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Chargers Head Coach Brandon Staley Draft Availability

Friday, April 28, 2023 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

On the team's decision not to exercise LB Kenneth Murray Jr.'s fifth-year option:

"Echoing what [General Manager] Tom [Telesco] said about the [salary] cap and stuff like that. We have the utmost respect for Kenneth Murray [Jr.]. He is a very important player to our team. I love coaching him. We love having him. We're expecting big things from him this season."

On the selection of OLB Tuli Tuipulotu and LB Daiyan Henley:

"Tuli [Tuipulotu], he was one of the most productive players in college football. He has 13.5 sacks and second in tackles for loss in the NCAA. One of the top players in the country on defense. He has a lot of the characteristics that we think translate to playing championship defense. He's really tough and rugged at the point of attack. He's versatile. He can rush from the outside and from the inside. He has versatility that way. He has the play style that we're really attracted to. He was here at our local pro day, got to know him a little bit even better. He's a guy that just really grew on us in the process. I'm very excited to add him to our group."

On Tuipulotu's 'competitive character':

"He has that ultimate competitive character, the play style. His brother plays for the Eagles. His cousin is an outstanding player for the Niners. I think he's been raised in that environment where football is life and the rest is just details. He's focused on his craft and being as good as he can be. When he came to the local pro day, that was the impression he gave us; how focused he is, how driven he is. We've wanted to join up with those types of guys. You guys met [WR] Quentin [Johnston] and he's the same way. Daiyan [Henley] is the same way. These guys are incredibly driven. They're very focused. Football is so important to them. Then, they have the play style that we're really attracted to. They are very, very physical. Tuli is a very natural player. He's natural in a lot of different places and that's why he makes so many plays, and the same thing with Daiyan. Daiyan is one of the top special teams players in the draft, a first-team All-Pac-12 at Washington State, a guy that can really run. He's a true low 4.5 [40-yard-dash] guy with a 36-inch vertical. He was at our local pro day and we got to know him even better. Spent a lot of time with [Defensive Coordinator] Derrick Ansley, [Linebackers Coach] Jeff Howard, myself, our staff. Just really feel good about him and him adding a lot of depth and quality to our defense and to our special teams."

On Henley learning from LB Eric Kendricks:

"What a wealth of knowledge. I think the same for Tuli [Tuipulotu]. They are two of the type of guys that will be able to soak all of that up from [OLB] Joey Bosa and [OLB] Khalil Mack, and in Daiyan's case, from an Eric Kendricks. Kenneth Murray is going into his fourth year playing, so there's a lot of wisdom there. I know that they'll take full advantage of it. I think that they're going to fit really well with our football team."

On Henley's versatility:

"The special teams value, too. To be a dynamic playmaker, a four-core player, and then a guy that we think eventually at linebacker — if you take a look at his last year at Washington State, I think, in the run game and pass coverage, and then he was an outstanding rusher, had five sacks his last year there — any time that you can get a three-down linebacker that can really run, we feel like that's a really tough thing to find nowadays. We're very excited about the pick."

On the difference in selection phone calls between Tuipulotu and Henley:

"Tuli [Tuipulotu] was very quiet [*laughter*]. Daiyan [Henley], there was a lot going on [*laughter*]. I think that it is really awesome, two Southern California guys, to get drafted by their home team. I can't imagine there being anything better than that. When we had [former Chargers OLB] Uchenna [Nwosu] here, I know how special that is. To grow up right down the road and to see a dream come true close by, where your family can really be a part of your journey, I think it's amazing. Getting to know both of those guys up close and personal was a cool part of the process."

On drafting two players that participated in the club's local pro day and the quality of football in Southern California:

"I know that Southern California is one of the premier places in the country to play football. I know that the top two players in the Draft are from California. Being here three years — I'm from Northeast Ohio, one of the special places in the country for football — but Southern California, that's taking it to a different level. Since I've been the head coach here, the local pro day has been really good to us. Last year, [DL] Otito [Obonnia] was here. That was something that was really impressive to us, was spending time with him. It's one of those things that's part of the process. These two guys really, I thought, took advantage of their opportunity in that setting."

On the plan for Tuipulotu's usage in pass rush:

"He played everywhere for S.C., inside and outside. He's kind of in that mold of a [Vikings OLB] Za'Darius Smith where he can play outside on early downs and then go inside and rush the passer. He played inside for S.C., as well. He's just a rugged, tough player. He's a lot of this, he's a lot of that, and that's what makes him a really unique player. He's a natural player. That's why he makes so many plays, because he's not just doing it on the edge and he's not just doing it inside, he's doing it from everywhere. When you're winning like that consistently, that means you're a damn good football player, and that's what he is."

On if Henley 'will challenge for a spot right away':

"I think he's going to have to earn his way. We really like our linebacker room. I think he has a lot of ability, but there's a lot to learn, especially at inside linebacker. There's a lot to see in the pro game that's different. There's a transition there. We just want him to come in here and compete. We think that he has a lot of good things to work with. I think he really upgrades our athleticism at that position. I think he'll be fantastic on special teams."

On if Henley 'is strictly a linebacker':

"Yes. He's a linebacker."

On reconnecting in-person with WR Quentin Johnston today:

"It was exciting to see him in-person. It had been since February. Then, to see him be the same guy — you know, you go through a process, you get drafted in the first round, to see that that's the same guy that we met, that's the same guy that we've heard about, as I told you guys, this guy has real size, and that stands out in person. More than anything, it's just who he is as a person. His makeup is off the charts. We're so excited to join up with someone like him. He's been working hard. I'm just excited for him to get here with the group and start working."

On 'focusing long-term' with the 'vision' for each player selected:

"That's the whole thing. You're signing a rookie for four or five years, that's the vision. There are different paths for everybody, in terms of how quickly people play and what their role is. Maybe this is what I thought his role would be, and then some things happen and this is what it becomes. You guys have seen it, since I've been the head coach, there are some guys that don't play very much at all, and then, midway through the year after your bye, then they play a whole bunch down the stretch. I think that light goes on at different points for players. This is a developmental game, so we definitely have that long-term path. I think that's why it's important to be connected, personnel and coaching, and really be aligned in your vision for the role and how you're going to utilize them. I think all three of these guys fit what we want in a football player at their positions. That's why we feel really good about all three of these guys."

On Tuipulotu's success last year in Southern California Defensive Coordinator Alex Grinch's scheme:

"I think that it's just the matchup, being able to play in a lot of different places. He was on the move. He has real power for the outside. Then, on the inside, he has real quickness that's hard to deal with. When you can play in both places, you can get on the right matchup and then really expose it. If there's a tackle that's light or doesn't anchor very well, then I can go to work on this guy. Or, they have some interior players that don't move very well, I can move inside. The big thing is that he can kick ass on early downs because he's so physical at the at the point of attack. That's what we're looking for, guys that are really physical at the point of attack and that can make plays. The thing that kind of gives him an edge over a lot of guys is he can rush inside. That's why you've seen guys like Za'Darius Smith, Pernell McPhee, who I coached, guys like Trey Flowers, guys with a little bit of this, a little bit of that. They can really be matchup guys. He's a point of attack player. He makes a lot of plays in all of those different places. That's something that's real, that sack production and those tackles for losses, that's all real production playing in the Pac-12 and that's three years worth of production. I know Tom talked about it, he's only 20 years old, so his best ball is in front of him. We're really excited to join up with this guy."

On if both players are 'violent hitters':

"Yes, play style guys. When I say play style, that's what I'm talking about — rugged, tough football players."

On Henley's personality:

"I think he has a lot of confidence. I think you can see that he's very confident. There's not anything that's too big for him. When he takes the field, I think he believes in himself and he has that mentality that he's a dog and that he's going to make something happen. We feel like we need that and that's how you win championships, is with players like that. I'm excited to add him to our group. I know how much football means to both of these guys, really all three of them. I think they're going to be great fits for the Chargers."

On Henley:

"I think that he's a complete player. I think you've seen it here with the Chargers with [Cardinals LB] Kyzir [White] and [Chiefs LB] Drue [Tranquill], both converted safeties that go to linebacker and that really give you a different physical dimension because of their speed. That helps you immensely in the kicking game. When you have seen the picture from a safety perspective — and Daiyan [Henley] was a tremendous receiver, too, coming out of high school — when you have seen the bigger picture, I think it helps you. The fact that he has that physicality and toughness to play blocks in the core, because what's different is the closer you get to the ball, things are happening quicker, for him to go into linebacker and then be the playmaker that he was, and then you know the blitzing, to me., is a big winning edge for him because he can rush, he can get on a running back and make things happen."

On Henley's background as a quarterback in high school:

"He was kind of taking us through that at the pro day, being an offensive player and then going to Nevada and playing on defense, kind of where he started out and then where he ended up. Sometimes that happens, as a player. You kind of you think that you're going one way and then you do something else. I think that just shows you what a football player he is. I think where the game is now, you need guys who can play in space, you need guys that can match up and you need guys that are violent hitters. If you can get it, that's something now that you don't see as much of the contact from players the farther that you move away from the ball. The linebacker/DB position now aren't as much contact positions as the way it used to be, so when you can find somebody that has that contact ability, it's important."