

Chargers Training Camp Media Availability

Saturday, August 5, 2023 ⚡ Jack Hammett Sports Complex ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

SPECIAL TEAMS COORDINATOR RYAN FICKEN

Opening statement:

"A great day today. I thought that the guys came out and competed. With camp, it's been great seeing these guys compete, run around a little bit and be out there in front of these fans. It's been a lot of fun so far, but excited for tomorrow and the scrimmage, leading up to the Rams when we play them next week. With that, I'll go ahead and open it up to questions."

On an update on K Dustin Hopkins:

"With Dustin, he's been doing a lot of kicking on the side and everything, but I'm going to go ahead and defer to Coach [Staley], respectfully, on that. I think he'll be talking tomorrow about that. Dustin has been doing well on the side right now."

On K Cameron Dicker:

"Cam has picked up right where he left off right now. He's very consistent, very smooth in his operation. We love where he is heading and the direction of where he is going with his kickoffs and his field goals. The way that he handles it, he's a professional, so we've been very pleased right now with where he is at."

On WR Derius Davis:

"Derius [Davis] is doing well. He still has those rookie moments, in terms of just building, but not in a bad way. He's learning everything. He wants to learn. He's a sponge on everything, all the situations. He comes up and asks great questions, not just about how to catch or what to do, he's learning about every situation out there, how to handle these. It's been great working with him and the whole group, with [WR] John [Hightower] and [WR] Pokey Wilson. They've been doing a good job, too."

On what he 'needs to see' out of Davis to 'give him confidence':

"We try and do our best to talk about all of these situations. Unfortunately, you can't practice or get those in the games on all of them. Mainly, that he has that grasp of knowledge of it. Then, you go out and see him execute it in practice, and then in the game. Just see how comfortable he is when he's catching. He has the mechanics and he takes control of the situations. That's what we're kind of looking for. He has God-given ability that the Lord has blessed him with and he can just go ahead and let it take over from there when he gets that ball in his hands."

On Hightower:

"I think he understands our expectations with special teams right now, what we're expecting out of him. He knows his role. Speaking for us on special teams, he's done a great job with the returner role. He has great mechanics. Obviously, he has really good speed. He's definitely an option at that position. We're really pleased with where he's at right now."

On LB Daiyan Henley:

"He's a football player. His versatility, just the value that he has in all of the positions that he can go ahead and play. His athleticism, obviously, his speed. A lot of guys don't know, this guy was a true athlete in high school, too, in terms of playing both sides of football. We're looking for football players that are not just one position, a linebacker or a running back, but a complete football player, and that's what he is. That's what we're excited about."

On the 'message' for the special teams unit as a whole this year:

"The first thing is that last year was last year, that one is done. We have to go ahead and work back from Day 1, starting with our technique and fundamentals, just try and get it off the ground again and act as if no one knows anything. We're new, everyone's new here. But we want to really stress the technique and fundamentals, but we have to build consistency in what we do. We know what the expectations are and we know what's in front of us. I think we have great players right now on the roster and the depth to go ahead and get that done. We have to make sure that we go out there and we execute."

On the value of LS Josh Harris:

"Josh [Harris] is phenomenal for our group. That's not just special teams or specialists, he's phenomenal for our team. He's a leader, that's the big draw for us going to get him. I take my hat off to [General Manager] Tom [Telesco] and [Executive VP of Football Operations/Player Finance] Ed [McGuire] for going and actively pursuing him. They brought him on board and he's just been a phenomenal leader for us. That's why we put a lot on his plate. He sees it in the big picture, on the outside, too, not just with the specialists. He will talk to these core guys and make sure that we have that bar still set up high. We are still on pace to go ahead and make sure that we achieve that."

On gunner:

"I like to spot, in terms of those two [DB Ja'Sir Taylor and S Deane Leonard], but they're still improving. It's good to see them come back and start where they left off, but we have to create depth in all situations and all positions. [Assistant Special Teams Coach] Beep Gould, he's doing a great job working with those guys. They know our expectations, what we expect out of those guys, but it doesn't stop with them. [DB Mark] Webb [Jr.], he is doing a great job of working there. [S] JT Woods and some of these young guys that we're trying to continue to incorporate, it's just the message that we've told these guys from the get-go was how can you create value for yourself to impact this football team in a positive way? I'm seeing that from this group of players here. We're excited about that. I think that Tom Telesco and Coach Staley, they've targeted the right guys. We have the roster, so now we have to continue to build on that and continue to have success moving forward."

On if WR Quentin Johnston is 'a real possibility' at gunner:

"Absolutely. We talk about how it doesn't matter, drafted in first round or an undrafted free agent. You think about [Falcons RB] Cordarrelle Patterson, when he was in Minnesota, we utilized him as a gunner. That's how he got his role on that. Anyone is valuable, but it's just how you create your role. How can you create value to go ahead and help this football team win games because, ultimately, that's what we're here to do, is help this team win."

CENTER COREY LINSLEY

On training camp:

"It's going good. It was a good first couple of days. Good stuff to build on. It's the early days of camp and finding, you know, new problems, maybe that hadn't arisen before and coming up with solutions. Then, practicing what you need to get good at. Good start to camp. Nothing out of the ordinary, which is good."

On the run game:

"It's probably too early, but you know, we're working on it. Even the first day, I remember it was between periods and Nuge [Offensive Line Coach Brendan Nugent], just speaking for myself — on this block, I want you to do this, not that. The next period, I did it and now I have a feel for it. It's just little stuff like that. It's a lot of similar concepts that carry over. I feel like every team in the NFL runs a version of the same stuff. It's just the little nuances. I feel like we're getting better."

On QB Justin Herbert's extension:

"That was pretty cool. It was really cool. I remember when, I think my first year in the NFL, I remember seeing [former Packers and current Jets QB] Aaron [Rodgers] made like \$24 million. Justin is [reportedly] making twice as much as that. That's crazy. I mean, it's really wild. Obviously, well-deserved. Obviously, we all know the type of player he is, the type of potential he has. I'm very happy to see that. I can't wait to see what he buys, you know? It'll be pretty interesting. Not [as much gifts for others], I'm more so a jet boat, whatever [*laughter*]. I'm just kidding. All-in-all, I'm very happy for him. Everybody was ecstatic for him. It's well-deserved."

On Herbert's development:

"His confidence is through the roof. His awareness is through the roof. Again, early days in camp, everybody feels like they're winning the Super Bowl now. There's a lot of stuff blown out of proportion. You can see that we're taking the right steps. We're taking the necessary steps. Justin, just speaking about him, you can tell the areas of his game that he's elevated, which is awesome."

On Herbert's leadership:

"Honestly, Justin — I remember getting on the phone with [former Offensive Line Coach] James Campen, who was the O-Line coach here and he was my O-Line coach in Green Bay. I'm just talking to him about the Chargers in general. I remember the first thing, he said, 'You're going to love Herbert.' That's carried over for my entire time here. Everybody here says the same thing. Yeah, he's grown in certain areas and he's mature. I don't know, you can probably say a bunch of stuff, but all-in-all, he's remained the same person and maybe more comfortable? I don't know. Everybody still loves him."

On Herbert pre-snap:

"It's really awesome. Speaking of that awareness, speaking of the areas of the game that he's elevated, I feel like that's one of them. It's great to see. It's not perfect right now. Nothing is perfect right now. The fact that you just see us taking steps over and over again, is huge."

On OL Jamaree Salyer:

"Jamaree and [G] Zion [Johnson] both — I know Zion is switching over, which I guess it's what he played in college and maybe is a little bit more comfortable over there. Both of those guys are taking steps. Again, speaking with everything, we're building day-in and day-out. Both of those guys are Steady Eddy. They're just ball players. They get it. It's awesome to have both of them on either side."

On OL Jordan McFadden and T Foster Sarell:

"It's really cool to see. We know Foster. He played and stepped up in a big way last year when we needed him to. It's awesome to see him. I feel like you make the most improvements when you get game play, like game time. Foster came in. He's doing a great job. He comes in the game and does a great job for us last year, stepping up in a big way when we needed him to. That's carried over to this camp, where he feels more confident and a lot more poise. That's awesome to see him just build and build and build. Jordan, it was great. In the springtime, we don't really do anything. That's for a great reason, to take care of guys' bodies. In the first couple of days of camp, I think everybody noticed Jordan. Noticed the kind of player he is. It was great to see him come into his own. Now, him, he has to shift over to left tackle right now and take those reps. Again, doesn't blink. He's just another guy that's come in here, doesn't blink, steps up and is just ready to go. Jordan really showed out in a positive way these early days in camp at guard. I'm excited to see him play."

On building an identity in the run game:

"I think that we're talking about it a lot. We're putting a lot of emphasis. Again, only speaking about what's going on right now. I feel like our emphasis on it, the things that we've worked on from [Offensive Coordinator] Kellen [Moore], to [Brendan] Nuge [Nugent], to [Assistant Offensive Line Coach] Shaun [Sarrett], [Offensive Assistant] Phil [Serchia], down to us. It's all been relayed. It's all been focused on, worked on. We just have to keep that up. We can't have a few good days and then back off, do you know what I mean? We just have to keep it rolling."

On if there's anything 'unique' about Offensive Coordinator Kellen Moore:

"I mean, he's a great dude. I don't know [*laughter*]. Everybody has their own little schtick.

"He loves *The Office*, yeah the television show. He probably loves our office. I don't know, you'd have to ask him. I don't know, I'd have to think about it. There's not really anything that sticks out right now. It's all been positive."

On WR Keenan Allen saying Moore doesn't get 'mad':

"Okay, yeah. I'll say that. He's very level-headed, which is great. That, to me, has kind of carried over from most offensive coaches that I've been around. Level-headed, very analytical, smart. Typically, defensive coaches are the hot-headed ones."

On Offensive Line Coach Brendan Nugent:

"It's been great. Like I said, for all of us, there's just been a little bit of adjustment. Kellen [Moore] coming in. Obviously, Nuge being here last year coming into this year. It's been a little bit of an adjustment for him, just naturally, you know? A new guy comes in, a new boss. I feel like Nuge has taken it in stride and coached us extremely well. Like I said, the example of the first day of practice, he's coaching me up on a specific technique. We go into the next period, I do it. It's great. I guess that could speak a little bit to how that carryover, a year of communication that we can build upon. It makes it easier to build upon."

On what he'd buy if he had '\$260 Million':

"Man, I don't know [*laughter*]. That's a good question. I don't know, I'd probably get a NetJet subscription. My brother works at NetJet. He can get me in there. I don't know. That's probably what I would do first."

WIDE RECEIVER JOSHUA PALMER

On training camp:

"I would say it's going well. The whole receiving core is doing a really good job. We're on our P's and Q's and trying to be available for [QB] Justin [Herbert] the best that we can."

On returning to practice after missing a portion of the offseason program due to injury:

"I have a new appreciation for the game. I hate missing, but now I look at football through a different lens because I wasn't able to do it for a while, I don't take it for granted."

On how he's feeling:

"100 percent. No worries"

On the selection of a wide receiver in the first round:

"That's bound to happen every year. Since college, they recruit the best athletes. They're drafting the best players to help us win games. As long as the coaches have trust in those players, then we have trust in those players, as well. With [WR] Q [Johnston] coming in, he's a good end receiver. We all like his game and we're all learning from each other."

On motivation:

"I'm motivated every year, it doesn't really matter what it is. I'm in a never-ending tunnel. That's the price you pay for wanting to be the best."

On relationship Herbert:

"It's still growing. We're still young, Justin [Herbert] is going into Year 4 and I'm going into Year 3. I haven't been doing this for a long time and he hasn't been in for a long time. We have a lot of time to grow, but we've made major improvements from every season."

On his one-handed catch in 1-on-1s:

"I had a bench route. The route could have been better, but Justin [Herbert] trusts us, so he threw it up and allowed me to make a play on it. He threw it high and I was able to showcase my talent."

On whom informed him of catch 'trending' on the internet:

"Family members hit me up saying, 'Great catch.'"

On Offensive Coordinator Kellen Moore's offense:

"Explosive. He's going to get it to everybody and anybody. He's going to make sure we show our strengths."

On Moore's coaching style:

"He knows what he wants. He knows what guys he wants in certain positions. Even just the way he walks and he talks through our meetings and the installs, he really knows what he's talking about. We have the upmost confidence in him."

On Herbert wanting to throw the ball deep:

"Run every route like you're going to get the ball."

On receiving guidance from WRs Keenan Allen and Mike Williams:

"I do that every year. Until my last season in the NFL, I'm always going to be learning from guys who I value as receivers. The day I stop learning is the day I stop playing."

On Allen:

"I watch a lot of film. I say it every year, but I watch a lot of film of him. Next to him, I'll watch him on the field. A lot of the offseason and in the middle of the night, I'll wake up randomly and want to do a release [*laughter*]. I'm always working on it, I'm always thinking about it. It's never ending, I'm addicted to it."

On 'waking up in the middle of the night thinking about releases':

"Sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night and do a release if it's stuck in my head."

On if he arises from his bed to do the release:

"I'll be thinking about something and I have to feel the steps, so I'll get out of bed and do it, just to get it out [*laughter*]."