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Chargers Offseason Media Availability, Phase Three

Wednesday, June 7, 2023 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR DERRICK ANSLEY

On OTAs and the progression of the offseason program:

"It's going well. Our guys are working every day. Every day is a new theme. We've installed a good bit of our defense, so the guys are digesting that at a good pace so far."

On the 'balance' between his role and Head Coach Brandon Staley's influence on the defense as play-caller:

"My job is to make sure that the defense is doing things the right way, on the grass and off of the grass. Make sure that everything is in place for Coach Staley to do his job at a high level. As a staff, we do that as a collective."

On his relationship with Staley and how that has evolved:

"I've known Coach [Staley] for a while. This is going into Year 3 together, so we kind of know what he wants and how he likes things. It's been a natural progression."

On the 'biggest' area of improvement for the defense:

"Take it day by day, one day at a time. Keep the main things the main things; blocking, tackling and takeaways. Don't get ahead of ourselves. Work on the fundamentals of your position, make sure that your unit is together collectively and just do it one day at a time."

On 'differences' between how he and Staley communicate now compared to the previous two seasons:

"No, a lot of same as. [Former Defensive Coordinator] Coach [Renaldo] Hill did a really good job, and my job is to continue that with Coach Staley, to make sure that he has everything in place to deliver the message in the installations to the defense."

On DB Ja'Sir Taylor's development as an inside cover defender:

"He's mature past his age. He's a very quiet kid, very observant. He understands the big picture. He's working hard, just like how the other Stars are working hard. That is going to be an interesting battle once we get to camp."

On players describing him as 'high energy' and how he characterizes his demeanor:

"You have to read the climate of the day. Whatever those guys need me to be, that is what I'll be. When we have a not-so-great day, then I need to pump a little more energy into them. When the players have that energy, then we need to kind of take a step back. There's an even ground there."

On confidence in DB Ja'Sir Taylor potentially being a primary contributor in the secondary and Taylor's performance in the win over the Dolphins on *Sunday Night Football* last year:

"I think that it's a lot of credit to him, to come into a primetime game like that against a high-octane offense. He came in and held his own very well. Obviously, we have a lot of things that we have to work on, especially at the Nickel spot, to get some consistency there moving forward. He definitely has done a really good job so far."

On S Alohi Gilman's development:

"His leadership — Alohi [Gilman] has been a guy here, he's going into Year 4. He's very calm, very coachable, understands why he is being corrected or why he did things a certain way. He's been very calm, very even-keel, going into Year 3 with us."

On LB Daiyan Henley:

"He's getting a lot of reps out there by injury, some guys are hurt. He has stepped right in. Being a young guy, you wouldn't know it because he has jumped in there and grabbed the bull by the horns. He's really working hard on and off of the field. He's staying late, coming early. He is really putting the time in to learn his craft."

On if he has 'changed' at all with the promotion to defensive coordinator:

"Not much. I think that's one of the reasons that Coach [Staley] trusted me with this leadership role, because I am myself. He wants me to be myself. He encourages that, to do things the way that we see it, and making sure that we lead the right way. Every day is a different day, so you have to come in here, reset, and be what those guys need you to be every day."

On LB Eric Kendricks:

"Another guy that has provided a lot of leadership. He is calm out there. He has played a lot of football. He is good for the LB room. [Linebackers] Coach [Jeff] Howard and [Front Seven Specialist] Coach [Mike] Hiestand, they've taken a liking to him. He has done a really good job running the green dot in there."

On what he 'would like to see' out of the defense next week at Minicamp:

"Same as, take it one day at a time. We have to get through Friday [*laughter*], make sure that we finish OTAs the right way. Then, once we get into Minicamp — you now, there will be some different people out there that we have to cover [*laughter*] — so it will be a really good challenge for us to finish this thing off going into August."

On if he has 'noticed anything different' with OLB Joey Bosa this offseason:

"I have a lot of credit for our front four, five, six guys that are working up there. Those guys go over to their side and work nonstop, the whole practice. The amount of fundamentals that those guys are getting, it's incredible. My hat is off to them and how they are working. When the DBs are doing 7-on-7, they are constantly working on fundamentals, and Joey [Bosa] has been right in the middle of that — working on his hands, working on his block protection, doing a really good job with his drops. That whole group — [OLBs] Chris Rumph [II], Khalil [Mack], Tuli [Tuipulotu], all of those guys do a really good job of developing their craft."

On if he will be on the field or in the booth for games:

"We haven't gotten that far yet, we're trying to get through tomorrow, and then get to Friday [*laughter*]. Those things will kind of present themselves as we go."

On if his energy 'is at a different level now':

"No, because players can feel if you're being somebody that you're not. I just try to come in here and be myself. Different players need different things. Zont [CB Asante Samuel Jr.] is a high-energy guy, so I pump that energy into him, and he pumps it back into me. That kind of affects everybody out there. We like to be ourselves, not try to be anybody that we're not."

CENTER COREY LINSLEY

On his offseason:

"I can't complain. It's better in Cali. I'm enjoying the weather minus the past month, it's been cloudy."

On the movement along the offensive line:

"It's good. I think [G] Zion [Johnson] said he feels more natural at that position [of left guard]. I think [OL] Jamaree [Salyer] is steady Eddy. He doesn't bat an eye no matter what. Shoot, we asked him to play left tackle last year four games in or whatever. He went in a rolled. Throughout camp, it will be the communication, the fits and the combos and stuff. Those guys inside, they're workhorses, man. Obviously, we're glad to get [T] Rashawn [Slater] back and [T Trey] Pip [Pipkins], glad to get him back as well and re-sign him. Hopefully, the goal through camp is to build that continuity. I feel like we communicate really well. Now, it's just about getting the feel for everything down."

On how the offensive line can take its play to another level this season:

"I think, overall, it's really obvious. The run game lacked. Protection game, I think we can be better. That's what this offseason, a lot of it has been about, from a protection standpoint. The communication, the simplification of everything. Also, just relying on our instincts more and helping out everybody as much as we can. I feel like we're making a lot of improvement, even right now. The run game, we'll take accountability for that. I'm sure you could pick it apart to a bunch of different reasons, but ultimately, up front, that's something that we take pride in. We want to run the ball. Every O-Line in the NFL wants to run the ball. For us to fall significantly below our standard, I think that's in the back of our mind and has been. That will be a key point for us all throughout camp and continuing on in the season."

On the difference in the run game with this offense:

"Really, we don't know. There is some verbiage [difference] and different blocking techniques and what have you that we're having to learn. Ultimately, it's on us to learn them and it will be on [Offensive Coordinator] Kellen [Moore], it's his responsibility to fulfill his job description and it's our responsibility to fulfill ours. That will be what it is. Everybody's run game is different. We have to learn this one. I feel like we're doing a pretty good job of it. Any issues that we have had, we've been able to work through them. As of right now, we just have to do our job. We have to be a lot better than we were last year."

On the simplification of the run game:

"I think the focusing part of it will help us a lot. There was a little bit of where we didn't ever get good at one thing last year in the run game. We had our plays that were successful, but they were individual plays. There wasn't a scheme and we never felt like we got in a flow. Some of it's on us, some of it is on coaches, some of it is on everybody, right? It's a collective effort here and it always will be. Majoring in something, just like you said, I think it will help us take a step forward."

On if it feels like he's entering his 10th NFL season:

"No, thank God. We were just talking about this. I never would have thought I would have felt his good at year 10. I thought I was going to be hobbled. It's tougher to recover sometimes. I feel like I take such better care of my body now. Some of it is because you have to and some of it is because you just train smarter. I definitely feel a lot better than I thought I would, so I'm thankful for that, and I'm lucky to not have any major injuries."

On leading an offensive line group of young players:

"There are good aspects the other way, too. When we had [former G] Oday [Aboushi], [former G/T Michael] Scho [Schofield III] and those guys, it was awesome to have, and [former G] Matt [Fieler] — the other veteran presence in the room and on the field. These guys, they really do operate like vets. We'll have to learn through stuff, but when it comes to not freaking out on the field and just being cool, calm and collected, Rashawn [Slater] and [Trey] Pip [Pipkins], obviously, and the guys next to me who I directly communicate with the most, those guys do an excellent job of that. None of the 'yips,' the rookie jitters or anything. Those guys have been great."

"It's just their natural disposition, man. Blame [General Manager] Tom [Telesco] and the personnel department for getting them here [*laughter*]. I think that's just how they naturally are."

On the continuity for the offensive line:

"It's awesome. With Kellen [Moore], like I said, we're learning some new stuff. Learning some new verbiage, techniques, new plays and what have you. Like you said, having [Offensive Line Coach Brendan] Nuge [Nugent] here and having [Assistant Offensive Line Coach] Shaun [Sarrett], both of those guys — I feel like our room gels together really well. It has been, obviously, initially a learning experience for Shaun and Nuge, but us being able to receive their teaching in the same manner helps out a lot.

"I can't say enough about Jamaree [Salyer] and Zion [Johnson]. Zion is like a genius computer, whatever guy. Jamaree is like, cool, calm, collected. He knows ball and gets it. There are little aspects of the game where your intuition has to take over. A guy is going this way, your assignment might take you out here, but you know there's a guy returning to the gap. Just little stuff like that, that both of them get really well. It's comforting to know that."

On RB Austin Ekeler:

"I can't say enough about Ek, man. He works his butt off. He does an excellent job on the field. He's a great leader. Obviously, I'm very happy to have him back. I'm happy that he got a little extra cash in incentives and stuff. For us, Ek is one of the mainstays, man. He leads by example and does a great job in the running back room. Very happy to have him."

On if he was in contact with Ekeler earlier this offseason:

"Not much. Just as much as we ever are. I think what really speaks to Ek is that nobody batted an eye. There was an issue, a monetary issue. There was nobody coming out of the woodwork saying, 'Oh, Ek doesn't do this well,' or 'they think this or that.' You know how those reports leak out. Nobody batted an eye and knew it would get done. Happy to get that result."

On what he can take from previous years to help propel the team this year:

"I mean, no, we never got it done. I can tell you why, looking back, and same thing with last year. That Jacksonville game, when we look at it, it was a culmination of a lot of things. We understand why it happened now. We have to improve. We have to make those adjustments and I feel like we are. At the same time, it's just going to take [time]. I know there are guys that, when I walked into the locker room in Green Bay, 90 percent of those guys had been on the Super Bowl team. That standard that they set, that's what I'm trying to do here and what all the leaders of our team are trying to do. We expect to do this. We expect to make the playoffs. We expect to get to the championship. I feel like we have done a good job. [Head] Coach [Brandon] Staley and top-down. We've done a good job of those are our expectations. This is the standard. We just have to go and do it."

On overcoming the Jacksonville loss:

"I mean, it is what it is. It sucked. I feel like every loss, especially in the playoffs, is hard to get over, but we're here."

CORNERBACK ASANTE SAMUEL JR.

On the development of the defense and the influence of Defensive Coordinator Derrick Ansley:

"We're all trying to get together, build chemistry and stuff. Have fun with each other. We're trying to build as a team, build our chemistry, and just have fun. Taking it one day at a time."

On how the defense 'will be run' with Ansley:

"I'm not sure. I trust the coaches fully; [Head] Coach [Brandon] Staley, Coach DA [Defensive Coordinator Derrick Ansley] and [Defensive Passing Game Coordinator/Secondary] Coach Tommy [Donatell]. Whatever they put us in, I feel like they're going to maximize our abilities to the best."

On LB Eric Kendricks:

"He just brings a lot of experience. A great guy, a great playmaker. He's one of the best linebackers in the league right now. Just blessed to be a part of the team and blessed to have him. Just have to try to keep learning from all of the older guys."

On DB Ja'Sir Taylor's development as an inside cover defender:

"He's been doing excellent on the inside, and the outside — He's been doing well all OTAs. I'm excited for him."

On areas of focus toward improvement this offseason:

"Same thing, the little things — footwork, small technique things. Just trying to maximize my abilities in the scheme. That's about it."

On CB J.C. Jackson:

"Every time I see J.C., he's working hard. He's trying to get back with the team. He's a great player, a great guy. I just can't wait to get him back."

On if he saw WR Keenan Allen on The Masked Singer:

"[*Laughter*] We saw one clip in the team meeting. He did a great job. He's a great singer, great player. He can do it all [*laughter*]."

On if Allen is 'the best singer on the team':

"From what I've seen, yeah, I think so [*laughter*]."

On the defense using the ending of last season as a motivation for this upcoming season:

"We ended on a bad note, we didn't want to lose like that. We just have to put it behind us and take it one day at a time, try to get better and maximize each day. That's all that we try to focus on, maximizing each day. Don't look too far ahead, don't look too far behind. Just be happy to be here and have fun out there right now."

On 'how long' it took him to 'get over the Jacksonville game':

"I'm still not over it. It's going to be over when we get to play another team."

On areas of improvement for the defense as a unit:

"I feel like we really didn't have too much to work on after last year, we just have to build as a team. It's a team game, we can't really blame one specific spot. Have to keep building on what we did well. We don't look at the bad, we just look at the good and try to build off of that."

On if he feels like a veteran:

"No, I still feel like a young guy [*laughter*]. We still have great players that have put a lot of time into this league. I'm still young, compared to a lot of these guys. I'm still trying to learn from them. Whatever they want to give off and teach us, we're open ears. Just trying to get better."

On 'striking the balance' between 'being a young player with younger players around' and how he helps the younger players:

"If they ask me questions, I'm open to answer them. We're all grinding together, we're all learning together. We're still trying to get better together. We're helping each other — they might help me, I might help them. It's a team."

On if he has 'noticed any changes' in how Ansley leads the unit, now as defensive coordinator:

"No, I feel like he's the same guy. He comes with high energy. He wants the best for his players. He just wants us to compete at a high level every day, and that's what I feel like we're doing. We just have to get better each day. It's a grind, it's a long season."

On 'examples' of Ansley's energy:

"Every day, he's high energy. Every time a defensive back makes a play, or anybody on the defense, he's running out there, he's yelling. He's just happy to see people make plays. He just loves the competition."