



Josh.Rupprecht@chargers.nfl.com ⚡ Jennifer.Rojas@chargers.nfl.com ⚡ Jamaal.LaFrance@chargers.nfl.com

Brock.Anderson@chargers.nfl.com ⚡ Danny.Markino@chargers.nfl.com ⚡ Jordan.Colquitt@chargers.nfl.com ⚡ Leonie.Strehl@chargers.nfl.com

Chargers General Manager Tom Telesco Pre-Draft Media Availability

Monday, April 24, 2023 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

On 'if there is any progress' regarding contract extension discussions involving QB Justin Herbert:

"No updates."

On 'if there are any developments' regarding RB Austin Ekeler:

"Not since the Owners Meetings. No update there, either."

On if Eagles QB Jalen Hurts' contract extension 'numbers' were 'where he expected the quarterback market to go':

"His contract hasn't been submitted yet, so I haven't seen it. I'll probably look at it when the draft is over, but I haven't seen any of the numbers yet."

On if the Chargers have 'received any interest from other teams' regarding Ekeler:

"Same answer as before, no updates there."

On if Ekeler's situation 'changes' the team's 'approach to the draft' in regard to 'preparing any contingencies':

"I don't think so. We had [RB] Joshua Kelley and [RB] Larry Rountree [III] here, then we drafted [RB] Isaiah Spiller last year. Isaiah kind of fits in the category of players from previous drafts having to step up and fill needs. Typically, like in this year's draft, not a lot of these guys are going to come in and fill a need. When you look at the draft, when you draft players in the third, fourth, fifth, sixth round, people think that they are going to come in and immediately fill a need. You hope that they come in and earn a role. But you're really looking for players from previous draft classes to rise up; [S] JT Wodds, [DB] Ja'Sir Taylor, Isaiah Spiller and some other guys, have those guys step into roles. We think that it's a pretty good room right now, so I wouldn't necessarily look at it like that."

On the 'depth' of this year's draft:

"It depends which position. It's all very subjective, it really is. We're trying to project these players – they're college players who we are projecting to be professional players. It's a very subjective process. Our first-round numbers are kind of where they usually are. The depth of the draft is hard to tell. Each position is a little bit different. The only one that really kind of stands out – just because, in previous years, we've seen less and less college tight ends coming into the NFL – for whatever reason, this year, there's a whole bunch of really true tight ends that are coming into the league. Hopefully, that continues because that pool has gotten smaller and smaller. Other than that, it's pretty subjective."

On the development of the tight end class this year and if gaining an extra year of eligibility through COVID-19 has benefitted the group as a whole:

"Possibly. It is a position that requires some physicality and blocking at the line of scrimmage, sort of growing into your body a little bit. Now, with that being said, there are a couple of tight ends in this draft that are 21 years old with just three years of college ball. That could play into it, too, but that would also kind of play into it with all positions, I would assume."

On the 'key attributes' when evaluating a tight end prospect:

"Blocking and receiving. That's the ideal tight end, one that can do both [*laughter*]."

On the specifics of updates regarding Herbert and contract extension discussions:

"Like I said before, we won't do a play-by-play of, or characterize, where things are. The next big update will be if there is ever a contract signing. I really can't imagine ever being up here and giving a, 'Where we are and when we talked.' That's probably not the way that it is going to work."

On fifth-year option discussions regarding first-round selections from the 2020 NFL Draft:

"We have two first-round picks from that draft. We'll get that figured out next week."

On the potential of Spiller's development:

"Like a lot of players from last year's draft, they have a full offseason in the program. We like Isaiah [Spiller]. We liked him a lot when we drafted him. He's a 225-pound running back who is 5-foot-11 and has great vision, can make people miss. He was stuck behind some players last year and he will get a chance to come in, compete and earn a job this year. We would have liked to have seen him get a little bit more run last year, but there were some other players in front of him. He's still the same talent that we saw last year. Like a lot of these players, they may earn roles more towards the middle or back end of their rookie contract, maybe not right at the beginning – which is OK, which is normal. Then, take it from there."

On the amount of players he has 'first-round grades' on:

"I don't want to give that exact number there."

On 'mentioning blocking before receiving' when describing tight end prospect attributes and 'if that means that blocking is more important than receiving':

"Not necessarily, just in alphabetical order [*laughter*]."

On if having a first-round selection 'play right away' is the 'ideal situation' for a team:

"It really depends on where your roster is currently. Ideally, even your first-round pick, if he has to come in and earn a role and doesn't have to step into a starting role immediately, that is fine, that means that you have a pretty strong football team. You'd like to construct it where, going into the draft, you feel like you're solid across the positions to where you don't really feel forced to take a certain position. I feel like that's where we are right now, where you can kind of let the draft come to you. There really aren't many spots that we couldn't use a player at, other than maybe quarterback and left tackle, right now. We'll see how it plays out, but I feel like our roster is at a point where we're not forced to go one direction or another."

On 'if this is the happiest he has been with the offensive line in the last five-to-six years':

"Hard to characterize that, but I like the guys up front. We had talked about it before, but getting [T] Trey Pipkins [III] back was pretty important for us, kind of keep some continuity up front, plus he is a good player. We still need to add some depth to that position group, because you never know if those five guys are going to line up for all 17 games, but we feel good about it. I think it is a strong point of the football team."

On Offensive Coordinator Kellen Moore's involvement in discussions involving prospects:

"It's both Kellen [Moore] and [Defensive Coordinator] Derrick [Ansley], Derrick is our new [defensive] coordinator. Both of those guys, a lot. What is great about them is that they are very direct. There's not a lot of grey area, which makes my job a lot easier, as far as if a player fits, if he doesn't fit, what characteristics they like about him, which characteristics they may not like about a player. The conversations have been really good. Those two coordinators, plus the special teams coordinator, plus the head coach, it's a big part of the process to tie everything in together. Those conversations have been great."

On if 'speed' is 'something that the team values in the draft':

"I've never met a coach who didn't want speed. I've never been a GM who didn't want speed, not a scout. We want it at every position, same with Derrick [Ansley] and, certainly, with [Special Teams Coordinator] Ryan Ficken. It's all the same."

On re-signing WR Jalen Guyton and the team's 'expectation':

"Hopefully, where he was pre-injury. Jalen [Guyton] has been a really productive vertical threat for us. The production has been there, as far as yards per catch. He's a bigger receiver that really runs very well. He's still in his rehab process. He won't be full-go in OTAs, but as we get closer to training camp, hopefully, he is ready to go when he comes in and, hopefully, he can bring that same element."

On if the signing of Guyton 'changes the team's mind' regarding outlook on the receiver position in the draft:

"When the season ended last year, we were hoping to bring him back, so nothing changed there."

On if kick returner and punt returner is 'something that the team will have to add at some point' prior to the season:

"Kick returner and punt returner, we will probably have to look in a couple of different areas and have some people come in and compete for that job."

On evaluating returner prospects in the draft:

"I think there are plenty of possibilities there. Whether it works out or not, that's a different story. But, yeah, there are plenty of possibilities there."

On if the team 'leans toward players with more college experience' when evaluating returners:

"It's going to be a projection a little bit because if you just go based on who did a lot of punts and kicks together, your pool is going to be pretty small. So, I think that you do have to project out a little bit."

On if the team will add to the quarterback room:

"We'll go into camp with at least three, maybe four [quarterbacks], but we'll see. We're excited about [QB] Easton [Stick] to kind of step into this role. We've seen him for a number of years. He's really sharp. He's athletic, he's tough. He just doesn't have a lot of snaps under his belt yet, which happens to a backup sometimes. We have a lot of confidence in him. We'll kind of see how it plays out in the preseason."

On how teams selecting quarterbacks early affect the Chargers in the draft:

"I see at least six going in the top 15. At least six quarterbacks. Maybe seven if we can get lucky. It does, certainly, help us. The more that go earlier, it's going to push players down [the board]. Luckily, this year we're in the position that we wouldn't be taking a quarterback in the first round. Luckily, this year, there are some good quarterbacks that hopefully go high. It's definitely a benefit to us."

On potentially selecting a quarterback late in the draft:

"Who knows? We'll see how the board kind of falls. We don't get that specific on it."

On the importance and value of top-30 visits:

"A lot of it is medical if the player wasn't at the combine. The second part of that is just to have a chance for our coaches to meet players, get a good feel for their football learning and what they've been asked to do when they played at their school. Just a little bit of familiarity. Sometimes, for a player that may be a late draft pick or a college free agent, it's kind of a recruiting visit, I guess, you could say. Since the combine only has so many players, if we want to take players late in the draft, I'd prefer to have a physical on that player than not. A lot of these players that are coming in, if they weren't at the combine, I need a full medical on the player."

On if local pro days allow the team to see a player without using a top-30 visit:

"That is one of the reasons. Having a local day out here is amazing because we could have invited 80 to 100 players if we could. There's so much talent out here. Not only between USC, UCLA and San Diego State, but just all the local high school talent that's from here. It's a pretty cool day to have those kids come in and work. Every year, there may be some players that we had late that kind of flashed to us there. It's a great benefit to have that many good players right in front of our coaches for a full day."

On scouting slot cornerbacks for the defensive scheme:

"It's kind of like we talked about with returners. Yeah, you'd like to see them play a lot inside, that's a little easier evaluation, but you do have to project some of it, too, or else your pool of players is going to be pretty small. There's definitely some characteristics that you could see if a player only plays outside that may translate to play inside. Ideally, if you're drafting a player, you'd like them to be able to do both because over the course of the season, you only have four or five, maybe six — six if you're lucky — on your active roster. They have to be able to do some different things. Scouting is really about projecting. We're projecting a college player to a pro player. You're going to have to put some of that into it."

On CB J.C. Jackson's progress:

"Really good. He looks great for where he is right now. He still has some ways to go, but I saw him running in the weight room the other day on the treadmill. He looked really good. Hopefully, that keeps progressing the same way."

On if Jackson could participate in training camp:

"That's the hope, yeah. We're still, what, three months from there? But yeah, that's the hope. I'm optimistic on that."

On trading back in the draft:

"I guess, we like to 'zig' while others 'zag.' We're always open to any options, up or down. There's no philosophy on that to now do that."

On 'filling out the roster':

"I've never been part of a draft where we looked at our football team and said, 'Boy, we are so loaded on both sides of the ball and on special teams that we don't need any depth.' This year is no different."

On the wide receiver draft class:

"I mean, you just never know. Look where [Bills WR] Stefon Diggs was drafted. You just never know. We're projecting. It's a cute word to say it, but we're making educated guesses on these players. We really are. How things may look now — where your drafted in this draft is not your final determination on how you perform in this league. You can look back in every single draft. That's not the way it works out. We can all have these opinions on what positions look strong or weak, but in the end do we really know? It's just so subjective. The receiver group — there are so many receivers that come out of college nowadays. I think a lot of it has to do with the amount of 7-on-7 work in the summer, the amount of passing that they do at the high school level, the amount of passing they do at the college level. There are a lot more receivers that come into the league ready to play. That being said, this group is probably similar to some others. Maybe not some of the size that other groups have had. There's probably a good amount of — actually corners and receivers that are a little smaller than what you typically have coming into the league, but they have a lot of other characteristics that make up for it. We'll see how it plays out."

On how receivers are coming into the league ready to play:

"I think a lot of the technical skills — there are receivers in this draft that are outstanding route-runners. A lot of that comes from really good coaching and players being coachable, both at the high school level and the college level."

On the team's linebacker depth:

"Like every single position, we'll always take more depth. It's the nature of this league."

On the progress of DL Austin Johnson and DL Otito Ogbornia:

"Everything is good so far."

On if either Johnson or Ogbornia has been at the facility:

"Actually, I don't know who was on the field last week or today, for that matter. I don't even know. Those two guys really are more still in rehab mode. They're not in workout mode yet."

On the challenge of forecasting the picks before the team selects:

"It's hard. I mean, I try, but if I did a mock draft, there's nothing saying that mine would know more than yours, to be honest with you. I don't know what other people are going to do. Everyone thinks they do, but I just don't know. Nobody gives out information, so you make educated guesses based on where their roster is, where their depth charts are, the style of players they like, the schemes they play. In the end, it's hard to tell. I still go through the whole process trying to figure it out. Obviously, the farther you're down in the draft, the harder it is to project who is going to be there. Where we are this year, we'll have to have a bigger pool of players available to us. Then, also account for if you have to trade up or trade down and kind of take it from there. I go through the same forecasting to try and figure it out. It's sometimes a lost cause."

On if he enjoys the process of forecasting what players will be available:

"I enjoy the process of trying to manage the draft. 'Okay, these are the players that we really like in all of these different rounds,' and, 'How do we get them?' I do enjoy that part a lot."

On preparing for the 'surprise' drop like S Derwin James Jr., to No. 17 in the 2018 NFL Draft:

"You try to be prepared for everything. Not necessarily when people fall. That's where that player was rated on other people's boards. You have to be prepared for everything. You just don't know. There are 32 teams. Their draft boards are all different. It's normal, it's a very subjective process. It makes it kind of exciting if you're going to watch the draft. You just don't know what's going to happen. The biggest part of the draft the last month or so is preparation of what could happen and being prepared for it."

On if the team does a mock draft:

"Yes. These mock draft simulators online have been great. I've probably gone through it 25 or 30 times, just going through different scenarios to see if something could pop up that we're not prepared for."

On using mock draft simulators:

"I've used a couple of different ones. What I like is they're quick. You can kind of scroll through fast. You can kind of change different settings. It's all mental exercises. Obviously, you're making decisions with a clock over your head. You really can't wait until you're on the clock and then start talking to people and decide what you want to do. You kind of have a plan laid out of what could happen and kind of take it from there."

On the location of Day 1 at Westfield Century City:

"I haven't thought about the location too much. We'll get our work done there. We're going the main draft at a train station in Kansas City. I'll do it wherever we need to do it from."

On challenges to doing a day of the draft away from the facility:

"As long you have your people with you and we have internet and a cell phone just in case and a draft board — we could do it in this room, we could do it over there, we could do it anywhere."

On if his surfboard will be on location:

"I haven't even thought about that yet. I've been pretty busy."

On the potential of media observing the draft room:

"All of you? *[laughter]* Yeah, I'm going to say no on that one. *[Laughter]*"