

Chargers Offseason Media Availability, Phase Two

Monday, May 1, 2023 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR KELLEN MOORE

On the offseason:

"It's been really good. It's been really fun just being able to collaborate. Obviously, with coaches, initially. Now, that we have the players here, just really starting to build that. It's been a lot of fun. It's been great kind of connecting with these guys. Today was the first day on the field to actually do some field stuff. We actually had a football out there. That was good."

On QB Justin Herbert:

"He's just really detailed, really diligent with his work. He really has just been awesome to kind of collaborate and make sure, as we go through this process, that we don't lose anything as we go through a transition. I think that's one big part of this thing, is that there's been a lot of success. Justin has had a lot of success his first few years. We want to make sure we build off of that and not start from scratch."

On if Herbert's recovery affects the offseason program:

"Really, to be honest, most years I think there's always a handful of guys that are going through this process. It just kind of happens a lot of times. OTAs [Organized Team Activities], a lot of guys are going through cleanups and a couple of different things to go through in an offseason. This happens. [G] Zion [Johnson] will be going through it just like Justin. I think you get as much as you can in the classroom, the walkthroughs, all of the different components to that thing. Obviously, there will be some field work that Justin may not be able to be a part of — as much as he would want to, we would all want to, but we'll catch up with it. We have plenty of time through the training camp and all of that."

On the roster:

"Really, ultimately, the roster we were pretty much able to bring everyone back from last year, for the most part. Walking in that room today, other than [Quarterbacks Coach] Doug [Nussmeier], [Offensive Assistant] Phil [Serchia] and myself, the three coaches that were new, everyone else was part of 2022. It has been really fun just to kind of start building those relationships. I think that's the biggest thing about this thing, is that we're doing this thing together. As we find each other, start understanding each other and start working together, I think, develop this thing and build it."

On the positions on the roster:

"I think the really cool part is listening to the position coaches, initially, because those guys have spent a lot of time with these guys over the course of the last few years. Really, understanding where their position is, getting to know some of the players and then, ultimately, kind of setting our eyes on 2023. That was our whole plan from the beginning. It's been really, really good. I think you have a really cool offensive line that's young, that's developing and that's going to be a tremendous strength of ours. [C] Corey [Linsley] leads the way, but you have a bunch of young guys that may have dealt with getting banged up a little bit last year, but fought through it. That's going to be a really, really good group. [TE] Gerald [Everett] at the tight end spot with young guys behind him kind of finding their roles, dealing with health things. It seemed like, obviously, a lot of guys were banged up. The receiver room, kind of the same thing. You have [WR] Keenan [Allen], you have [WR] Mike [Williams], [WR Joshua] Josh [Palmer], they've been doing it for a long time. They're really, really good. Really talented. You have some younger guys in there. Then, obviously, at the running back position with [RB] Austin [Ekeler] and then, the younger guys who kind of have their different opportunities. Each group kind of has that feeling to it. It'll be a lot of fun."

On Head Coach Brandon Staley:

"Brandon has been awesome. He's been really, really good. I've just loved working together, collaborating on this thing and kind of building this offense toward 2023. Again, kind of embracing all of the good things that are going on and then, hopefully, kind of being able to add some different things that can hopefully help us as we go on in our future here. Brandon has been awesome through the whole transition, through the draft process. It's been a lot of fun."

On the team selecting WR Quentin Johnston in the first round:

"Brandon [Staley] is this defensive guy and he's drafting these offensive guys, I like this. It's a lot of fun. Q [Johnston] really stood out for us as we went through the process. Everyone kind of sees the measurables, the size as far as the height and the weight. What he did for TCU from his versatility, I thought, was really, really special. His ability to kind of catch-and-run, he was a fly-sweep guy. He got the ball in a lot of different ways. You saw a lot of versatility in his game that maybe, initially, someone may not have necessarily anticipated. We were really excited that he was there and available for us."

On areas Johnston can improve:

"Certainly, everyone is going to have things they want to improve on as they go into the NFL. He had a couple of drops, statistically, if you get detailed into that, but he makes some spectacular plays. I think he's going to be just fine. It wasn't a big concern for us. If you see enough of his contested catches at TCU and the challenge of the catches that he didn't make, you feel very comfortable with that."

On how Johnston and WR Derius Davis add speed to the offense:

"There's a vertical element of it that we're really excited about. With Q [Johnston], just the size, catch radius. He goes up and gets the ball downfield. You can do it however you need to do it, whether it's size, catch radius, speed. He definitely brings a vertical element to us. Derius, obviously, the kick return and punt return component of it, and then he just has straight-up natural speed that's very rare in this league. Only a handful of teams have those type of things."

On not drafting a tight end and if that's a position he'd 'like to see grow':

"No, sometimes drafts, that's just the way drafts go. There was a lot of tight ends in this draft that we liked. Sometimes, that's just the way drafts go. We feel really good about the group. Gerald [Everett] has done a tremendous job. He's been in this league for a number of years. From afar, I've always been impressed with his production and versatility at the tight end position. Then, we have this younger group that we're really excited about just developing these guys. Giving them roles and opportunities. I think the cool thing about football is that you can play it in a lot of different ways. There's not just one way to do it. We find what these guys do really well and try to enhance those things."

On the importance of tight end to the offense:

"I think the tight end room is a very rare room and it's a very important room for an offense because they're part of every aspect of the game. The run game, they're right in there with the O-Line in the run-game component and the techniques. They're in the pass game, obviously, with the QBs, at times they're a protector, even in the play-action game and what not. Those guys have to be able to do a lot of different things. It's a very important role just because of those things. We probably used a little bit more tight ends, maybe, the last couple of years in Dallas. A little bit more 12 and 13 [personnel] and some of those different things. It suited us well. We'll do whatever suits us best as we kind of build this thing. I am excited about the guys we have. I think they all have traits that are really exciting. I'm excited to just work with them."

On the importance of explosive plays:

"I think it's just something that we've all talked about through this whole process this offseason. I think it's a collaborative effort. It's not just about Dallas or the scheme. I think it's just all of us working together on creating more explosive opportunities. I think Brandon [Staley] is always a really awesome resource for me because he views it from the defensive side. He can express the challenges that certain things create when you're on the opposing side. The quickest way to get to the end zone is big plays. In this league, if you go 12-, 14-, 15-play drives, they're awesome. They're really fun to be part of because it bleeds the clock and does so many good things. At the end of the day, when you do have explosive opportunities, you need to take advantage of those. It's a quicker way to get to the end zone and, ultimately, when you look at the statistics, explosive plays has a huge impact on who's winning games."

On improving the running game:

"It's just a collaborative effort. I think there was some health stuff. Obviously, there were some missing pieces last year. I thought there was some good stuff. Again, I think the biggest thing as you go through these transitions is don't lose any of the good. There's plenty of good that has gone on here, run game included. There will be different things, schematically, that come from my past experiences or someone else on our staff's past experiences that we think may be able to better suit us or help us in some form or fashion. I think we're really excited to just collaborate on this thing. I think we'll utilize some of the things that were in place and some other stuff. We'll suit it however it best suits our players. Whatever best suits us, we can adapt and adjust however we need to."

On if RB Austin Ekeler's absence affects the offseason program:

"Right now, we're just so focused on really the foundation of the system, of offensive football. Just kind of building a really solid foundation focusing more on the bigger picture, the big picture from a scheme standpoint. Then, as you get into Phase Three of OTAs, training camp and as you get into the season, we start narrowing that thing, getting specific from player-specific responsibilities and what not. Right now, we're at such a wider lens that we're really teaching for everyone."

On the team's sixth-round selection, DL Scott Matlock, calling him the 'Boise State GOAT':

"He's awesome. I got a chance to meet him when he was here for his visit. He's a stud. I'm glad we have a couple of Broncos. I think we have two now [Matlock and DL David Moya]. We need to get a couple of more somehow. We'll figure out a way."

On if he and Matlock took a picture together on his visit:

"We did take a picture, yes."

On Matlock catching two touchdowns at Boise State:

"Oh yes, he's already told me. [Boise State Head Coach] Andy Avalos immediately sent them to me. He's the head coach at Boise. He sent them to me as soon as [Matlock] got drafted. For you guys concerned about the tight end position, maybe we have something there [*laughter*]."

On drafting Johnston speaking to the philosophy of 'you can never have enough playmakers':

"I completely agree with it. Whatever positions they are — I think, sometimes, we get very focused in the positions — you just want really talented players who can have an impact on the field. Whatever position they are — running back, receiver, tight end — we'll figure out how the scheme fits those guys. To have Q [Johnston] join that receiver room with all the talent that's in there in those guys and the experience, I think it's going to be awesome for him because he's going to learn so much from those guys. It's going to allow us to put these guys in different roles and different positions to allow them to be successful. No one is ever going to complain about having a receiver room like this room, where you have all of this talent. I think we're really, really excited."

TACKLE TREY PIPKINS III

On 'what it meant' to re-sign with the Chargers:

"Everything. I definitely did not want to go anywhere else. I love the guys. I love the team, love the coaches, love everybody here. It was awesome to get the opportunity to come back."

On 'proving' that he could 'hold down the job long-term':

"It's good for confidence, obviously, but I think that I still have a lot more to prove. I'm going to keep working and keep doing what I do, continue to try to prove that I earned this."

On if his agent spoke with any other teams during free agency:

"There were a few other teams, but I had told him before everything started that this is where I wanted to be. Whatever he could do to make that work was priority number one. It all worked out."

On his 'level of confidence' that he would return to the team following the end of last season:

"Honestly, I didn't know. I had never been through free agency or anything before, so I just waited to see what happened. From the end of the season to March 15, it seemed like that was years long [laughter]. It seemed like a really long time. I didn't really know what to expect so I just had to play it by ear and wait to see what happened."

On his 'first purchase' following the extension:

"No, I have not made a first purchase. My wife and I bought a house in Texas, but that was, technically, before I signed. There wasn't any big purchase."

On new Offensive Coordinator Kellen Moore:

"It's been great. The amount of knowledge that he has is unbelievable. I think that the cool things that he can bring to our offense is going to be huge for us."

On what Moore can bring to the offense:

"His honestly, his knowledge of just offense, in general, and just his willingness to create and be creative with plays and play-calling, things like that, is going to be really good for us."

On if he feels that he is 'an ascending player':

"I think that I still have a lot to prove. I think I have a lot to improve on and get better at, so I think I can still improve from where I was at last year, for sure."

On his relationship with OL Jamaree Salyer:

"He's an alright guy [laughter]. No, he's awesome. Just like everybody else in the O-line room, we're all a very tight-knit group. Whoever is playing anywhere on the line, we're going to have really good chemistry either way. I can't wait to figure out how everything's going to work out and get comfortable with whoever is next to me."

On having C Corey Linsley leading the group:

"It's huge. Any time you can have veteran like Corey [Linsley], who's been through so much, has been to multiple Pro Bowls, all of that type of stuff, he can teach you so much about the game, about succeeding in the way that you want to succeed and helping you out in your own personal game. Even though he doesn't play tackle or anything like that, the knowledge he has about the game is great. He helps a ton."

On what 'needs to happen' for the team to 'achieve a higher level' than it did last season:

"We just have to continue to get close and build our chemistry, build our trust in one another. I think that is going to be huge for us, the chemistry that we can build with one another and continue to trust, really just rely on one another. I think that is going to be big for us."

On how last season ended impacting this upcoming season:

"Aside from the motivation piece – which, obviously, it's a big motivation to improve and not let something like that happen again – just that type of experience, going through something like that with a team, with a group, is just huge for the chemistry and the camaraderie you build when you go through something tough. You fight and fight and fight to come back together stronger."

On if his knee is '100 percent':

"Oh yeah. I don't even think about it anymore [laughter]."

On if it is a 'relief' that his knee is healthy:

"It's been good to get it all rehabbed and fully healthy. It's been good that I don't have to worry about it anymore. For sure."

On how his 'approach to the offseason changed this year' compared to previous offseasons:

"This year, it didn't change a whole lot from last year. I still went down to Dallas. Before that, I was just trying to figure out what really worked for me and I didn't really know. The help from [T] Rashawn [Slater] and [former Chargers OL] Oday [Aboushi], just telling me to head down to Duke [Manyweather] and really work an O-line specific coach and things like that, it really helped me a ton. Continue to add and continue finding what works for me."

On having the same position coach for consecutive seasons for the first time in his career:

"It's huge. I was joking with my agent during free agency, I was like, 'Of course, Nuge [Offensive Line Coach Brendan Nugent] is back. This the first time I'm going to be able to have the same O-line coach and, of course, I'm going to have to go somewhere else or something.' I was going to be pissed [laughter]. It's huge. That continuity and terminology and just the relationship you can build with O-line coaches is big. I think it will really big."

On particular aspects of his game that he worked on with Manyweather:

"I think the biggest thing that he helped me with is just understanding, in my pass set, where to stop setting. So, I stopped over-setting, just really staying inside-out on defenders and things like that, and being strong when I get to that point and things like that. I think that's the biggest thing that helped me with, for sure."

On if he will continue to work with Manyweather over the summer:

"Yes, I'll go back out there in the summer."

On working with Slater at Manyweather's facility and if any other Chargers joined them this offseason:

"[T] Foster [Sarrell] went down there, too. He was down there for 8, 10 weeks in the spring. He was down there with us, which, it was awesome to have him down there, too."

OFFENSIVE LINEMAN JAMAREE SALYER

On his offseason:

"It's been going pretty well, just working out. I went back home to Atlanta and worked out this spot called Pinnacle Prospects. I got some good work in, there's a lot of competition in there. A lot of guys I played with in college, a lot of guys around the league, in general, just come in and get some good work. I knew I had things to work on, obviously, making the transition to a different position. I always try to get cross-train in the offseason."

On if he has 'taken any time to reflect' on his rookie season:

"It's kind of hard to slow down, sometimes, for football players. It's a certain time period where you slow down and you go on vacation and spend time with family, but I just feel like this is a quick turnaround, especially if you go deep into the season like we did last year. For me, it's kind of hard to slow down and stop working and be reflective because, for me, I feel like I'm not working hard enough. I think I have had some time to think about it. Everybody tries to ask me about it, I'm just like, 'You know what happened.' I'm kind of ready to move on to the next adventure, which is this season. I've thought about it. This was kind of a whirlwind then, but ready to move forward to what's next."

On switching positions along the offensive front:

"I've always said that I'm a team-first type of player. I've always wanted to be open to doing whatever the team needs me to do. Obviously, it worked out in my favorite last year. Like I said, I always try to cross-train in the offseason, so I'm not exactly sure where I will land yet, but I just want to be available to play whatever the team needs me to play. I want to be able to be on the field and help in any type of way that I can."

On the differences between tackle and guard:

"Tackle, it calls for more explosion, as far as with your feet. Guard, I feel like, is more quick twitch. Things happen a lot faster on the inside than they do on the outside. Most of the time, as a tackle, you blocking, probably, the best pound-for-pound player on the field, he's a good athlete, but you're normally just blocking that person for like 70 percent of the game. At guard, there are twists, linebackers, nickels that come, safeties that show up on the inside, so you have to think a lot faster at guard, whereas at tackle, you have to play a lot faster, but it's not as much thinking – most of the time, you're just kind of out there playing the game."

On the differences between playing on the left side of the line compared to the right side:

"Feet, hands. From a doing-it standpoint, obviously, everything is flipped. From a mental standpoint, it's football. I try not to over-complicate it, I try not to over-do it. When it happens, I just try to take the coach, take the criticism as I can. I train, in the offseason, at both sides, most of the time at both positions. To me, it's just going out there and playing football."

On new Offensive Coordinator Kellen Moore:

"He's a great coach, great person. We had a chance to meet with him today. I got a chance to talk to him in the offseason. He's very, very creative with his play-calling. Obviously, the Cowboys, his previous team, they were known as a very physical team and they were very creative. He's very good at setting up plays for them. They had a very successful offense, so the proof is in the pudding for him. I'm excited to see what he could do for us here."

On if he has 'any early indication' for what the offensive line could look like:

"We're just starting to get into meetings. We haven't gotten too deep into the plays and whatnot. All we have is what he's done in the past, and what he's done the past, everybody knows that the Cowboys have been a physical team. We're excited about that, if that comes to be, but at the end of the day, he is going to call the plays and we have to execute whatever it is."

On his first true NFL offseason compared to the Draft process last year:

"It's night-and-day. You have to fly to Indy [Indianapolis, Ind.], then you have to fly to Pensacola [Fla.] to train, then you have to make space for your family somewhere in there. Where, in the NFL offseason, you get your rookie year behind you, you can just kind of chill for a little bit. You just kind of relax, spend time with the guys for a little bit after the season. You spend time with family, go places, do things. You have a little bit of change in your pocket. It's a lot better. Rookie year, I was like, 'I have change in my pocket, but I'm going to have to pay it back [laughter].' There are a lot of things that you have to think about, you have to make some decisions when you're coming into it [laughter]. If you're a late-round pick, you have to make some choices [laughter]. It's been a lot different. Going into Year 2, it's been a lot more smooth. I had a lot of fun this offseason, getting to spend time with family, getting to do things with my family, and getting to work – just getting to train, getting to focus just on football, not a 40-yard-dash, not a vertical [jump]. It's been cool."

On his relationship with Pipkins and Linsley:

"Those guys, just transitioning into the league, they were probably two of the better veterans that I could have had. Having [former Chargers G] Matt [Feiler] last year and those guys really made it easy for me to come in and be in the position that I was in and excel. They didn't put more pressure on me than I could take or anything like that. They were just like, 'We need you to do what you need to do and we trust you.' That's really the biggest thing with me. Last year, they instilled a lot of trust in me, even talking to Trey now, I can tell that he trusts me a lot. Talking to Corey, he trusts me a lot. I feel like I've earned that, to a degree, but I want to keep earning their respect, their trust, by the way that I carry myself. I couldn't ask for better veterans coming into the season."