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Chargers Training Camp Media Availability

Wednesday, July 27, 2022 ⚡ Jack Hammett Sports Complex ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

On having ‘lines of fans’ outside of training camp gate prior practice opening:

“It means that people are excited about the Chargers. It means that it’s the start of training camp. There’s nothing better in pro sports than training camp around your fans. This is where you make a lot of memories happen. I know how important it is for our organization and our players. We hope to give them a great three or four weeks of camp.”

On S Derwin James Jr. not practicing today:

“We’re working through his contract situation. Just making sure that that gets situated here. He’s out here doing all of the walk-throughs, he’s going to be working out, but he won’t be going full-speed until that gets situated.”

On discussions involving James Jr.’s contract:

“We have full respect for Derwin, his agent — David Mulugheta, who is one of the best in the business. I think that there is full respect on both sides. They know how much we love Derwin. Derwin knows how much we love him. We’re just working through that process right now. We’re going to let it take shape, and when it does, he’ll be out there playing.”

On if James Jr.’s shoulder is ‘fully healed’:

“Oh, yeah — 100 percent clear. Derwin is ready to go.”

On if James Jr. ‘will be out there once the contract situation is resolved’:

“Yes, he will be out there.”

On how he prepared for his second season as Head Coach:

“I think before we left for break, we were really connected on how we wanted this training camp to look. I think that’s the advantage of going into your second year with everybody. I think you could tell by how today went into, it was just so much crisper. There’s so much more confidence in what you’re doing. But, I took a lot of time this summer and enjoyed my family. We tried to make a lot of memories and be around my boys, my nieces and all of the people who are close to me. We were ready for today and I felt like our performance reflected it.”

On ‘if today was about re-installing what was taught in OTAs’:

“It’s building off of what we did in spring practice, with the OTAs and the minicamp. Your goal, as a coach, is to have your install kind of happen three times before you play. That’s certainly our goal here. I think the one thing after the spring is you get to assess that part of your operation. Then, if you need to make a couple of adjustments going into training camp, you can. Out here, this is guys playing fast and really playing football for the first time with their helmets on, pads, going full speed against each other — mano a mano — and that’s a big part of coming back, just learning how to practice as a team, getting used to that physicality. I thought that we were off to a good start today.”

On RB Isaiah Spiller:

“He’s going to be in a full competition at running back. It’s going to be a full competition. It’s not just going to be him as a running back, it’s going to be him on special teams. It’s going to be, ‘Who can be the most complete running back for our football team?’ I’m excited to see that competition take shape.”

On LB Kenneth Murray Jr. starting training camp on Active/Physically Unable to Perform:

“There’s not a timeline. I know that he’s made a lot of progress over the summer — not enough to start camp, but I think that you’ll see him at some point during training camp. He’s working hard and he’s feeling much closer. But, I’m not going to put a timeline on it. I just think that he will be practicing at some point in the next four to six weeks.”

On Murray Jr. ‘missing time’ during training camp and how that could impact his role:

“I think that’s a good question. I think it remains to be seen. I think that’ll be up to Kenneth [Murray Jr.], how much he is able to take what he knows — obviously, in the classroom and in the walk-throughs — and then being able to translate it to the football field. I know that he’s working hard. He has a good mindset.”

On the energy expressed today from CB J.C. Jackson and OLB Khalil Mack:

“Those guys, they’ve played a lot of football. I think that experience and that production brings a lot of confidence. I saw a group that was playing together today, as a team. That is what we were after today, putting together a good team performance in all three phases. You can have the right energy when you know what you’re doing — you know how to do it and why it’s important. That’s what we’re after, as a staff, making sure that in all three phases, that that takes place so that you can get the fun and the energy of football.”

On the competition at RT and ‘what will decide the competition’:

“I think consistency and performance, and I think being a complete tackle in the run game and pass game. We’re going to get a very accurate evaluation from them by who they have to block every single day. Obviously, throughout the preseason games, we’re going to have a lot of opportunities to evaluate these guys. I know that we have confidence in both of them. It’s going to be fun to see these guys compete. I think it’s not just about them, it’s how they play with the other four guys that are on their offensive line, and, obviously, the other players around them, too. They’re worked really hard. I think you can see big changes in both of them. They’re both confident football players and that’s going to bring out the best.”

On if today’s practice ‘was a good indication’ of rep distribution at RT:

“For sure. We’re definitely going to get them equal looks at it so that we can truly figure it out. They both deserve it. They both deserve that chance to truly compete. I think that you’ll see a lot more of that as we go.”

On ‘how much Khalil Mack has developed’ since Staley coached him on the Bears in 2018:

“He’s just wiser. He’s the same personality-wise, but he’s just wiser. There’s even more experience to draw from. That player that was out there today is the player that I’m used to seeing.”

On if he will ‘continue with 4th-and-Staley play-calling’:

“Every year is a new season. I think that we have full confidence in our team and how we do things. I think each of those things has a life of its own — that’s what I’ve said from the beginning. I know that kind of exploded last year. I do think it’s a positive thing for our team because we want to be aggressive. We want to have a team that’s fearless. It’s not scared to meet a moment. Every decision has a life of its own. You’re going to take it case-by-case. We have a brand new team, so to say that we’re going to do it exactly like we did last year, that won’t be the case.”

On if anything ‘was pointed out’ to him following last season he was ‘frustrated by’:

“I mean, I didn’t like the way we finished the season, not getting a chance to compete in the tournament — that stayed with me ever since I walked across that field in the last game. I liked the way we competed as a team in the last four games, but we were 1-3. That’s the facts. We didn’t finish our season, and I think that we’re going to draw a lot of lessons from that.”

On how much influence ‘the spreadsheet and EPA’ will play in fourth-down decisions this year:

“All of those decisions are about feel, all of them are — they’re about mindset, then there’s the math that’s also a part of it, but it’s more mindset than math, I can assure you that. It’s the way that we want to play, as a team. I think that we’re going to try and get better at it as we go.”

On the competition along the defensive line:

“A lot of competition, and guys competing for different roles. We normally have five active on game day — five or six. Those spots are going to be important in competing for roles, and what exactly that looks like. We have four to six weeks to figure it out. I think we do have some good pieces that can play some unique roles for us, but that’s going to take shape as we go. We’re going to know all that we need to know about these guys when we put pads on — who can sustain that consistency of performance, who can produce and make plays. Fortunately for us, we’re going to have a great evaluation because our offensive line is one of the top lines in football.”

On building ‘team comradery’:

“I think that we have a bunch of guys that really fit well together. I think our ownership — the Spanos Family — [General Manager] Tom Telesco, [Director of Player Personnel] JoJo Wooden, [Director of College Scouting] Kevin Kelly, [Executive Vice President of Football Administration/Player Finance] Ed McGuire, our coaching staff, we brought in guys that really love this game, that have incredible makeup as competitors. Normally, when you bring people like that together, then you will have that team spirit, a team that believes in one another. That’s certainly what we’re after. To see it take shape out here in training camp on the first practice, I like that, as a coach. I expect it to continue to grow as we go.”

On the players’ mindset at the start of training camp:

“They believe in our team. They believe in the Powder Blues. Your most important job, as a head coach, is getting your team to believe in what you do and how you do it. I know that our team really believes in playing for the Powder Blues. I think our whole organization is why they feel that way. It’s not just coaches, it’s everybody in our organization that comes together for these guys. We expect that to reflect our performance. I think today was off to a good start.”

On the secondary:

“You know how I feel about the secondary. I feel like, in the NFL, you can’t have enough secondary players. I think that we’ve drafted and acquired a lot of really good secondary players that can play a lot of different roles for us. There’s going to be fierce competition at corner, safety, and then all of those hybrid roles — Star, Money — and then in special teams. When you bring quality DBs together, it’s going to bring out the best in those guys, and then our receivers on our team. I think those guys are going to compete for roles. They have the ability, we’re going to see if they can be consistent in their performance, those young guys.”

On the young secondary players ‘getting ahead of the pack’:

“Toughness, physicality, discipline, consistency of those three things. Then, performing under pressure when we go against different people.”

QUARTERBACK JUSTIN HERBERT

On today's practice:

"The day went well. There was a lot of energy out of our guys. It's always tough spending so much time away from the facility, away from your teammates, but it was good to have everyone back out there today. Everyone looked good, sharp, so there is a lot to look forward to."

On his time off this summer:

"It was good. It went by pretty fast. I'm thankful to be back here working out and lifting and doing all of these things that we love around here. It's great to see all of the teammates and staff and just excited to get back to work."

On what he takes away from the team's finish to the 2021 season:

"You just have to compete and you have to execute when it matters most. Unfortunately, we fell short of that, but I think we have the team, and definitely the pieces, it's all about how we come together and work as a team. I'm looking forward to the challenge, of course, but a lot of great guys here, for sure."

On being in the same offensive system for the second year in a row:

"I think it's a major advantage for us having the same offense for the second year. Going into this camp, and having a year of film to look back on and study and go through, is so helpful. We're miles ahead of where we were at this point last year, so now we're focusing on things that are maybe a little more tough or challenging to tackle, but I think we're where we need to be right now."

On transitioning 'from a young guy to a veteran':

"I don't know. I'm still experiencing the young aspects of playing in the NFL. I have a lot to learn, but hopefully a lot of room for improvement, as well."

On the last time he had the same offensive system for two years in a row:

"My junior and senior year at Oregon, we had the same offense, so that was the last time."

On if he 'feels pressure to have team success':

"There is no pressure on us. The only pressure that you make is what you put on yourself. I think, as a team, we have the pieces, we have the athletes and competitors. As long as we're doing our best and we're asking each other what we want to do ourselves, I don't think there's much more that you can ask of."

On his thoughts on measuring a quarterback's success on their win-loss record:

"Personally, I don't measure quarterbacks that way. I think it's a team game. As long as we're playing the Chargers versus any team, that's what matters most. It's an offense, defense and special teams game that goes into it. You can definitely look at that, I think, but I think, for the most part, it's all about the team."

On TE Gerald Everett:

"Gerald is very athletic. He's a guy that's really able to create separation pretty easily. We've seen that over the couple of months that we have been together. Just throwing with him and getting all of the timing, as you would with a receiver, he's an incredible athlete. We've seen that in the weight room, out on the field, so I'm looking forward to throwing to him."

On what he worked on this offseason:

"A lot of it is footwork. I think all of the drops that tie into the routes — three-step, five-step, seven-step — and being smooth in your progression and going through all of the reads."

On how this season's defensive roster 'compares to last year':

"I thought the defense was really good last year, and so the pieces they added this year, it's really exciting to watch. The EDGE rushers are going to be a little difficult to deal with sometimes during practice, but it's a fun challenge and I'm looking forward to it."

On how G Zion Johnson fits into the offense:

“Hopefully at right guard [*laughter*]. He’s done an incredible job. He’s picked up the offense really quickly, so I’m looking forward to watching him progress and continuing to mature.”

On the competition between the offensive and defensive units:

“It’s always competitive. We’ve done a good job in the past two seasons of keeping it competitive. Those guys on the defense — [S] Derwin [James], led by [OLB] Kyle Van Noy, [OLB] Khalil [Mack], they are always competitive, and [CB] J.C. Jackson, as well. They force us to be better and as long as they are doing that, we feel like we can help each other out.”

On his ‘personal goals’ for the season:

“My personal goal is just to be the best quarterback and teammate that I can be. I try not to look too much into statistics. I think that can kind of skew or throw you off from what you are trying to accomplish. As long as I work hard and do the right things on and off the field, I think we’ll be in good shape.”

On the fans cheering for him after practice as he went to sign autographs:

“They were cheering for Khalil Mack, actually [*laughter*].”

OUTSIDE LINEBACKER KHALIL MACK

On the defensive additions going through their first training camp practice:

“First off, it’s always a blessing when you get to play this game, the game of football. I love this game and to have, like you said, the talent that we have out here, it starts with this. It starts with the work. My expectations for myself are always high. I’m not going to display or tell what they are, but I expect you guys to be able to see it when I touch the field.”

On the type of leader he is:

“I don’t like to talk much. I like my actions to speak, and I like for guys to follow me based on what they see and what they see me doing.”

On how he feels physically:

“Good, man. I’m blessed. First day out, it was a fun day. It was a fun day for me.”

On if today was a ‘normal first day of training camp’ compared to previous seasons:

“I feel like training camp is training camp. It was normal, I guess. I’m not sure what you meant by that.”

On his workload today:

“Just kind of getting the feel for things and getting in the groove of things. Just a normal day.”

On opening the regular season against the Raiders, the team that drafted him:

“It’s just another game. That’s what everyone says, right? ‘It’s just another game.’ I mean it is another game. Playing against some guys that I know is fun. The game of football is fun. I’ll talk a little trash, but that’s what we do.”

On ‘if developing a disruptive mindset starts in training camp’:

“It always starts here. You create habits out here on the field, on the practice field. A lot of people say switches and turning it on, but it all starts out here. That’s why I am doing what I’m doing, as far as this process, just jumping out there and getting the feel of things early rather than later.”

On joining a team ‘who had disappointment at the end of last season’ and how he can relate to that:

“That’s the thing; it’s a new season. I was disappointed in Chicago, so coming out here, I didn’t feel any disappointment. I felt excited. I felt excited for a new opportunity, just knowing the potential. Just getting to this, getting to what really matters — the work and the camaraderie, communication and feeling how it’s going to feel on Sundays before we get there.”

On the team’s potential:

“That’s the thing, everybody is going to tell you at this time of the year that, ‘The sky is the limit,’ and, ‘Championship,’ and all of that. I see it as one day at a time. Take it one day at a time and work together, being the best, getting better every day. I feel like that will take care of itself once we get to that point.”

On playing alongside OLB Joey Bosa and the rest of the EDGE group:

“It’s dope. Starting with [Outside Linebackers Coach] Giff [Smith], another great leader. He’s a fun dude, but when it comes down to work, we work. He does some things that are very impressive and you can see it with Joey and everybody communicating about what they want to do and what they want to feel for that day. It’s different, and it’s unique. I’m looking forward to it.”

On ‘personal goals’ for this season:

“I feel like up to this point in my career, I’ve accomplished things, but ultimately we want to get to a Super Bowl and we want to win it. That’s the only thing on my mind at this point in my career.”

On the new defensive starters ‘getting acclimated’ to playing with each other:

“That speaks to the professionalism of the guys that they signed, including myself. Understanding defenses is what we do. It’s part of what we do. Coming in and learning a new defense, there are some learning curves. There are some things, but ultimately it’s about playing fast and doing what we get paid to do.”

On 'if he can teach teammates how to cause turnovers':

"It starts with the habits, going after the ball and raking at the ball and punching at the ball. It's just little things that translate to the game, then everybody ends up doing it during the game. That's how you create those habits."

On S Derwin James Jr. not practicing today due to contract discussions:

"Definitely going to be excited when that happens, but, obviously, business has to come first in his situation. It is what it is. We've all been there."

On QB Justin Herbert 'committing to offseason improvements':

"I feel like that's what great players do. They always find things that maybe they are not so good at. To think that a guy like that already has great footwork talking about how he's perfecting it is a great thing to hear."

On the competitive nature between the offense and defense:

"The competitive nature, that's natural. That's what we do. If we're not competitive, then nobody gets better. That's how I see the game. Competing and iron sharpening iron, that's what it's all about during this process. So, when Sundays come, whoever they play against on the offensive side, it should be easy."