make this about themselves and their egos get in the way. But with him, he just wants to win and he wants the guys to get better. He wants guys to get healthy. He wants guys to have success. Even in meetings, I've met him over the phone, but just seeing him in-person, how eccentric he is in meetings — he's getting up, he's showing guys how to do stuff. It just makes it fun because I think we all know that this can be a really, really long season if you don't have the right people in place, it can kind of drag along. But, if you have a guy like that in the building who's just enthusiastic about football and wants to win, then that's infectious."

On similarities between Jim and John Harbaugh:

"Very similar. I think their philosophy, they get from their father, it's just they want to win and they want to be sound all across the board — fundamentals. It's going to be physical and it's going to be a lot of fun."

On if he is 'concerned at all' following his injury last season:

"Not at all. Last year, I had a concussion. For a week after, it was a little touch-and-go stuff, but I went to the Mayo Clinic down in Jacksonville and got a second opinion, got a full, clear bill of health. The only reason that I really sat out as long as I did was that, from the front office, there was really no point. We were 2-13 at the time, so there was really no point in rushing back."

On Harbaugh's instruction today in meetings:

"Just getting up there and like showing us how route to run, it's funny seeing your head coach do that, wherever you're at. Just getting up there, showing hand-placement stuff and things like that, it's just cool because meetings can get really boring when you're just sitting there flipping through PowerPoints. When you have a coach that gets up there and kind of is hands-on, it makes football a lot more enjoyable."

On his evaluation of Harbaugh's instruction:

"He looked good, man [*laughter*]. He was loose, he was fluid up there, putting his foot in the ground and turning back, being [quarterback-]friendly. He's got it all covered [*laughter*]."

On if there is 'overlap' between Roman's offense in Baltimore and what has been installed thus far:

"There are some similarities, just with words and things like that. Obviously, how he wants to run the ball and what he thinks is going to be successful. I'm sure it's evolved since 2018, 2019, and he's put his different spins on it — obviously, the passing game is probably a little bit more advanced. But, I know that run game to my core, and it's going to be fun to watch."

On why this run scheme 'works':

"I think that everybody in this league, they're big, strong, fast, athletic. But, when you have a system like this, where you get guys to buy-in and collectively fight for one another, and you turn it into a street fight — like what we did in Baltimore, it's just you're going to out-tough people, because nobody wants to do that for 60 minutes, it's a tough game and tough doing that 20 weeks for 60 minutes. I think these coaches, playing for John [Harbaugh] and playing for Jim [Harbaugh], they expect to wear teams out at the end. If you're not going to do it, they're going to find somebody to do it."

On how the run game 'helps' QB Justin Herbert:

"He's deadly. You give him a run game, he is going to be able to throw it all over the place. I think that's the one thing, outside looking in, it's the one thing that he hasn't had, just a consistent run game. We all see what he can do through the air. You pair up a run game with that, I think that the sky is the limit for this place."

On his relationship with fellow TE Will Dissly:

"Will [Dissly] came out the same year. We were in the same draft class. He had a lot of success, he got to stay in Seattle for a few years. I bounced around a little bit, trying to find a home. It'll be fun to be in the same room with him. I think we have similar qualities. He does some things well that I can pick and choose from to help my game, and, hopefully, I can help him with route-running stuff, as well. I think we'll pair pretty good together."

On his 'play style':

"Fast and physical. I remember my first year at these guys back in Baltimore. They just told me that I was thinking a little bit too much. When I think, I play slow. My rookie year, after that, I just promised myself that whatever I do, it's going to be 1,000 miles an hour. I had success in Cincinnati, I had success in Baltimore with those guys, just understanding what I'm doing, cutting it loose, playing fast and physical. Because, again, I know that I can do it for 60 minutes, but not everybody can do that. I'll take it there."

On if he could have a 'renaissance type of year' in 'this system and place' where he 'feels comfortable':

"Certainly. This is my brand of football. This is what I play. I played in the SEC, I played for [former South Carolina Head Coach Will] Muschamp. I played from that [Nick] Saban blueprint. They drafted me in Baltimore because of that blueprint and who I am, my makeup. I did it in Cincinnati, when they gave me the opportunity. They kind of laid out in front of me what was expected of me. Didn't get that in Carolina, but they know why they came and got me. I'm physical. I love playing like that because I know that for 60 minutes, I can do it. The person across from me? I don't know, we'll find out."

On 'what percentage of the NFL can do it':

"There are a few dogs out there [laughter]. There are guys that you circle that you know it's going to be a street fight for 60 minutes, but there are also teams where you know that if I can get after them, they'll end up folding and quitting. I just know that — I'm 30 years old and I've been playing sports since I was, gosh, I don't know how long — and I've done it every year. I just know who I am to my core. If I can bring that guy out like I did in Cincinnati, there's not many guys that can match that for 60 minutes."

On his 'dog eat dog' tattoo:

"That's just the league, man. It's a street fight. It's mano a mano. This guy is lining up in front of me and he thinks he's better than me. We're going to see where the cards fall. I like my odds."

On 'why running the football still matters to the success of a football team':

"You have to give guys different looks. If you line up in certain sets and they know what they're getting, the defense is just going to tee off on you. But, if you're multi-dimensional and you're able to do stuff that confuses them, you get the backers and secondary to suck up, pause [laughter], it really creates a problem for the defense — when you have the football flying over your head, when you're thinking run. This offense is going to be fun. It is quick-hitting, it's right at you. It's what I love."

On the baseline examination with Executive Director of Player Performance Ben Herbert:

"It was fun. I haven't had that in the NFL yet, a stuff like that that is really hands-on and really wants to fix you and see your deficiencies and help you overcome those, which I think is great because, playing football, you get beat up. Everyone thinks squat, bench, clean, throw stuff over my head, it's like they're really breaking it down to making sure that the soft-tissue stuff doesn't happen, guys are healthy and guys can play this brand of football."