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Chargers Week 1 Media Availability

Monday, September 4, 2023 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

SPECIAL TEAMS COORDINATOR RYAN FICKEN

Opening Statement:

"I thought it was a really good day. Coming back after a long weekend as we go ahead and prepare for Miami and take those steps forward. I thought it was a great day."

On the kicker competition:

"Dustin [Hopkins], first and foremost, is an elite kicker. Either way, however it shook out, we were going to lose a top kicker. We felt, as an organization, that the body of work with what [K] Cameron [Dicker] has done — nothing that Hopkins hasn't done — more of what Dicker has done, our faith and belief in him and his consistency with it. Moving forward, we thought he was the right guy for the opportunity."

On K Cameron Dicker:

"It's his approach to the game. He plays like he's a veteran kicker. Nothing sways him at all. He's confident in everything he does. He's consistent in his approach. You know what you're going to get out of him. We're really excited that he's still here as a Charger. Even last year there were opportunities where other teams were pushing for him, we're fortunate that he's here. It was a great competition between those two guys, I thought they made each other better as they competed against each other."

On Dicker's range:

"That's something that depends on the situation. It depends on the game, the environment, the wind, indoor or outdoor and all of that. We're very confident in his leg strength and where he can kick from, the distance. Especially with how many reps you're going to get, those opportunities from the greater distances. I don't think distance really plays a factor with him. He's steady Eddie as it is."

On Dicker's confidence:

"Absolutely, he's a confident guy. We talk about this throughout practice, being up in pre-game, to know what the situation is. We always talk about those numbers and the distances. He's a very confident kicker, which he should be. He's talented."

On if kickers know 'they'll have a good day' like pitchers in baseball:

"With these kickers I've been around, they always think that they can go ahead and make those. That's what you want with those kickers. With the pitchers, I'm not quite sure, but I know the comparison you're talking about. That's what you want to have, those confident kickers that know they can go in there and hit any kick. We want to make sure that we put them in the position to be successful. Those guys also know what their limitations are. In this case they have very few limitations."

On 'replacing' FB Zander Horvath:

"It's a tough replacement. I don't think that you, necessarily, replace a Zander Horvath. It's unfortunate — with the way that the roster is made up — to lose a really good player, in terms of special teams, as Zander. I'm very thankful for what he brought to this organization last year and how we were able to get a foundation built with him as a rookie. He's going to do great things wherever he is at, so I'm very happy for him to have a situation. We wanted him back here, just a different situation. It just kind of works out that way. He's going to be successful wherever he goes."

On if Horvath 'will be replaced by committee':

"You have to be able to pick it up with a group of guys, or if you have a guy that can handle that situation. We think that there are, possibly, some guys on our current roster, that will be up, that can go ahead and handle those. Again, it's very difficult to replace him, specifically, because he was so versatile in the roles. Like we have talked about before, the kickoff situations are the positions that he played, and punt return, just his athleticism and everything that he was able to bring. Now, it is difficult to pick that up, but I feel that we have the right guys on the roster to be able to do that, so I'm excited about those guys."

On his 'early evaluation' of the Dolphins:

"It's a really good group. They're going to be tough to prepare for. They do a bunch of things. This coach, [Dolphins Special Teams Coordinator] Coach Danny [Crossman], he's a really good coach. We have to make sure that we're ready to go and dialed in. It's going to be a great test for our young guys and for our unit as a whole. They're a really good, well-coached group."

On if he has 'seen enough' of WR Derius Davis 'to name him the starting returner':

"We have a pretty good idea of who is going to be the returner. Obviously, Derius [Davis] did some good things in the preseason games. At the end of the day, we still have to make sure that we're repping and we're preparing the other guys, too, on this team that can handle the job because you never know what could happen, anything can happen. We're going full throttle with the three returners that we have on this roster, to prepare them to be ready to go on Sunday, if their number gets called."

On the new rule involving fair catching a kickoff:

"There are a couple of teams that did it [in the preseason], but like you said, you didn't see much of it. Maybe situationally, depends on the philosophy that some of these teams are going to have, depending on the situation of the game, the returner. Yeah, you might see it, but I just know what our philosophy is and what we're going to do. It's tough to figure out what the rest of the teams might do, but we have to prepare for teams to fair catch it, to kick different types of kicks when they're on kickoff and we have to be able to recover all of those types of kicks, as well."

On 'why a team wouldn't fair catch every single kickoff return to guarantee getting the ball at the 25-yard line':

"Yeah, you would like to. If you we're 100 percent going to be able to catch the ball, obviously, you have the one rule where you do muff it, the ball is going to be right there at the spot. You have to prepare for that. It just depends on the situation. If you want to save time on the clock, you may fair catch it. Every situation is going to be dependent upon what we do moving forward on that."

On whom the third returner would be:

"[WR Alex] Erickson. He, obviously, has a long history of doing it and he has done it at this level at a high level. He definitely has that ability."

On if he 'wants' to have the punt and kick returner to be the same person:

"That's two different positions, so whoever is the best guy for each job. If you platoon it, if you have two separate guys, however it is, you want the best returner for the position. I see it as separate jobs. If it's one guy, great. You kind of help yourself on the roster and you can build off of that. I've been around where it's been both situations, where you've had one for each and where you've had one guy do it."

On P JK Scott's preseason and the performance of the punt unit:

"I thought that we did some good things. Unfortunately, we weren't able to get a lot of realistic looks, in terms of feeling the whole part of it, the rush. You just get a lot of the return type of looks and the coverage. I thought that JK, for the most part, did a great job. There are always some things that we need to build on, going forward, but I was pleased with the body of work that he had out there. Now, that's all behind us, and he has to go ahead and start right now from square one, starting with Week 1, where we go ahead and put everything together and have consistent punts. The coverage units, I thought, did some good things. We just have to make sure that we're consistent with it. I thought that we got a lot of good work."

On if LB Tanner Muse has special teams experience:

"Yes. We expect him to be out there. That's a big reason why we ended up bringing him here. We're excited to have a guy such as Tanner [Muse], the way that he plays special teams, with his length and his speed and his strength. He does a great job. We expect him to be out there and be a major contributor for us."