

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 Minicamp Media Availability

Tuesday, June 13, 2023 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

On the first day of Minicamp:

"Good energy. This group has had a really good approach to the offseason. Today, the level was high out there. The guys practiced hard. Now, we'll finish it out tomorrow."

On RB Austin Ekeler:

"Austin [Ekeler] is just how he always is, just so consistent. He's hasn't been here and you're wondering, 'What's going on?' Then, he comes out here and he just lights it up. He's in such great shape. He's such a professional. He's on top of his assignments. We all know who Austin Ekeler is, but you never take it for granted because he showed up and it was great to see him today."

On S JT Woods:

"We're going to find out a lot more about him when the pads come on. He's had a good offseason. He's working hard. He has definitely improved his body. He has become the professional that we expected him to be. But we're going to find out a lot more during training camp. But, we love working with him, for sure."

On Woods' development over last season:

"All the things that we saw from college, he still possesses all of those things that we really liked about him. I know that when we drafted him, we really saw him as a developmental player, that there was a lot in his game. Track was a big part of his equation in college. From a developmental standpoint, we knew that there was a lot of work to do, but that he had a lot of the traits, both physically and mentally, that you like to work with. I think all of those were on display last year. He was able to get in the game some and get that experience, but more importantly, he got a full year's worth of practice. I think that's as beneficial as anything. I think this preseason is going to be really big for him — get a lot of work, a lot of reps out there. I think we'll find a lot more about his growth in training camp."

On what he will 'need to see' out of Woods in training camp:

"You want a complete safety back there. You want a guy that can run the show, that has full command. You want a guy that is going to be a really good key-diagnose player, somebody that can trigger in the run game. Then, show range in the passing game. We know that that's the strength of him, is playing in the deep part of the field, the range and the ball skills. We know that he can cover well enough in the slot. Just looking to improve in all ways for him, but we really like working with him. He's worked really hard on his body, in terms of getting to the right weight that you need to play at, in order to be able to play against these good players that you have to tackle and get on the ground. I'm excited to coach him in training camp."

On CB J.C. Jackson's recovery:

"He's progressing. He's been working really hard. This summer will be important for him."

On if he 'anticipates' that Jackson 'will be ready by training camp':

"I think that the summer is going to tell a lot about his ability to be full-go for training camp."

On Jackson's comfort within the scheme:

"It's an important point because when you transition these players from other teams, it's a big aspect. He's doing the job that he's done his whole career, in terms of covering the number one receivers. That's what we brought him here to do. Fundamentally, we're asking him to do the things that he's done his whole career, just it's with us. I think it's just getting that comfort zone of being around the guys that you play with. It's not an individual sport. I think that people underestimate the transition for players because it's much more challenging in football to transition to a new team. I think you've seen it with quarterbacks that have transitioned to new teams. He is the player that we signed, we know that. I'm confident that in training camp, once he gets to working with his teammates, that he'll be able to showcase the real player that he is."

On if he is 'surprised' about where Jackson 'is at physically':

"No. He's engineered differently. I fully expect for him to be out there playing his game at some point this fall."

On WR Joshua Palmer:

"If any of our guys aren't out there, it's just for something minor in nature. You'll get to see him at training camp."

On 'any update' regarding a contract extension with QB Justin Herbert:

"No, ongoing."

On if he is 'hopeful to get a phone call before training camp that the deal is done':

"I'm hopeful, confident. It will happen when it's supposed to happen."

SAFETY DERWIN JAMES JR.

On CB J.C. Jackson returning to the field:

"It's been good seeing him back out there moving, doing DB drills. I know that he's excited. We can't wait to get him out there."

On improving in pass rush:

"I'm getting better. I'm always trying to improve my game. I never feel like I got it, so just trying to work the ways. I know that they're going to be rushing me this year, so why not get better at it?"

On if he 'picks the brains' of OLBs Joey Bosa and Khalil Mack:

"Heck yeah [*laughter*]. They're two of the best. Both of them will be future Hall of Famers, so why not?"

On S Alohi Gilman:

"A lot of confidence in Lo [Alohi Gilman]. He's a guy that's consistent. Everyone here counts on him. Everyone knows that he's going to be where he needs to be. He's getting better. He's making calls. He's confident. It's exciting being out there. It's been a lot of fun, a lot of energy out there, honestly."

On anything that he is 'working on' during minicamp:

"Coming out here and getting better. Trying to get the offense better. Like I said, give me better. Get better, overall, as a whole."

On being a 'playoff team':

"We definitely feel like we belong in the playoffs. We know that we belong in the playoffs. Every guy in here believes in each other. You'll see it soon."

On S JT Woods:

"He's growing, he's getting better. He's understanding the system more. He still has a ways to go where he wants to get, but he's getting better every day."

On Gilman's growth:

"How we're bonding as DBs, he's bringing us closer. I'm one of the guys that's a leader, but he's bringing us closer together. After every play, every time we are taking the field, it's been just a joy going to take the field with him, honestly."

On LB Eric Kendricks:

"I love E.K., E.K. is a baller. It's good having E.K. in the middle. Confident guy. He's still learning everything, it's kind of new to him, but he's going to get it here soon."

On LB Kenneth Murray Jr.:

"Another guy that's getting better. He's gaining more confidence. Working with E.K., too, I see those guys in the middle talking constantly, working with each other. That's what we need. We need everybody to just do their part. I come in, do my part. They do their part. I feel like we'll get the results we want, as a defense."

On areas of growth for the defense and CB Asante Samuel Jr. entering his third NFL season:

"To me, football is just confidence and knowing your job. I feel like if you know your job and you know it well enough, and you're confident to go do it, you can do it. Year 3 with Asante, I feel like he is going to have a lot more confidence, for sure."

On training in Florida with Samuel and Jackson during the break before training camp:

"Definitely, for sure. We definitely try to get together in the offseason, even [CB] Michael Davis, too, [CB] Kemon [Hall], a lot of the guys, we all try to come together and get some position work in. Get the movements that we need for the season."

On conversations with Murray regarding his fifth-year option not being exercised:

"As a team, I feel like we leave the upstairs business upstairs. But we do remind each other of what we are chasing. Everybody has their own individual goals, but we try not to bring upstairs business into the locker room. He's working hard. If he wants it, it's there for him, so it doesn't matter if he comes out and plays the season that he needs to play, it will be there for him. It's that simple."

On if the team 'talks about' the Jaguars game:

"That's over with. I don't even want to think about that game anymore, honestly. On to the new season. I can't wait until we get out there and are playing somebody else."

LINEBACKER ERIC KENDRICKS

On minicamp feeling different than other parts of the offseason program:

"We're keeping it tight. It's kind of standard out here, but it's getting real. The season is around the corner. So I guess, in a sense, yeah, it is."

On integrating into the defense:

"I'm definitely more familiar with my alignments and things like that, but terminology and stuff like that, I'm still learning from some of the vets. [LB Kenneth Murray Jr.] K9 has been helping me a lot. I think, the biggest thing is the locker room. I feel like I fit in with the locker room. It's a bunch of guys who care and are all about ball. I can't really ask for more besides to go out there on Sunday and play hard."

On teammates that have helped him acclimate:

"I mean, [LB Kenneth Murray Jr.] K9 is in my position group. He's been helping me a lot, especially as we're both backers [linebackers]. I'm kind of leaning on him, especially as I learn the playbook. Really, a bunch of guys, I feel like."

On LB Kenneth Murray Jr.:

"He's a beast, man. He's a freak. I think it's going to be his best year yet."

On how much carryover there is from Minnesota:

"Just terminology differences. A lot of similar concepts. [Head] Coach [Brandon] Staley is super smart. He can remember plays from my first year in the league. He brings up plays and compares the new plays to how I used to run things. He can compare them [the new plays] to old plays that I didn't even know he knew. For him to make those comparisons for me, it helps me a lot to just correlate things and get things organized."

On if the plays Head Coach Brandon Staley mentions were from his rookie season:

"My first year in the league. A whole different defense. He knows those kind of plays, too, which is crazy. I don't know."

On when Staley recalls a play from his rookie season:

"He recalls it and then I'm like, 'How do you know that?' As soon as he recalls it, it brings it up but I wasn't thinking of it."

On if he can remember the plays when Staley brings them up:

"Yeah, once he brings it up, then it's easy because I was in that for a while. It's easy for me to correlate that to how we do it now and then I get things rolling."

On how much 'trust' he has in Staley from those comparisons:

"He knows ball, he loves ball. I think that's the main thing. I step into the locker room, the coaches love ball, the players love ball, equipment loves ball, trainers love ball. That's what it's all about. It's from the whole building. When you walk into an environment and you're surrounded by that, it makes it easier for you to get along with the program."

On what he's seen from the offense:

"Man, these weapons are crazy. We have some big old receivers and everything like that. Obviously, Herb [QB Justin Herbert] is going to throw it wherever he wants to, which I think is the best quality. You have to have someone who's not scared back there, who's going to sling it. He definitely can do that."

On if he and QB Justin Herbert have spoken about his interception from 2021 while with Minnesota:

"No, we haven't talked about that. Probably not."

On his upcoming offseason:

"Shoot, just heading into the offseason, I get to spend some time with my son and my wife. He's five weeks, [turns] six weeks old this week. It's going to be pretty cool. Obviously, football is important, it's at the forefront, but I have to take a little time to get that in order as well at home. It's going to make me play better, as well."

DEFENSIVE LINEMAN SEBASTIAN JOSEPH-DAY

On minicamp:

"It's great. Great energy. Let's keep this thing rolling, keep the momentum rolling and taking it one day at a time."

On Defensive Coordinator Derrick Ansley:

"His attitude is amazing. I think I actually touched on this earlier this year — it's a confidence and it radiates off him, and radiates to everyone else. I think he did a great job with the DBs — last year was my first year here. I saw his approach with the DBs. He's been outstanding for us. Like I said, his confidence just radiates to everyone and the energy as well. It's fun. We have a good relationship, he's always sending me text messages about doing great and things like that. Always giving me little tidbits and stuff like that to read. It's very motivating in a positive way and reassuring. I really like DA a lot."

On what he gets out of minicamp:

"Oh, everything. You lift and go out and do drills. It's training in the offseason, the same thing for me. You gain everything. You get to work on your footwork. You get to work on hand placement, get-off. You get to watch film. Honestly, it's crazy, each year when you watch yourself the previous year and you see yourself now and how much you've grown when it comes to footwork and stuff like that, it's really cool. [Defensive Run Game Coordinator/Defensive Line] Jay [Rodgers] has done a great job, a phenomenal job. All of the coaches have done a phenomenal job this year. I really feel we're way more connected this year, the whole defensive unit. I think that's what we needed. We just needed time to gel with one another. I think now that's definitely going to show this year. I'm excited about that."

On if he 'itches' for live reps:

"I mean, yes and no. The offseason is kind of like baking a cake. I know it's a weird analogy, but you can't skip one step. Each phase, at least with me and my training, you need to do this — you have to get the eggs, you have to [break] the yolk. It's step-by-step. You have to put the baking soda in, you can't take the cake out too soon. It's step-by-step. The way I approach it, yeah, it would obviously be fun, but I'm year six in now. I really have a good schedule. I feel like a lot of vet guys have a good feel of how they ramp themselves up to make sure they're peaking come August and July."

On if he bakes a lot of cakes:

"No, but you know what? It just popped in my mind [laughter]. After practice, I'm a little hungry, if you know what I'm saying [laughter]."

On how the break between minicamp and training camp fits into the cake analogy:

"Yeah, like letting your dough rise. That's when I think you hit it really hard. I'm going to probably cut up a little bit. A lot more field work. A lot more football-oriented work. I feel like the beginning half is more foot speed and getting stronger. Getting stronger, I'm adding mass. Then, in summertime, I'm going to cut. Start cutting up. Start doing more football drills, more football-oriented stuff. That's just the way I do things. Then, more explosive stuff. You need to be explosive on the field. Plyometric stuff."

On what he's seen from the offense:

"Yeah, it's night-and-day right now, I think. Tempo, speed. Just the complexity of it, it's really cool to see. I'm excited. I'm really excited for the guys that we have on that side. Adding a few guys in the draft. We're going to be really, really hard to defend, for sure. I'm really excited."

On how a talented offense is challenging to practice against:

"I think that will definitely present us with a bigger challenge. I think you want that, right? You never want that to be one-sided in training camp. You always want it to be back-and-forth. I think what they're doing over there, it's definitely going to be a very competitive training camp. The stuff they're showing is really unique and really awesome to see. It's refreshing. It's some stuff that we've seen in our opponents and some stuff that they've done to us. It's really cool to see. I'm really excited for [QB] Justin [Herbert] and those guys to have [Offensive Coordinator] Kellen Moore over there."

On expectations this year compared to last year:

"I don't think it even has to be discussed, we all know. The injury bug got us. We can't make it an excuse. We do what we have to do. This year, we're going to learn from the mistakes that we made and bounce back from it. It's a distant memory right now. Obviously, we use it as motivation. We don't forget, but also we don't dwell on it. We're super excited. The goal is to be healthy — a lot healthier this year so that we can do what we have to do."

On CB J.C. Jackson:

"I'm really happy for J.C., man. He's been putting in a lot of work this offseason. I was here for the entire spring, so I've seen him the entire time. The entire winter, too. In February, I was here. I've seen him every day grinding away. I'm really happy for J.C. I expect a huge comeback from him. I'm super excited. I think it's awesome that you have guys like Vato [CB Michael Davis] and Zont [CB Asante Samuel Jr.] because they raised their play last year. It's definitely, I feel like, motivate J.C. to come back even healthier, better and stronger. All champagne problems. Great problems to have. I'm really excited for J.C., man. He's been working his tail off. I'll be happy to have him back, for sure."

On LB Eric Kendricks:

"Eric brings quick and concise communication. That's what you need at that position — quick and concise communication, confidence. He has a great personality. We're always yucking it up outside the locker room. He's a good dude. I really like Eric. I like the energy that he brings. He's done a great job helping us get lined up and making the calls. He's a very smart player and a great player as well. We're super excited to have him."

"It feels great [to bring him in]. It means that it's not a facade. It's authentic, not fabricated. It's a compliment to us and he fits right in. Like I said, great player, great person. It's been fun. He's doing a great job of communicating. We just have to keep building off it."