



QUOTES

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OFFSEASON PROGRAM PHASE 2 MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Monday, May 6, 2019 | Hoag Performance Center | Costa Mesa, Calif.

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS ASSISTANT HEAD COACH/SPECIAL TEAMS COORDINATOR GEORGE STEWART

Opening statement:

"I'd like to welcome you to our offseason special teams segment — of our offseason program. It's very important for us to have an opportunity to make sure that our football team is competitive. That's one thing that [Head] Coach [Anthony] Lynn talked about. We made some changes on our football team this offseason. We brought in a new punter and have a new long snapper [on the roster]. [LS] Mike Windt is still on this football team. Competition that Coach Lynn talks about, that's one of the things in this area that we have in the course of this offseason. With the draft, [General Manager] Tom Telesco did a great job trying to help our special teams with players coming in. Competition is going to be critical. We're trying to do a great job of bettering our football team from the bottom-up. We made some improvement over the last three years. We've had some teams that ranked in the top-5 in this unit and some teams that were ranked in the top-8. We're trying to improve this area of the football team. Hopefully, we'll get that done this offseason."

On P Ty Long:

"Ty is a right-footed punter. He did a great job in the CFL. You have to imagine, now, that he's up there kicking in adverse conditions. That's one thing that — with our schedule when we play some East Coast teams — he's going to do a great job for us. We have some competition from the young man from Notre Dame coming in [P Tyler Newsome] as well. [Long] is a strong-legged guy with great get-off. He's a directional punter, so he does a nice job of putting the ball both to the right and the left. That big field that they have in Canada. It benefits us because he had to kick wider, which would put the ball in the corners for us, in terms of his punts. We're looking for a big job from him."

On if Long can hold on kicks:

"He's an excellent holder. That's one thing — over the course of this offseason with a new snapper [in the building] and a holder, he's doing a great job for us. He did that all through his college career when he was at Birmingham."

On CB Desmond King II as a punt returner:

"Desmond has done a great job. He was a great punt returner back in college. What we basically did was give him an opportunity. You mentioned [WR] Travis Benjamin [got reps] early because Desmond was getting so much play as a defensive back. Travis, I think, was our third receiver at that particular point in time, and of course, he did it the year before. Desmond's progression, in terms of a punt returner, has been outstanding. He's a strong runner. I think he was a second-team All-Pro in that area last year. We continue to look for Desmond to do big things for us, as well. Again, you go back to the draft that Tom Telesco had — [S Nasir] Nas [Adderley] did a great job of doing that [in college] as well. We're looking for competition in that spot, but Desmond is our punt returner."

On the outlook of kick returner:

"Desmond [King] is our guy as well — but again, you look at the guys that Tom [Telesco] has brought in the past few years. [RB] Austin Ekeler could be back there this year. You look at [RB] Detrez [Newsome] could be back there this year. We just signed a young man, [RB Jeremy] Cox, who was a great return guy back in college. We're looking at different combinations, but right now Desmond is that featured guy. He averaged about 23 yards or 24 yards [per kick return] a year ago. The kick return team, I think, was in the top-10 or just barely out of the top-10. He's done a good job as well."

On K Michael Badgley:

"I feel very comfortable about our placekicker. Tom [Telesco], again, did a great job of going out to find Michael Badgley. Mike was at the University of Miami, as we know. He came in last year and did an outstanding job. From the standpoint of — I think it was 94 percent on his field goals. Over the last half of the season, I think he was the best kicker in our league. He was rookie of the year from [ProFootballTalk] as the special teams rookie. He has done an excellent job. I think he was 15-of-16 [on field goals] a year ago. He had the 59-yard field goal. He has done a great job. He's out working his tail off now and we're looking for big things out of Michael."

On the development of the special teams unit:

"We do a great job — but again, it goes back to our personnel department. There is so much time [dedicated] in coaching that we don't have the opportunity to do very much film work at all. We have to base our responsibilities on our scouting department. They do a great job. They see more players than we do and they do a great job of looking for those guys."

On QB Easton Stick as an athlete:

"I think that someone asked Coach Lynn that. We drafted as a quarterback. He is an excellent athlete. [Using him on special teams] is up for debate and up to the head coach. He does a lot of good things. He can hold, he can return. He is fast. I looked at the kid that they have in New Orleans [Saints QB Taysom Hill] — same type of situation. Maybe if he's available for that, we can use him. Right now, he's going to be a quarterback."

On LB Drue Tranquill:

"Drue has been on our radar for a long time. Again, our scouting department has talked about this young man. They have stayed with him. Of course, not only Drue, but all of the linebackers that came out in the draft. Drue is a Notre Dame guy. I'm a Notre Dame guy, so in terms of having a chance to watch him, he's a great benefit for our football team. He's a 6-2, 230-pound athlete that can run. Again, it's more competition for us to have the opportunity to get better."

On if Long could kick off:

"Going forward right now, Ty is our punter. He does kick off. We will have the opportunity, of course, in training camp to see him do that as well. Michael is our kicker. That could come down to a situation that's very similar to Indianapolis a few years ago. They had a [punter that kicked off] and the kicker just kicked field goals. That could be a situation here, but we're going to look at all options before we go forward."

On Badgley's performance in 2018:

"Michael has a great work ethic in terms of the things that he does — a great work ethic. We're very pleased to have him because he is a professional. In the short time that he has been here, he has gained the respect of our football team. I'm quite sure that he has gained respect from our media as well because he was given a task and he has done it outstandingly. That's one thing with a kicker — we've had kicking problems before. I think there's a team in our league right now that has kicking issues. I'm glad it's not us anymore. Michael has done an excellent job in terms of handling that business."

On Badgley's confidence:

"He has that [New] Jersey — I call it Jersey confidence. 'Just give me the ball.' He's a great kicker. His mental approach is outstanding. That's one thing that I like about him. That 59-yard field goal that you mentioned a minute ago, we were going to punt the football. We were going to punt it and pin them, then Michael [says], 'Coach, I got it.' I believe my kickers. I had [K] Gary Anderson when I was a young coach. Gary will probably be a Hall of Famer. I was a young coach and he was a veteran guy — I believe in my kickers. When they tell you that they can kick the football and make those type of field goals, I have the confidence that they can do it because that's what we're on the football team for. [Badgley] has done a great job of making those kicks. We're very fortunate to have him."

On Badgley's mental approach:

"[I like] his mindset and the way he goes about his business. From a standpoint of how he eats, how he trains and how he works in the field. He's very meticulous in what he does. He's a pro's pro to be a young player. He was coached very well in college at Miami. For us to have a chance to get him — it's just everything about him. He's kind of like Tiger Woods — you know with that standard operating procedure that Tiger Woods has. He's looking at the football, he's looking at the spot, he's looking at the wind conditions. Everything that you look for in a kicker, he does those things. We're very fortunate to have a guy like Michael Badgley on our football team."

On how the experience at Notre Dame can translate to a successful NFL career:

"First of all, because it is the school. It's a Power 5 school, as we know. The tradition has been very great. Guys that go to school there are normally top-echelon type of players. With that and [Notre Dame Head] Coach [Brian] Kelly has done a great job of coaching those guys. To have an [DE] Isaac Rochell, to have a [DT] Jerry Tillery, to have a Drue Tranquill on our football team — we're very fortunate. You look at the guys that have played in this league from Notre Dame, they've been outstanding. You go back to [TE] Mark Bavaro years and years ago, but [teams] have been very fortunate with those types of guys — like [RB] Ricky Watters in San Francisco when he was there. We've been very fortunate with those types of athletes. That particular group [from Notre Dame] because they're smart — No. 1. I'm not saying they're smarter than any one else, but they're smart and had to get into school there. They're athletic and have great toughness. We're very fortunate to have those guys on our team."

On Notre Dame athletes with interests outside of football:

"That's one thing that our head coach, Coach Lynn, talks about — about having a plan B. You know, plan A is football in terms of what they do. Plan B is what you're going to do after football. It's very rare that you have guys — sometimes it's late in their career before they look at a plan B. To get a guy like Jerry Tillery that has a plan B already, it's outstanding for him. That's what we try to do with our players so once they leave this organization, they're able to go out in the real world and have a chance to be successful in other endeavors."

On if the coaching staff sees other interests as positive in players:

"Absolutely, no question."

On if the staff takes pride in the development of the players after football:

"We do. Not only me, but you look at [Senior Director of Player Engagement] Arthur Hightower in terms of our player's program. He does a great job with that in terms of getting guys here, putting them back in school so that they can graduate while they're playing pro football — which it's excellent for our league to do that. We do have a sense of pride of seeing guys continue to do well. [NBA President of League Operations] Byron Spruell — another Notre Dame guy — played for me years ago. I think he's right next to the Commissioner of the National Basketball Association. Byron has done a great job in that respect, although he was a football player and crossed paths into the NBA. He's done a great job. We've been very fortunate and take pride in that."

On the importance of rookie minicamp:

"It's critical in terms of having those guys come in. I look at Coach Lynn — undrafted free agent. Austin Ekeler — undrafted free agent. George Stewart — undrafted free agent. They have an opportunity to come to a football and have eyes on them that are serious eyes — meaning just because they're undrafted doesn't mean you don't watch them like you do a first-rounder. You do because you never know that diamond in the rough. Two years ago, I tell these guys all the time, Austin Ekeler was a pest. Every day in my office, saying, 'Coach Stew.' A pest, but you put him on the field and he was very productive. You have to find those guys. Detrez Newsome a year ago. [S] Adrian Phillips, an All-Pro and Pro Bowler. Those guys are important to our lifeblood. Again, I go back to Tom Telesco, finding those types of guys that come in and give you a chance to be successful."

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS CORNERBACK CASEY HAYWARD JR.**On the offseason:**

"It's pretty much the same. Spent the offseason in Atlanta. Same stuff. Working out, running, lifting. I probably lifted a little more this offseason than I normally do. It got me ready for the lift here and the runs here."

On the Chargers draft picks:

"For me, I think it's great. Especially when you get a guy up front that was really good in college. Hopefully, he can come in here and complement the defensive line. Then you get a guy in the back end. Hopefully, he can come in here and try to help us win right away. Then you get some linebackers and things like that. Especially from a defensive point, we know there's a couple of holes we had that we needed to correct and hopefully the draft did that. Hopefully, another year with some of the younger guys can come in, get healthy and make a case to win this division and win a Super Bowl, ultimately."

On if he's met with any of the rookies:

"No, I haven't met any of the younger guys. I chatted with [S] Nasir [Adderley] over the phone, through texts and things. He's excited to come here and try to help us win. I'm pretty sure all the younger guys are eager to come here and help us win. I know everybody will get a chance to see them this weekend."

On a message to the younger guys:

"I say just come in and try to learn. Come in and try to learn. I think the hardest part is learning the playbook and trying to learn how to be a pro. I know that my first year I didn't know how to be a pro, but I got underneath an older guy's wing and he told me how to be a pro. Hopefully, they can come in and try to learn just like [S Derwin] DJ [James Jr.] did last year. Couple of the older guys, safeties, took him under their wings and he was able to flourish. He was one of those guys who came in, he didn't have a big ego and he was able to learn from some of the older guys and you see what it did for him."

On what it means to be a pro:

"I think coming in you have all the time on your hands. You're here all day. Be able to come in here, study, watch film, learn how to watch film because it's definitely a little different. The hashes are different. It's not going to be the same as college. You have to learn how to come in here and work."

On S Nasir Adderley:

"I've seen a little film on him. Ball hawk. Playmaker. I think at this level that's what you need, a guy who can cause turnovers, get extra possessions for the offense and I think we have a lot of those guys on this defense. Hopefully, he can come in right away and do the same thing he did in college. People always say, 'He went to a smaller school,' but he went to the Senior Bowl and did the same thing he did in college. He did it with the best competition at the Senior Bowl."

On LB Denzel Perryman:

"Coming off that injury, I think he has the right mindset of getting healthy and trying to come in here and help us win. You can tell when he's on the field that he definitely helps us a defense. We're a better tackling team when he's on the field and just a better defense."

On mentally preparing for this year and putting last year behind them:

"Last year was behind me as soon as the season was over, especially after the Super Bowl. I took some vacation after the Super Bowl. It was behind me right after my vacations, as soon as I got on the flight. You have to start thinking back, especially when you start coming back to workouts — the things that you personally can get better at and take that into accountability when you're working out in the offseason. Try to correct some of those things. As a team and as a defense, you have to see what you did well, what you didn't do as well and come in here and try to correct it. That's what the coaches do. They watch the film and they see what we need to correct. They tell us and we go out there and try to correct it."

On takeaways from the playoff loss:

"Tackle well. Play sound football because with a team like that with [Patriots QB] Tom Brady, and a team that knows how to win, you can't get behind like that. We knew we'd be able to run the mill a little bit in the second half, but the cushion was just too big. You can't get behind with teams like that and, I think especially, have the defense tackle better and the man-to-man in that game. I think if we get another chance at them hopefully next year, that we'll do a better job."

On personal goals to get better this season:

"Try to get better on the man-to-man and things like that. Work on my tackling. Get the ball, cause turnovers. Things I've been doing over and over for the past couple years. I think as a whole for me, it was about winning. Help the team win 12 games and that's what it was about. If we can win 16 games and I play well, I think I did my job no matter what the stats say. The goal is to come in here and win every single game. Realistically, it probably won't happen, but that's the goal each and every week — to win no matter who you're playing. For me, coming in here and try to help this team win as much as we can and win a division. The accolades will come with that. If I'm playing well, the accolades will come with it."

On initial thoughts on the schedule:

"Colts. I just know that's the first game. We play the Colts. That's what you kind of worry about the first game, who you play first. We know we play the division teams twice. We already automatically know that, we just don't know when. The first game is probably the most important game and that's the Colts game. I think Detroit is after that. The only reason I know that is because one of my friends plays for Detroit. He's already talked trash to me. He said he's going to [beat us]. That's the only reason I know that game."

On CB Desmond King II:

"I think the sky's the limit for Desmond. He's a great player already. Of course, there's plenty of things for him to get better at just like every guy. Like myself. From top to bottom, [QB Philip] Phil [Rivers] to whoever they might say is the last person on the roster. Everyone can get better. If he can get just a little better at something he wasn't as good at, he's going to be dominant again. If he can just get a better at the little things coach told him to get better at, he'll have a better year and he'll be All-Pro again."

On how the secondary has evolved:

"I think as a whole; I think we're pretty close. We treat each other like brothers. I think the Jack Boys came from one of the guys that was here, he went to Houston, I think that was their little motto that they used to say, Jack Boys. He was here so we just took it and ran with it. I know Houston, they're the Jack Boys, too — the University of Houston. Here, when you think about jack boys, you think about somebody who's coming to take something. As a whole, that's what we're trying to do get turnovers, take the ball away. As a mindset, I think we're just so close and we bring the energy. If we're playing well, I think the defense is playing well."

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS QUARTERBACK PHILIP RIVERS**On his offseason:**

"It's been good. I think, based on last year's success and then the disappointing finish, it gives you both some hunger to get back going but also with that comes a lot of excitement I think with the team we have coming back and the couple pieces we've added. Now being back around the guys the last week or so, it's been good. I think we six or seven weeks left in this offseason period to get better and improve and the season will be here before you know it."

On if the offseason disappointment was greater this year because of the great season last year:

"I think you have to stay focused on one day at a time and see what's right in front of you. I think looking back on that season, obviously, what we've talked about in forever since I've been here is how important winning the division is. I think that's always going to be our first goal. Find a way to win the division — which we didn't do. We had opportunities to. You look through those games that we let get away and those end up making it tougher on the path in the end. We're a long way from that, obviously, but I think those things should be in the back of our mind as we try to improve on the little things — the little details each day."

On how long the hurt of the last playoff games and how soon you move on:

"It sits around for a while, certainly, until the Super Bowl is over. It kind of lingers because you're watching the other teams that are playing and wishing we had a different outcome and made some different plays, better plays and found a way to be playing in that game. For me, I think it's always been once that game is over. Everybody's been back, reset and then you can start looking ahead. I think it's good to relax mentally, for sure. That game was disappointing, too, because we just didn't have a game where we got beat like that really all year. We'd been playing so good down the stretch and been so good on the road, but I think in some ways that can be good for us moving forward now. With this team, for a lot of guys, it was their first playoff experience. We went on the road, won in Baltimore and then went to New England — which we know what they've done over the last decade-plus. I think we got some valuable experience and we can use that moving forward this year."

On the schedule:

"As I always say, it's an NFL schedule. I think people that say this is a good schedule or bad schedule or this one is tough, they're all tough. You have 16 of them. I always look at the first one, the home opener and obviously our first game being at home against Indy will be exciting. That team, obviously, with what they did the last 10 weeks to finish and obviously with [Colts Head Coach] Frank [Reich] there and [Colts Offensive Coordinator] Nick [Sirianni] add some familiarity, which they'll have with us as well. Not having a division game in that first month is a little different than normal for us. Both of those Kansas City games are late in the year. You look at some of the prime-time games, Christmas and Thanksgiving, where we'll be and where some potential cold weather games where will be. There aren't too many of those. All in all, I think it's a heck of a schedule, fairly balanced as far as there aren't too many back-to-back East Coast games. There's that one stretch Tennessee and Chicago and I think there's one other one. With the bye coming a little later and the Thursday night game kind of right in there before it, that will be kind of interesting to see — which can be really good for us depending on where you sit injury-wise. It's a heck of a schedule. Obviously, we have some exciting home games. They all are. They'll all exciting, but I think we've known our opponents for some time. I think when the schedule comes out it makes it a little more specific when you know the dates of them. Obviously, our focus will be on that first one as we get into training camp and getting off to a good start. We did a better job of that last year than we did two years ago and it kind of cost us. Getting off to a good start, even without those division games, will be key. I think wherever you sit after that midway point — our division games are going to be late so whether we have a lead or whether we're behind we'll be able to gain ground or you'll have to hold your ground. It won't be one of those deals where you get so far behind and don't have those division opponents. I think it's a heck of a schedule. I don't know if there's ever been one to come out that's disappointing so it's exciting."

On continuity on the coaching staff:

"I think it's super important and I think it's hard to really put a value on it. I think it's huge. Obviously, we have some guys coming in, guys like [QB] Tyrod [Taylor], who are having to learn it, so it's a new system to them — but the guys that have been here, I think it does a lot for you, mentally. Not that you relax, but from a confidence, from a familiarity, all those things when you just come back in the first day, we're running plays. We all know what to expect. We all know how we communicate. We all know we have a lot of game experience together in this system. All those things help. They certainly help. It's hard to put an exact value on it but it's certainly big. I think the progress we made with this staff, [Head] Coach [Anthony] Lynn in his third year, the vision is clear. How we operate, how we practice, all those things now are crystal clear and that certainly helps you focus on the details. I think that's where we are now with this team. You always talk about them, but you may not be there yet. Truly now, where we are, the big picture, the big plays, the philosophy is all there so let's focus on the details now and find a way to make up that much in the difference from being a championship team or a team that gets in that can't finish it."

On his contract extension deadline:

"There really isn't [a deadline]. I'm certainly thankful for that if that opportunity comes. I'm just fine right where we are. I have this year left and under no immediate stress or urgency to get anything done even if it means playing out. That'd be just fine, it really will. We have a good group here and a good thing going and at this point focus on one year at a time and take it from there."

On if he'd be okay playing this season not knowing if he'd be back:

"Yeah, I'd be fine. I'd be fine with it. Look at it again in early spring if that, in fact, is how it plays out. I really have no goal or see it playing a certain way. I really don't. I'm really at peace with where it is now. I'm under contract for this season and excited about this team and our opportunities."

On practicing against LB Thomas Davis Sr.:

"I haven't been able to spend a lot of time around him yet. Last week we were able to talk a little bit in the locker room. We're in this part before OTAs where the offense is on the field together and we're in meeting rooms and we don't see the defense a ton right now. I have a great deal of respect for him and what he's done in his career, the injuries he's overcome and the player he's been. He's been an unbelievable player in this league. I played him once every four years, but watched him and always respected him as a player. Seeing him early on as a teammate he's going to be a great addition. Not only does he have a lot in the tank in between the lines but when you get guys like that [NT Brandon] Mebane a few ago, [C Mike] Pouncey — those guys are still big-time players for us but they also bring a great deal to the locker room from a leadership standpoint, in the meeting rooms and on the field. They're guys that have been players and proven winners for a long time. I was excited when we got him."

On chirping at Davis last week on the field:

"I was just having a little fun. They've gotten the best of us when he was in Carolina. We would have a little bit of that banter in the games. It'll be fun in practice. I've heard he gets after it a little bit in practice, so it'll be fun to have another defensive guy. [CB] Casey [Hayward Jr.] and I have always had a little interaction so adding another guy in the mix who likes a little back and forth, I think it's good. It brings out the best on both sides. Adds a little bit of energy to some practices that might be a little sluggish and it's all in good fun. It's all about pushing and trying to make each other better. He's obviously seen a lot of football. He's played against in that division that he was in — going again [Saints QB] Drew [Brees], [Falcons QB] Matt Ryan and those guys. I like it, too, to learn from guys what he sees, does, how he thinks. You find out about guys as players and certainly some feedback not only having fun but communicating to hopefully help each side get a little better."

On QB Easton Stick:

"[I've seen him play] a little bit. Obviously, those guys, they're always in the playoffs and winning the championship every year. I have seen him play some on those Saturdays on the road in the hotel or wherever we may be. Just a quick hello, I haven't really had any time to interact with him. Everything I hear — I know [Offensive Coordinator Ken] Whiz [Whisenhunt] and [Quarterbacks Coach] Shane [Steichen] met with him in the scouting process and were really impressed with him. He'll be great in the room and fit right in. It will be good to have a young guy in there that, from everything you hear and everything that he says, is hungry and eager to learn and work. We'll have a lot of fun and he'll fit right in with us."

On how he felt this offseason:

"Yeah, I did [go into the offseason relatively healthy]. I had a little ankle tweak in that last game, which was not a big deal. I would have been practicing Wednesday. When you don't have to, it's nice to rest a little bit. Other than that, I felt really good. It was another, thankfully and for the most part, healthy year. You have the little nicks you get here and there. Guys up front did a heck of a job and, thankfully, I've been able to stay upright and be out there again every game. Going into the offseason healthy is something I'm appreciative for. I feel like you kind of can hit the ground running a little bit as far as getting back into the flow not as achy and sore getting going. I feel good. I felt good last year at this time and I feel good again. I'm just looking forward to getting back going."

On the rule changes regarding pass interference calls:

"I'm going to have to continue to re-read that a few times. We're all going to have to get a feel for it because I think it's going to be interesting how it all plays out. I do think it's both the non-calls or the calls, right, that can get changed there really at any time in the game? As you mentioned, late in games, too. It will be interesting to see. Hopefully, some things come up even in the preseason that we can kind of see how it's going to play out because I don't know there isn't something you could call on every play — with just some of the hand fighting and the natural competitiveness of going after the football. We have guys, [WRs] Keenan [Allen] and Mike [Williams] that play the ball well down the field and are good at using their body, going up and making plays. It will be interesting to see. Certainly, that opportunity for — not only Mike going up and making the catch, but maybe getting a call or a non-call that turns into a call — it can certainly play into your thinking down the stretch when you're trying to get a chunk play or wherever it may fall in the game. I think it will take everybody some getting used to through camp and the preseason, kind of seeing how that's being handled."

On his future:

"I would say that it's fair to say that's still my desire [to play in the new stadium]. I know I said a handful [of years], a handful. I can't say that forever, I guess. I think, more than anything, just truly at this point trying to be grateful and appreciative of the year that I have in front of me. This year is what I have right now. If it's another year, and another year and both the team and myself and seeing the same way — if they want me here and I have the same desire and passion to be here and play, then we'll go again. I really don't have a number in mind. Again, it's as honest as I can be and it is the truth. I'm just focused on this year and we'll go from there."

On if he still wants to play to see the opening of the new stadium:

"That is my desire, yes. Absolutely."

On Patriots QB Tom Brady mentioning playing until age 45:

"Yeah, no. I appreciate Tom wanting me to be here until 45, but I think Tom knows that's not going to happen."

On the process of the offseason:

"I do [still enjoy it]. I think it would be untrue a little bit to say some of the little nuances of things that you maybe don't feel you need as much, but I think, again, that's a trap. I do enjoy it. I enjoy all of those things being out there, really, with your teammates. I think that's what makes it fun. It's not just throwing a slant and throwing a hitch. It's being out there with the guys, enjoying that camaraderie. Really, I think, again, it's that group of buddies trying to achieve a goal together. There is so much more to football, as you've heard me say over the years, that makes it my favorite sport and such a special game to me. I still get excited. I enjoyed a little break over Easter and everything. Not being here, though, I was like, 'Gosh, I'm excited to get back there,' knowing that the guys were here and I wasn't here. It felt a little weird. I'm still as fired up as I am every year at this point and I'm looking forward to it."

On the stability among the core group of players:

"As you mentioned, the core group of guys are still here. Seeing that core group grow up together [is something I enjoy]. Some of the young guys that were in their second or third year, they're now in six, seven or eight, that are part of this core group. It is a neat locker room. I do think you don't just carry that from year to year. I think it's something that we have to re-create. You create it this time of year. You especially create it during training camp — that camaraderie, that togetherness, that love for one another. Again, I think that's all the same page of what we're trying to get done and then enjoying the ride along the way. You can't spend all of the next eight months talking about trying to win the Super Bowl. Let's enjoy, let's try to get better today at this. Let's worry about this concept or this period of practice. The more we can be short-term in our focus and enjoy that, work at that and focus on that, we ultimately know what we're shooting for in the long-run."