



LA

GAME RELEASE

WEEK 1 vs. MIAMI DOLPHINS

SUN. SEPT. 10, 2023 | 1:25 PM PT



LOS ANGELES CHARGERS

GAME RELEASE

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CHARGERS HOST DOLPHINS TO OPEN 2023 SEASON

The Los Angeles Chargers host the Miami Dolphins to open the 2023 season, kicking off from SoFi Stadium at 1:25 p.m. PT on Sun., Sept. 10. Kevin Harlan, Trent Green and Melanie Collins have the call on CBS, while Matt “Money” Smith, Daniel Jeremiah and Shannon Farren will broadcast on the Chargers Radio Network airwaves on ALT FM-98.7. Adrian Garcia-Marquez and Francisco Pinto will present the game in Spanish on Que Buena Los Angeles.

Sunday marks the second-ever Week 1 matchup between the teams, with the Bolts winning the 1986 season opener over Miami, 50-28. Los Angeles topped Miami last season on *Sunday Night Football*, holding the Dolphins to 219 total net yards, the fewest allowed in the series by a Chargers defense in over 50 years.

The Bolts offense is led by new offensive coordinator, Kellen Moore, and quarterback **Justin Herbert**, who signed an extension this offseason after re-writing record books through the first three seasons of a career. The unit also features touchdown machine Austin Ekeler and a dangerous receiving corps headlined by **Keenan Allen** and **Mike Williams**. Defensively, **Derwin James Jr.**, leads the unit along with pass rushers **Joey Bosa** and **Khalil Mack**. The team also added All-Pro linebacker **Eric Kendricks** in free agency.

The Miami offense features Tua Tagovailoa, who threw for 3,548 yards and 25 touchdowns last season, while his 105.5 passer rating led the NFL in 2022. Tagovailoa has a pair of receiving weapons in Tyreek Hill and Jaylen Waddle, posted 1,710 and 1,356 receiving yards last year, respectively. Defensively, the Dolphins are coached by Defensive Coordinator Vic Fangio and acquired cornerback Jalen Ramsey in the offseason.

Los Angeles heads on the road to the Music City next week to face off with the Tennessee Titans. The teams kick off from Nissan Stadium at 10:00 a.m. PT on Sun., Sept. 17.

BY THE NUMBERS

200.3 The Bolts offense averaged a league-high 200.3 rushing yards per game this preseason, the highest average by any team in a single preseason since 2001 preseason when Cincinnati ran for 204.3 yards per game.

300 QB Justin Herbert needs five games with 300-plus passing yards for the most 300-yard games in a quarterback’s first four seasons in NFL history.

6 The Chargers are scheduled to play six prime-time game this year, including four games at SoFi Stadium. The team plays on *Monday Night Football* twice, *Sunday Night Football* twice, *Thursday Night Football* once and the first-ever Saturday primetime contest broadcast exclusively on Peacock.

ON THE CALL

TELEVISION: CBS
Play-by-play: Kevin Harlan
Analyst: Trent Green
Sideline: Melanie Collins

CHARGERS RADIO: ALT FM-98.7
Play-by-play: Matt “Money” Smith
Analyst: Daniel Jeremiah
Sideline: Shannon Farren

NATIONAL RADIO: COMPASS
Play-by-play: Troy Clardy
Analyst: Steve Beuerlein

SPANISH RADIO: QUE BUENA
LOS ANGELES (FM-105.5/94.3)
Play-by-play: Adrian Garcia-Marquez
Analyst: Francisco Pinto

CHARGERS MOBILE APP: Official team news, full game stats and live press conferences are available on the Chargers mobile app. For more details, visit Chargers.com/app.

2023 CHARGERS SCHEDULE

PRESEASON (2-1)

Wk	Date	Opponent	TV	Result
1	Sat., Aug. 12	at L.A. Rams	CBS LA	W, 34-17
2	Sun., Aug. 20	NEW ORLEANS	CBS LA	L, 22-17
3	Fri., Aug. 25	at San Francisco	CBS LA	W, 23-12

REGULAR SEASON (0-0)

Wk	Date	Opponent	TV	Time*/Res.
1	Sun., Sept. 10	MIAMI	CBS	1:25 p.m.
2	Sun., Sept. 17	at Tennessee	CBS	10:00 a.m.
3	Sun., Sept. 24	at Minnesota	FOX	10:00 a.m.
4	Sun., Oct. 1	LAS VEGAS	CBS	1:05 p.m.
5	—	BYE	—	—
6	Mon., Oct. 16	DALLAS	ESPN	5:15 p.m.
7	Sun., Oct. 22	at Kansas City	CBS	1:25 p.m.
8	Sun., Oct. 29	CHICAGO	NBC	5:20 p.m.
9	Mon., Nov. 6	at N.Y. Jets	ESPN	5:15 p.m.
10	Sun., Nov. 12	DETROIT	CBS	1:05 p.m.
11	Sun., Nov. 19	at Green Bay	FOX	10:00 a.m.
12	Sun., Nov. 26	BALTIMORE	NBC	5:20 p.m.
13	Sun., Dec. 3	at New England	CBS	10:00 a.m.
14	Sun., Dec. 10	DENVER	CBS	1:25 p.m.
15	Thurs., Dec. 14	at Las Vegas	PRIME	5:15 p.m.
16	Sat., Dec. 23	BUFFALO	PEACOCK	5:00 p.m.
17	Sun., Dec. 31	at Denver	CBS	1:25 p.m.
18	Jan. 6/Jan. 7	KANSAS CITY	TBD	TBD

*All Times Pacific

HOME GAMES IN CAPS

2022 AFC WEST STANDINGS

Team	W	L	T	Pct.	PF	PA
Kansas City	14	3	0	.824	496	369
L.A. Chargers	10	7	0	.588	391	384
Las Vegas	6	11	0	.353	395	418
Denver	5	12	0	.294	287	359

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BREAKING DOWN THE 2023 SCHEDULE

SERIES BREAKDOWN	2022 RECORD	NOTES
 <p>ALL-TIME: 15-17-0 HOME: 11-8-0 AWAY: 4-9-0 LAST: W, 23-17 — 2022 vs. Dolphins</p>	<p>OVERALL: 9-8-0 HOME: 6-2-0 AWAY: 3-6-0 STANDING: 2nd AFC East</p>	<p>The Chargers host Miami for the 20th time ever in Week 1, with the Dolphins holding a 17-15 mark in the all-time series. Los Angeles topped Miami last season on <i>Sunday Night Football</i>, holding the Dolphins to 219 total net yards, the fewest allowed in the series by a Chargers defense in over 50 years.</p>
 <p>ALL-TIME: 28-15-1 HOME: 19-3-1 AWAY: 9-12-0 LAST: W, 17-14 — 2022 vs. Titans</p>	<p>OVERALL: 7-10-0 HOME: 3-5-0 AWAY: 4-5-0 STANDING: 2nd AFC South</p>	<p>The Chargers are 28-15-1 (0.651) against the former AFL West rival. Los Angeles have won 11 of the past 13 games overall, including three of the last five on the road. Four of the last five matchups in the series have been decided by one score.</p>
 <p>ALL-TIME: 6-8-0 HOME: 3-3-0 AWAY: 3-5-0 LAST: L, 27-20 — 2021 vs. Vikings</p>	<p>OVERALL: 13-4-0 HOME: 8-1-0 AWAY: 5-3-0 STANDING: 1st NFC North</p>	<p>The Week 3 matchup will be Los Angeles' first regular-season game at U.S. Bank Stadium, as the team hasn't visited the Twin Cities since 2015. Typically high-scoring affairs, the winning team scored at least 24 points in all but two of the series' 14 matchups.</p>
 <p>ALL-TIME: 57-67-2 HOME: 29-33-1 AWAY: 28-34-1 LAST: L, 27-20 — 2022 at Raiders</p>	<p>OVERALL: 6-11-0 HOME: 4-4-0 AWAY: 2-7-0 STANDING: 3rd AFC West</p>	<p>The Chargers have won 14 of the past 20 home contests against the Raiders, scoring 20-plus points in all but five of those matchups. Los Angeles has won 12 of the past 19 games against the Raiders on the road. 10 of the past 14 road games against the Raiders have been decided by one score, including three in overtime.</p>
 <p>ALL-TIME: 5-7-0 HOME: 2-5-0 AWAY: 3-2-0 LAST: L, 20-17 — 2021 vs. Cowboys</p>	<p>OVERALL: 12-5-0 HOME: 8-1-0 AWAY: 4-4-0 STANDING: 2nd NFC East</p>	<p>The Bolts have won four of the last six games against the Cowboys, including a 22-point victory in Dallas on Thanksgiving in 2017. The Chargers have won three-straight games on <i>Monday Night Football</i>, while the contest marks the team's first-ever Monday night game against the Cowboys.</p>
 <p>ALL-TIME: 57-67-1 HOME: 31-30-1 AWAY: 26-37-0 LAST: L, 30-27 — 2022 vs. Chiefs</p>	<p>OVERALL: 14-3-0 HOME: 7-1-0 AWAY: 7-2-0 STANDING: 1st AFC West</p>	<p>The Chargers have won two of the last three road games against the Chiefs, including back-to-back wins in 2020 and 2021. The Chargers have an all-time regular-season home record against the Chiefs of 31-30-1, with the last four matchups being decided by one score.</p>
 <p>ALL-TIME: 6-7-0 HOME: 4-3-0 AWAY: 2-4-0 LAST: W, 17-16 — 2019 at Bears</p>	<p>OVERALL: 3-14-0 HOME: 2-7-0 AWAY: 1-7-0 STANDING: 4th NFC North</p>	<p>Los Angeles plays against Chicago for the 14th time in history and the seventh at home, with the Bolts holding a 4-3 advantage in home games. The Bolts and Bears have played four prime-time games in history, including one on <i>Sunday Night Football</i> in 1993.</p>
 <p>ALL-TIME: 23-12-1 HOME: 14-6-0 AWAY: 9-6-1 LAST: W, 34-28 — 2020 vs. Jets</p>	<p>OVERALL: 7-10-0 HOME: 3-5-0 AWAY: 4-5-0 STANDING: 4th AFC East</p>	<p>Los Angeles plays the Jets for the first time since 2020, when Justin Herbert threw for 366 yards and three scores in a victory at SoFi Stadium. The Chargers have won the last four matchups with the Jets. The Bolts have a 2-0 record in primetime against the Jets, both of which came on <i>Monday Night Football</i>.</p>
 <p>ALL-TIME: 7-5-0 HOME: 5-0-0 AWAY: 2-5-0 LAST: L, 13-10 — 2019 at Lions</p>	<p>OVERALL: 9-8-0 HOME: 5-4-0 AWAY: 4-4-0 STANDING: 2nd NFC North</p>	<p>The Chargers host Detroit for the first time since a five-point win in 2015 and have won seven of the last nine against the Lions. In the 33-28 home victory in season, Keenan Allen hauled in 15 receptions, the most by a player on Kickoff Weekend since the 1970 NFL-AFL merger.</p>
 <p>ALL-TIME: 2-10-0 HOME: 1-6-0 AWAY: 1-4-0 LAST: W, 26-11 — 2019 vs. Packers</p>	<p>OVERALL: 8-9-0 HOME: 5-4-0 AWAY: 3-5-0 STANDING: 3rd NFC West</p>	<p>The Bolts square off against Green Bay for just the 13th time in history. In the most recent game of the series, Los Angeles defeated the Packers at home in 2019 by 15 points, as the defense allowed just 184 total net yards.</p>
 <p>ALL-TIME: 5-8-0 HOME: 4-4-0 AWAY: 1-4-0 LAST: L, 6-34 — 2021 at Ravens</p>	<p>OVERALL: 10-7-0 HOME: 5-3-0 AWAY: 5-4-0 STANDING: 2nd AFC North</p>	<p>The Week 12 matchup against the Ravens will mark just the ninth game Los Angeles hosts Baltimore. The Chargers beat the Ravens in the 2018 AFC Wild Card matchup, 23-17. The Bolts won the lone <i>Sunday Night Football</i> matchup against Baltimore in 2011, 34-14.</p>
 <p>ALL-TIME: 14-24-2 HOME: 6-12-1 AWAY: 8-12-1 LAST: L, 27-24 — 2021 vs. Patriots</p>	<p>OVERALL: 8-9-0 HOME: 4-4-0 AWAY: 4-5-0 STANDING: 3rd AFC East</p>	<p>Los Angeles heads to New England for first time since 2017. The Patriots hold a 24-14-2 advantage in the all-time series, while four of the last six matchups have been decided by less than 10 points.</p>
 <p>ALL-TIME: 55-70-1 HOME: 37-26-0 AWAY: 18-44-1 LAST: L, 31-28 — 2022 at Broncos</p>	<p>OVERALL: 5-12-0 HOME: 4-4-0 AWAY: 1-8-0 STANDING: 4th AFC West</p>	<p>The Bolts hold a 37-26 regular-season home record against the Broncos. In the 2022 home game on <i>Monday Night Football</i>, Los Angeles beat Denver in overtime, 19-16. 10 of the last 13 matchups in the Mile High City have been decided by one score, including six of them by less than seven points.</p>
 <p>ALL-TIME: 24-11-2 HOME: 13-5-1 AWAY: 11-6-1 LAST: L, 27-17 — 2020 at Bills</p>	<p>OVERALL: 13-3-0 HOME: 7-1-0 AWAY: 6-2-0 STANDING: 1st AFC East</p>	<p>Los Angeles hosts Buffalo for the first time since a 30-point win in 2017, where the Chargers forced six turnovers. The Bolts have won the last six home games against the Bills and four of the last five games in the series overall. The Chargers played their first Saturday night game against the Bills, a 20-3 victory in 1971.</p>

CHARGERS-DOLPHINS SERIES HISTORY

SERIES BREAKDOWN

All-Time Series Record	17-19 (.472)
Regular Season Series Record	15-17 (.467)
Chargers All-Time at Home vs. Dolphins	12-8 (.469)
Current Streak	W, One (1) game
Last Meeting	Dec. 11, 2022 – W, 17-23
Longest Chargers Win Streak	Two (2) games (Last: 2009-11)
Longest Dolphins Win Streak	Seven (7) games (1995-2008)
Head Coach Brandon Staley vs. Dolphins	1-2 (.333)
Staley All-Time vs. Dolphins*	1-0 (1.000)
Most Career GP vs. Dolphins	CB J.C. Jackson (8)

*Including years as assistant coach

TEAM SUPERLATIVES AGAINST DOLPHINS

Most Points Scored	50 – Sept. 7, 1986 vs. Mia.
Fewest Points Allowed	0 – Nov. 12, 1967 vs. Mia.
Average Points Scored	22.1
Average Points Allowed	22.9
Most Points (Combined)	78 – Sept. 7, 1986 vs. Mia.
Fewest Points (Combined)	21 – Dec. 19, 1999 at Mia.
Largest Margin of Victory	34 – Oct. 2, 1966 vs. Mia.
Most Total Net Yards	537 – Nov. 18, 1984 vs. Mia.
Fewest Total Net Yards Allowed	205 – Oct. 11, 1968 at Mia.
Most First Downs	34 – Nov. 18, 1984 vs. Mia.
Fewest First Downs Allowed	11 – Dec. 19, 1999 at Mia.
Most Net Passing Yards	371 – Nov. 18, 1984 vs. Mia.
Fewest Net Passing Yards Allowed	63 – Oct. 30, 1977 at Mia.
Most Rushing Yards	239 – Nov. 3, 1968 vs. Mia.
Fewest Rushing Yards Allowed	44 – Dec. 20, 2015 vs. Mia.
Most Takeaways	5 – Oct. 30, 1977 at Mia.
Fewest Giveaways	0 – Last: Dec. 11, 2022 vs. Mia.

MOST RECENT SINGLE-GAME HIGHS

Category	Date	Opp./Loc.	Player	No.
Completions	Dec. 11, 2022	vs. Mia.	J.Herbert	39
Comp. Pct.*	Sept. 29, 2019	at Mia.	P.Rivers	80.0
Passing Yards	Nov. 18, 1984	vs. Mia.	D.Fouts	380
Passing TDs	Nov. 18, 1984	vs. Mia.	D.Fouts	4
Passer Rating*	Sept. 29, 2019	at Mia.	P.Rivers	131.9
Rushing Yards	Sept. 29, 1974	vs. Mia.	D.Woods	157
Rushing TDs	Dec. 27, 1993	vs. Mia.	N.Means	3
Receptions	Dec. 11, 2005	vs. Mia.	A.Gates	13
Receiving Yards	Oct. 2, 1966	vs. Mia.	G.Foster	134
Receiving TDs	Dec. 20, 2015	vs. Mia.	D.Woodhead	3
Scrim. Yards	Nov. 3, 1968	vs. Mia.	D.Post	200
Scrim. TDs	Dec. 20, 2015	vs. Mia.	D.Woodhead	4
Tackles	Sept. 27, 2009	vs. Mia.	K.Burnett	13
Sacks	Sept. 29, 2019	at Mia.	D.King	2.5
Interceptions	Oct. 30, 1977	at Mia.	C.Duren	3
FGs Made	Oct. 2, 2011	vs. Mia.	N.Novak	4
Net Punt Avg.**	Oct. 5, 2008	at Mia.	M.Scifres	55.8

*Min. 20 Pass Attempts

**Min. Three (3) Punts

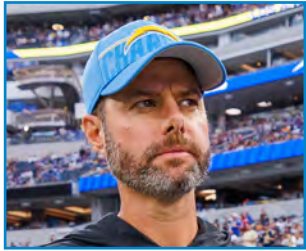
ALL-TIME GAMES AGAINST DOLPHINS

Date	Opponent	Result	Venue
Oct. 2, 1966	vs. Miami	W, 44-10	Balboa Stadium
Nov. 12, 1967	vs. Miami	W, 24-0	San Diego Stadium
Dec. 10, 1967	at Miami	L, 41-24	Orange Bowl
Nov. 3, 1968	vs. Miami	W, 34-28	San Diego Stadium
Oct. 11, 1969	at Miami	W, 21-14	Orange Bowl
Oct. 15, 1972	at Miami	L, 24-10	Orange Bowl
Sept. 29, 1974	vs. Miami	L, 28-21	San Diego Stadium
Oct. 30, 1977	at Miami	W, 14-13	Orange Bowl
Oct. 15, 1978	vs. Miami	L, 28-21	San Diego Stadium
Nov. 20, 1980	at Miami	W, 27-24 (OT)	Orange Bowl
Jan. 2, 1982	at Miami*	W, 41-38 (OT)	Orange Bowl
Jan. 16, 1983	at Miami*	L, 34-13	Orange Bowl
Nov. 18, 1984	vs. Miami	W, 34-28 (OT)	Jack Murphy Stadium
Sept. 7, 1986	vs. Miami	W, 50-28	Jack Murphy Stadium
Oct. 16, 1988	at Miami	L, 31-28	Joe Robbie Stadium
Dec. 15, 1991	vs. Miami	W, 38-30	Jack Murphy Stadium
Jan. 10, 1993	at Miami*	L, 31-0	Joe Robbie Stadium
Dec. 27, 1993	vs. Miami	W, 45-20	Jack Murphy Stadium
Jan. 8, 1995	vs. Miami*	W, 22-21	Jack Murphy Stadium
Nov. 5, 1995	vs. Miami	L, 24-14	Jack Murphy Stadium
Dec. 19, 1999	at Miami	L, 12-9	Pro Player Stadium
Nov. 12, 2000	vs. Miami	L, 17-7	Qualcomm Stadium
Nov. 24, 2002	at Miami	L, 30-3	Pro Player Stadium
Oct. 27, 2003	vs. Miami	L, 26-10	Sun Devil Stadium
Dec. 11, 2005	vs. Miami	L, 23-21	Qualcomm Stadium
Oct. 5, 2008	at Miami	L, 17-10	Dolphin Stadium
Sept. 27, 2009	vs. Miami	W, 23-13	Qualcomm Stadium
Oct. 2, 2011	vs. Miami	W, 26-16	Qualcomm Stadium
Nov. 17, 2013	at Miami	L, 20-16	Sun Life Stadium
Nov. 2, 2014	at Miami	L, 37-0	Sun Life Stadium
Dec. 20, 2015	vs. Miami	W, 30-14	Qualcomm Stadium
Nov. 13, 2016	vs. Miami	L, 31-24	Qualcomm Stadium
Sept. 17, 2017	vs. Miami	L, 19-17	StubHub Center
Sept. 29, 2019	at Miami	W, 30-10	Hard Rock Stadium
Nov. 15, 2020	at Miami	L, 29-21	Hard Rock Stadium
Dec. 11, 2022	vs. Miami	W, 23-17	SoFi Stadium

*AFC Divisional

THE MATCHUP

AT THE HELM



BRANDON STALEY

Chargers Head Coach

Overall Record: 19-16 (.543)
 Reg. Season Record: 19-15 (.559)
 Postseason Record: 0-1 (.000)
 Record vs. Dolphins: 1-0 (1.000)
 Home Record (Reg.): 10-7 (.588)

Hometown: Perry, Ohio
 College: Dayton ('04) / Mercyhurst ('05)

The Los Angeles Chargers hired Brandon Staley as the 17th head coach in franchise history, becoming the first Bolts head coach with a defensive background in over a decade. One of the most progressive minds in football, Staley brought an aggressive approach to the Chargers, leading the Bolts to a pair of winning seasons and a playoff berth in his first two years with the team. In those two seasons, Staley coached seven players to be selected to a combined eight Pro Bowls.

Staley served as the defensive coordinator for the Los Angeles Rams in 2020 after spending three seasons as the outside linebackers coach for Denver (2019) and Chicago (2017-18). As one of the most progressive defensive minds in football, Staley overhauled a Rams defense to become the best defense in football in 2020. The unit ranked No. 1 in total defense, passing defense and scoring defense while finishing as the third-best rushing defense.

Prior to coaching in the NFL, Staley spent three seasons (2013, '15-16) at John Carroll as defensive coordinator/secondary coach and the 2014 season as defensive coordinator/linebackers at James Madison. In his final season as a collegiate coach, Staley earned National Coordinator of the Year honors for Division III by leading his unit to rank third in the nation in total defense (218.0 ypg) and fourth in scoring defense (12.6 ppg).

Staley played quarterback at the University of Dayton, serving as a team captain and was a two-year starter. The Flyers posted a 16-5 record with Staley starting under center from 2003-04. Following his time at Dayton, Staley played one season with his twin brother, Jason, at Mercyhurst College, playing there in 2005. A native of Perry, Ohio, Staley and his wife, Amy, have three sons — Colin, Will and Grant.



MIKE MCDANIEL

Dolphins Head Coach

Overall Record: 9-9 (.500)
 Reg. Season Record: 9-8 (.529)
 Postseason Record: 0-1 (.000)
 Record vs. Chargers: 0-1 (.000)
 Road Record (Reg.): 3-6 (.333)

Hometown: Greeley, Colo.
 College: Yale ('05)

Mike McDaniel was named the 11th head coach in team history on Feb. 7, 2022. The 2022 season was McDaniel's 16th in the NFL and first as a head coach.

McDaniel became the fifth coach in Dolphins history to lead his team to the playoffs in his first season and just the sixth to post a winning record (9-8) in his first year at the helm. McDaniel spent five seasons (2017-21) with the San Francisco 49ers, capping his tenure as the club's offensive coordinator in 2021. McDaniel helped the 49ers have one of the league's most effective rushing attacks in 2019 as San Francisco went 13-3, winning the NFC and advancing to Super Bowl LIV. Prior to San Francisco, McDaniel spent two seasons (2015-16) as an offensive assistant with the Atlanta Falcons after spending the 2014 season as wide receivers coach for the Cleveland Browns.

His first NFL position coach job came in 2013 with Washington when he was promoted to wide receivers coach after aiding the staff for two seasons as an offensive assistant (2011-12). From 2009-10, McDaniel served as running backs coach for the Sacramento Mountain Lions of the United Football League. McDaniel was an offensive assistant for the Houston Texans from 2006-08. His first NFL coaching position came as a coaching intern with the Broncos in 2005.

A native of Greeley, Colorado, McDaniel played wide receiver at Yale, where he graduated with a degree in history. He and his wife, Katie, have one daughter.

2022 REGULAR SEASON TEAM RANKINGS

10-7
 2nd (AFC West)

9-8
 2nd (AFC East)

OFFENSE (NFL RANK)

23.0 (13th) Points Per Game 23.4 (11th)
 346.1 (20th) Net Yds. Per Game 364.5 (6th)
 145.8 (28th) Net Rushing Yds. Per Game 99.2 (T-25th)
 200.4 (7th) Net Passing Yds. Per Game 265.4 (4th)
 5.29 (20th) Scrimmage Yds. Per Play 6.14 (2nd)
 10/140 Opp. Interceptions/Return Yds. 15/166
 39/-207 (17th) Sacks Allowed/Yds. 35/-254 (T-9th)
 19/9 Fumbles/Lost 16/6
 43.6% (8th) Third Down Pct. 36.2% (24th)
 54.1% (17th) Red Zone TD Pct. 60.0% (10th)
 30:29 (9th) Time of Possession Avg. 29:20 (25th)
 19 (T-5th) Giveaways 21 (T-8th)

DEFENSE (NFL RANK)

22.6 (T-21st) Points Per Game 23.5 (24th)
 346.1 (20th) Net Yds. Per Game 337.8 (18th)
 145.8 (28th) Net Rushing Yds. Per Game 103.0 (4th)
 200.4 (7th) Net Passing Yds. Per Game 234.8 (27th)
 5.87 (29th) Scrimmage Yds. Per Play 5.29 (14th)
 14/166 Interceptions/Return Yds. 8/115
 40/-287 (T-15th) Sacks/Yds. 40/-290 (T-14th)
 22/10 Opp. Fumbles/Lost 20/6
 39.2% (17th) Third Down Pct. 41.6% (T-24th)
 53.2% (12th) Red Zone TD Pct. 59.3% (23rd)
 24 (T-11th) Takeaways 14 (T-30th)

+5 (T-7th) TURNOVER MARGIN -7 (T-28th)

SPECIAL TEAMS (NFL RANK)

43.6 (30th) Punts-Avg. Yds. (Gross) 46.4 (20th)
 41.5 (14th) Punts-Avg. Yds. (Net) 40.6 (22nd)
 11.7 (3rd) Punt Returns-Avg. Per 5.8 (31st)
 3.4 (1st) Punt Returns-Avg. Per Allowed 10.4 (25th)
 19.0 (30th) Kickoff Returns-Avg. Per 18.9 (31st)
 21.1 (7th) Kickoff Returns-Avg. Per Allowed 27.8 (332nd)
 31/33 (2nd) Field Goals Made/Attempted 26/32 (24th)

PENALTIES (NFL RANK)

81/695 (T-4th) Penalties Against/Yds. 111/881 (T-28th)

THE MATCHUP

WITHIN STRIKING DISTANCE

WR Keenan Allen

- Needs four catches to tie Julio Jones as the second-fastest player ever to reach 800 career receptions (127 games), trailing only Antonio Brown's 126 games.
- Needs at least 15 receptions for the third 15-catch game of his career, which would be the most by any player in NFL history.
- Needs at least 14 receptions for the fifth 14-catch game of his career, which would be the most by any player in NFL history.
- Needs at least 11 receptions for the 14th 11-catch game of his career, which would be the most by any player in NFL history.
- Needs 298 receiving yards to move into sole possession of No. 2 in Chargers history.

OLB Joey Bosa

- With a start, would reach 80 career regular-season starts.
- Needs a strip sack to reach 10 for his career and become the only player since he entered the NFL in 2016 to register double-digit strip sacks.

CB Michael Davis

- Needs one pass defensed to reach 60 for his career.
 - The pass defensed would extend his streak with a pass breakup to eight consecutive games, the longest active streak in the NFL.

RB Austin Ekeler

- Will appear in his 80th career game on Sunday.
- Needs 11 receptions to reach 400 for his career, becoming the seventh Charger to record at least 400 catches.
- Needs a touchdown catch to reach 30 for his career. He would be the youngest running back since 1960 to reach 30 touchdown receptions. The current youngest is Hall of Famer Marshall Faulk (28 years, 265 days).
 - The 30 touchdown catches would set the record for most receiving touchdowns in the Super Bowl era (since 1966) by a running back with a single team and break a tie with Brian Westbrook (29 with Eagles).
 - He would become the seventh player ever to have at least 30 career rushing touchdowns and 30 career receiving touchdowns.
- Needs two touchdowns to reach 40 scores since the beginning of the 2021 season, more than 10 more than the next closest player over that span.

QB Justin Herbert

- Will appear in and start his 50th career game on Sunday.
- Needs 20-plus completions to his streak of games with at least 20 completions to 28 games. It's currently the third-longest streak in NFL history.
- Needs 300 passing yards to record his 23rd career performance with 300-plus yards, breaking a tie with Hall of Famer Dan Marino for the third-most by any player through their first four seasons in history.
- Needs six passing touchdowns to reach 100 for his career, becoming the fourth player to eclipse that mark within the first 50 games of a career (Patrick Mahomes, Hall of Famer Dan Marino and Hall of Famer Kurt Warner).

S Derwin James Jr.

- Needs a half-sack to reach 10 sacks for his career, becoming the eighth player and second defensive back (Hall of Famer Ronde Barber) to have at least seven interceptions and 10 sacks within the first 55 games of a career since sacks became an official statistic in 1982.

DL Austin Johnson

- Will appear in his 100th career game on Sunday.

C Corey Linsley

- Will appear in and start his 130th career game on Sunday.

P JK Scott

- Needs nine punts pinned inside the 20-yard line to reach 100 career punts inside the 20.

WR Mike Williams

- With a start, will reach 60 career regular-season starts.
- Needs 10 catches to reach 300 for his career.

2022 INDIVIDUAL LEADERS



10-7
2nd (AFC West)

9-8
2nd (AFC East)

PASSING YARDS

Herbert	4,739	Tagovailoa	3,548
Daniel*	52	Bridgewater*	683
		Thompson	534

RUSHING YARDS

Ekeler	915	Mostert	891
Kelley	287	Wilson Jr.	392
Herbert	147	Edmonds*	120

RECEIVING YARDS

Williams	895	Hill	1,170
Palmer	769	Waddle	1,356
Allen	752	Sherfield*	417
Ekeler	722	Gesicki*	362

POINTS SCORED

Ekeler	108	Sanders	119
Dicker	79	Hill	54
Hopkins*	39	Waddle	48

INTERCEPTIONS

Callahan*	3	Holland	2
Three Tied	2	Six Tied	1
Five Tied	1		

SACKS

Mack	8.0	Phillips	7.5
Fox	6.5	Ingram III*	6.0
Two Tied	5.0	Roberts*	4.5

TACKLES (SOLO)

Tranquill*	144 (93)	Roberts*	104 (65)
James Jr.	115 (64)	Baker	100 (66)
Murray Jr.	76 (50)	Wilkins	98 (59)
Davis	61 (47)	Holland	93 (76)

KICKOFF RETURNS (AVG.)

Carter*	26 (19.1)	Mostert	25 (20.1)
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PUNT RETURNS (AVG.); FC

Carter*	29 (11.7); 17	Wilson Jr.	13 (7.5); 16
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FIELD GOALS

Dicker	19/20 (95.0%)	Sanders	26/32 (81.3%)
Hopkins*	9/10 (90.0%)		
Bertolet*	3/3 (100.0%)		

PUNTS (GROSS/NET AVG.)

Scott	73 (43.6/41.5)	Morstead*	61 (46.4/40.6)
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*Player no longer with team.

CHARGERS-DOLPHINS CONNECTIONS

COLLEGE CONNECTIONS

	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	2016-19
	MIA	S Jevon Holland	2018-19
	MIA	S Verone McKinley III	2018-21
	LAC	P JK Scott	2014-17
	LAC	<u>Derrick Ansley</u>	2010-11, '16-17
		(Defensive Coord.)	
	MIA	G Lester Cotton	2015-18
	MIA	QB Tua Tagovailoa	2017-19
	MIA	DT Raekwon Davis	2016-19
	MIA	<u>Brendan Farrell</u>	2013-19
		(Asst. Special Teams)	
	LAC	RB Joshua Kelley	2018-19
	LAC	DL Otito Ogbonna	2018-21
	LAC	<u>Ryan Ficken</u>	2004-06
		(Special Teams Coord.)	
	MIA	LB Jaelan Phillips	2017-18
	MIA	<u>Jon Embree</u>	2003-05
		(Asst. HC/Tight Ends)	
	LAC	OL Jamaree Salyer	2018-21
	LAC	TE Tre' McKitty	2020
	LAC	<u>Robert Muschamp (QC)</u>	2021-22
	MIA	LB Channing Tindall	2018-21
	LAC	C Corey Linsley	2009-13
	LAC	OLB Joey Bosa	2013-15
	MIA	CB Eli Apple	2013-14
	MIA	LB Jerome Baker	2015-17
	LAC	WR Mike Williams	2014-17
	LAC	OL Jordan McFadden	2018-22
	LAC	LB Tanner Muse	2015-19
	MIA	DT Christian Wilkins	2015-18
	LAC	T Foster Sarrell	2017-20
	MIA	P Jake Bailey	2015-18
	MIA	<u>Steve Donatell</u>	2019-21
		(Defensive Asst.)	
	LAC	S Alohi Gilman	2017-19
	LAC	<u>Mike Hiestand</u>	2012-15
		(Front Seven Specialist)	
	MIA	OL Liam Eichenberg	2017-20
	MIA	TE Durham Smythe	2014-17
	LAC	C Will Clapp	2014-17
	MIA	LS Blake Ferguson	2016-19
	MIA	LB Duke Riley	2013-16
	LAC	OLB Chris Rumph II	2017-20
	MIA	<u>Joe Kasper (Safeties)</u>	2018-20
	LAC	S Derwin James Jr.	2015-17
	MIA	CB Jalen Ramsey	2013-15
	LAC	OLB Tuli Tuipulotu	2020-22
	MIA	DT Brandon Pili	2017-20, '22
	LAC	DL Sebastian Joseph-Day	2013-17
	MIA	TE Tyler Kroft	2012-14
	MIA	<u>Anthony Campanile</u>	2005, '12-15
		(Linebackers)	
	LAC	K Cameron Dicker	2018-21
	MIA	S Brandon Jones	2016-19
	LAC	<u>Will Harris</u>	2018-21
		(Asst. Secondary)	
	LAC	<u>John Timu</u>	2011-14, '19-20
		(Asst. Defensive Line)	
	MIA	RB Salvon Ahmed	2017-19

Underlined indicates coaching or administrative roles.

NOTEWORTHY BONDS

Chargers **Head Coach Brandon Staley** spent three years coaching with Dolphins **Defensive Coordinator Vic Fangio**. The pair spent the 2017 and 2018 seasons in Chicago before coaching in Denver in 2019.

Chargers **Defensive Passing Game Coordinator/Secondary Coach Tom Donatell** is the elder brother of Dolphins **Defensive Assistant Steve Donatell**.

Multiple members of the Miami Dolphins have spend time with the Chargers. **Passing Game Coordinator/Secondary Coach Renaldo Hill** served as the Defensive Coordinator of the Chargers from 2021-22. **Miami Offensive Coordinator Frank Smith** also served as Run Game Coordinator/OL Coach with the Chargers in 2021. **Wide Receivers Coach Wes Welker** signed with the Chargers in 2006 as an undrafted free agent and spent training camp with the team.

Bolts **CB Asante Samuel Jr.** and **WR Joshua Palmer** both attended St. Thomas Aquinas High School. **OLB Joey Bosa** also attended St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Fort Lauderdale. Bosa's father, **John Bosa**, played defensive end for the Dolphins from 1987 to 1989 and Bosa's uncle, **Eric Kumerow**, played linebacker in Miami for three seasons (1988-90). Dolphins **K Jason Sanders** is from Orange, having attended Villa Park High School. **WR River Cracraft** hails from Rancho Santa Margarita, attending Santa Margarita Catholic High School.

During the 2020 season, Chargers **Head Coach Brandon Staley** coached Dolphins **CB Jalen Ramsey** while at the Rams, helping Ramsey earn his fourth consecutive Pro Bowl as well as First-Team All-Pro from *The Associated Press*.

Chargers **LB Kenneth Murray Jr.**, played youth football for the South Post Eagles, the team included many Division I athletes including Dolphins **WR Jaylen Waddle**.

Chargers **DL Nick Williams** played under Dolphins **Quarterbacks/Passing Game Coordinator Darrell Bevell** while he was interim Head Coach at the Detroit Lions (2020). Williams also spent time in Miami during the 2016 season.

PRO CONNECTIONS

Head Coach Brandon Staley (2019)		Offensive Line Butch Barry (2022)
Asst. Special Teams Chris Gould (2015-21)		Associate HC/TEs Coach Eric Studesville (2010-17)
Dir. of Sports Perf. Anthony Lomando (2012-20)		Defensive Coord. Vic Fangio (2019-21)
Def. Run Game Coord./DL Coach Jay Rodgers (2009-14)		Senior Asst. Wade Harman (2019-21)
Front Seven Specialist Mike Hiestand (2019-21)		Pass Game Coord./Secondary Renaldo Hill (2019-20)
		LB Bradley Chubb (2018-22)
		WR River Cracraft (2017-19)
		LB Malik Reed (2019-21)
		TE Eric Saubert (2021-22)
		CB Jalen Ramsey (2019-22)
Head Coach Brandon Staley (2020)		
DL Morgan Fox (2016-20)		
TE Gerald Everett (2017-20)		
DL Sebastian Joseph-Day (2018-21)		
K Cameron Dicker (2022)		
Head Coach Brandon Staley (2017-18)		Offensive Coord. Frank Smith (2015-17)
OLB Khalil Mack (2018-21)		Defensive Coord. Vic Fangio (2015-18)
DL Nick Williams (2018-19)		RB Raheem Mostert (2016)
Def. Run Game Coord./DL Jay Rodgers (2015-20)		TE Eric Saubert (2019)
OL Coach Brendan Nugent (2013-14)		
Asst. Defensive Line Coach John Timu (2015-17)		
C Will Clapp (2018-21)		T Terron Armstead (2013-21)
OL Coach Brendan Nugent (2015-21)		
LS Josh Harris (2012-21)		Head Coach Mike McDaniel (2015-16)
		Offensive Asst. <i>Richardo Allen</i> (2014-20)
		Asst. QBs Coach Chandler Henley (2021)
		Senior Asst. Wade Harman (2014-18)
		LB Duke Riley (2017-19)
K Cameron Dicker (2022)		Defensive Coord. Vic Fangio (2022)
		Safety Coach Joe Kasper (2021-22)
		LB Duke Riley (2019-20)
OLB Khalil Mack (2014-17)		Offensive Coord. Frank Smith (2018-20)
Defensive Coord. Derrick Ansley (2018)		Asst. OL Coach Lemuel Jeanpierre (2018-19)
LB Tanner Muse (2020)		G Lester Cotton (2019-22)
		FB Alec Ingold (2019-21)
Offensive Coord. Kellen Moore (2015-22)		CB Kelvin Joseph (2021-22)
QB's Coach Doug Nussmeier (2018-22)		QB Mike White (2018-19)
		OL Connor Williams (2018-19)
		WR Cedrick Wilson Jr. (2018-21)
LB Eric Kendricks (2015-22)		QB's/Pass Game Coord. Darrell Bevell ('06-10)
Special Teams Coord. Ryan Ficken (2007-21)		Def. Assistant Steve Donatell (2022)
		CB Parry Nickerson (2021)

Italicized indicates coaches who were players at the time.



ANTONIO GATES

PRO FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME CANDIDATE

8x

PRO BOWLER

5x

ALL-PRO



ALL-TIME TIGHT ENDS RECORDS:

116

RECEIVING TDS

21

MULTI-TD GAMES

39

TD CATCHES ON
THIRD DOWN

8

SEASONS OF
8+TD CATCHES

TOM TELESKO

TELESKO'S DRAFT HISTORY

Chargers General Manager Tom Telesko has drafted 76 players since joining the team in 2013. Those draft picks have combined to play 2,480 games and make 1,344 starts in the regular season (65 games played with 38 starts in the postseason) for the Bolts.

2023 CHARGERS DRAFT SELECTIONS

Pos.	Player	Drafted	Reg. Season		Postseason	
			GP	GS	GP	GS
WR	Quentin Johnston	1-21	0	0	0	0
OLB	Tuli Tuipulotu	2-54	0	0	0	0
LB	Daiyan Henley	3-85	0	0	0	0
WR	Derius Davis	4-125	0	0	0	0
OL	Jordan McFadden	5-156	0	0	0	0
DL	Scott Matlock	6-200	0	0	0	0
QB	Max Duggan	7-239	0	0	0	0
Totals			0	0	0	0

2022 CHARGERS DRAFT SELECTIONS

Pos.	Player	Drafted	Reg. Season		Postseason	
			GP	GS	GP	GS
G	Zion Johnson	1-17	17	17	1	1
S	JT Woods	3-79	10	1	0	0
RB	Isaiah Spiller	4-123	6	0	0	0
DL	Otito Ogbornia	5-160	7	1	0	0
OL	Jamaree Salyer	6-195	17	13	1	1
DB	Ja'Sir Taylor	6-214	17	3	1	0
DB	Deane Leonard	7-236	17	0	1	0
FB	Zander Horvath	7-260	15	2	1	0
Totals			106	37	5	2

2021 CHARGERS DRAFT SELECTIONS

Pos.	Player	Drafted	Reg. Season		Postseason	
			GP	GS	GP	GS
T	Rashawn Slater	1-13	19	19	0	0
CB	Asante Samuel Jr.	2-47	29	27	1	1
WR	Joshua Palmer	3-77	33	16	1	0
TE	Tre' McKitty	3-97	28	12	1	1
OLB	Chris Rumph II	4-118	31	0	1	0
G/T	Brenden Jaimes	5-159	22	0	1	0
LB	Nick Niemann	6-185	34	0	1	0
RB	Larry Rountree III	6-198	16	0	1	0
DB	Mark Webb Jr.	7-241	7	0	0	0
Totals			219	74	7	2

2020 CHARGERS DRAFT SELECTIONS

Pos.	Player	Drafted	Reg. Season		Postseason	
			GP	GS	GP	GS
QB	Justin Herbert	1-6	49	49	1	1
LB	Kenneth Murray Jr.	1-23	44	38	1	1
RB	Joshua Kelley	4-112	37	1	1	0
WR	Joe Reed	5-151	11	0	0	0
S	Alohi Gilman	6-186	43	9	1	1
WR	KJ Hill Jr.	7-220	21	0	0	0
Totals			205	97	4	3



2019 CHARGERS DRAFT SELECTIONS

Pos.	Player	Drafted	Reg. Season		Postseason	
			GP	GS	GP	GS
DL	Jerry Tillery	1-28	54	29	0	0
S	Nasir Adderley	2-60	50	44	1	0
T	Trey Pipkins III	3-91	52	24	1	1
LB	Drue Tranquill	4-130	47	27	1	1
QB	Easton Stick	5-166	1	0	0	0
OLB	Emeke Egbule	6-200	32	0	0	0
DL	Cortez Broughton	7-242	11	0	0	0
Totals			247	124	3	2

2018 CHARGERS DRAFT SELECTIONS

Pos.	Player	Drafted	Reg. Season		Postseason	
			GP	GS	GP	GS
S	Derwin James Jr.	1-17	50	50	3	3
OLB	Uchenna Nwosu	2-48	62	25	2	0
DL	Justin Jones	3-84	51	35	2	2
LB	Kyzir White	4-119	47	37	0	0
C/G	Scott Quessenberry	5-155	63	10	2	0
WR	Dylan Cantrell	6-191	0	0	0	0
RB	Justin Jackson	7-251	43	6	2	0
Totals			316	163	11	5

2017 CHARGERS DRAFT SELECTIONS

Pos.	Player	Drafted	Reg. Season		Postseason	
			GP	GS	GP	GS
WR	Mike Williams	1-7	85	60	2	2
G	Forrest Lamp	2-38	25	18	0	0
C/G	Dan Feeney	3-71	63	57	2	2
S	Rayshawn Jenkins	4-113	61	32	2	2
DB	Desmond King II	5-151	53	23	2	2
T	Sam Tevi	6-190	58	44	2	2
DE	Isaac Rochell	7-225	51	9	2	0
Totals			396	243	12	10

TOM TELESKO



TELESKO'S DRAFT HISTORY

2016 CHARGERS DRAFT SELECTIONS

Pos.	Player	Drafted	Reg. Season		Postseason	
			GP	GS	GP	GS
OLB	Joey Bosa	1-3	84	79	3	3
TE	Hunter Henry	2-35	55	49	1	1
C	Max Tuerk	3-66	0	0	0	0
LB	Joshua Perry	4-102	15	1	0	0
LB	Jatavis Brown	5-175	56	23	0	0
P	Drew Kaser	6-179	36	0	0	0
FB	Derek Watt	6-198	64	13	2	0
G	Donavon Clark	7-224	0	0	0	0
Totals			310	162	6	4

2015 CHARGERS DRAFT SELECTIONS

Pos.	Player	Drafted	Reg. Season		Postseason	
			GP	GS	GP	GS
RB	Melvin Gordon III	1-15	67	63	2	2
LB	Denzel Perryman	2-48	69	51	0	0
CB	Craig Mager	3-83	24	10	0	0
LB	Kyle Emanuel	5-153	63	32	2	0
DE	Darius Philon	6-192	54	19	2	0
Totals			277	175	6	2

2014 CHARGERS DRAFT SELECTIONS

Pos.	Player	Drafted	Reg. Season		Postseason	
			GP	GS	GP	GS
CB	Jason Verrett	1-25	25	21	0	0
OLB	Jeremiah Attaochu	2-50	40	13	0	0
G	Chris Watt	3-89	17	8	0	0
DT	Ryan Carrethers	5-165	24	3	0	0
RB	Marion Grice	6-201	0	0	0	0
WR	Tevin Reese	7-240	0	0	0	0
Totals			106	45	0	0

2013 CHARGERS DRAFT SELECTIONS

Pos.	Player	Drafted	Reg. Season		Postseason	
			GP	GS	GP	GS
T	D.J. Fluker	1-11	59	59	2	2
LB	Manti Te'o	2-38	38	34	2	2
WR	Keenan Allen	3-76	126	121	5	4
CB	Steve Williams	5-145	31	4	0	0
LB	Tourek Williams	6-179	44	6	2	0
QB	Brad Sorensen	7-221	0	0	0	0
Totals			298	224	11	8

Current Chargers are bolded in Powder Blue

TELESKO'S PRO BOWLERS

Throughout his tenure with the Chargers, **Tom Telesko** has acquired or extended 15 players that went on to earn Pro Bowl nods, including seven players that were acquired via draft pick.

BOLTS PRO BOWLERS ACQUIRED OR EXTENDED, SINCE 2013

Year Acq.	Player	How Acq.	Pro Bowls
2013	WR Keenan Allen	Drafted (3-76)	5
2014	S Adrian Phillips	UDFA	1
	CB Jason Verrett	Drafted (1-25)	1
2015	RB Melvin Gordon III	Drafted (1-15)	2
	QB Philip Rivers	Extension	3
2016	DE/OLB Joey Bosa	Drafted (1-3)	4
	CB Casey Hayward Jr.	UFA (G.B.)	2
2017	DE Melvin Ingram III	Extension	3
	T Russell Okung	UFA (Den.)	1
2018	S Derwin James Jr.	Drafted (1-17)	3
	C Mike Pouncey	FA	1
2020	QB Justin Herbert	Drafted (1-6)	1
2021	C Corey Linsley	UFA (G.B.)	1
	T Rashawn Slater	Drafted (1-13)	1
2022	OLB Khalil Mack	Trade (Chi.)	1
Totals	15 Players		30 Pro Bowls
	7 Drafted Players		17 Pro Bowls

ROOKIE RECOGNITION

Since joining the Bolts in 2013, **Tom Telesko** has drafted players that received recognition for their play — notably 2016 NFL Defensive Rookie of the Year **Joey Bosa** and 2020 NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year **Justin Herbert**.

Bosa twice earned NFL Defensive Rookie of the Month in 2016 (October and December) en route to winning consensus Defensive Rookie of the Year honors. Last year, **Asante Samuel Jr.**, also won Defensive Rookie of the Month for September.

In 2020, Herbert was named the NFL Offensive Rookie of the Month for October and November, tossing 10-plus touchdowns in both months. He posted a 122.2 passer rating in October — the best by a rookie in the month in NFL history (min. 50 attempts). He was widely recognized after his record-setting season as Offensive Rookie of the Year.

BOLTS TO WIN NFL ROOKIE OF THE MONTH, SINCE 2013

Season	Player	Phase	Month
2016	DE Joey Bosa	Defense	October
	DE Joey Bosa	Defense	December
2020	QB Justin Herbert	Offense	October
	QB Justin Herbert	Offense	November
2021	CB Asante Samuel Jr.	Defense	September

TOM TELESKO

PLAYER OF THE WEEK HONORS

Over the course of his career as General Manager of the Chargers, **Tom Telesko** has acquired or extended 15 different players that earned AFC Player of the Week recognition.

In Week 17, **Austin Ekeler** led all AFC players in Week 17 in rushing yards (122) and rushing touchdowns (two), including a career-long, 72-yard score. He added four catches for 39 yards (9.8 avg.), giving him an AFC-best 161 scrimmage yards.

Dustin Hopkins (Week 6), **Cameron Dicker** (Week 9) and **JK Scott** (Week 12) won AFC Special Teams Player of the Week in 2022. It made the 2022 Chargers the first known team to have two different kickers win Special Teams Player of the Week in the same season.

Hopkins battled through an injury to make all four field goals, including a 39-yard game-winner in overtime, to cap a come-from-behind victory. Dicker converted a game-winning kick as time expired. Scott placed four punts inside the 20 in the win, giving him an AFC-best four games with three or more punts inside the 20.

Last year, **Justin Herbert** won AFC Offensive Player of the Week three times — including in back-to-back weeks — to become the first Charger to do so since Hall of Famer **LaDainian Tomlinson** won the award four times in 2006.

Joey Bosa won AFC Defensive Player of the Week in 2019 following a Week 8 win at Chicago where he totaled 12 tackles (eight solo), two sacks and six tackles for loss.

After a monumental win on *Thursday Night Football* in Kansas City in 2018, **Mike Williams** was named AFC Offensive Player of the Week. He scored three touchdowns (two receiving, one rushing) and added a two-point conversion in the final seconds of the game.

CHARGERS TO WIN AFC PLAYER OF THE WEEK, ACQUIRED OR EXTENDED SINCE 2013

Season	Player	Phase	Week
2016	P Drew Kaser	Special Teams	Week 6 vs. Den.
	LB Denzel Perryman	Defense	Week 7 at Atl.
	RB Melvin Gordon III	Offense	Week 9 vs. Ten.
2017	RB Melvin Gordon III	Offense	Week 5 at NYG
	WR Travis Benjamin	Special Teams	Week 7 vs. Den.
2018	CB Desmond King II	Defense	Week 9 at Sea.
	CB Desmond King II	Special Teams	Week 13 at Pit.
	K Michael Badgley	Special Teams	Week 14 vs. Cin.
	WR Mike Williams	Offense	Week 15 at K.C.
2019	P Ty Long	Special Teams	Week 1 vs. Ind.
	DE Joey Bosa	Defense	Week 8 at Chi.
2020	CB Casey Hayward Jr.	Defense	Week 1 at Cin.
2021	QB Justin Herbert	Offense	Week 9 at Phi.
	QB Justin Herbert	Offense	Week 13 at Cin.
	QB Justin Herbert	Offense	Week 14 vs. NYG
2022	K Dustin Hopkins	Special Teams	Week 6 vs. Den.
	K Cameron Dicker	Special Teams	Week 9 at Atl.
	P JK Scott	Special Teams	Week 12 at Ari.
	RB Austin Ekeler	Offense	Week 17 vs. LAR

PLAYER OF THE MONTH AWARDS

Over the course of his career as General Manager of the Chargers, **Tom Telesko** has acquired or extended three different players that earned AFC Player of the Month recognition.

With a monumental November, **Derwin James Jr.**, was named AFC Defensive Player of the Month. He was the only defensive back in the last 30 years to have at least 30 tackles, multiple sacks, an interception and forced fumble in a single November.

With a historic final six weeks, **Cameron Dicker** was named AFC Special Teams Player of the Month for December/January. He totaled 47 points, ranking second in the AFC among kickers in points scored by making 25-of-26 total kicks (96.2 pct.).

CHARGERS TO WIN AFC PLAYER OF THE MONTH, ACQUIRED OR EXTENDED SINCE 2013

Season	Player	Phase	Week
2017	DE Melvin Ingram III	Defense	September
	CB Casey Hayward Jr.	Defense	November
2022	S Derwin James Jr.	Defense	November
	K Cameron Dicker	Special Teams	December/January

PFWA SUPERLATIVES

Selections made by **Tom Telesko** have garnered league-wide recognition. He has drafted 13 players that were named All-Rookie by the *Professional Football Writers of America*.

Three picks by Telesko earned *PFWA* Rookie of the Year honors — **Keenan Allen** for offense in 2013, **Joey Bosa** for defense in 2016 and **Justin Herbert** overall and for offense in 2020.

Derwin James Jr., was named All-NFL by the *PFWA* as a rookie. He is one of four Telesko draft selections (Allen, once; Bosa, three times; James, twice; **Rashawn Slater**, once) to be named All-AFC.

Below is a look at Telesko's draft picks that have been recognized by the *PFWA* as All-NFL, All-AFC or All-Rookie:

CHARGERS DRAFT PICK SUPERLATIVES FROM PFWA WHILE WITH TEAM, SINCE 2013

Drafted	Player	All-NFL	All-AFC	All-Rookie
2013	Keenan Allen	0	1	1
	D.J. Fluker	0	0	1
2016	Joey Bosa	0	3	1
	Jatavis Brown	0	0	1
	Hunter Henry	0	0	1
2017	Dan Feeney	0	0	1
2018	Derwin James Jr.	1	2	1
2019	Drue Tranquill	0	0	1
2020	Justin Herbert	0	0	1
	Kenneth Murray Jr.	0	0	1
2021	Nick Niemann	0	0	1
	Rashawn Slater	0	1	1
2022	Zion Johnson	0	0	1
Totals	13 Players	1	7	13

BRANDON STALEY



COACHING AT AN ALL-STAR LEVEL

Since entering the NFL coaching ranks in 2017, **Brandon Staley** has coached 10 different players to be named an all-star a combined 12 times.

PRO BOWLERS COACHED BY BRANDON STALEY

Season	Team	Staley Position	Pro Bowlers
2018	Chicago	Outside Linebackers	1 <i>OLB Khalil Mack</i>
2019	Denver	Outside Linebackers	1 <i>OLB Von Miller</i>
2020	L.A. Rams	Defensive Coordinator	2 <i>DT Aaron Donald, CB Jalen Ramsey</i>
2021	L.A. Chargers	Head Coach	6 <i>WR Keenan Allen, OLB Joey Bosa, QB Justin Herbert, S Derwin James Jr., C Corey Linsley, T Rashawn Slater</i>
2022	L.A. Chargers	Head Coach	2 <i>S Derwin James Jr., OLB Khalil Mack</i>
Totals	10 Players		12 Pro Bowls

A BEAST IN THE EAST

Brandon Staley led the Bolts to a win in the Eastern Time Zone in his first career game as an NFL head coach. He's coached the team to a 6-1 record in the time zone, the most wins among active head coaches of teams in the Pacific Time Zone.

In 2022, Staley is 3-0 in the Eastern Time Zone, and is the only coach of a Pacific Time Zone team to be undefeated in the East this season. His .857 career winning percentage in the East is the best by any head coach of a Pacific Time Zone team since 2016.

ACTIVE HEAD COACH WINNING PCT. IN EASTERN TIME ZONE, PACIFIC TIME ZONE TEAMS, REGULAR SEASON, SINCE 2021

Rank	Coach (Team)	Wins	Losses	Ties	Pct.
1.	Brandon Staley (LAC)	6	1	0	.857
2.	Kyle Shanahan (S.F.)	5	1	0	.833
3.	Sean McVay (LAR)	3	1	0	.750
4.	Pete Carroll (Sea.)	2	2	0	.500
5.	Josh McDaniels (L.V.)	0	2	0	.000

GO FOR THE BALL

Since taking over as head coach in 2021, **Brandon Staley's** defense and special teams units have been among the NFL's best at forcing fumbles and recording strip sacks.

Over the last two seasons, the Chargers have an AFC-high 15 strip sacks. The Bolts also rank first in the AFC and No. 3 in the NFL over that span with 34 forced fumbles.

STRIP SACKS, NFL, SINCE 2021

Rank	Team	Strip Sacks
1.	Dallas Cowboys	16
2.	Los Angeles Chargers	15
	Philadelphia Eagles	15
4.	Arizona Cardinals	13
	Kansas City Chiefs	13
	San Francisco 49ers	13

FORCED FUMBLES, NFL, SINCE 2021

Rank	Team	Forced Fumbles
1.	San Francisco 49ers	38
2.	Dallas Cowboys	36
3.	Los Angeles Chargers	34
4.	Arizona Cardinals	33
5.	New York Giants	32
	Indianapolis Colts	32

The Los Angeles defense led the AFC in 2021 with 19 forced fumbles on the season — also ranking No. 3 in the NFL. The 19 forced fumbles tied the team's 2007 season as the most by a Chargers team in the last 20 years.

The Bolts also led the NFL with 11 strip sacks, which were the most by a Chargers defense in 20 seasons.

FORCED FUMBLES, NFL, 2021

Rank	Team	Forced Fumbles
1.	San Francisco 49ers	22
2.	Arizona Cardinals	21
3.	Los Angeles Chargers	19
4.	Indianapolis Colts	18
	Kansas City Chiefs	18
	Pittsburgh Steelers	18

STRIP SACKS, NFL, 2021

Rank	Team	Strip Sacks
1.	Los Angeles Chargers	11
2.	Arizona Cardinals	10
3.	Chicago Bears	8
4.	Dallas Cowboys	7
	Los Angeles Rams	7
	Minnesota Vikings	7
	San Francisco 49ers	7

ASSISTANT COACHES



DERRICK ANSLEY

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR
4TH NFL SEASON
3RD SEASON WITH CHARGERS



KELLEN MOORE

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR
12TH NFL SEASON
1ST SEASON WITH CHARGERS



CHRIS BEATTY

WIDE RECEIVERS
3RD NFL SEASON
3RD SEASON WITH CHARGERS



DERRICK FOSTER

RUNNING BACKS
3RD NFL SEASON
3RD SEASON WITH CHARGERS



WILL HARRIS

ASSISTANT SECONDARY
2ND NFL SEASON
1ST SEASON WITH CHARGERS



JEFF HOWARD

LINEBACKERS
11TH NFL SEASON
1ST SEASON WITH CHARGERS



ROBERT MUSCHAMP

DEFENSIVE QUALITY CONTROL
10TH NFL SEASON
1ST SEASON WITH CHARGERS



DOUG NUSSMEIER

QUARTERBACKS
8TH NFL SEASON
1ST SEASON WITH CHARGERS



SHAUN SARRETT

ASSISTANT OFFENSIVE LINE
12TH NFL SEASON
3RD SEASON WITH CHARGERS



GIFF SMITH

OUTSIDE LINEBACKERS
13TH NFL SEASON
8TH SEASON WITH CHARGERS



PAT WHITE

OFFENSIVE ASSISTANT
4TH NFL SEASON
2ND SEASON WITH CHARGERS



RYAN FICKEN

SPECIAL TEAMS COORDINATOR
17TH NFL SEASON
2ND SEASON WITH CHARGERS



TOM ARTH

PASSING GAME SPECIALIST
5TH NFL SEASON
2ND SEASON WITH CHARGERS



TOM DONATELL

DEF. PASSING GAME COORDINATOR/SECONDARY
7TH NFL SEASON
3RD SEASON WITH CHARGERS



CHRIS GOULD

ASSISTANT SPECIAL TEAMS
9TH NFL SEASON
2ND SEASON WITH CHARGERS



MIKE HIESTAND

FRONT SEVEN SPECIALIST
5TH NFL SEASON
2ND SEASON WITH CHARGERS



KEVIN KOGER

TIGHT ENDS
5TH NFL SEASON
3RD SEASON WITH CHARGERS



BRENDAN NUGENT

OFFENSIVE LINE
11TH NFL SEASON
2ND SEASON WITH CHARGERS



JAY RODGERS

DEF. RUN GAME COORDINATOR/DEFENSIVE LINE
15TH NFL SEASON
3RD SEASON WITH CHARGERS



PHIL SERCHIA

OFFENSIVE ASSISTANT
1ST NFL SEASON
1ST SEASON WITH CHARGERS



JOHN TIMU

ASSISTANT DEFENSIVE LINE
6TH NFL SEASON
3RD SEASON WITH CHARGERS



CHANDLER WHITMER

OFFENSIVE QUALITY CONTROL
3RD NFL SEASON
3RD SEASON WITH CHARGERS

TEAM NOTES

WELCOME TO L.A.



11 players on Los Angeles' active roster are new this season.

HOW NEW CHARGERS WERE ACQUIRED

How Acquired	New Players
Draft Selections	6
Undrafted Free Agents/IPP	2
Veteran Free Agents	2
Practice Squad Signings	0
Trades	0
Waiver Claims	1
Totals	11

NEW CHARGERS ON THE ACTIVE ROSTER

Pos.	Player	Exp.	How Acq.
WR	Derius Davis	R	Draft Selection (4-125)
RB	Elijah Dotson	R	Undrafted Free Agent
S	AJ Finley	R	Undrafted Free Agent
LB	Daiyan Henley	R	Draft Selection (3-85)
WR	Quentin Johnston	R	Draft Selection (1-21)
LB	Eric Kendricks	9	Free Agent
DL	Scott Matlock	R	Draft Selection (6-200)
OL	Jordan McFadden	R	Draft Selection (5-156)
LB	Tanner Muse	4	Waivers (Pittsburgh)
OLB	Tuli Tuipulotu	R	Draft Selection (2-54)
DL	Nick Williams	9	Free Agent

COACH LOCATIONS

For the 2023 season, 16 members of the Chargers coaching staff will be down on the sideline while seven others will be up in the booth. The location of each coach can be seen below:

CHARGERS COACHES DOWN ON THE SIDELINE (16)

Name	Position
Brandon Staley	Head Coach
Derrick Ansley	Defensive Coordinator
Ryan Ficken	Special Teams Coordinator
Kellen Moore	Offensive Coordinator
Chris Beatty	Wide Receivers
Derrick Foster	Running Backs
Chris Gould	Assistant Special Teams
Mike Hiestand	Front Seven Specialist
Jeff Howard	Linebackers
Kevin Koger	Tight Ends
Brendan Nugent	Offensive Line
Doug Nussmeier	Quarterbacks
Jay Rodgers	Defensive Run Game Coordinator/Defensive Line
Giff Smith	Outside Linebackers
John Timu	Assistant Defensive Line
Pat White	Offensive Assistant

CHARGERS COACHES UP IN THE BOOTH (7)

Name	Position
Tom Arth	Passing Game Specialist
Tom Donatell	Defensive Passing Game Coordinator/Secondary
Will Harris	Assistant Secondary
Robert Muschamp	Defensive Quality Control
Shaun Sarrett	Assistant Offensive Line
Phil Serchia	Offensive Assistant
Chandler Whitmer	Offensive Quality Control

MAKING THE ROUNDS IN PRIMETIME

The Bolts are slated to appear in six prime-time games this season. If the team does play in all of those contests, it will tie last year for the most prime-time games in a single season in franchise history.

MOST PRIME-TIME GAMES PLAYED, SINGLE SEASON, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Season	No. of Games
1.	2022	6
2.	2008	5
3.	2021	4
	2014	4
	2013	4
	2012	4
	2011	4
	2010	4
	2009	4
	2006	4
	1996	4
	1993	4
—	2023	6

TEAM NOTES

BOLTS IN THE TOP 100

Following an NFL-leading eight selections in the league's annual Top 100 rankings last year, six Chargers found themselves on the list this year in advance of the 2023 season. Four Bolts landed within the top 40 slots, with **RB Austin Ekeler** leading the way at No. 21 on the list.

OLB Joey Bosa earned his seventh career placement on the list, one for each accrued season, while **QB Justin Herbert** finished his third professional season with his third-straight appearance in the Top 100. In his first season donning the Powder Blue, **OLB Khalil Mack** returned to the chart, placing 38th on the list.

Three-time All-Pro **S Derwin James Jr.** appeared at slot No. 30 on this year's list, marking his highest ranking ever on the NFL Top 100 and his third-career nod. A newcomer to the Chargers, **LB Eric Kendricks** secured his third placement on the list over the last four years, landing at No. 93 following the 2022 season.

CHARGERS NFL TOP 100 SELECTIONS, 2023

Rank	Pos.	Player	Tot. Selec.	High. Rk.
21	RB	Austin Ekeler	2	21 (2023)
30	S	Derwin James	3	30 (2023)
32	QB	Justin Herbert	3	32 (2022)
38	OLB	Khalil Mack	8	3 (2019)
70	OLB	Joey Bosa	7	30 (2022)
93	LB	Eric Kendricks	3	83 (2020)

CHARGERS OPEN THURSDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL

The Bolts faced Kansas City in the first-ever *Thursday Night Football* game broadcast exclusively on Prime Video. The Week 2 game had 13.0 million viewers, making it the sixth-most-watched broadcast that week.

MOST-WATCHED TV TELECASTS, SEPT. 12-SEPT. 18, 2022

Rank	Date	Program	Network	Viewership
1.	Sept. 18	Cin. at Dal.	CBS	27.5 M
2.	Sept. 18	Chi. at G.B.	NBC	20.5 M
3.	Sept. 12	Den. at Sea.	ABC/ESPN/ESPN2	19.8 M
4.	Sept. 18	T.B. at N.O.	FOX	16.2 M
5.	Sept. 18	N.E. at Pit.	CBS	14.2 M
6.	Sept. 15	LAC at K.C.	AMAZON	13.0 M
7.	Sept. 18	60 Minutes	CBS	10.2 M

SUNDAY AND MONDAY NIGHT RATINGS

In Weeks 10, 11 and 14, Los Angeles appeared on NBC's *Sunday Night Football*. The games in Weeks 10 and 11 were the second-most watched program in America of their respective week, while the Week 14 contest was the third-most viewed broadcast in America that week.

Through the first 15 weeks of the NFL season, the Chargers ranked inside the Top 10 in local household impressions (429,000).

MOST-WATCHED TV TELECASTS, NOV. 7-NOV. 13, 2022

Rank	Date	Program	Network	Viewership
1.	Nov. 13	Dal. at G.B.	FOX	29.2 M
2.	Nov. 13	LAC at S.F.	NBC	16.6 M
3.	Nov. 13	Min. at Buf.	FOX	16.2 M
4.	Nov. 13	Jax. at K.C.	CBS	14.5 M
5.	Nov. 7	Bal. at N.O.	ESPN/ESPN2	10.5 M

MOST-WATCHED TV TELECASTS, NOV. 14-NOV. 20, 2022

Rank	Date	Program	Network	Viewership
1.	Nov. 20	Dal. at Min.	CBS	27.7 M
2.	Nov. 20	K.C. at LAC	NBC	18.7 M
3.	Nov. 20	Det. at NYG	FOX	15.6 M
4.	Nov. 20	Phi. at Ind.	CBS	15.4 M
5.	Nov. 14	Was. at Phi.	ESPN	12.8 M

MOST-WATCHED TV TELECASTS, DEC. 5-DEC. 11, 2022

Rank	Date	Program	Network	Viewership
1.	Dec. 11	T.B. at S.F.	FOX	24.0 M
2.	Dec. 11	NYJ at Buf.	CBS	17.5 M
3.	Dec. 11	Mia. at LAC	NBC	16.5 M
4.	Dec. 11	Phi. at NYG	FOX	14.0 M
5.	Dec. 5	N.O. at T.B.	ESPN/ESPN2	11.3 M

The Chargers also appeared on ESPN's *Monday Night Football* in Week 6 against Denver. The game was the fifth-most watched broadcast in America that week. Los Angeles' Week 16 contest on *Monday Night Football* was the 10th-most watched television program in America that week.

MOST-WATCHED TV TELECASTS, OCT. 17-OCT. 23, 2022

Rank	Date	Program	Network	Viewership
1.	Oct. 23	K.C. at S.F.	FOX	22.3 M
2.	Oct. 23	Pit. at Mia.	NBC	16.3 M
3.	Oct. 23	Det. at Dal.	CBS	14.7 M
4.	Oct. 23	G.B. at Was.	FOX	13.4 M
5.	Oct. 17	Den. at LAC	ESPN	12.1 M
6.	Oct. 17	World News Tonight	ABC	8.4 M

TEAM NOTES

PASSING OFFENSE

After ranking fourth in total offense and tied for No. 2 in passing last season, the Chargers offense continued to flash in 2022. The team ranked No. 3 in the NFL with an average of 269.6 net passing yards per game.

NET PASSING YARDS PER GAME, NFL, 2022

Rank	Team	Net Passing Yards/Game
1.	Kansas City Chiefs	297.8
2.	Tampa Bay Buccaneers	269.8
3.	Los Angeles Chargers	269.6
4.	Miami Dolphins	265.4
5.	Cincinnati Bengals	265.0

CONVERTING IN CRUNCH TIME

After leading the NFL with 22 fourth-down conversions last season, Los Angeles converted 15 attempts in 2022, the second-most conversions in the AFC.

FOURTH DOWN CONVERSIONS, AFC, 2022

Rank	Team	Fourth Down Conversions
1.	Cleveland Browns	23
2.	Los Angeles Chargers	15
3.	Jacksonville Jaguars	14
4.	Houston Texans	13
	Las Vegas Raiders	13
	Miami Dolphins	13

The Bolts also converted 112-of-257 attempts on third down for a 43.6 third down percentage. The team's 112 third-down conversions led the league in 2022, while the 43.6 percentage ranked No. 8.

THIRD DOWN CONVERSIONS, NFL, 2022

Rank	Team	Third Down Conversions
1.	Los Angeles Chargers	112
2.	Pittsburgh Steelers	106
3.	Dallas Cowboys	105
4.	Philadelphia Eagles	102
5.	Buffalo Bills	97

THIRD DOWN OFFENSE, NFL, 2022

Rank	Team	Conv.	Att.	Conv. Pct.
1.	Buffalo	97	193	50.3
2.	Kansas City	94	196	48.7
3.	Cincinnati	95	206	46.1
4.	Philadelphia	102	222	45.9
5.	Dallas	105	231	45.5
6.	San Francisco	95	211	45.0
7.	Pittsburgh	106	236	44.9
8.	L.A. Chargers	112	257	43.6
9.	Jacksonville	90	215	41.9
10.	Atlanta	82	196	41.8

TAKE IT AWAY

The Bolts recorded 24 takeaways to 19 giveaways in 2022, a plus-five turnover differential that ranked tied for seventh in the NFL and No. 3 in the AFC.

TURNOVER DIFFERENTIAL, NFL, 2022

Rank	Team	TA	GA	Diff.
1.	San Francisco 49ers	30	17	+13
2.	Dallas Cowboys	33	23	+10
3.	Philadelphia Eagles	27	19	+8
4.	Detroit Lions	22	15	+7
	New England Patriots	30	23	+7
6.	Cincinnati Bengals	24	18	+6
7.	Los Angeles Chargers	24	19	+5
	Jacksonville Jaguars	27	22	+5
9.	Baltimore Ravens	25	21	+4
	Pittsburgh Steelers	23	19	+4

EXTENDED DRIVES

The Bolts had 38 drives of 10-plus plays in 2022, ranking No. 4 in the NFL during the regular season.

DRIVES OF 10-PLUS PLAYS, NFL, 2022

Rank	Team	Drives of 10-Plus Plays
1.	Pittsburgh Steelers	45
2.	Las Vegas Raiders	40
	Tampa Bay Buccaneers	40
4.	Los Angeles Chargers	38
5.	Detroit Lions	37
	Kansas City Chiefs	37

MAKE SOMETHING HAPPEN

Chargers receivers made something happen after the catch among the best in the NFL in 2022, ranking second the league with 2,542 yards after catch.

YARDS AFTER CATCH, NFL, 2022

Rank	Team	Yards After Catch
1.	Kansas City Chiefs	2,850
2.	Los Angeles Chargers	2,542
3.	Tampa Bay Buccaneers	2,358
4.	Detroit Lions	2,263
5.	San Francisco 49ers	2,245

TEAM NOTES

SPECIAL TEAMS COVERAGE

Los Angeles' punt coverage unit allowed the fewest yards per return in the NFL in 2022. It's the best single-season return average allowed by a Bolts team since 1971.

PUNT RETURN AVERAGE AGAINST, NFL, 2022

Rank	Team	Opponet Punt Return Avg.
1.	Los Angeles Chargers	3.1
2.	Pittsburgh Steelers	5.7
3.	Seattle Seahawks	5.9
4.	Washington Commanders	6.4
5.	Baltimore Ravens	6.8

KICKING TRUE

Los Angeles' kicking game was among the most consistent in the NFL in 2022, making 31-of-33 field goals despite deploying three different kickers.

FIELD GOAL PERCENTAGE, NFL, 2022

Rank	Team	FGM	FGA	FG Pct.
1.	Carolina Panthers	33	35	94.3
2.	Los Angeles Chargers	31	33	93.9
3.	Houston Texans	29	31	93.5
4.	Los Angeles Rams	28	30	93.3
5.	Chicago Bears	25	27	92.6

PLAYERS WITH 500 YARDS AND THREE SCORES

The Bolts had six players in 2022 that topped 500 receiving yards and three touchdown catches — **WR Keenan Allen**, **WR DeAndre Carter**, **RB Austin Ekeler**, **TE Gerald Everett**, **WR Joshua Palmer** and **WR Mike Williams**. It's the most players to do so on the same team in a single season in NFL history.

MOST PLAYERS WITH 500-PLUS RECEIVING YARDS AND THREE TOUCHDOWN CATCHES, SINGLE SEASON, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season	Team	Players
1.	2022	L.A. Chargers	6
2.	2018	New England	5
	2018	Tampa Bay	5
	2017	Washington	5
	2016	New England	5
	2013	Denver	5
	2011	New Orleans	5
	2000	Indianapolis	5
	1993	Miami	5

HOLD THE LINE

The Bolts defense held the line on third-and-short in 2022, allowing just 18 conversions on 37 attempts on third down with one to two yards to go. The 48.6 conversion percentage allowed ranked No. 1 in the NFL in 2022.

THIRD DOWN DEFENSE, 1-2 YARDS TO GO, NFL, 2022

Rank	Team	Conv.	Att.	Conv. Pct.
1.	L.A. Chargers	18	37	48.6
2.	Buffalo	24	44	54.5
3.	N.Y. Giants	21	37	56.8
4.	Cleveland	29	49	59.2
5.	Tampa Bay	25	42	59.5

The defensive third-and-short performance in 2022 was the second-best in the NFL over the last three seasons.

THIRD DOWN DEFENSE, 1-2 YARDS TO GO, NFL, SINCE 2020

Rank	Season	Team	Conv.	Att.	Conv. Pct.
1.	2020	Baltimore	15	32	46.9
2.	2022	L.A. Chargers	18	37	48.6
3.	2020	L.A. Chargers	22	44	50.0
4.	2021	San Francisco	24	45	53.3
5.	2020	Pittsburgh	20	37	54.1

TEAM NOTES

DEFENSE OVER THE LAST FIVE GAMES

The Bolts defense was among the NFL's best in the final five games of the 2022 season. The team ranked third in total defense, fourth in passing defense, third in scoring defense and was the best third-down defense in football over those five weeks.

TOTAL DEFENSE, NFL, WEEKS 14-18, 2022

Rank	Team	Total Net Yards Allowed/Game
1.	Pittsburgh Steelers	253.2
2.	New Orleans Saints	271.3
3.	Los Angeles Chargers	284.8
4.	Washington Commanders	285.5
5.	Kansas City Chiefs	291.6

PASSING DEFENSE, NFL, WEEKS 14-18, 2022

Rank	Team	Net Passing Yards Allowed/Game
1.	New Orleans Saints	123.0
2.	Pittsburgh Steelers	143.6
3.	Cleveland Browns	151.6
4.	Los Angeles Chargers	153.0
5.	Washington Commanders	162.8

SCORING DEFENSE, NFL, WEEKS 14-18, 2022

Rank	Team	Points Allowed/Game
1.	New Orleans Saints	12.0
2.	Pittsburgh Steelers	13.8
3.	Los Angeles Chargers	15.0
4.	Jacksonville Jaguars	15.6
5.	Baltimore Ravens	15.8

THIRD DOWN DEFENSE, NFL, WEEKS 14-18, 2022

Rank	Team	Conv.	Att.	Conv. Pct.
1.	L.A. Chargers	15	55	27.3
2.	Washington	14	50	28.0
3.	N.Y. Jets	23	72	31.9
4.	Kansas City	23	69	33.3
5.	Buffalo	19	56	33.9

DEFENSE DOMINATES IN INDY

The Chargers defense was suffocating on third down in the Week 16 victory over Indianapolis, allowing zero third-down conversions for the first time since 2010 and just the second time since at least 2000. The Bolts put forth the eighth performance by any defense in the last 30 years with seven-plus sacks and zero third-down conversions allowed.

The performance was the first by any NFL defense in the last 30 years with seven sacks and three interceptions while allowing less than 180 total net yards and zero third-down conversions.

THIRD-DOWN CONV. ALLOWED, SINGLE GAME, SINCE 2000

Season	Game	Def. 3rd Down Conv.
2022	Dec. 26, 2022 at Indianapolis	0
2010	Dec. 12, 2010 vs. Kansas City	0
2014	Oct. 5, 2014 vs. N.Y. Jets	1
2012	Sept. 16, 2012 vs. Tennessee	1
2010	Nov. 22, 2010 vs. Denver	1
2010	Sept. 13, 2010 at Kansas City	1
2009	Dec. 13, 2009 at Dallas	1
2008	Sept. 22, 2008 vs. N.Y. Jets	1
2002	Oct. 20, 2002 at Oakland	1
2002	Sept. 15, 2002 vs. Houston	1
2001	Dec. 30, 2001 vs. Seattle	1
2000	Nov. 12, 2000 vs. Miami	1

DEFENSIVE PERFORMANCES WITH ZERO THIRD-DOWN CONVERSIONS ALLOWED AND SEVEN-PLUS SACKS, SINGLE GAME, NFL, SINCE 1991

Season	Team	Game	Sacks	3D Conv.
2022	LAC	Dec. 26, 2022 at Ind.	7.0	0
2022	N.E.	Nov. 6, 2022 vs. Ind.	9.0	0
2021	Mia.	Dec. 27, 2021 at N.O.	8.0	0
2012	Den.	Nov. 11, 2012 at Car.	7.0	0
2011	K.C.	Dec. 4, 2011 at Chi.	7.0	0
2010	NYG	Oct. 3, 2010 vs. Chi.	10.0	0
2005	Ten.	Oct. 9, 2005 at Hou.	7.0	0
2002	Phi.	Dec. 21, 2002 at Dal.	7.0	0

UNIFORM RECORDS

NEW UNIFORM RECORD

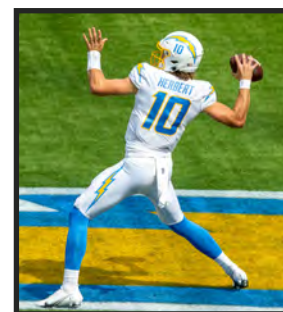
In April 2020, the Bolts unveiled new, sleek uniforms to make the best uniform in sports even better — marking a new era of Chargers football as the team moved into SoFi Stadium. Below is the team's record for the uniform colors as well as combinations.

RECORD BY UNIFORM, PANTS AND COMBOS, SINCE 2020

Uniform Color	Home	Road	Overall
Powder Blue Uniform	11-5	0-2	11-7
White Uniform	0-3	12-10	12-13
Navy Blue Color Rush	0-3	0-1	0-4
Royal Blue Color Rush	3-0	0-0	3-0

Pants Color	Home	Road	Overall
Gold Pants	5-4	6-6	11-10
White Pants	6-4	6-6	12-10
Navy Blue Color Rush	0-3	0-1	0-4
Royal Blue Color Rush	3-0	0-0	3-0

Uniform/Pant Combos	Home	Road	Overall
Powder Uni/Gold Pants	5-3	0-1	5-4
Powder Uni/White Pants	6-2	0-1	6-3
White Uni/Gold Pants	0-1	6-5	6-6
White Uni/White Pants	0-2	6-5	6-7
Navy Blue Color Rush	0-3	0-1	0-4
Royal Blue Color Rush	3-0	0-0	3-0



UNIFORM RECORD SINCE THE MERGER

Since the 1970 NFL-AFL Merger, the Bolts have donned several different uniforms. Below is a look since 1970 of the team's record in specific uniform and pant colors as well as uniform combinations:

RECORD BY UNIFORM, PANTS AND COMBOS, SINCE 1970

Uniform Color	Home	Road	Overall
Powder Blue Uniform	35-38-2	4-6-1	39-44-3
White Uniform	63-38	145-214-2	208-252-2
Navy Blue Uniform	103-90	16-18	119-108
Royal Blue Uniform	20-21	6-4	26-25

Pants Color	Home	Road	Overall
Gold Pants	61-52-2	48-72-3	109-124-5
White Pants	132-115	50-72	182-187
Navy Blue Pants	22-19	73-98	95-117
Royal Blue Pants	6-1	0-0	6-1

Uniform/Pant Combos	Home	Road	Overall
Powder Uni/Gold Pants	11-16-2	1-4-1	12-20-3
Powder Uni/White Pants	24-22	3-2	27-24
White Uni/Gold Pants	36-16	41-64-2	77-80-2
White Uni/White Pants	10-9	32-53	42-62
Royal Uni/Royal Pants	6-1	0-0	6-1
Navy Uni/Navy Pants	5-6	1-1	6-7
Royal Uni/Gold Pants	14-20	6-4	20-24
Navy Uni/White Pants	98-84	15-17	113-101
White Uni/Navy Pants	17-13	72-97	89-110

Helmet Color and Combos	Home	Road	Overall
White Helmet	91-74-2	68-88-3	159-162-5
White Uni/White Pants	6-6	16-12	22-18
White Uni/Gold Pants	7-2	11-22-2	18-24-2
Powder Uni/Gold Pants	10-16-2	1-4-1	11-20-3
Powder Uni/White Pants	24-22	3-2	27-24
Navy Uni/Navy Pants	5-5	1-1	6-6
Royal Uni/Royal Pants	6-1	0-0	6-1
White Uni/Navy Pants	9-6	32-40	41-46
Navy Uni/White Pants	24-16	4-7	28-23
Navy Helmet	130-113	103-154	233-267
Navy Uni/Navy Pants	0-1	0-0	0-1
Navy Uni/White Pants	74-68	11-10	85-78
Royal Uni/Gold Pants	14-20	6-4	20-24
White Uni/Gold Pants	30-14	31-42	61-56
White Uni/Navy Pants	8-7	40-57	48-64
White Uni/White Pants	4-3	15-41	19-44

JUSTIN HERBERT

THE LAW OF AVERAGES

Justin Herbert ranks No. 2 in NFL history averaging 287.5 passing yards per game among players with at least 1,000 attempts. Meanwhile, Herbert's 1.8 career interception percentage ranks No. 7 in NFL history and his 96.2 passer rating ranks 15th all-time (min. 1,000 attempts).

PASSING YARDS PER GAME, MIN. 1,000 ATT., NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team/s	Player	Passing Yards/Game
1.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	303.0
2.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	287.5
3.	Cin.	QB Joe Burrow	280.3
4.	S.D./N.O.	QB Drew Brees	280.0
5.	Ind.	QB Andrew Luck	275.2

COMPLETING RECORDS

After setting the rookie completions record in 2020, Justin Herbert has completed 1,316 career passes, the most in NFL history through a player's first three seasons. His 839 completions through last year were also the most by a player through their first two seasons in NFL history.

COMPLETIONS, FIRST THREE SEASONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Completions
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	1,316
2.	Ind.	QB Andrew Luck	1,062
3.	Ari.	QB Kyler Murray	1,057
4.	L.V.	QB Derek Carr	1,055

Herbert completed the most passes by any player in their first 50 career games in NFL history. He also completed the most passes ever by any player before turning 25 years old.

Herbert reached 1,000 completions in his 38th career game, setting the record for the fastest to do so in NFL history. He eclipsed that mark at 24 days, 221 days old, tying QB Drew Bledsoe as the second-youngest player to hit that mark.

COMPLETIONS, FIRST 50 CAREER GAMES, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Completions
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert*	1,316
2.	Det.	QB Matthew Stafford	1,239
3.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	1,216
4.	Ari.	QB Kyler Murray	1,170

*Has played 49 career games

COMPLETIONS BEFORE TURNING 25 YEARS OLD, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Completions
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	1,316
2.	N.E.	QB Drew Bledsoe	1,310
3.	T.B.	QB Jameis Winston	1,183

FEWEST GAMES TO 1,000 COMPLETIONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Games
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	38
2.	Det.	QB Matthew Stafford	41
3.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	42



HERBERT AS A PRO

Since entering the NFL, Justin Herbert leads the AFC in completions and ranks inside the top 10 in the NFL in passing yards, passing touchdowns and combined touchdowns. His 22 games with 300-plus passing yards rank No. 2 in the NFL since 2020.

PASSING COMPLETIONS, NFL, SINCE 2020

Rank	Team	Player	Completions
1.	T.B.	QB Tom Brady	1,376
2.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	1,316
3.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	1,261
4.	Buf.	QB Josh Allen	1,164
5.	Min.	QB Kirk Cousins	1,145

PASSING YARDS, NFL, SINCE 2020

Rank	Team	Player	Passing Yards
1.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	14,829
2.	T.B.	QB Tom Brady	14,643
3.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	14,089
4.	Buf.	QB Josh Allen	13,234
5.	Min.	QB Kirk Cousins	13,033

PASSING TOUCHDOWNS, NFL, SINCE 2020

Rank	Team/s	Player	Passing Touchdowns
1.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	116
2.	G.B./NYJ	QB Aaron Rodgers	111
3.	Buf.	QB Josh Allen	108
	T.B.	QB Tom Brady	108
5.	Min.	QB Kirk Cousins	97
6.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	94
7.	Cin.	QB Joe Burrow	82

COMBINED TOUCHDOWNS, NFL, SINCE 2020

Rank	Team/s	Player	Combined Touchdowns
1.	Buf.	QB Josh Allen	129
2.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	124
3.	G.B./NYJ	QB Aaron Rodgers	118
4.	T.B.	QB Tom Brady	114
5.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	102
6.	Min.	QB Kirk Cousins	101
7.	Cin.	QB Joe Burrow	92

JUSTIN HERBERT

AMONG THE GAME'S BEST

Justin Herbert was among the NFL leaders in 2022 in completions, passing yards and 300-yard performances.

PASSING COMPLETIONS, NFL, 2022

Rank	Team	Player	Completions
1.	T.B.	QB Tom Brady	490
2.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	477
3.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	435
4.	Min.	QB Kirk Cousins	424
5.	Cin.	QB Joe Burrow	414

PASSING YARDS, NFL, 2022

Rank	Team	Player	Passing Yards
1.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	5,250
2.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	4,739
3.	T.B.	QB Tom Brady	4,694
4.	Min.	QB Kirk Cousins	4,547
5.	Cin.	QB Joe Burrow	4,475

MOST GAMES WITH 300-PLUS PASSING YARDS, NFL, 2022

Rank	Team	Player	Games
1.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	10
2.	Buf.	QB Josh Allen	6
3.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	5
	Cin.	QB Joe Burrow	5
	Det.	QB Jared Goff	5
	T.B.	QB Tom Brady	5
7.	—	Four Other Players	4

HERBERT MOVES THE CHAINS

Over the last nine weeks of the regular season, Justin Herbert converted all eight attempts to move the chains on third-and-one or shorter.

THIRD-AND-ONE RUSHING CONV. PCT., NFL, WEEKS 10-18, 2022

Rank	Team	Player	Att.	1st Downs	Pct.
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	8	8	100.0
	Buf.	RB Devin Singletary	8	8	100.0
	Dal.	QB Dak Prescott	7	7	100.0

Herbert has converted 23-of-24 (95.8 pct.) third-and-one and fourth-and-one rushing attempts in his career. It's the best rushing first down percentage in the NFL over the last three seasons among players with at least 15 attempts.

THIRD-AND-ONE AND FOURTH-AND-ONE RUSHING CONVERSIONS, MIN. 15 ATTEMPTS, NFL, SINCE 2020

Rk.	Team/s	Player	Att.	1st Downs	Pct.
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	24	23	95.8
2.	S.F.	QB Jimmy Garoppolo	20	19	95.0
3.	Ten.	QB Ryan Tannehill	21	19	90.5
4.	Sea./Den.	QB Russell Wilson	18	16	88.9
5.	Was./L.V.	RB Peyton Barber	16	14	87.5
	Bal.	RB Gus Edwards	24	21	87.5

CLOSING OUT WINS

Justin Herbert has been clutch late in games dating back to his rookie season. In his career, Herbert has engineered 13 game-winning drives in the fourth quarter or overtime.

His 13 game-winning drives are tied for the second-most ever through a player's first three seasons. Since the beginning of the 2020 season, his 13 game-winning drives rank tied for third in the NFL, while his 10 over the last two years are tied for No. 2.

JUSTIN HERBERT'S CAREER GAME-WINNING DRIVES

Game	Drive Length	Game-Winning Score
Dec. 13, 2020 vs. Atl.	6 plays, 49 yds (0:31)	Badgley 43-yd FG
Dec. 17, 2020 at L.V.	5 plays, 75 yds (1:49)	Herbert 1-yd TD run*
Dec. 27, 2020 vs. Den.	7 plays, 56 yds (2:01)	Badgley 37-yd FG
Sept. 12, 2021 at Was.	3 plays, 3 yds (0:45)	M.Williams 3-yd TD rec.
Sept. 26, 2021 at K.C.	8 plays, 59 yds (1:10)	M.Williams 4-yd TD rec.
Oct. 10, 2021 vs. Cle.	5 plays, 48 yds (0:31)	Ekeler 3-yd TD run
Nov. 7, 2021 at Phi.	15 plays, 64 yds (6:05)	Hopkins 29-yd FG
Nov. 21, 2021 vs. Pit.	3 plays, 75 yds (1:15)	M.Williams 53-yd TD rec.
Oct. 9, 2022 at Cle.	13 plays, 66 yds (6:26)	Bertolet 27-yd FG
Oct. 17, 2022 vs. Den.	4 plays, 7 yds (2:08)	Hopkins 39-yd FG*
Nov. 6, 2022 at Atl.	3 plays, 24 yds (0:34)	Dicker 37-yd FG
Nov. 27, 2022 at Ari.	7 plays, 38 yds (1:33)	Ekeler 1-yd TD rec.
Dec. 18, 2022 vs. Ten.	6 plays, 52 yards (0:44)	Dicker 43-yd FG

*Game-winning drive was in overtime

GAMES-WINNING DRIVES IN FOURTH QUARTER OR OVERTIME, FIRST THREE SEASONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Game-Winning Drives
1.	Dal.	QB Dak Prescott	14
2.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	13
	Atl.	QB Matt Ryan	13
4.	Oak.	QB Derek Carr	12
	Sea.	QB Russell Wilson	12

Herbert posted a game-winning drive in the fourth quarter or overtime of three-straight games in 2020, becoming just the third rookie to do so since the 1970 NFL-AFL merger. The two others — Ben Roethlisberger (2004) and Vince Young (2006) — also won Offensive Rookie of the Year honors from *The Associated Press*.

ROOKIE QUARTERBACKS WITH THREE CONSECUTIVE GAME-WINNING DRIVES, SINCE 1970

Season	Team	Quarterback	Consecutive Games
2020	LAC	Justin Herbert*	3 (Dec. 13 — Dec. 27)
2006	Ten.	Vince Young*	3 (Nov. 26 — Dec. 10)
2004	Pit.	Ben Roethlisberger*	3 (Dec. 5 — Dec. 18)

*Won AP Offensive Rookie of the Year

JUSTIN HERBERT

CAPTAIN COMEBACK

Justin Herbert has led the Bolts to 10 career come-from-behind victories in the fourth quarter or overtime, including four in 2022.

HERBERT'S FOURTH QUARTER/OVERTIME COMEBACK WINS

Date	Opponent	4Q/OT Deficit	Result
Dec. 17, 2020	at Las Vegas	24-27 (OT)	W, 30-27 (OT)
Sept. 12, 2021	at Washington	13-16	W, 20-16
Sept. 26, 2021	at Kansas City	21-24	W, 30-24
Oct. 10, 2021	vs. Cleveland	35-42	W, 47-42
Nov. 7, 2021	at Philadelphia	16-17	W, 27-24
Nov. 21, 2021	vs. Pittsburgh	34-37	W, 37-34
Oct. 9, 2022	at Cleveland	27-28	W, 30-28
Oct. 17, 2022	vs. Denver	13-16	W, 19-16 (OT)
Nov. 6, 2022	at Atlanta	14-17	W, 20-17
Nov. 27, 2022	at Arizona	17-24	W, 25-24

Herbert's 10 career come-from-behind wins in the fourth quarter or overtime were the second-most ever within the first three seasons of a career. His 10 comeback wins are tied for the second-most in NFL since he entered the professional ranks in 2020.

FOURTH QUARTER/OVERTIME COMEBACK WINS, FIRST THREE SEASONS NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	4Q/OT Comeback Wins
1.	Oak.	QB Derek Carr	12
2.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	10
3.	Ari.	QB Jake Plummer	9
	Den.	QB John Elway*	9
	Ind.	QB Peyton Manning*	9
	StL	QB Marc Bulger	9
	T.B.	QB Doug Williams	9
	Was.	QB Jay Schroeder	9

**Pro Football Hall of Famer*

HERBERT CONSISTENTLY COMPLETES

Justin Herbert has completed 20 or more passes in 27-straight games, good for the third-longest streak in NFL history. He also had a 21-game streak earlier in his career, tied for the fourth-longest in league annals.

CONSECUTIVE GAMES WITH 20-PLUS COMPLETIONS, NFL HISTORY

Rk.	Team/s	Quarterback	Dates	Consec. Games
1.	N.O.	Drew Brees	Dec. 6, 2009-Oct. 6, 2013	57
2.	N.O.	Drew Brees	Nov. 29, 2015-Nov. 5, 2017	30
3.	LAC	Justin Herbert	Nov. 7, 2021-Present	27
4.	LAC	Justin Herbert	Sept. 20, 2020-Oct. 17, 2021	21
	Bal./Den.	Joe Flacco	Nov. 5, 2017-Sept. 29, 2019	21
	N.O.	Drew Brees	Oct. 27, 2013-Nov. 24, 2014	21

TOUCHDOWN MACHINE

After setting the all-time rookie record with 31 touchdown passes in 2020, Justin Herbert threw 38 passing scores in 2021. His 69 touchdown passes were the most in NFL history through the first two seasons of a career. He threw a touchdown in 45 of his career games played, the most in NFL history through the first three seasons of a career.

Herbert's 94 career passing scores were the second-most through a player's first three seasons and rank No. 2 in history by a player before turning 25 years old. He joined Hall of Famer Peyton Manning as the only players ever to throw 25 touchdown passes in each of their first three seasons. Herbert has a chance to be among the youngest in history to reach 100 career passing touchdowns.

TOUCHDOWN PASSES, FIRST THREE SEASONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Passing Touchdowns
1.	Mia.	QB Dan Marino*	98
2.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	94
3.	Ind.	QB Andrew Luck	86
4.	Ind.	QB Peyton Manning*	85
5.	Cin.	QB Joe Burrow	82

CONSECUTIVE SEASONS WITH 25 TOUCHDOWN PASSES TO START A CAREER, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Consecutive Seasons
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	3 (2020-22)
	Ind.	QB Peyton Manning*	3 (1998-2000)
3.	Sea.	QB Russell Wilson	2 (2012-13)
4.	Cle.	QB Baker Mayfield	1 (2018)

TOUCHDOWN PASSES BEFORE TURNING 25 YEARS OLD, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Passing Touchdowns
1.	Mia.	QB Dan Marino*	102
2.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	94
3.	T.B.	QB Jameis Winston	88
4.	Ind.	QB Peyton Manning*	85
5.	Bal.	QB Lamar Jackson	84

YOUNGEST PLAYERS TO REACH 100 CAREER PASSING TOUCHDOWNS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Age (Years-Days)
1.	Mia.	QB Dan Marino*	24-357
2.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	25-52
3.	Hou.	QB Deshaun Watson	25-104
4.	Buf.	QB Josh Allen	25-219
5.	Ind.	QB Peyton Manning*	25-232
—	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	25-184^

^Age as of Sept. 10, 2023
*Pro Football Hall of Famer

JUSTIN HERBERT



HERBERT HITS 14K

Justin Herbert, who set the record for passing yards through a player's first two seasons (9,350), has thrown for 14,089 yards in his career. He is the only player in NFL history to reach 13,000 passing yards over his first three years. Herbert is also the only player ever to eclipse 4,000 yards in each of his first three years and the only player to top 4,500 yards in two of his first three seasons.

PASSING YARDS, FIRST THREE SEASONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Passing Yards
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	14,089
2.	Ind.	QB Andrew Luck	12,957
3.	Ind.	QB Peyton Manning*	12,287
4.	Cin.	QB Joe Burrow	11,774
5.	T.B.	QB Jameis Winston	11,636

*Pro Football Hall of Famer

CONSECUTIVE SEASONS WITH 4,000 PASSING YARDS TO START A CAREER, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Consecutive Seasons
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	3 (2020-22)
2.	T.B.	QB Jameis Winston	2 (2015-16)
3.	Ind.	QB Andrew Luck	1 (2012)
	Car.	QB Cam Newton	1 (2011)

Herbert is among the all-time leaders in passing yards before turning 25 years old. He is one of just three players to ever top 14,000 passing yards before his 25th birthday. He eclipsed 13,000 career passing yards in his 45th career game, the second-fewest games to do so in NFL history.

PASSING YARDS BEFORE TURNING 25 YEARS OLD, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Passing Yards
1.	N.E.	QB Drew Bledsoe	14,462
2.	T.B.	QB Jameis Winston	14,628
3.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	14,089
4.	T.B.	QB Josh Freeman	12,963

FEWEST GAMES TO 13,000 PASSING YARDS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Games
1.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	43
2.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	45
3.	Det.	QB Matthew Stafford	46
	StL	QB Kurt Warner*	46

*Pro Football Hall of Famer

BIG-TIME PERFORMER

After he set rookie records in 2020 with eight 300-yard games and six three-touchdown performances, Justin Herbert continues to put up big-time performances.

Herbert has topped 300 passing yards 22 times in his career, the most by a player through their first three seasons in NFL history. The 22 games with 300-plus passing yards are already tied for the third-most through a player's first four pro seasons in NFL history.

MOST GAMES WITH 300-PLUS PASSING YARDS, FIRST THREE SEASONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Games
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	22
2.	Ind.	QB Andrew Luck	19
3.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	17
	StL	QB Kurt Warner*	17
5.	Cin.	QB Joe Burrow	16
	Mia.	QB Dan Marino*	16

MOST GAMES WITH 300-PLUS PASSING YARDS, FIRST FOUR SEASONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Games
1.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	26
	StL	QB Kurt Warner*	26
3.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert^	22
	Mia.	QB Dan Marino*	22
5.	Ind.	QB Andrew Luck	21

*Pro Football Hall of Famer

^In third professional season

The third-year passer has also thrown for at least three touchdowns in 16 career games, ranking No. 2 over a player's first three seasons. Herbert has thrown multiple touchdown passes in 30 career games, including eight in 2022. His 30 games with multiple passing scores are the second-most by a player through their first three professional seasons.

MOST GAMES WITH THREE-PLUS TOUCHDOWN PASSES, FIRST THREE SEASONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Games
1.	Mia.	QB Dan Marino*	18
2.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	16
3.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	15
4.	Cin.	QB Joe Burrow	14
5.	Ind.	QB Peyton Manning*	13
	StL	QB Kurt Warner*	13

MOST GAMES WITH MULTIPLE TOUCHDOWN PASSES, FIRST THREE SEASONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Games
1.	Mia.	QB Dan Marino*	32
2.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	30
3.	Ind.	QB Andrew Luck	28
4.	Ind.	QB Peyton Manning*	26
	Cin.	QB Joe Burrow	26

*Pro Football Hall of Famer

JUSTIN HERBERT

DUAL-THREAT QUARTERBACK

Justin Herbert set the record for combined touchdowns as a rookie (36) and through a player's first two seasons (77). His 102 combined touchdowns are also the most in history through the first three seasons of a career.

In Week 9, he tied Hall of Fame QB Dan Marino as the second-fastest players to reach 90 combined touchdowns, each doing so in their 40th career game.

COMBINED TOUCHDOWNS, FIRST THREE SEASONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Combined Touchdowns
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	102
2.	Mia.	QB Dan Marino*	100
3.	Ind.	QB Andrew Luck	98
4.	Buf.	QB Josh Allen	92
	Car.	QB Cam Newton	92
	Cin.	QB Joe Burrow	92

*Pro Football Hall of Famer

He also has seven career games with multiple passing touchdowns and a rushing score, tying for the third-most by a player through their first three professional seasons.

MOST GAMES WITH MULTIPLE PASSING TDs AND A RUSHING TD, FIRST THREE SEASONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Games
1.	Car.	QB Cam Newton	10
2.	Ari.	QB Kyler Murray	9
3.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	7
	Buf.	QB Josh Allen	7
	Dal.	QB Dak Prescott	7

COMPLETING AT A HIGH RATE

In Week 14, **Justin Herbert** completed 76.5 percent of his passes (39-of-51), the second-highest completion percentage this year by any quarterback in a single game with at least 45 attempts. He has two of the top five completion percentage performances this season among players with 45 attempts.

PASSING COMPLETION PERCENTAGE, SINGLE GAME, MINIMUM 45 ATTEMPTS, NFL, 2022

Rk.	Team	Game	Player	Comp. Pct.
1.	Cin.	Dec. 24, 2022 at N.E.	QB Joe Burrow	76.9
2.	LAC	Dec. 11, 2022 vs. Mia.	QB Justin Herbert	76.5
3.	T.B.	Jan. 1, 2023 vs. Car.	QB Tom Brady	75.6
4.	T.B.	Oct. 2, 2022 vs. K.C.	QB Tom Brady	75.0
5.	LAC	Nov. 27, 2022 at Ari.	QB Justin Herbert	74.5
6.	Ind.	Oct. 16, 2022 vs. Jax.	QB Matt Ryan	72.4

CONSISTENCY COUNTS

In Week 12, **Justin Herbert** posted his 10th career game with three-plus touchdown passes and zero interceptions, the most by any player in history through the first three seasons of a career.

Herbert registered his 10th game with 300-plus yards and zero interceptions in the Week 14 win over Miami. He became the only player ever to do so 10 times before turning 25 years old.

MOST GAMES WITH THREE TOUCHDOWN PASSES AND ZERO INTERCEPTIONS, FIRST THREE SEASONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Games
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	10
2.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	9
3.	LAR	QB Jared Goff	8
	Oak.	QB Derek Carr	8

MOST GAMES WITH 300 PASSING YARDS AND ZERO INTERCEPTIONS, BEFORE TURNING 25 YEARS OLD, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Games
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	10
2.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	9
3.	Buf.	QB Josh Allen	7
	LAR	QB Jared Goff	7
5.	Mia.	QB Dan Marino	6
	T.B.	QB Jameis Winston	6

TARGET ACQUIRED

Justin Herbert has thrown touchdowns to 15 players, including 13 with multiple scores. He's most frequently thrown touchdowns to **WR Mike Williams**, who has caught 17 scores from Herbert. The first passing score of his career went to **WR Jalen Guyton**, who also caught the first touchdown of his career on the play.

HERBERT'S CAREER TOUCHDOWN PASSES BY RECEIVER

Receiver	Touchdown Passes
WR Mike Williams	18
WR Keenan Allen	17
RB Austin Ekeler	15
WR Joshua Palmer	7
TE Donald Parham Jr.	7
WR Jalen Guyton	6
TE Jared Cook	4
TE Gerald Everett	4
TE Hunter Henry	4
WR DeAndre Carter	3
WR Tyron Johnson	3
FB Zander Horvath	2
FB Gabe Nabers	2
TE Stephen Anderson	1
TE Virgil Green	1
Total (15 Receivers)	94

JUSTIN HERBERT IN PRIMETIME

A PRIME-TIME PRODIGY

Since entering the NFL, **Justin Herbert** has made 12 starts in primetime, leading the Bolts to wins on each of the regularly-slated prime-time games — *Thursday Night Football*, *Sunday Night Football* and *Monday Night Football*.

He has been one of the best quarterbacks under the lights since entering the NFL in 2020, with his 95.4 passer rating in prime-time games ranking No. 4 in the NFL over the last three seasons with 300 prime-time passing attempts.

PRIME-TIME PASSER RATING, MIN. 300 ATT., SINCE 2020

Rank	Team/s	Player	Passer Rating
1.	G.B./NYJ	QB Aaron Rodgers	118.1
2.	Buf.	QB Josh Allen	109.9
3.	Dal.	QB Dak Prescott	103.9
4.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	102.1
5.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	95.4
6.	Sea./Den.	QB Russell Wilson	93.4

Herbert has thrown 24 touchdown passes in his 12 prime-time starts, ranking No. 4 in the NFL in primetime since he entered the league in 2020.

PRIME-TIME PASSING TOUCHDOWNS, SINCE 2020

Rank	Team/s	Player	GS	Passing TDs
1.	G.B./NYJ	QB Aaron Rodgers	17	44
2.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	16	39
3.	Buf.	QB Josh Allen	13	38
4.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	12	24
5.	Dal.	QB Dak Prescott	9	22
6.	T.B.	QB Tom Brady	14	21
	L.V./N.O.	QB Derek Carr	12	21

THURSDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL

As a rookie in 2020, **Justin Herbert** recorded his first career comeback win in the fourth quarter or overtime in Week 15 at Las Vegas, leading the Bolts to a 30-27 overtime victory. He finished the game with 314 passing yards and two touchdowns on 22-of-32 passing (68.8 pct.) for a 121.1 passer rating. Herbert added a rushing touchdown in overtime to secure the victory.

At 22 years, 282 days old, Herbert became the second-youngest player to mount a come-from-behind win in the fourth quarter or overtime of a Thursday night game in NFL history.

YOUNGEST QUARTERBACKS TO LEAD A COME-FROM-BEHIND WIN IN FOURTH QUARTER OR OVERTIME, THURSDAY NIGHT GAMES, NFL HISTORY

Rk.	Team	Game	Player	Age (Yrs-Days)
1.	S.F.	Dec. 14, 2006 at Sea.	QB Alex Smith	22-221
2.	LAC	Dec. 17, 2020 at L.V.	QB Justin Herbert	22-282
3.	Dal.	Dec. 1, 2016 at Min.	QB Dak Prescott	23-125

SUNDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL

Justin Herbert has appeared in five career games on *Sunday Night Football*, totaling 1,241 passing yards and nine touchdowns with four interceptions on 108-of-170 passing (63.5 pct.) for a 93.3 passer rating.

In the team's Week 15 win on *SNF*, Herbert completed 39 passes on 51 attempts (76.5 pct.) for 367 yards and a touchdown with zero interceptions (102.3 rating). His 76.5 completion percentage was the best ever in a Sunday night contest by a quarterback to throw zero interceptions and 45-plus attempts.

HIGHEST COMPLETION PCT., SUNDAY NIGHT GAME, MIN. 45 ATT. AND ZERO INTERCEPTIONS, NFL HISTORY

Rk.	Team	Game	Player	Comp. Pct.
1.	LAC	Dec. 11, 2022 vs. Mia.	QB Justin Herbert	76.5
2.	T.B.	Oct. 2, 2022 vs. K.C.	QB Tom Brady	75.0
3.	N.E.	Oct. 27, 1996 vs. Buf.	QB Drew Bledsoe	71.1
4.	K.C.	Nov. 14, 2021 at L.V.	QB Patrick Mahomes	70.0
5.	Ari.	Oct. 2, 2005 vs. S.F.	QB Josh McCown	69.6

Herbert made his first career appearance on *Sunday Night Football* in Week 11 of the 2021 against Pittsburgh, throwing for 382 yards and three touchdowns with an interception on 31-of-40 passing (73.2 pct.) for a 116.1 passer rating. He added 90 rushing yards to become the first player ever to have at least 350 yards passing and 90 yards rushing in a single game.

His 116.1 passer rating was the best in a quarterback's first career start on *SNF* with at least 40 passing attempts since the program began in 2006. It was also the best passer rating by a quarterback ever in their first career start in Sunday night game (min. 40 att.).

PASSER RATING, FIRST CAREER START IN A SUNDAY NIGHT GAME, MINIMUM 40 ATTEMPTS, NFL HISTORY

Rk.	Team	Game	Player	Passer Rtg.
1.	LAC	Nov. 21, 2021 vs. Pit.	QB Justin Herbert	116.1
2.	Ari.	Oct. 2, 2005 vs. S.F.	QB Josh McCown	109.4
3.	StL	Nov. 18, 2001 at N.E.	QB Kurt Warner	105.4

MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL

In a three appearances on *Monday Night Football*, **Justin Herbert** has thrown for 959 yards and seven scores with two interceptions on 106-of-160 passing (66.3 pct.) for a 91.6 passer rating.

In 2020, Herbert tossed four touchdown passes on *Monday Night Football*, setting the program's single-game rookie passing touchdown record. He added three touchdowns in the lone Monday night contest in 2021, making him one of four players with seven or more touchdown passes in their first two starts on *MNF* since the program began in 1970.

JUSTIN HERBERT

DIAL IT UP DEEP

Justin Herbert has been one of the NFL's top deep passers since entering the NFL in 2020, leading the league with 32 completions of 40-plus yards over that span.

Herbert also ranks among NFL leaders over the last three years with six completions of 50-plus air yards and 16 of 40-plus air yards.

COMPLETIONS OF 40-PLUS YARDS, NFL, SINCE 2020

Rank	Team/s	Player	Completions
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	32
	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	32
	Sea./Den.	QB Russell Wilson	32
4.	—	Five Other Players	30

COMPLETIONS OF 50-PLUS AIR YARDS, NFL, SINCE 2020

Rank	Team/s	Player	Completions
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	6
	Sea./Den.	QB Russell Wilson	6
3.	Det./LAR	QB Matthew Stafford	4
	Phi./Ind./Was.	QB Carson Wentz	4
5.	Buf.	QB Josh Allen	3

COMPLETIONS OF 40-PLUS AIR YARDS, NFL, SINCE 2020

Rank	Team/s	Player	Completions
1.	Sea./Den.	QB Russell Wilson	19
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	16
3.	Det./LAR	QB Matthew Stafford	15
4.	L.V./N.O.	QB Derek Carr	13
5.	Buf.	QB Josh Allen	12
	G.B./NYJ	QB Aaron Rodgers	12

The third-year passer is tied for the league lead with three touchdowns of at least 70 yards over the last three years. Herbert ranks fourth in the NFL since 2020 with eight passing scores of at least 50 yards and is tied for No. 5 with 12 touchdowns of 40-plus yards.

PASSING TOUCHDOWNS OF 70-PLUS YARDS, NFL, SINCE 2020

Rank	Team/s	Player	Passing TDs
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	3
	Cle./Car./LAR/T.B.	QB Baker Mayfield	3
	Cin.	QB Joe Burrow	3
	G.B./NYJ	QB Aaron Rodgers	3
	Det./LAR	QB Matthew Stafford	3

PASSING TOUCHDOWNS OF 40-PLUS YARDS, NFL, SINCE 2020

Rank	Team/s	Player	Passing TDs
1.	Cin.	QB Joe Burrow	17
2.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	14
	Sea./Den.	QB Russell Wilson	14
4.	L.V./N.O.	QB Derek Carr	13
5.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	12
	Det./LAR	QB Matthew Stafford	12
7.	Min.	QB Kirk Cousins	11

THREADING THE NEEDLE ON THIRD DOWN

In his 49 career starts, **Justin Herbert** has been the one of the best passers in the NFL at moving the chains on third down. He has completed 319 passes on 505 attempts (63.2 pct.) for 3,779 yards and 34 touchdowns with 14 interceptions (96.8 passer rating). Herbert's 319 completions lead the NFL, while his 3,779 passing yards rank second on third down since 2020.

Herbert tied for the league lead with 14 touchdown passes on third down in 2020, good for the most by a rookie in the last 40 seasons. He added 13 touchdowns in 2021 and seven this year, giving him 34 third-down passing scores since entering the professional ranks, which is good for No. 4 over that span.

Herbert's 96.8 passer rating on third down ranks sixth in the NFL and No. 3 in the AFC over the last three years among players with at least 300 passing attempts on third down.

THIRD DOWN COMPLETIONS, NFL, SINCE 2020

Rank	Team/s	Player	Completions
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	319
2.	T.B.	QB Tom Brady	302
3.	Min.	QB Kirk Cousins	279
4.	Atl./Ind.	QB Matt Ryan	276
5.	LAR/Det.	QB Jared Goff	264

THIRD DOWN PASSING YARDS, NFL, SINCE 2020

Rank	Team	Player	Passing Yards
1.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	3,817
2.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	3,779
3.	L.V./N.O.	QB Derek Carr	3,502
4.	Min.	QB Kirk Cousins	3,356
5.	T.B.	QB Tom Brady	3,311

THIRD DOWN PASSING TOUCHDOWNS, NFL, SINCE 2020

Rank	Team	Player	Passing Touchdowns
1.	T.B.	QB Tom Brady	39
2.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	37
3.	Min.	QB Kirk Cousins	35
4.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	34
5.	Buf.	QB Josh Allen	31
6.	G.B./NYJ	QB Aaron Rodgers	29

Herbert leads the NFL with 226 passing first downs on third down over the past three seasons. He threw for 12 third-down conversions in 2021's Week 1 win at Washington, the most passing first downs in a single game on third down since Andrew Luck did so in 2012. Herbert sported a league-leading 79 passing first downs on third down in 2021.

THIRD DOWN PASSING FIRST DOWNS, NFL, SINCE 2020

Rank	Team	Player	Passing First Downs
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	226
2.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	213
3.	T.B.	QB Tom Brady	203
4.	Buf.	QB Josh Allen	186
	Min.	QB Kirk Cousins	186

JUSTIN HERBERT

HERBERT COMPLETES 477 PASSES

With 477 completions in 2022, **Justin Herbert** led all AFC passers and set a single-season career high. The 477 completions are the third-most in a single season in NFL history.

PASSING COMPLETIONS, SINGLE SEASON, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season	Team	Player	Completions
1.	2022	T.B.	QB Tom Brady	490
2.	2021	T.B.	QB Tom Brady	485
3.	2022	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	477
4.	2016	N.O.	QB Drew Brees	471
5.	2011	N.O.	QB Drew Brees	468

HERBERT SETS TEAM RECORDS

Justin Herbert continues to set team single-season records, doing so for the most completions and attempts in a season in franchise history. He's among best single-season completion percentage and set the team's single-season record for passing interception percentage.

COMPLETIONS, SINGLE SEASON, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Season	Player	Passing Completions
1.	2022	QB Justin Herbert	477
2.	2021	QB Justin Herbert	443
3.	2015	QB Philip Rivers	437

PASSING ATTEMPTS, SINGLE SEASON, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Season	Player	Passing Attempts
1.	2022	QB Justin Herbert	699
2.	2021	QB Justin Herbert	672
3.	2015	QB Philip Rivers	661

COMPLETION PERCENTAGE, MIN. 140 ATTEMPTS, SINGLE SEASON, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Season	Player	Completion Pct.
1.	2013	QB Philip Rivers	69.5
2.	2018	QB Philip Rivers	68.3
3.	2022	QB Justin Herbert	68.2
4.	2020	QB Justin Herbert	66.6

PASSING INTERCEPTION PERCENTAGE, MIN. 150 ATTEMPTS, SINGLE SEASON, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Season	Player	Passing INT Pct.
1.	2022	QB Justin Herbert	1.4
2.	2020	QB Justin Herbert	1.7
	2017	QB Philip Rivers	1.7
	1993	QB John Friesz	1.7
5.	2004	QB Drew Brees	1.8

WINS IN DECEMBER AND JANUARY

Since entering the NFL in 2020, **Justin Herbert** has led the Bolts to 11 wins in the months of December and January, the fifth-most in the NFL over that span.

STARTING QUARTERBACK WINS, DECEMBER AND JANUARY, NFL, SINCE 2020

Rank	Team/s	Player	Starts	Wins
1.	Buf.	QB Josh Allen	16	14
	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	16	14
3.	G.B./NYJ	QB Aaron Rodgers	15	13
4.	T.B.	QB Tom Brady	16	12
5.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	17	11
6.	LAR/Det.	QB Jared Goff	14	10
7.	Dal.	QB Dak Prescott	12	9
	Min.	QB Kirk Cousins	16	9
	Sea./Den.	QB Russell Wilson	16	9

HERBERT IN TEAM HISTORY

Through three seasons, **Justin Herbert** has the best completion percentage (66.9) and passer rating (96.2) in Chargers history among players with at least 500 pass attempts.

CAREER COMPLETION PERCENTAGE, MIN. 500 ATTEMPTS, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Seasons	Player	Completion Pct.
1.	2020-Present	QB Justin Herbert	66.9
2.	2004-19	QB Philip Rivers	64.7
3.	2001-05	QB Drew Brees	62.2

CAREER PASSER RATING, MIN. 500 ATTEMPTS, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Seasons	Player	Passer Rating
1.	2020-Present	QB Justin Herbert	96.2
2.	2004-19	QB Philip Rivers	95.1
3.	2001-05	QB Drew Brees	84.9

LEGGING IT OUT

In the team's *Sunday Night Football* victory over Pittsburgh in Week 11 of the 2021 season, **Justin Herbert** threw for 382 yards and ran for 90 yards, becoming the only player to ever top 350 yards passing and 90 yards rushing in a single game. He was the fifth player ever to run for 90 yards and pass for 300 in the same game.

QUARTERBACKS WITH 300 PASSING YARDS AND 90 RUSHING YARDS, SINGLE GAME, NFL HISTORY

Season (Wk)	Team	Quarterback	Pass Yds	Rush Yds
2022 (2)	Bal.	Lamar Jackson	318	119
2021 (14)	Buf.	Josh Allen	308	109
2021 (11)	LAC	Justin Herbert	382	90
2015 (15)	Car.	Cam Newton	340	100
2014 (7)	Sea.	Russell Wilson	313	106
2011 (5)	Phi.	Mike Vick	315	90
1989 (15)	Phi.	Randall Cunningham	306	92

JUSTIN HERBERT

A ROOKIE CAMPAIGN FOR THE AGES

AWARDS

- *The Associated Press* Offensive Rookie of the Year
- *Professional Football Writers of America* Rookie of the Year
- PFWA Offensive Rookie of the Year
- PFWA All-Rookie Selection
- NFL Offensive Rookie of the Month (October)
- NFL Offensive Rookie of the Month (November)
- FedEx NFL Air Player of the Week — Week 11 vs. NYJ (fan vote)
- Voted by fans as the Pepsi Zero Sugar Rookie of the Year
- Nine-time Pepsi Zero Sugar Rookie of the Week (voted by fans)

RECORDS AT THE TIME

- Most passing touchdowns by a rookie quarterback ever (31).
- Most combined touchdowns by a rookie in NFL history (36).
- Most consecutive games by a rookie quarterback with multiple passing touchdowns in NFL history (seven).
- Most performances by a rookie quarterback with 300-plus passing yards in NFL history (eight).
- Most performances by a rookie quarterback with three-plus touchdowns in NFL history (six).
- Most games by a rookie quarterback with multiple touchdown passes in NFL history (10).
- Most completions ever by a rookie quarterback (396).
- Youngest player ever to throw 30 touchdowns in a single season, doing so at 22 years, 299 days old.
- Tied for the longest streak of game-winning drives (three games) in the fourth quarter or overtime by a rookie quarterback in the Super Bowl era (since 1966).
- Recorded the first win in pro football history by a rookie quarterback while posting 300 passing yards, three touchdown passes, a rushing score and no interceptions.
- Most passing touchdowns by a rookie quarterback in a game (four) and a half (three) in *Monday Night Football* history.
- Tied for the longest streak of games with three-plus touchdown passes by a rookie quarterback in NFL history (four).
- Tied for the most 300-yard passing performances in a player's first two career games (two).
- Became the first player since at least 1970 to register over 1,500 passing yards and a 100-plus passer rating through the first five games of a career.
- Set marks for the most passing attempts, completions, passing yards and touchdown passes by a rookie quarterback in Chargers history.
- Recorded the most single-game rushing yards by a quarterback in team annals (66 in Week 7 vs. Jax.).

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND OTHER NOTES AT THE TIME

- Ranked second among rookie quarterbacks in NFL history with 4,336 passing yards on the season.
- Joined Patrick Mahomes as the only players in history to eclipse 4,000 passing yards in the first 14 starts of a career.
- Became the second player in NFL history to top 250 passing yards in each of the first seven games of a career (Mahomes).
- Threw a touchdown pass in each of his first 10 games played, the second-longest streak to open a career in NFL history.
- Threw for 277 yards in the first half of Week 11, the most by any rookie quarterback in a first half over the last 40 seasons.
- Became the third quarterback in NFL history to have 300 passing yards and a rushing score in a debut.
- Threw for the fourth-most passing yards in a debut since 1970.
- Became the first quarterback to throw a touchdown and run for a score in the first half of a debut since 1954.

OFFENSIVE ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

Justin Herbert earned widespread recognition as the Offensive Rookie of the Year, including as the 10th quarterback in history to win the honor from *The Associated Press*. Herbert was also selected by *Professional Football Writers of America* as Rookie of the Year and Offensive Rookie of the Year — becoming the second and seventh quarterback to win those awards, respectively. He is the first player in history to be recognized with all three honors.

QUARTERBACKS TO WIN AP OFFENSIVE ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

Season	Team	Player	Combined TDs
2020	LAC	Justin Herbert	36
2019	Ari.	Kyler Murray	24
2016	Dal.	Dak Prescott	29
2012	Was.	Robert Griffin III	27
2011	Car.	Cam Newton	35
2010	StL	Sam Bradford	19
2008	Atl.	Matt Ryan	17
2006	Ten.	Vince Young	19
2004	Pit.	Ben Roethlisberger	18
1970	Buf.	Dennis Shaw	10

HOT OUT OF THE GATE

Justin Herbert kicked off his career with a pair of historic streaks. As a rookie, he tossed a touchdown pass in each of the first 10 games of his career, just one less than the all-time record. Herbert's streak of games with 250-plus passing yards to start a career ended at seven contests, ranking second in NFL history.

PLAYERS WITH A PASSING TOUCHDOWN, CONSECUTIVE GAMES TO START CAREER, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Consecutive Games
1.	Was.	QB Mark Rypien	11
2.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	10
3.	Den.	QB Jay Cutler	9

PLAYERS WITH 250 PASSING YARDS, CONSECUTIVE GAMES TO START CAREER, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Consecutive Games
1.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	10
2.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	7
3.	—	Seven Other Players	2

Herbert threw 31 touchdowns in 2020, eclipsing 30 in the season finale. At 22 years, 299 days of age that day, he became the youngest player in history to register 30 touchdown passes in a single season, besting a mark set by Ravens QB Lamar Jackson.

YOUNGEST PLAYERS TO THROW 30 TOUCHDOWN PASSES, SINGLE SEASON, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season	Team	Player	Age (Years-Days)
1.	2020	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	22-299
2.	2019	Bal.	QB Lamar Jackson	22-339

JUSTIN HERBERT

A BIG-TIME ROOKIE

In 2020, **Justin Herbert** posted the most passing touchdowns (31) and combined scores (36) by a rookie quarterback in NFL history.

He also registered a rookie-record six games with three-plus touchdowns. Four of those games were in a row, joining Deshaun Watson as the only rookie quarterbacks in NFL history with three or more consecutive games of three-plus touchdown passes.

Herbert had a seven-game streak with multiple touchdown passes, good for the longest by a rookie quarterback in NFL history and tied for the third-best in team history. He finished the year with a rookie-record 10 multi-touchdown games.

PASSING TOUCHDOWNS, ROOKIE QBs, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season	Team	Quarterback	Passing TDs
1.	2020	LAC	Justin Herbert	31
2.	2018	Cle.	Baker Mayfield	27
3.	2012	Sea.	Russell Wilson	26
	1998	Ind.	Peyton Manning	26

COMBINED TOUCHDOWNS, ROOKIE QBs, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season	Team	Quarterback	Combined TDs
1.	2020	LAC	Justin Herbert	36
2.	2011	Car.	Cam Newton	35
3.	2012	Sea.	Russell Wilson	30

MOST GAMES WITH MULTIPLE PASSING TOUCHDOWNS, ROOKIE QUARTERBACKS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season	Team	Quarterback	Games
1.	2020	LAC	Justin Herbert	10
2.	2018	Cle.	Baker Mayfield	9

With 4,336 passing yards, Herbert recorded the second-most passing yards in NFL history among rookie quarterbacks. Herbert completed 396 passes and tossed for 300-plus yards in eight games, the most by a rookie quarterback in history.

PASSING YARDS, ROOKIE QUARTERBACKS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season	Team	Quarterback	Passing Yards
1.	2012	Ind.	Andrew Luck	4,374
2.	2020	LAC	Justin Herbert	4,336
3.	2011	Car.	Cam Newton	4,051
4.	2015	T.B.	Jameis Winston	4,042

MOST GAMES WITH 300-PLUS PASSING YARDS, ROOKIE QUARTERBACKS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season	Team	Quarterback	Games
1.	2020	LAC	Justin Herbert	8
2.	2012	Ind.	Andrew Luck	6

COMPLETIONS, ROOKIE QUARTERBACKS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season	Team	Quarterback	Completions
1.	2020	LAC	Justin Herbert	396
2.	2016	Phi.	Carson Wentz	379
3.	2021	Jax.	Trevor Lawrence	359

EFFICIENCY AT ITS FINEST

With a 98.3 passer rating in 2020, **Justin Herbert** had the No. 5 rating by a rookie quarterback in NFL history (min. 200 att.). Herbert's 289.1 passing yards per game ranked No. 1 in NFL history among rookie QBs with at least 200 passing attempts.

PASSER RATING, ROOKIE QBs, MIN. 200 ATT., NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season	Team	Quarterback	Passer Rating
1.	2016	Dal.	Dak Prescott*	104.9
2.	2017	Hou.	Deshaun Watson	103.0
3.	2012	Was.	Robert Griffin III*	102.4
4.	2012	Sea.	Russell Wilson	100.0
5.	2020	LAC	Justin Herbert*	98.3
6.	2004	Pit.	Ben Roethlisberger*	98.1
7.	1983	Mia.	Dan Marino	96.0

PASSING YARDS/GAME, ROOKIE QBs, MIN. 200 ATT., NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season	Team	Quarterback	Pass Yds/Game
1.	2020	LAC	Justin Herbert*	289.1
2.	2012	Ind.	Andrew Luck	273.4
3.	2020	Cin.	Joe Burrow	268.8
4.	2018	Cle.	Baker Mayfield	266.1
5.	2011	Car.	Cam Newton*	253.2

*Won AP Offensive Rookie of the Year



AUSTIN EKELER

KEEPING SCORE

After tying for an NFL-best 20 scrimmage touchdowns last year, **Austin Ekeler** reached the end zone 18 times in 2022, leading the NFL for the second year in a row.

SCRIMMAGE TOUCHDOWNS, NFL, 2022

Rank	Team/s	Player	Scrimmage TDs
1.	LAC	RB Austin Ekeler	18
2.	Det.	RB Jamaal Williams	17
3.	L.V.	WR Davante Adams	14
4.	Phi.	QB Jalen Hurts	13
	Car./S.F.	RB Christian McCaffrey	13
	Cle.	RB Nick Chubb	13
	Ten.	RB Derrick Henry	13

Ekeler led the NFL with 38 scrimmage scores over the last two seasons, including a league-best 12 total touchdowns in the fourth quarter. He topped 15 scrimmage scores in each of the past two years, making him just the fourth NFL player to do so in the last 15 seasons. Ekeler's 12 fourth-quarter touchdowns over the last two seasons were tied for the fifth-most scores in the fourth quarter over a two-year span in the last 30 years.

SCRIMMAGE TOUCHDOWNS, NFL, SINCE 2021

Rank	Team	Player	Scrimmage TDs
1.	LAC	RB Austin Ekeler	38
2.	Ari.	RB James Conner	26
3.	G.B./L.V.	WR Davante Adams	25
	Cin.	RB Joe Mixon	25
	Dal.	RB Ezekiel Elliott	24
	Ind.	RB Jonathan Taylor	24
7.	—	Three Other Players	23

CONSECUTIVE SEASONS WITH 15-PLUS SCRIMMAGE TOUCHDOWNS, NFL, SINCE 2006

Rank	Team	Player	No. of Seasons
1.	Chargers	RB Austin Ekeler	2 (2021-22)
	Titans	RB Derrick Henry	2 (2019-20)
	Rams	RB Todd Gurley II	2 (2017-18)
	Chargers	RB LaDainian Tomlinson*	2 (2005-06)

FOURTH-QUARTER TOUCHDOWNS IN A TWO-YEAR SPAN, NFL, SINCE 1991

Rank	Seasons	Team/s	Player	Touchdowns
1.	2006-07	Chargers	RB LaDainian Tomlinson*	16
2.	2005-06	Chargers	RB LaDainian Tomlinson*	15
3.	2002-03	Chiefs	RB Priest Holmes	14
	1999-2000	Jax./Det.	RB James Stewart	14
4.	2010-11	Texans	RB Arian Foster	13
5.	2021-22	Chargers	RB Austin Ekeler	12
	2013-14	Seahawks	RB Marshawn Lynch	12
	2000-01	49ers	WR Terrell Owens*	12
	1995-96	Bengals	WR Carl Pickens	12
	1994-95	Bengals	WR Carl Pickens	12
	1994-95	Cowboys	RB Emmitt Smith*	12

*Pro Football Hall of Famer



HAULING IN PASSES

With 107 receptions in 2022, **Austin Ekeler** led all NFL running backs and ranked tied for fifth among all players in the NFL and No. 3 in the AFC. His 107 catches tied for the second-most ever in a single season by a running back.

RECEPTIONS, NFL, 2022

Rank	Team	Player	Receptions
1.	Min.	WR Justin Jefferson	128
2.	Mia.	WR Tyreek Hill	119
3.	K.C.	TE Travis Kelce	110
4.	Buf.	WR Stefon Diggs	108
5.	LAC	RB Austin Ekeler	107
	Dal.	WR CeeDee Lamb	107
7.	Det.	WR Amon-Ra St. Brown	106

RECEPTIONS, RUNNING BACKS, SINGLE SEASON, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season	Team	Player	Receptions
1.	2019	Panthers	RB Christian McCaffrey**	116
2.	2022	Chargers	RB Austin Ekeler	107
	2018	Panthers	RB Christian McCaffrey	107
4.	2014	Bears	RB Matt Forte	102
5.	1995	Cardinals	RB Larry Centers*	101
6.	2003	Chargers	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	100

*Pro Bowl Selection

**Associated Press First-Team All-Pro

Ekeler posted three games of 10-plus catches in 2022, including back-to-back in Weeks 6 and 7, becoming the sixth running back in NFL history to post consecutive games with at least 10 catches. Ekeler's seven career games of 10 or more catches ranks No. 2 in NFL history.

MOST GAMES WITH 10-PLUS RECEPTIONS, RUNNING BACKS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team/s	Player	Games
1.	Panthers/49ers	RB Christian McCaffrey	11
2.	Chargers	RB Austin Ekeler	7
3.	Chargers	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	6
	Ari./Was./Buf./N.E.	RB Larry Centers	6
5.	Saints	RB Alvin Kamara	5
	T.B./Was./Det.	RB James Wilder	5
	49ers/Raiders/Vikings	RB Roger Craig	5

AUSTIN EKELER

EKELER IN ELITE COMPANY

Austin Ekeler ran in a pair of touchdowns in the AFC Wild Card, giving him 20 touchdowns in the regular and postseason combined. He became just the seventh player in NFL history to have 20 touchdowns in consecutive seasons (regular and postseason combined).

CONSECUTIVE SEASONS WITH 20-PLUS SCRIMMAGE TOUCHDOWNS, REGULAR AND POSTSEASON COMBINED, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	No. of Seasons
1.	Chargers	RB Austin Ekeler	2 (2021-22)
	Chargers	RB LaDainian Tomlinson*	2 (2005-06)
	Seahawks	RB Shaun Alexander	2 (2004-05)
	Chiefs	RB Priest Holmes	2 (2002-03)
	Rams	RB Marshall Faulk*	2 (2000-01)
	Broncos	RB Terrell Davis*	2 (1997-98)
	Cowboys	RB Emmitt Smith*	2 (1994-95)

*Pro Football Hall of Famer



DUAL-THREAT RUNNING BACK

Austin Ekeler registered his first three-touchdown game in Week 1 of 2019, helping the Bolts defeat Indianapolis in overtime. With his three-touchdown game in Week 4 at Houston, Ekeler's four career games with at least three scrimmage scores ranks tied for No. 2 in the NFL since the start of the 2019 season.

MOST GAMES WITH THREE-PLUS SCRIMMAGE TOUCHDOWNS, NFL, SINCE 2019

Rank	Team	Player	Games
1.	Ten.	RB Derrick Henry	5
2.	LAC	RB Austin Ekeler	4
	GB	RB Aaron Jones	4
4.	—	Three Other Players	3

The dual-threat back now has 10 career games with a rushing and receiving touchdown, tied for No. 6 in NFL history. His 10 career games with a rushing and receiving score are the most ever by an undrafted player and the most in Chargers history.

Ekeler's four games in 2022 with a rushing and receiving touchdown led the NFL and tied for the second-most in a single season in NFL history. He is the only player ever to have multiple seasons with at least four performances with a rushing and receiving touchdown.

MOST GAMES WITH A RUSHING TOUCHDOWN AND RECEIVING TOUCHDOWN, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team/s	Player	Games
1.	Ind./StL	RB Marshall Faulk*	15
2.	Phi./S.F.	RB Brian Westbrook	12
	BalC^	RB Lenny Moore*	12
4.	Cle.	RB Jim Brown*	11
	Car./S.F.	RB Christian McCaffrey	11
6.	LAC	RB Austin Ekeler	10
	N.O.	RB Alvin Kamara	10
8.	—	Six Other Players	9

*Pro Football Hall of Famer

^Baltimore Colts

GAMES WITH A RUSHING TOUCHDOWN AND RECEIVING TOUCHDOWN, SINGLE SEASON, NFL HISTORY

Rk.	Season	Team	Player	Games
1.	1975	Minnesota Vikings	RB Chuck Foreman**	5
2.	2022	L.A. Chargers	RB Austin Ekeler	4
	2021	L.A. Chargers	RB Austin Ekeler	4
	2019	Carolina Panthers	RB Christian McCaffrey**	4
	2008	Philadelphia Eagles	RB Brian Westbrook	4
	2000	St. Louis Rams	RB Marshall Faulk**	4
	1981	Cincinnati Bengals	RB Pete Johnson*	4
	1979	Pittsburgh Steelers	RB Sidney Thornton	4
	1975	Buffalo Bills	RB O.J. Simpson**	4
	1962	Dallas Texans	RB Abner Haynes^	4

**Pro Bowl Selection

†Associated Press First-Team All-Pro

^AFL All-Star Selection and Associated Press First-Team All-AFL

AUSTIN EKELER

HANDS TEAM

Austin Ekeler has solidified himself as one of the most dynamic receiving backs in the NFL. His 29 receiving touchdowns rank No. 6 among running backs in the Super Bowl era (since 1966) are tied for the most by a running back with a single team over that span.

CAREER RECEIVING TOUCHDOWNS, RUNNING BACKS, NFL, SUPER BOWL ERA

Rank	Team/s	Player	Receiving TDs
1.	Ind./StL	Marshall Faulk*	36
2.	S.D./N.O./Phi.	Darren Sproles	32
3.	Phi./Mia./N.E./NYJ	Keith Byars	31
4.	Phi./S.F.	Brian Westbrook	30
	S.D./Cin./T.B./Cle.	James Brooks	30
6.	LAC	Austin Ekeler	29
7.	Ari./Was./Buf./N.E.	Larry Centers	28

RECEIVING TOUCHDOWNS WITH A SINGLE TEAM, RUNNING BACKS, NFL, SUPER BOWL ERA

Rank	Team	Player	Receiving TDs
1.	Chargers	Austin Ekeler	29
	Eagles	Brian Westbrook	29
3.	Rams	Marshall Faulk*	27
	Bengals	James Brooks	27
	Giants	Joe Morrison	27

**Pro Football Hall of Famer*

The Western State Colorado product has totaled 29 career touchdown catches, which are the most receiving scores by a running back through their first six and seven seasons in the Super Bowl era (since 1966).

RECEIVING TOUCHDOWNS THROUGH FIRST SIX SEASONS, RUNNING BACKS, NFL, SUPER BOWL ERA

Rank	Team	Player	Receiving TDs
1.	LAC	Austin Ekeler	29
2.	N.E.	James White	24
3.	Min.	Chuck Foreman	23
	Phi.	Brian Westbrook	23
5.	Car./S.F.	Christian McCaffrey	22
	N.O.	Alvin Kamara	22

RECEIVING TOUCHDOWNS THROUGH FIRST SEVEN SEASONS, RUNNING BACKS, NFL, SUPER BOWL ERA

Rank	Team/s	Player	Receiving TDs
1.	LAC	Austin Ekeler [^]	29
2.	Phi.	Brian Westbrook	28
3.	N.E.	James White	25
4.	Min.	Chuck Foreman	23
5.	Ind./StL	Marshall Faulk*	22
	Car./S.F.	Christian McCaffrey [^]	23
	N.O.	Alvin Kamara [^]	22

**Pro Football Hall of Famer*

[^]In sixth professional season

GO-AHEAD SCORES LATE

Since entering the NFL in 2017, **Austin Ekeler** has scored six go-ahead touchdowns in the fourth quarter or overtime, ranking tied for No. 3 over that span.

GO-AHEAD TOUCHDOWNS IN FOURTH QUARTER OR OVERTIME, NFL, SINCE 2017

Rank	Team/s	Player	Go-Ahead TDs
1.	LAC	WR Mike Williams	7
	G.B./L.V.	WR Davante Adams	7
	L.V.	RB Josh Jacobs	7
4.	LAC	RB Austin Ekeler	6
	K.C.	TE Travis Kelce	6
	LAC/Den.	RB Melvin Gordon III	6
	LAR	WR Cooper Kupp	6
	NYG	RB Saquon Barkley	6
9.	—	Three Other Players	5

AN OLD HEAD ON YOUNG SHOULDERS

With a touchdown grab on a 14-yard catch-and-run in Week 4, **Austin Ekeler** became the youngest running back in the common draft era (since 1967) to reach 25 career touchdown catches, reaching that mark at 27 years, 138 days old. Ekeler is a touchdown catch shy of reaching 30 for his career. He has a chance to again be the youngest to reach that mark since 1960.

YOUNGEST RUNNING BACKS TO REACH 30 CAREER RECEIVING TOUCHDOWNS, NFL, SINCE 1960

Rank	Team/s	Player	Age (Years-Days)
1.	Ind./StL	Marshall Faulk*	28-294
2.	NYG	Joe Morrison	30-62
3.	Hou.**/Oak./K.C.	Billy Cannon	30-81
4.	Phi./S.F.	Brian Westbrook	31-101
5.	S.D./Cin./T.B./Cle.	James Brooks	32-359
6.	S.D./N.O./Phi.	Darren Sproles	33-174
—	LAC	Austin Ekeler	28-116[^]

[^]Age as of Sept. 10, 2023

**Pro Football Hall of Famer*

***Houston Oilers*

AUSTIN EKELER



YAC ATTACK

Austin Ekeler led the NFL in 2022 with 843 yards after catch. In his breakout year in 2019, he led the conference with 940 yards after catch and ranks No. 1 in the NFL since the start of that season with 2,884 yards after catch.

YARDS AFTER CATCH, NFL, 2022

Rank	Team/s	Player	Yards After Catch
1.	LAC	RB Austin Ekeler	843
2.	Car./S.F.	RB Christian McCaffrey	695
3.	K.C.	TE Travis Kelce	648
4.	Min.	WR Justin Jefferson	624
5.	Phi.	WR A.J. Brown	583

YARDS AFTER CATCH, NFL, SINCE 2019

Rank	Team	Player	Yards After Catch
1.	LAC	RB Austin Ekeler	2,884
2.	LAR	WR Cooper Kupp	2,331
3.	K.C.	TE Travis Kelce	2,209
4.	N.O.	RB Alvin Kamara	2,185
5.	S.F.	WR Deebo Samuel	2,132

A CAREER DAY IN CLEVELAND

Austin Ekeler recorded 199 yards from scrimmage (173 rushing, 26 receiving) in the Week 5 win at Cleveland, the sixth-most in a single game in the NFL this season. His career-high 173 rushing yards ranks No. 4 in the league in a single game in 2022.

SCRIMMAGE YARDS, SINGLE GAME, NFL, 2022

Rk.	Team	Player	Game	Scrimmage Yds
1.	L.V.	RB Josh Jacobs	Nov. 27, 2022 at Sea.	303
2.	Ten.	RB Derrick Henry	Oct. 30, 2022 at Hou.	228
3.	Min.	WR Justin Jefferson	Dec. 11, 2022 at Det.	223
4.	Cin.	RB Joe Mixon	Nov. 6, 2022 vs. Car.	211
5.	T.B.	WR Mike Evans	Jan. 1, 2023 vs. Car.	207
6.	LAC	RB Austin Ekeler	Oct. 9, 2022 at Cle.	199
7.	NYJ	RB Breece Hall	Oct. 9, 2022 vs. Mia.	197

RUSHING YARDS, SINGLE GAME, NFL, 2022

Rk.	Team	Player	Game	Rushing Yds
1.	L.V.	RB Josh Jacobs	Nov. 27, 2022 at Sea.	229
2.	Ten.	RB Derrick Henry	Oct. 30, 2022 at Hou.	219
3.	Chi.	QB Justin Fields	Nov. 6, 2022 vs. Mia.	178
4.	LAC	RB Austin Ekeler	Oct. 9, 2022 at Cle.	173
5.	N.E.	RB R.Stevenson	Dec. 18, 2022 at L.V.	172

END ZONE EKELER

Austin Ekeler is one of just eight players in NFL history to record at least 25 rushing touchdowns and 25 receiving touchdowns in a career. He joins Hall of Famer Lenny Moore as the only players to accomplish that feat within the first six seasons of a career.

PLAYERS WITH 25 RUSHING TOUCHDOWNS AND 25 RECEIVING TOUCHDOWNS, NFL HISTORY

Seasons	Player	Rush TDs	Rec. TDs
2017-Present	RB Austin Ekeler	34	29
2002-10	RB Brian Westbrook	41	30
1994-2005	RB Marshall Faulk*	100	36
1981-92	RB James Brooks	49	30
1959-68	RB Timmy Brown	31	26
1958-68	RB John David Crow	38	35
1956-67	RB Lenny Moore*	63	48
1952-64	RB Frank Gifford*	34	43

*Pro Football Hall of Famer

CRAZY EIGHTS

In 2021, Ekeler registered the sixth season in NFL history with at least eight rushing scores and eight touchdown catches. He's the only AFC player ever to do so. It was Ekeler's second career season with eight-plus touchdown catches, joining Hall of Fame RB Marshall Faulk (2000 and '01) as the only running backs in the last 50 years to post multiple seasons of eight-plus touchdown grabs.

PLAYERS WITH EIGHT RUSHING TOUCHDOWNS AND EIGHT TOUCHDOWN CATCHES, SINGLE SEASON, NFL HISTORY

Season	Team	Player	Rush TDs	Rec. TDs
2021	LAC	RB Austin Ekeler	12	8
2001	StL	RB Marshall Faulk**	12	9
2000	StL	RB Marshall Faulk**	18	8
1975	Min.	RB Chuck Foreman**	13	9
1966	Dal.	RB Dan Reeves	8	8
1949	NYG	RB Gene Roberts	9	8

**Pro Bowl Selection

*Associated Press First-Team All-Pro

MOST SEASONS WITH EIGHT-PLUS RECEIVING TOUCHDOWNS, RUNNING BACKS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team/s	Player	Seasons
1.	Chargers	RB Austin Ekeler	2 (2019, '21)
	Rams	RB Marshall Faulk*	2 (2000-01)
	Oilers/Raiders	RB Billy Cannon	2 (1961, '67)
	Colts	RB Lenny Moore*	2 (1960-61)

*Pro Football Hall of Famer

AUSTIN EKELER

SETTING UNRAFTED RECORDS

Austin Ekeler reached 60 career touchdowns in the Week 16 win at Indianapolis, becoming the third undrafted running back to do so in the common draft era (since 1967).

He has now registered five-straight seasons with at least 900 scrimmage yards, tying Clem Daniels for the longest streak in NFL history by an undrafted running back.

CAREER TOUCHDOWNS, UNRAFTED RUNNING BACKS, COMMON DRAFT ERA

Rank	Team/s	Player	Touchdowns
1.	Bal./K.C.	RB Priest Holmes	94
2.	Hou./Mia.	RB Arian Foster	68
3.	LAC	RB Austin Ekeler	63
4.	T.B./N.E./Pit./Phi./Det.	RB LeGarrette Blount	58
5.	S.D./Car./Buf.	RB Mike Tolbert	46

CONSECUTIVE SEASONS WITH 900-PLUS SCRIMMAGE YARDS, UNRAFTED RUNNING BACKS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team/s	Player	No. of Seasons
1.	LAC	RB Austin Ekeler	5 (2018-22)
	Oak.	RB Clem Daniels	5 (1962-66)
3.	K.C.	RB Priest Holmes	4 (2001-04)
	Buf./Den.	RB Cookie Gilchrist	4 (1962-65)
5.	—	Five Other Players	3

Ekeler, the best receiving undrafted running back in the last 50 years, is the record-holder for receptions (389), receiving scores (29) and receiving yards (3,448) by an undrafted running back in the common draft era (since 1967).

CLOSING IN ON TEAM RECORDS

Austin Ekeler finished the season with one of the top scoring and one of the top pass-catching campaigns in franchise history.

TOUCHDOWNS, SINGLE SEASON, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Season	Player	Touchdowns
1.	2006	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	31
2.	2021	RB Austin Ekeler	20
	2005	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	20
4.	1981	RB Chuck Muncie	19
5.	2022	RB Austin Ekeler	18
	2007	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	18
	2004	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	18
8.	2003	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	17

RECEPTIONS, SINGLE SEASON, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Season	Player	Receptions
1.	2022	RB Austin Ekeler	107
2.	2021	WR Keenan Allen	106
3.	2019	WR Keenan Allen	104
4.	2017	WR Keenan Allen	102
5.	2020	WR Keenan Allen	100
	2003	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	100

SIGNED, SEALED, DELIVERED



In Week 5 of the 2021 season, Austin Ekeler hauled in a receiving score and ran in two others in the fourth quarter to seal the victory over Cleveland. He became the first player in over a decade and just the fifth since at least 1991 to have three scrimmage touchdowns in a single fourth quarter.

PLAYERS WITH THREE-PLUS SCRIMMAGE TOUCHDOWNS IN A SINGLE FOURTH QUARTER, NFL, SINCE 1991

Season	Week	Team	Player	Scrimmage TDs
2021	5	LAC	RB Austin Ekeler	3
2009	8	Hou.	RB Ryan Moats	3
2008	12	Atl.	RB Michael Turner	3
2002	1	K.C.	RB Priest Holmes	3
1991	16	S.D.	RB Rod Bernstine	3

100 MILES AND RUNNIN'

In the team's 45-10 win over Jacksonville in 2019, Austin Ekeler recorded the 35th 100-yard rushing and 100-yard receiving performance in league annals on just 12 offensive touches — the fewest in a 100/100 performance in NFL history.

Ekeler's effort was the fourth such performance by an undrafted running back in the common draft era (since 1967) and the third in team history (second by a Charger in the regular season.)

PLAYERS WITH 100 RUSHING YDS AND 100 RECEIVING YDS, SINGLE GAME, MAX. 15 TOUCHES, NFL HISTORY

Season	Team	Player	Rush Yds	Rec. Yds	Touches
2019	LAC	Austin Ekeler	101	112	12
1986	Dal.	Herschel Walker	122	170	15
1954	ChiC*	Ollie Matson	115	161	15

*Chicago Cardinals

PLAYERS WITH 100 RUSHING YARDS AND 100 RECEIVING YARDS, SINGLE GAME, CHARGERS HISTORY

Season	Player	Rush Att	Rush Yds	Rec.	Rec. Yds
2019	Austin Ekeler	8	101	4	112
1985	Lionel James	12	127	5	118
1963	Keith Lincoln*	13	206	7	123

*Only postseason 100/100 performance in pro football history

KEENAN ALLEN



A FIVE-YEAR SPAN FOR THE AGES



Keenan Allen topped 95 receptions in each season from 2017-21, becoming the second player in NFL history to do so in five-straight years. Over that span, Allen was selected to five Pro Bowls, leading the NFL in receptions and ranked fifth in receiving yards. He is one of 12 players in history to top 500 receptions over any five-year span.

AMONG THE LEAGUE LEADERS

Since the start of the 2017 season, **Keenan Allen** ranks No. 3 in the NFL with 575 catches. He's also registered 6,670 receiving yards, good for seventh in the league over that span.

RECEPTIONS, NFL, SINCE 2017

Rank	Team/s	Player	Receptions
1.	G.B./L.V.	WR Davante Adams	606
2.	K.C.	TE Travis Kelce	590
3.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	575
4.	Min./Buf.	WR Stefon Diggs	567
5.	K.C./Mia.	WR Tyreek Hill	537

RECEIVING YARDS, NFL, SINCE 2017

Rank	Team/s	Player	Receiving Yards
1.	K.C./Mia.	WR Tyreek Hill	7,747
2.	G.B./L.V.	WR Davante Adams	7,711
3.	K.C.	TE Travis Kelce	7,482
4.	Min./Buf.	WR Stefon Diggs	7,189
5.	T.B.	WR Mike Evans	6,847
6.	Hou./Ari./Ten.	WR DeAndre Hopkins	6,811
7.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	6,670
8.	LAR	WR Cooper Kupp	6,329

Allen's 36 touchdown grabs since 2017 rank No. 3 in the AFC.

RECEIVING TOUCHDOWNS, AFC, SINCE 2017

Rank	Team/s	Player	Receiving TDs
1.	K.C./Mia.	WR Tyreek Hill	57
2.	K.C.	TE Travis Kelce	55
3.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	36
4.	Bal.	TE Mark Andrews	34
5.	Hou./Ten.	WR DeAndre Hopkins	31
6.	LAC	WR Mike Williams	30
7.	LAC	RB Austin Ekeler	29
	Buf.	WR Stefon Diggs	28
	Pit./K.C.	WR JuJu Smith-Schuster	29
10.	Cin.	WR Tyler Boyd	28

CONSECUTIVE SEASONS WITH 95-PLUS RECEPTIONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team/s	Player	Consecutive Seasons
1.	Pit.	WR Antonio Brown	6 (2013-18)
2.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	5 (2017-21)
3.	Hou./Ari.	WR DeAndre Hopkins	4 (2017-20)
	Ind.	WR Marvin Harrison*	4 (1999-2002)
	S.F.	WR Jerry Rice*	4 (1993-96)

**Pro Football Hall of Famer*

PLAYERS WITH 500 CATCHES IN A FIVE-YEAR SPAN, NFL HISTORY

Seasons	Team/s	Player	Receptions
2018-22	G.B./L.V.	WR Davante Adams	532
	K.C.	TE Travis Kelce	507
	Min./Buf.	WR Stefon Diggs	503
2017-21	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	509
	G.B.	WR Davante Adams	506
2016-20	N.O.	WR Michael Thomas	510
	Hou./Ari.	WR DeAndre Hopkins	508
2015-19	Atl.	WR Julio Jones	519
	Hou.	WR DeAndre Hopkins	504
2014-18	Pit.	WR Antonio Brown	576
	Atl.	WR Julio Jones	524
2013-17	Pit.	WR Antonio Brown	582
2012-16	Pit.	WR Antonio Brown	547
2011-15	Pit.	WR Antonio Brown	510
2009-13	N.E./Den.	WR Wes Welker	522
2008-12	N.E.	WR Wes Welker	560
2007-11	N.E.	WR Wes Welker	554
2002-06	Ind.	WR Marvin Harrison	500
2001-05	Ind.	WR Marvin Harrison	514
2000-04	Ind.	WR Marvin Harrison	534
1999-2003	Ind.	WR Marvin Harrison	563
1998-2002	Ind.	WR Marvin Harrison	528
1994-98	Min.	WR Cris Carter	507
1993-97	Min.	WR Cris Carter	515
1992-96	S.F.	WR Jerry Rice	524

KEENAN ALLEN



ON A TEAR

Over the last six weeks of the regular season, **Keenan Allen** ranked No. 1 in the NFL with 50 receptions. A league-high 16 of his catches over that span came on third down.

RECEPTIONS, NFL, WEEKS 13-18, 2022

Rank	Team	Player	Receptions
1.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	50
2.	Min.	WR Justin Jefferson	47
3.	T.B.	WR Chris Godwin	44
4.	Dal.	WR CeeDee Damb	43
5.	Det.	WR Amon-Ra St. Brown	41

THIRD DOWN RECEPTIONS, NFL, WEEKS 13-18, 2022

Rank	Team	Player	Receptions
1.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	16
2.	Dal.	WR CeeDee Damb	13
3.	Det.	WR Amon-Ra St. Brown	12
	Min.	WR Justin Jefferson	12
	Min.	TE T.J. Hockenson	12
	NYJ	WR Garrett Wilson	12
	S.F.	RB Christian McCaffrey	12

KEENAN KEEPS ON CATCHING

Keenan Allen has caught a pass in 58-straight games, tied for the eighth-best streak in team history. He's the third Charger to record multiple 50-game reception streaks.

CONSECUTIVE GAMES WITH A RECEPTION, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rk.	Player	Dates	Consec. Games
1.	TE Antonio Gates	Nov. 23, 2003-Nov. 30, 2008	80
2.	WR Charlie Joiner	Dec. 10, 1978-Sept. 16, 1984	78
3.	TE Antonio Gates	Oct. 23, 2011-Nov. 13, 2016	77
4.	TE Kellen Winslow	Sept. 2, 1979-Oct. 28, 1985	73
5.	WR Keenan Allen	Sept. 15, 2013-Dec. 9, 2018	67
6.	RB Ronnie Harmon	Sept. 1, 1991-Sept. 10, 1995	66
7.	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	Sept. 9, 2001-Dec. 26, 2004	63
8.	WR Keenan Allen	Dec. 22, 2018-Present	58
	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	Sept. 25, 2005-Nov. 30, 2008	58
10.	WR Tony Martin	Sept. 11, 1994-Oct. 5, 1997	53

THE TOP TARGET

In 2020, **Keenan Allen** made team history with a record-setting 16 catches in the Bolts' Week 11 win over the Jets and also set an NFL record by registering his sixth career game of 13-plus receptions. Allen also became the fifth player ever with multiple games of 15 or more catches.

Allen also has the most games with 12-plus catches and the most contests with at least 12 receptions and 100 receiving yards.

MOST GAMES WITH 15-PLUS RECEPTIONS, NFL HISTORY

Rk.	Team/s	Player	Games
1.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	2
	Dal./L.V.	TE Jason Witten	2
	Den./Mia./Chi./NYJ/NYG/Sea.	WR Brandon Marshall	2
	S.D./Mia./N.E./Den./StL	WR Wes Welker	2
	Pit./N.E./T.B.	WR Antonio Brown	2

MOST GAMES WITH 14-PLUS RECEPTIONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team/s	Player	Games
1.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	4
	Pit./N.E./T.B.	WR Antonio Brown	4
3.	Dal./L.V.	TE Jason Witten	3
4	—	Nine Other Players	2

MOST GAMES WITH 13-PLUS RECEPTIONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team/s	Player	Games
1.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	6
2.	S.D./Mia./N.E./Den./StL	WR Wes Welker	5
	Pit./N.E./T.B.	WR Antonio Brown	5

MOST GAMES WITH 12-PLUS RECEPTIONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team/s	Player	Games
1.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	10
2.	S.D./Mia./N.E./Den./StL	WR Wes Welker	9
3.	Ind.	WR Marvin Harrison*	8
4.	S.F./Oak./Sea.	WR Jerry Rice*	7
	Hou./Ind./Ten.	WR Andre Johnson	7
	Pit./N.E./T.B.	WR Antonio Brown	7

MOST GAMES WITH 12-PLUS RECEPTIONS AND 100-PLUS RECEIVING YARDS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team/s	Player	Games
1.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	9
2.	Ind.	WR Marvin Harrison*	8
	S.D./Mia./N.E./Den./StL	WR Wes Welker	8
4.	S.F./Oak./Sea.	WR Jerry Rice*	7
	Hou./Ind./Ten.	WR Andre Johnson	7

MOST GAMES WITH 11-PLUS RECEPTIONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team/s	Player	Games
1.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	13
	Hou./Ind./Ten.	WR Andre Johnson	13
3.	S.D./Mia./N.E./Den./StL	WR Wes Welker	12
	Ind.	WR Marvin Harrison*	12
	Pit./N.E./T.B.	WR Antonio Brown	12

*Pro Football Hall of Famer

KEENAN ALLEN

A HISTORIC TRACK RECORD

Keenan Allen has a chance to be among the fastest players to reach 800 career receptions in NFL history. He's four receptions away from eclipsing 800 for his career.

FEWEST GAMES TO 800 RECEPTIONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team/s	Player	Games
1.	Pit.	WR Antonio Brown	126
2.	Atl.	WR Julio Jones	127
3.	Ind.	WR Marvin Harrison	131
4.	Hou.	WR Andre Johnson	137
5.	Den./Mia./Chi./NYJ	WR Brandon Marshall	140
—	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	126

In Week 12 in 2021, Allen eclipsed 700 career receptions, doing so in his 111th game to tie Antonio Brown for the fastest player to reach that mark in NFL history. Allen also tied Brown as the fastest player in league annals to reach 600 career catches (96 games) by hauling in a team-record 16 receptions in 2020's Week 11 win against the New York Jets.

FEWEST GAMES TO 700 RECEPTIONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Games
1.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	111
	Pit.	WR Antonio Brown	111
3.	Atl.	WR Julio Jones	112
4.	Ind.	WR Marvin Harrison	114

FEWEST GAMES TO 600 RECEPTIONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team/s	Player	Games
1.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	96
	Pit.	WR Antonio Brown	96
3.	Atl.	WR Julio Jones	97
4.	Ari./Bal.	WR Anquan Boldin	98

Allen caught nine passes in his 99th career game in 2020's Week 14 win against Atlanta, setting an all-time record for the most catches through the first 100 games of a career. Allen added a catch in the 100th game of his career to add to his record-setting mark.

RECEPTIONS, FIRST 100 CAREER GAMES, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team/s	Player	Receptions
1.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	624
2.	Pit.	WR Antonio Brown	622
3.	Atl.	WR Julio Jones	619
4.	Ari./Bal.	WR Anquan Boldin	614
5.	Ind.	WR Marvin Harrison	591



THIRD-DOWN PHENOM

Since the beginning of his historic span in 2017, Keenan Allen has also been the NFL's top receiver on third down, totaling 168 catches for 2,236 yards and moving the chains on 137 of those receptions — leading the NFL in receptions and receiving first downs, while ranking No. 2 in receiving yards over that span.

THIRD DOWN RECEPTIONS, NFL, SINCE 2017

Rank	Team/s	Player	Receptions
1.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	168
2.	G.B./L.V.	WR Davante Adams	149
3.	LAR	WR Cooper Kupp	142
4.	K.C./Mia.	WR Tyreek Hill	136
5.	K.C.	TE Travis Kelce	132

THIRD DOWN RECEIVING YARDS, NFL, SINCE 2017

Rank	Team/s	Player	Receiving Yards
1.	G.B./L.V.	WR Davante Adams	2,259
2.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	2,236
3.	LAR	WR Cooper Kupp	2,180
4.	K.C./Mia.	WR Tyreek Hill	2,139
5.	K.C.	TE Travis Kelce	1,807

RECEIVING FIRST DOWNS, THIRD DOWN, NFL, SINCE 2017

Rank	Team/s	Player	Rec. First Downs
1.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	137
2.	G.B./L.V.	WR Davante Adams	117
3.	K.C.	TE Travis Kelce	113
	LAR	WR Cooper Kupp	113
5.	K.C./Mia.	WR Tyreek Hill	111

KEENAN ALLEN

TRIPLE-THREAT

From Weeks 11-13 in 2017, Keenan Allen became the first player in NFL history to post three-consecutive games with 10-plus receptions, 100-plus receiving yards and a touchdown catch.

KEENAN ALLEN'S RECEIVING STATS, WEEK 11-13, 2017

Week	Date	Opp.	Rec.	Yds	Avg.	Lg	TD
11	Nov. 19, 2017	vs. Buf.	12	159	13.3	29	2
12	Nov. 23, 2017	at Dal.	11	172	15.6	42t	1
13	Dec. 3, 2017	vs. Cle.	10	105	10.5	26	1

Allen capped off the season with an interception in the road finale at the New York Jets. The pick made him the first player in NFL history to have 90-plus catches and an interception in the same season. Allen also joined Hall of Famers Don Hutson (1942) and Randy Moss (2009) as the third player in league annals to register 1,000-plus receiving yards and an interception in the same season.

PLAYERS WITH 1,000 RECEIVING YARDS AND AN INTERCEPTION, SINGLE SEASON, NFL HISTORY

Season	Team	Player	Rec.	Rec. Yds	INTs
2017	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	102	1,393	1
2009	N.E.	WR Randy Moss*	83	1,264	1
1942	G.B.	E Don Hutson*	74	1,211	7

*Pro Football Hall of Famer



KEENAN KEEPS CLIMBING

Keenan Allen is among the elite pass catchers in franchise history. His 796 career receptions are the most ever by a Bolts wide receiver and rank No. 2 in franchise history. Allen ranks third in receiving yards (9,287), No. 4 in touchdown catches (52) and sixth in total touchdowns (53) in Chargers history.

Allen has 14 career games with 10-plus catches, the most ever by any Charger, while his 33 100-yard receiving games ranks No. 2.

CAREER RECEPTIONS, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Seasons	Player	Receptions
1.	2003-18	TE Antonio Gates	955
2.	2013-Present	WR Keenan Allen	796
3.	1976-86	WR Charlie Joiner*	586
4.	1979-87	TE Kellen Winslow*	541
5.	2001-09	RB LaDainian Tomlinson*	530
6.	1962-70	FL Lance Alworth*	493

CAREER RECEIVING YARDS, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Seasons	Player	Receiving Yards
1.	2003-18	TE Antonio Gates	11,841
2.	1962-70	FL Lance Alworth*	9,584
3.	2013-Present	WR Keenan Allen	9,287
4.	1976-86	WR Charlie Joiner*	9,203
5.	1966-76	WR Gary Garrison	7,533

CAREER RECEIVING TOUCHDOWNS, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Seasons	Player	Receiving TDs
1.	2003-18	TE Antonio Gates	116
2.	1962-70	FL Lance Alworth*	81
3.	1966-76	WR Gary Garrison	58
4.	2013-Present	WR Keenan Allen	52
5.	1976-86	WR Charlie Joiner*	47

CAREER TOUCHDOWNS, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Seasons	Player	Touchdowns
1.	2001-09	RB LaDainian Tomlinson*	153
2.	2003-18	TE Antonio Gates	116
3.	1962-70	FL Lance Alworth*	83
4.	2017-Present	RB Austin Ekeler	58
	1966-76	WR Gary Garrison	58
6.	2013-Present	WR Keenan Allen	53
7.	2015-19	RB Melvin Gordon III	47
	1976-86	WR Charlie Joiner*	47

GAMES WITH 100-PLUS RECEIVING YDS, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Seasons	Player	Games
1.	1962-70	FL Lance Alworth*	41
2.	2013-Present	WR Keenan Allen	33
3.	1979-87	TE Kellen Winslow*	24
4.	1976-86	WR Charlie Joiner*	23
	1966-76	WR Gary Garrison	23

*Pro Football Hall of Famer

MIKE WILLIAMS



CLUTCH SCORING GRABS

Since entering the NFL in 2017, **Mike Williams** has recorded a league-leading seven go-ahead scores in the fourth quarter or overtime.

GO-AHEAD TOUCHDOWNS IN FOURTH QUARTER OR OVERTIME, NFL, SINCE 2017

Rank	Team/s	Player	Go-Ahead TDs
1.	LAC	WR Mike Williams	7
	G.B./L.V.	WR Davante Adams	7
	L.V.	RB Josh Jacobs	7
4.	LAC	RB Austin Ekeler	6
	K.C.	TE Travis Kelce	6
	LAC/Den.	RB Melvin Gordon III	6
	LAR	WR Cooper Kupp	6
	NYG	RB Saquon Barkley	6

Williams hauled in seven touchdowns from **QB Justin Herbert** in the fourth quarter or overtime in 2021 — five were go-ahead scores and another was a game-tying touchdown.

His five go-ahead touchdowns in the fourth quarter or overtime set a single-season NFL record, while his six game-tying or go-ahead scores in the fourth quarter or overtime were also an all-time best in a season.

GO-AHEAD TOUCHDOWNS IN FOURTH QUARTER OR OVERTIME, SINGLE SEASON, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season	Team	Player	Go-Ahead TDs
1.	2021	LAC	WR Mike Williams	5
2.	2021	LAR	WR Cooper Kupp**	4
	2014	Min.	RB Matt Asiata	4
	2012	Atl.	RB Michael Turner	4
	1989	G.B.	WR Sterling Sharpe**	4
	1985	Hou.^	RB Mike Rozier	4
	1985	S.F.	RB Roger Craig*	4
	1979	StL	RB Ottis Anderson**	4

^Houston Oilers

GAME-TYING OR GO-AHEAD TOUCHDOWNS IN FOURTH QUARTER OR OVERTIME, SINGLE SEASON, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season	Team	Player	Go-Ahead TDs
1.	2021	LAC	WR Mike Williams	6
2.	1989	G.B.	WR Sterling Sharpe**	5

**Pro Bowl Selection*

†Associated Press First-Team All-Pro

WILLIAMS ABOVE AVERAGE

Since entering the NFL in 2017, **Mike Williams** has 290 catches for 4,557 yards for a career receiving average of 15.7 yards. His career average ranks No. 2 in the NFL since 2017 among players with at least 250 catches. Williams' 20.4 average in 2019 is the best in a single season over the last five years (min. 40 rec.).

YARDS PER RECEPTION, MIN. 250 REC., NFL, SINCE 2017

Rank	Team/s	Player	Yards/Reception
1.	Ten./Phi.	WR A.J. Brown	16.5
2.	LAC	WR Mike Williams	15.7
3.	T.B.	WR Mike Evans	15.4
4.	Ind./Dal.	WR T.Y. Hilton	15.0
5.	Min.	WR Justin Jefferson	14.9

YARDS PER RECEPTION, SINGLE SEASON, MIN. 40 RECEPTIONS, NFL, SINCE 2017

Rank	Season	Team	Player	Yards/Reception
1.	2019	LAC	WR Mike Williams	20.4
2.	2019	Ten.	WR A.J. Brown	20.2
3.	2018	T.B.	WR DeSean Jackson	18.9

BIG-PLAY MIKE WILLIAMS

Mike Williams led the AFC and tied for an NFL-high 11 receptions of 40-plus yards in 2021. Over the last two seasons, his 11 catches of at least 40 yards rank tied for No. 1 in the league. Since his breakout year in his second pro season in 2018, Williams' 23 catches of 40 or more yards rank tied for third in the NFL.

RECEPTIONS OF 40-PLUS YARDS, NFL, SINCE 2021

Rank	Team/s	Player	40-Yard Receptions
1.	LAC	WR Mike Williams	11
	Cin.	WR Ja'Marr Chase	11
	LAR	WR Cooper Kupp	11
	G.B./L.V.	WR Davante Adams	11
	Min.	WR Justin Jefferson	11
6.	Buf.	WR Stefon Diggs	10
	S.F.	WR Deebo Samuel	10
	K.C./Mia.	WR Tyreek Hill	10
9.	Ten./Phi.	WR A.J. Brown	9
	Was.	WR Terry McLaurin	9

RECEPTIONS OF 40-PLUS YARDS, NFL, SINCE 2018

Rank	Team	Player	40-Yard Receptions
1.	K.C./Mia.	WR Tyreek Hill	29
2.	Min./Buf.	WR Stefon Diggs	25
3.	LAC	WR Mike Williams	23
	G.B./L.V.	WR Davante Adams	23
	T.B.	WR Mike Evans	23
6.	Ten./Phi.	WR A.J. Brown	22
7.	G.B./K.C.	WR Marquez Valdes-Scantling	21
8.	LAR	WR Cooper Kupp	20

MIKE WILLIAMS

LOOK UP AT THE LEADERBOARD

Mike Williams ranks tied for No. 4 in the AFC over the last five seasons in receiving touchdowns, hauling in 30 in that span. He also ranks tied for ninth in touchdown grabs over the last two years.

RECEIVING TOUCHDOWNS, AFC, SINCE 2018

Rank	Team/s	Player	Receiving Touchdowns
1.	K.C./Mia.	WR Tyreek Hill	50
2.	K.C.	TE Travis Kelce	47
3.	Bal.	TE Mark Andrews	34
4.	LAC	WR Mike Williams	30
	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	30
6.	Buf.	WR Stefon Diggs	29
7.	LAC	RB Austin Ekeler	26
	Cin.	WR Tyler Boyd	26
9.	Ten.	WR A.J. Brown	24

RECEIVING TOUCHDOWNS, AFC, SINCE 2021

Rank	Team/s	Player	Receiving Touchdowns
1.	Cin.	WR Ja'Marr Chase	22
2.	Buf.	WR Stefon Diggs	21
	K.C.	TE Travis Kelce	21
4.	K.C./Mia.	WR Tyreek Hill	16
5.	Buf.	TE Dawson Knox	15
6.	Bal.	TE Mark Andrews	14
	L.V.	WR Davante Adams	14
	Mia.	WR Jaylen Waddle	14
9.	LAC	WR Mike Williams	13
	LAC	RB Austin Ekeler	13
	Buf.	WR Gabriel Davis	13
	Cin.	WR Tee Higgins	13
13.	L.V.	WR Hunter Renfrow	11
	N.E.	TE Hunter Henry	11

WILLIAMS PERFORMS AT ARROWHEAD



With his 15-yard touchdown grab in the third quarter of Week 2 at Kansas City, Mike Williams registered his seventh career touchdown (six receiving, one rushing) at GEHA Field at Arrowhead Stadium. His seven scores are the most ever by any visiting player at Arrowhead Stadium.

Williams finished the day with eight receptions for 113 yards (14.1 avg.) and the touchdown. The performance made him the only visiting player in history to record three-straight games at Arrowhead Stadium with 100-plus receiving yards and a touchdown.

MOST TOUCHDOWNS SCORED, VISITING PLAYERS, ARROWHEAD STADIUM, ALL-TIME

Rank	Team	Player	GP [^]	TDs
1.	Chargers	WR Mike Williams	6	7
2.	Chargers	RB LaDainian Tomlinson*	9	6
	Chargers	TE Antonio Gates	15	6
	Colts	WR Marvin Harrison*	4	6
	Den./NYJ	WR Eric Decker	6	6
6.	Chargers	RB Gary Anderson	4	5
	Broncos	WR Haven Moses	10	5
	Broncos	TE Shannon Sharpe*	11	5

[^]Games played at GEHA Field at Arrowhead Stadium

*Pro Football Hall of Famer

DERWIN JAMES JR.



A LEADING TACKLER IN 2022

Derwin James Jr., ranked No. 5 among all NFL defensive backs with 115 tackles in 2022. He reached 300 career tackles (41 games) and 350 tackles (47 games) faster than any defensive back in at least the last 30 years.

TACKLES, DEFENSIVE BACKS, NFL, 2022

Rank	Team	Player	Tackles
1.	Hou.	DB Jalen Pitre	147
2.	Hou.	DB Jonathan Owens	125
3.	Atl.	S Richie Grant	122
4.	NYG	S Julian Love	116
5.	LAC	S Derwin James Jr.	115
6.	Jax.	S Rayshawn Jenkins	112
7.	Ari.	S Budda Baker	111

FEWEST GAMES TO 300 TACKLES, DEFENSIVE BACKS, NFL, SINCE 1991

Rank	Team	Player	Games
1.	LAC	S Derwin James Jr.	41
2.	NYG	S Landon Collins	42
3.	Jax.	S Johnathan Cyprien	43
4.	Atl.	S Keanu Neal	44
	G.B.	S Morgan Burnett	44

FEWEST GAMES TO 350 TACKLES, DEFENSIVE BACKS, NFL, SINCE 1991

Rank	Team	Player	Games
1.	LAC	S Derwin James Jr.	47
2.	Jax.	S Johnathan Cyprien	49
3.	Ari.	S Budda Baker	51
	G.B.	S Morgan Burnett	51
	NYG	S Landon Collins	51

ZERO TO FIFTY

Derwin James Jr., posted 372 tackles and 9.5 sacks in 50 games played. He has the most tackles by a defensive back in the first 50 games of a career over the last 30 years.

TACKLES, DEFENSIVE BACKS, FIRST 50 CAREER GAMES, NFL, SINCE 1991

Rank	Team	Player	GP	Tackles
1.	LAC	S Derwin James Jr.	50	372
2.	Jax.	S Johnathan Cyprien	50	364
3.	NYG	S Landon Collins	50	349
4.	Ari.	S Budda Baker	50	344
5.	G.B.	S Morgan Burnett	50	341

SACKS, DEFENSIVE BACKS, FIRST 50 CAREER GAMES, NFL, SINCE 1982

Rank	Team/s	Player	Sacks
1.	NYJ/Sea.	S Jamal Adams	15.5
2.	Dal.	DB Bill Bates	12.0
3.	StL	S Adam Archuleta	10.5
4.	Hou.^	S Keith Bostic	10.0
5.	LAC	S Derwin James Jr.	9.5
	T.B.	CB Ronde Barber	9.5
7.	T.B.	S Antoine Winfield Jr.	9.0

^Houston Oilers

James is one of eight players — and the only defensive back — since the turn of the century to post 350 tackles, five interceptions and nine sacks within the first 50 games of a career.

PLAYERS WITH 350 TACKLES, FIVE INTERCEPTIONS AND NINE SACKS, FIRST 50 CAREER GAMES, NFL, SINCE 2000

Seasons	Team	Player	Sacks	INTs	Tackles
2018-22	LAC	S Derwin James Jr.	9.5	7	372
2018-21	Ind.	LB Shaquille Leonard	15.0	9	476
2018-21	Chi.	LB Roquan Smith	13.0	5	422
2012-15	T.B.	LB Lavonte David	10.0	6	463
2012-15	Sea.	LB Bobby Wagner	9.5	5	432
2009-13	Hou.	LB Brian Cushing	9.5	8	358
2000-02	Chi.	LB Brian Urlacher	19.0	6	415

DERWIN JAMES JR.

A NOVEMBER TO REMEMBER

In a dominant November, **Derwin James Jr.**, posted 37 tackles (20 solo), two sacks, an interception and a pair of forced fumbles. He was the only defender during the month to have a sack, a pick and a forced fumble. James was recognized as AFC Defensive Player of the Month for his efforts in November.

James was also the only defensive back in the last 30 years and first player in a decade to have at least 30 tackles, multiple sacks, an interception and a forced fumble in a single November.

PLAYERS WITH 30 TACKLES, TWO SACKS, AN INTERCEPTION AND A FORCED FUMBLE, SINGLE NOVEMBER, NFL, SINCE 1991

Season	Team	Player	Sacks	FF	INTs	Tackles
2022	LAC	S Derwin James Jr.	2.0	2	1	37
2013	Oak.	LB Nick Roach	4.5	2	1	38
2009	Sea.	LB David Hawthorne	3.0	1	2	50
2008	Pit.	LB James Harrison	5.5	3	1	36
2005	Jax.	LB Mike Peterson	2.0	1	1	37
2004	Car.	LB Will Witherspoon	2.0	1	2	36
2003	Phi.	LB Nate Wayne	3.0	2	1	36
2001	G.B.	LB Nate Wayne	2.0	1	2	39
1999	T.B.	LB Derrick Brooks	2.0	2	2	39

DERWIN'S PICKS AND SACKS BY PASSER

Derwin James Jr., has recorded seven interceptions and 9.5 sacks in his career. He has brought down Patrick Mahomes the most, totaling two sacks of the Texas Tech product. Below is a look at his career regular-season sacks and interceptions by passer:

REGULAR-SEASON CAREER INTs BY PASSER (7)

INTs	Passer	Most Recent INT
1	QB Derek Carr	Oct. 4, 2021 vs. L.V.
	QB Nick Foles	Dec. 26, 2022 at Ind.
	QB Jared Goff	Sept. 23, 2018 at LAR
	QB Drew Lock	Nov. 28, 2021 at Den.
	QB Kyler Murray	Nov. 27, 2022 at Ari.
	QB Ben Roethlisberger	Dec. 2, 2018 at Pit.
	QB Josh Rosen	Nov. 25, 2018 vs. Ari.

REGULAR-SEASON CAREER SACKS BY PASSER (9.5)

Sacks	Passer	Most Recent Sack
2.0	QB Patrick Mahomes	Nov. 20, 2022 vs. K.C.
1.5	QB Baker Mayfield	Oct. 10, 2021 vs. Cle.
1.0	QB Josh Allen	Sept. 16, 2018 at Buf.
	QB C.J. Beathard	Sept. 30, 2018 vs. S.F.
	QB Derek Carr	Sept. 11, 2022 vs. L.V.
	QB Marcus Mariota	Nov. 6, 2022 at Atl.
	QB Russell Wilson	Oct. 17, 2022 vs. Den.
0.5	QB Joe Burrow	Dec. 5, 2021 at Cin.
	QB Dak Prescott	Sept. 19, 2021 vs. Dal.



A DEFENSIVE CHESS PIECE

In 2022, **Derwin James Jr.**, had 115 tackles and was one of just five NFL players on the season to total at least four sacks, a forced fumble, an interception and 100 tackles.

James is just the third player since 2000 to have consecutive 100-tackle seasons after missing an entire year due to injury.

PLAYERS WITH 100 TACKLES, FOUR SACKS, AN INTERCEPTION AND A FORCED FUMBLE, NFL, 2022

Rk.	Team	Player	Sacks	FF	INTs	Tackles
1.	LAC	LB Drue Tranquill	5.0	1	1	144
2.	Bal.	LB Patrick Queen	5.0	1	2	117
3.	LAC	S Derwin James Jr.	4.0	2	2	115
4.	Car.	LB Frankie Luvu	7.0	1	1	111
5.	Chi.	DB Jaquan Brisker	4.0	1	1	104

PLAYERS WITH CONSECUTIVE 100-TACKLE SEASONS FOLLOWING AN ENTIRE MISSED YEAR DUE TO INJURY, NFL, SINCE 2000

Seasons	Team/s	Player	Tackles
2021-22	LAC	S Derwin James Jr.**	118 and 109
2015-16	Dal.	LB Sean Lee***	128 and 145
2011-12	Cle.	LB D'Qwell Jackson	158 and 119

**Pro Bowl Selection*

†Associated Press First-Team All-Pro

James is also one of seven defensive backs since the turn of the century to record at least 100 tackles, four sacks and a forced fumble in a single season.

DEFENSIVE BACKS WITH 100 TACKLES, FOUR SACKS AND A FORCED FUMBLE, SINGLE SEASON, NFL, SINCE 2000

Season	Team	Player	Sacks	FF	Tackles
2022	LAC	S Derwin James Jr.	4.0	2	115
2022	Chi.	DB Jaquan Brisker	4.0	1	104
2019	Car.	S Eric Reid	4.0	1	129
2019	Ten.	CB Logan Ryan	4.5	4	113
2010	Oak.	S Tyvon Branch	4.0	1	101
2005	Ari.	S Adrian Wilson	8.0	1	108
2000	S.D.	S Rodney Harrison	6.0	1	127

KHALIL MACK

MACK ATTACK

Since entering the NFL in 2014, **Khalil Mack** has totaled 84.5 sacks, the sixth-most over that span. He's one of football's top defenders at forcing turnovers, ranking No. 2 in strip-sacks and forced fumbles since entering the professional ranks.

Mack's 241 career hurries lead the league since he entered the NFL in 2014, while his 399 pressures rank No. 2 over that span.

SACKS, NFL, SINCE 2014

Rank	Team/s	Player	Sacks
1.	LAR	DT Aaron Donald	103.0
2.	N.E./Ari./L.V.	OLB Chandler Jones	94.5
3.	N.O.	DE Cameron Jordan	94.0
4.	Den./LAR/Buf.	OLB Von Miller	88.5
5.	K.C./Ind./Bal.	OLB Justin Houston	85.0
6.	Oak./Chi./LAC	OLB Khalil Mack	84.5
7.	Pit.	LB T.J. Watt	78.0

STRIP-SACKS, NFL, SINCE 2014

Rk.	Team/s	Player	Strip Sacks
1.	N.E./Ari./L.V.	OLB Chandler Jones	26
2.	Oak./Chi./LAC	OLB Khalil Mack	19
3.	LAR	DT Aaron Donald	18
	StL/LAR/Mia./Dal./Chi./Phi.	LB Robert Quinn	18
	Jax./Min./Bal./L.V./Ind./Chi.	DE Yannick Ngakoue	18

FORCED FUMBLES, NFL, SINCE 2014

Rk.	Team/s	Player	Forced Fum.
1.	N.E./Ari./L.V.	OLB Chandler Jones	30
2.	Oak./Chi./LAC	OLB Khalil Mack	25
	T.B.	LB Lavonte David	25
4.	LAR	DT Aaron Donald	24
5.	StL/LAR/Mia./Dal./Chi./Phi.	LB Robert Quinn	23
	Pit.	LB T.J. Watt	23

QUARTERBACK HURRIES, NFL, SINCE 2014

Rank	Team/s	Player	Hurries
1.	Oak./Chi./LAC	OLB Khalil Mack	241
2.	LAR	DT Aaron Donald	206
3.	Den./LAR/Buf.	OLB Von Miller	205
4.	Buf./Hou.	DL Jerry Hughes	198
5.	N.O.	DE Cameron Jordan	197

POSTSEASON SACKS

Khalil Mack registered his first career postseason sack in the AFC Wild Card at Jacksonville.

POSTSEASON CAREER SACKS BY PASSER (1.0)

Sacks	Passer	Most Recent Sack
1.0	QB Trevor Lawrence	Jan. 14, 2023 at Jax.* *AFC Wild Card

MACK'S SACKS AND PICKS BY PASSER

Khalil Mack has sacked 39 different players in the regular season for a total of 84.5 career sacks. He dropped QB Brock Osweiler six times in his career, including five times in a single game. Mack has also picked off three passes, including two that he returned for a touchdown. Below is a look at his career regular-season sacks and interceptions by quarterback:

REGULAR-SEASON CAREER SACKS BY PASSER (84.5)

Sacks	Passer	Most Recent Sack
6.0	QB Brock Osweiler	Nov. 21, 2016 vs. Hou.
5.5	QB Aaron Rodgers	Oct. 17, 2021 at Chi.
	QB Alex Smith	Dec. 10, 2017 at K.C.
5.0	QB Trevor Siemian	Nov. 26, 2017 vs. Den.
4.0	QB Derek Carr	Sept. 11, 2022 L.V.
	QB Kirk Cousins	Dec. 20, 2020 at Min.
3.0	QB Tom Brady	Oct. 8, 2020 vs. T.B.
	QB Jared Goff	Oct. 3, 2021 vs. Det.
	QB Josh McCown	Sept. 17, 2017 vs. NYJ
	QB Dak Prescott	Dec. 5, 2019 vs. Dal.
2.0	QB Sam Bradford	Sept. 23, 2018 at Ari.
	QB Teddy Bridgewater	Oct. 18, 2020 at Car.
	QB Joe Flacco	Sept. 15, 2019 at Den.
	QB Daniel Jones	Sept. 20, 2020 vs. NYG
	QB Colin Kaepernick	Dec. 7, 2017 vs. S.F.
	QB Case Keenum	Sept. 23, 2019 at Was.
	QB Patrick Mahomes	Sept. 15, 2022 at K.C.
	QB Marcus Mariota	Nov. 29, 2015 at Ten.
	QB Baker Mayfield	Sept. 26, 2021 at Cle.
	QB Philip Rivers	Oct. 27, 2019 vs. LAC
	QB Geno Smith	Dec. 3, 2017 vs. NYG
	QB Matthew Stafford	Nov. 11, 2018 vs. Det.
	QB Russell Wilson	Oct. 17, 2022 vs. Den.
	QB Jameis Winston	Oct. 30, 2016 at T.B.
1.0	QB Blake Bortles	Oct. 23, 2016 at Jax.
	QB Drew Brees	Nov. 1, 2020 vs. N.O.
	QB Joe Burrow	Sept. 19, 2021 vs. Cin.
	QB Jay Cutler	Oct. 4, 2015 at Chi.
	QB Ryan Fitzpatrick	Sept. 30, 2018 vs. T.B.
	QB Nick Foles	Dec. 26, 2022 at Ind.
	QB Jimmy Garoppolo	Nov. 13, 2022 at S.F.
	QB DeShone Kizer	Sept. 9, 2018 at G.B.
	QB Eli Manning	Dec. 2, 2018 at NYG
	QB Davis Mills	Oct. 2, 2022 at Hou.
	QB Cam Newton	Nov. 27, 2016 vs. Car.
	QB Kyle Orton	Dec. 21, 2014 vs. Buf.
	QB Tyrod Taylor	Dec. 4, 2016 vs. Buf.
	QB Deshaun Watson	Dec. 13, 2020 vs. Hou.
0.5	QB Matt Ryan	Sept. 27, 2020 at Atl.

REGULAR-SEASON CAREER INTs BY PASSER (3)

INTs	Passer	Most Recent INT
1	QB Kirk Cousins	Nov. 16, 2020 vs. Min.
	QB DeShone Kizer	Sept. 9, 2018 at G.B.
	QB Cam Newton	Nov. 27, 2016 vs. Car.

JOEY BOSA



NOT YOUR AVERAGE JOEY

Since entering the NFL in 2016, **Joey Bosa** has been a force, recording the sixth-best sacks-per-game over that span (min. 80 games played). He also ranks No. 12 in that time with 60.5 sacks.

SACKS PER GAME, MIN. 80 GAMES PLAYED, SINCE 2016

Rank	Team/s	Player	Sacks/Game
1.	Pit.	LB T.J. Watt	0.89
2.	Cle.	DE Myles Garrett	0.89
3.	LAR	DT Aaron Donald	0.78
4.	Ari./L.V.	OLB Chandler Jones	0.77
5.	Min.	OLB Danielle Hunter	0.74
6.	LAC	OLB Joey Bosa	0.72
7.	Den./LAR/Buf.	OLB Von Miller	0.71
8.	N.O.	DE Cameron Jordan	0.68
9.	Oak./Chi./LAC	OLB Khalil Mack	0.64

SACKS LEADERS, NFL, SINCE 2016

Rank	Team/s	Player	Sacks
1.	LAR	DT Aaron Donald	83.0
2.	Pit.	LB T.J. Watt	77.5
3.	N.O.	DE Cameron Jordan	76.5
4.	Ari./L.V.	OLB Chandler Jones	76.0
5.	Cle.	DE Myles Garrett	74.5
6.	Oak./Chi./LAC	OLB Khalil Mack	65.5
7.	Jax./Min./Bal./L.V./Ind./Chi.	DE Yannick Ngakoue	65.0
	K.C.	DT Chris Jones	65.0
	Min.	OLB Danielle Hunter	65.0
10.	Den./LAR/Buf.	OLB Von Miller	63.5
11.	Bal./N.E.	LB Matthew Judon	62.5
12.	LAC	OLB Joey Bosa	60.5
13.	Pit.	DE Cameron Heyward	56.5

FORCING THE ISSUE

After leading the NFL with seven strip-sacks in 2021, **Joey Bosa** picked up this year right where he left off. He posted 1.5 sacks in the season opener, including a strip-sack to reach 13 career strip-sacks. Despite missing 12 games this year, Bosa leads the NFL with eight strip-sacks over the last two seasons.

STRIP-SACKS LEADERS, NFL, SINCE 2021

Rank	Team/s	Player	Strip Sacks
1.	LAC	OLB Joey Bosa	8
2.	Car./Phi.	LB Haason Reddick	7
3.	Cin.	DE Trey Hendrickson	6
	Dal.	LB Micah Parsons	6
5.	Ari./L.V.	OLB Chandler Jones	5
	Atl./Dal.	DE Dante Fowler Jr.	5
	Pit.	LB Alex Highsmith	5
	S.F.	DL Nick Bosa	5
	Sea.	LB Darrell Taylor	5

FORCED FUMBLES LEADERS, NFL, SINCE 2021

Rank	Team	Player	Forced Fumbles
1.	LAC	OLB Joey Bosa	8
	Ind.	LB Shaquille Leonard	8
3.	Ari./L.V.	OLB Chandler Jones	7
	Car./Phi.	LB Haason Reddick	7
	S.F./Car.	CB Josh Norman	7
6.	Ari.	LB Isaiah Simmons	6
	Cin.	DE Trey Hendrickson	6
	Dal.	LB Micah Parsons	6
	Pit.	LB Alex Highsmith	6
	Pit.	LB T.J. Watt	6
	S.F.	DL Nick Bosa	6

STRIP-SACKS LEADERS, NFL, 2021

Rank	Team	Player	Strip Sacks
1.	LAC	OLB Joey Bosa	7
2.	Ari.	OLB Chandler Jones	5
3.	Chi.	LB Robert Quinn	4
	Pit.	LB T.J. Watt	4

Bosa has gone for the ball when taking down the quarterback since he entered the NFL. His 13 career strip-sacks are tied for the eighth-most since 2016. Nine of Bosa's 13 strip-sacks came on third down, which leads the NFL over that span.

STRIP-SACKS LEADERS, THIRD DOWN, NFL, SINCE 2016

Rk.	Team/s	Player	Strip Sacks
1.	LAC	OLB Joey Bosa	9
2.	StL/LAR/Mia./Dal./Chi./Phi.	LB Robert Quinn	8
	Jax./LAR/Atl./Dal.	DE Dante Fowler Jr.	8
4.	LAR	DT Aaron Donald	7
5.	K.C./Ind./Bal.	OLB Justin Houston	6
	Ari./L.V.	OLB Chandler Jones	6

JOEY BOSA

BOSA'S SACKS BY PASSER

Joey Bosa has 60.5 career sacks. He has sacked Las Vegas QB Derek Carr 8.5 times in his career, more than he's sacked any other quarterback. Bosa has brought down 38 different passers in his career, including 13 more than once. Below is a look at his career sacks by passer:

REGULAR-SEASON CAREER SACKS BY PASSER (60.5)

Sacks	Passer	Most Recent Sack
8.5	QB Derek Carr	Sept. 11, 2022 vs. L.V.
3.5	QB Trevor Siemian	Oct. 22, 2017 vs. Den.
2.5	QB Patrick Mahomes	Dec. 16, 2021 vs. K.C.
	QB Gardner Minshew II	Oct. 25, 2020 vs. Jax.
	QB Josh Rosen	Sept. 29, 2019 at Mia.
2.0	QB Josh Allen	Nov. 29, 2020 at Buf.
	QB Robert Griffin III	Dec. 24, 2016 at Cle.
	QB Eli Manning	Oct. 8, 2015 at NYG
	QB Ben Roethlisberger	Nov. 21, 2021 vs. Pit.
	QB Matt Ryan	Oct. 23, 2016 at Atl.
	QB Alex Smith	Sept. 24, 2017 vs. K.C.
	QB Ryan Tannehill	Oct. 20, 2019 at Ten.
	QB Mitchell Trubisky	Oct. 27, 2019 at Chi.
1.5	QB Lamar Jackson	Oct. 17, 2021 at Bal.
	QB Aaron Rodgers	Nov. 3, 2019 vs. G.B.
1.0	WR Davante Adams	Sept. 11, 2022 vs. L.V.
	QB Matt Barkley	Nov. 29, 2020 at Buf.
	QB Blake Bortles	Nov. 12, 2017 at Jax.
	QB Tom Brady	Oct. 29, 2017 at N.E.
	QB QB Drew Brees	Oct. 12, 2020 at N.O.
	QB Teddy Bridgewater	Sept. 27, 2020 vs. Car.
	QB Jacoby Brissett	Sept. 8, 2019 vs. Ind.
	QB Joe Burrow	Sept. 13, 2020 at Cin.
	QB Kirk Cousins	Nov. 14, 2021 vs. Min.
	QB Jeff Driskel	Dec. 9, 2018 vs. Cin.
	QB Joe Flacco	Oct. 6, 2019 vs. Den.
	QB Ryan Fitzpatrick	Sept. 12, 2021 at Was.
	QB Mike Glennon	Dec. 12, 2021 vs. NYG
	QB Jalen Hurts	Nov. 7, 2021 at Phi.
	QB QB Case Keenum	Dec. 30, 2017 at Den.
	QB DeShone Kizer	Dec. 3, 2017 vs. Cle.
	QB Drew Lock	Nov. 28, 2021 at Den.
	QB Cam Newton	Dec. 11, 2016 at Car.
	QB Tyrod Taylor	Nov. 19, 2017 vs. Buf.
	QB Russell Wilson	Jan. 8, 2023 at Den.
	QB Jameis Winston	Dec. 4, 2016 vs. T.B.
0.5	QB Brock Osweiler	Nov. 27, 2016 at Hou.
	QB Deshaun Watson	Sept. 22, 2019 vs. Hou.

POSTSEASON CAREER SACKS BY PASSER (1.0)

Sacks	Passer	Most Recent Sack
1.0	QB Lamar Jackson	Jan. 6, 2019 at Bal.* *AFC Wild Card



ONE OF A KIND

With 8.5 sacks in his first eight games of 2017, **Joey Bosa** brought his career total to 19.0 sacks over his first 20 career games. That topped the previous NFL record of 18.5 set by Aldon Smith in 2012.

SACKS, FIRST 20 CAREER GAMES, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Sacks
1.	Chargers	DE Joey Bosa	19.0
2.	49ers	LB Aldon Smith	18.5
3.	Cowboys	LB Micah Parsons	17.0
	Packers	LB Clay Matthews	17.0

BRING THE HEAT

Joey Bosa ranks fourth for sacks in team history after reaching 60 for his career. He eclipsed 50 in his 67th game of his career, setting the mark for the fastest by any player in Chargers history.

CAREER SACKS LEADERS, CHARGERS HISTORY SINCE 1982

Rank	Seasons	Player	Sacks
1.	1986-95	DE Leslie O'Neal	105.5
2.	2004-12	LB Shaun Phillips	69.5
3.	1984-90	DE Lee Williams	65.5
4.	2016-Present	OLB Joey Bosa	60.5
5.	2012-20	DE Melvin Ingram III	49.0
6.	1990-2002	LB Junior Seau	47.0

FEWEST GAMES TO 50 SACKS, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Seasons	Player	Games
1.	2016-21	OLB Joey Bosa	67
2.	1986-91	DE Leslie O'Neal	70
3.	1984-89	DE Lee Williams	75
4.	2004-10	LB Shaun Phillips	96

DEFENSIVE PLAYER NOTES

KENDRICKS HITS THE CENTURY MARK

A defensive stalwart, **LB Eric Kendricks** has topped 100 total defensive tackles (press box totals) in seven-straight seasons. It's the second-longest active streak in the NFL.

CONSECUTIVE SEASONS WITH 100 TOTAL TACKLES, ACTIVE NFL STREAKS

Rank	Team/s	Player	Consecutive Seasons
1.	Sea./LAR	LB Bobby Wagner	11 (2012-22)
2.	Min./LAC	LB Eric Kendricks	7 (2016-22)
3.	NYJ/N.O.	LB Demario Davis	6 (2017-22)
4.	Buf./Chi.	LB Tremaine Edmunds	5 (2018-22)
	Chi./Bal.	LB Roquan Smith	5 (2018-22)
	S.F.	LB Fred Warner	5 (2018-22)

MR. INT

CB J.C. Jackson has logged 27 total takeaways (25 interceptions, two fumble recoveries) in his career. He leads all NFL players in interceptions and ranks second in total takeaways since he entered the league in 2018.

INTERCEPTION LEADERS, NFL, SINCE 2018

Rank	Team/s	Player	Interceptions
1.	N.E./LAC	CB J.C. Jackson	25
2.	Mia.	CB Xavien Howard	24
3.	Den.	S Justin Simmons	23
4.	Det./Sea.	S Quandre Diggs	20
5.	Mia./Pit.	S Minkah Fitzpatrick	19
	Ten.	S Kevin Byard	19

DEFENSIVE TAKEAWAY LEADERS, NFL, SINCE 2018

Rank	Team/s	Player	Takeaways
1.	Mia.	CB Xavien Howard	29
2.	N.E./LAC	CB J.C. Jackson	27
3.	Den.	S Justin Simmons	25
4.	Mia./Pit.	S Minkah Fitzpatrick	24
5.	Hou./K.C./N.O.	S Tyrann Mathieu	23

ZONT WITH EARLY SUCCESS

CB Asante Samuel Jr., became the fourth Charger since the turn of the century to register 100 tackles, 10 passes defended and four interceptions over the first two seasons of a career. He joined Quentin Jammer as the only Chargers over that span to top 100 tackles, pick off four passes and break up 20 passes.

CHARGERS WITH 100 TACKLES, 10 PASSES DEFENSED AND FOUR INTERCEPTIONS, FIRST TWO SEASONS, SINCE 2000

Seasons	Player	PDs	INTs	Tackles
2021-22	CB Asante Samuel Jr.	22	4	100
2017-18	DB Desmond King II	15	4	132
2003-04	S Terrence Kiel	14	4	155
2002-03	CB Quentin Jammer	23	4	135

A POSTSEASON DEBUT FOR THE AGES

CB Asante Samuel Jr., picked off a three passes and registered six passes defended, including two interceptions and four passes defended in the first quarter. His three interceptions tied for the second-most in a single postseason game in NFL history and were the most since the 2003 Championship Weekend.

Samuel was the first player in NFL history to pick off three passes in a postseason debut. He was also the only player in the last 30 seasons to have multiple interceptions in the first quarter of a postseason game and the only player over that span to have three interceptions in a single first half of a postseason game.

The second-year cornerback broke up six passes on the day, ranking tied for third-most all-time in a single postseason game. He joined Troy Vincent as the only players in the last 30 seasons to have five passes defended in the first half of a postseason game.

INTERCEPTIONS, SINGLE POSTSEASON GAME, NFL HISTORY

Rk.	Team	Player	Game	INTs
1.	Hou.^	DB Vernon Perry	Dec. 29, 1979 at S.D.	4
2.	LAC	CB Asante Samuel Jr.	Jan. 14, 2023 at Jax.	3
	N.E.	CB Ty Law	Jan. 18, 2004 vs. Ind.	3
	Car.	CB Ricky Manning	Jan. 18, 2004 at Phi.	3
	Mia.	LB A.J. Duhe	Jan. 23, 1983 vs. NYJ	3
	Dal.	DB Dennis Thurman	Jan. 16, 1983 vs. G.B.	3
	Oak.	LB Rod Martin	Jan. 25, 1981 vs. Phi.	3
	Dal.	DB Charlie Waters	Dec. 26, 1977 vs. Chi.	3

PASSES DEFENSED, SINGLE POSTSEASON GAME, NFL, SINCE 1991

Rk.	Team	Player	Game	PDs
1.	Ari.	DB Corey Chavous	Jan. 2, 1999 vs. Dal.	7
	Hou.^	CB Steve Jackson	Jan. 16, 1994 vs. K.C.	7
3.	LAC	CB Asante Samuel Jr.	Jan. 14, 2023 at Jax.	6
	G.B.	CB Mike McKenzie	Jan. 11, 2004 at Phi.	6
	Dal.	DB Kevin Mathis	Jan. 2, 1999 vs. Ari.	6
6.	—	Nine Other Players		5

[^]Houston Oilers

SAMUEL SETS TEAM POSTSEASON RECORDS

CB Asante Samuel Jr.'s three interceptions have already tied for the most in a Chargers postseason career and set the postseason team record for single-game picks.

INTERCEPTIONS, SINGLE POSTSEASON GAME, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rk.	Player	Game (Round)	INTs
1.	CB Asante Samuel Jr.	Jan. 14, 2023 at Jax. (AFC W.C.)	3
2.	FS Glen Edwards	Jan. 3, 1981 vs. Buf. (AFC Div.)	2
	S Charlie McNeil	Jan. 24, 1961 vs. Hou. Oilers (AFL Ch.)	2
	S Bud Whitehead	Jan. 24, 1961 vs. Hou. Oilers (AFL Ch.)	2
	S Bob Zeman	Jan. 24, 1961 vs. Hou. Oilers (AFL Ch.)	2
6.	LB Drue Tranquill	Jan. 14, 2023 at Jax. (AFC W.C.)	1
	27 Other Occurrences		1

DEFENSIVE PLAYER NOTES

BREAK 'EM UP

CB Michael Davis set a career high with 15 passes defended on the season, his third consecutive year with at least 10 passes defended, making him one of six players to do so over each of the last three seasons. **CB Asante Samuel Jr.**, has also registered at least 10 passes defended in each of the last two seasons.

CONSECUTIVE SEASONS WITH 10-PLUS PASSES DEFENSED, ACTIVE NFL STREAKS SINCE 2020

Rank	Team/s	Player	Consecutive Seasons
1.	LAC	CB Michael Davis	3 (2020-22)
	Cle.	CB Denzel Ward	3 (2020-22)
	Dal.	CB Trevon Diggs	3 (2020-22)
	Mia.	CB Xavien Howard	3 (2020-22)
	NYG/Phi.	CB James Bradberry	3 (2020-22)
	T.B.	CB Carlton Davis	3 (2020-22)
	Was.	CB Kendall Fuller	3 (2020-22)
8.	LAC	CB Asante Samuel Jr.	2 (2021-22)
	—	Seven Other Players	2 (2021-22)

BASH AMONG TFL LEADERS

Acquired this offseason as an unrestricted free agent, **DL Sebastian Joseph-Day** made his presence felt as an anchor on the interior of the defensive line. Among AFC interior defensive linemen, his nine tackles for loss tied for No. 2 and tied for the most by a Chargers interior defensive lineman since at least 2008, when the stat began being tracked officially.

TACKLES FOR LOSS, INTERIOR DEFENSIVE LINEMEN, AFC, 2022

Rank	Team	Player	Tackles for Loss
1.	Ind.	DT DeForest Buckner	11
2.	LAC	DL Sebastian Joesph-Day	9
	Buf.	DT Ed Oliver	9
	Hou.	DL Maliek Collins	9
	Ind.	DT Grover Stewart	9
6.	Bal.	DT Justin Madubuike	8

Joseph-Day set a single-season career high with 56 tackles in 2022 and added an interception in the regular-season finale to go along with his nine tackles for loss. Since tackles for loss began being officially tracked in 2008, he is just the third interior defensive lineman to top 50 tackles, post eight tackles for loss and have an interception in a single season.

INTERIOR DEFENSIVE LINEMEN WITH 50 TACKLES, EIGHT TACKLES FOR LOSS AND AN INTERCEPTION, SINGLE SEASON, NFL, SINCE 2008

Season	Team	Player	TFLs	INTs	Tackles
2022	LAC	DL Sebastian Joseph-Day	9	1	56
2010	Det.	Ndamukong Suh	13	1	66
2009	Ari.	Darnell Dockett	18	1	51

DAVIS WITH 14 BREAKUPS SINCE WEEK 9

CB Michael Davis closed the 2022 regular season on a streak of seven consecutive games with a pass breakup, the longest active streak in the NFL. It's the longest streak by a Chargers defender in a single season since Casey Hayward Jr., did so in eight-straight contests in 2017.

CONSECUTIVE GAMES WITH A PASS DEFENSED, ACTIVE NFL STREAKS

Rk.	Team	Player	Dates	Consec. Games
1.	LAC	CB Michael Davis	Nov. 27, 2022-Present	7
2.	Cle.	CB Denzel Ward	Dec. 4, 2022-Present	6
3.	T.B.	CB Sean Murphy-Bunting	Dec. 18, 2022-Present	4
	Cin.	LB Germaine Pratt	Dec. 11, 2022-Present	4
	S.F.	CB Emmanuel Moseley	Sept. 18, 2022-Present	4

Davis registered 14 passes defended since the team's Week 8 bye, leading the NFL over the final 10 weeks of the regular season. A league-best 13 of his passes defended came since Week 12.

PASSES DEFENSED, NFL, WEEKS 9-18, 2022

Rank	Team	Player	Passes Defended
1.	LAC	CB Michael Davis	14
2.	LAR	CB Jalen Ramsey	11
3.	Cle.	CB Denzel Ward	9
	Cle.	CB Martin Emerson	9
	K.C.	CB L'Jarius Sneed	9
	Pit.	CB Levi Wallace	9
	Sea.	CB Tariq Woolen	9
	Ten.	CB Tre Avery	9
	Was.	DB Danny Johnson	9

PASSES DEFENSED, NFL, WEEKS 12-18, 2022

Rank	Team	Player	Passes Defended
1.	LAC	CB Michael Davis	13
2.	LAR	CB Jalen Ramsey	9
3.	Cle.	CB Denzel Ward	8
	Cle.	CB Martin Emerson	8
	T.B.	CB Carlton Davis	8
	Was.	DB Danny Johnson	8

SPECIALIST NOTES

SCOTT FLIPS THE FIELD

P JK Scott was a field-position weapon for the Chargers in 2022, pinning opponents inside their 20-yard line 28 times. He placed punts inside the 20 on 38.4 percent of his punts, the fourth-best punt inside the 20 percentage in the AFC in 2022 (min. 60 punts).

Scott also registered a 41.5-yard net punting average, good for the fourth-best in the AFC among and players with at least 60 punts. His net punting average of 41.5 yards was the best by a Chargers punter in at least the last 20 seasons.

PUNT INSIDE THE 20 PCT., MIN. 60 PUNTS, AFC, 2022

Rank	Team	Player	Punts Inside the 20 Pct.
1.	Mia.	P Thomas Morstead	45.9
2.	Hou.	P Cameron Johnston	42.1
3.	Ind.	P Matt Haack	40.0
4.	LAC	P JK Scott	38.4
5.	Cle.	P Corey Bojorquez	37.7

NET PUNTING AVERAGE, MIN. 60 PUNTS, AFC, 2022

Rank	Team	Player	Net Punting Average
1.	Ten.	P Ryan Stonehouse	44.0
2.	Hou.	P Cameron Johnston	42.6
3.	Den.	P Corliss Waitman	41.5
4.	LAC	P JK Scott	41.5
5.	Ind.	P Matt Haack	41.2
6.	Pit.	P Pressley Harvin	41.1

Scott posted three-plus punts inside the 20-yard line in five games, tied for the most performances in the AFC in 2022.

MOST GAMES WITH THREE-PLUS PUNTS INSIDE THE 20-YARD LINE, AFC, 2022

Rank	Team	Player	Games
1.	LAC	P JK Scott	5
	Hou.	P Cameron Johnston	5
	Ind.	P Matt Haack	5
	Mia.	P Thomas Morstead	5
	Ten.	P Ryan Stonehouse	5
6.	Den.	P Corliss Waitman	4

DICKER SETS SINGLE-SEASON TEAM RECORD

In 10 games played with the Bolts in 2022, **K Cameron Dicker** made 19-of-20 field goal attempts (95.0 pct.). It's the best single-season field goal percentage in team history among players with at least 15 field goal attempts.

FIELD GOAL PCT., MIN. 15 ATTEMPTS, SINGLE SEASON, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Season	Player	Field Goal Pct. (Made-Att.)
1.	2022	K Cameron Dicker	95.0 (19-20)
2.	2018	K Michael Badgley	93.8 (15-16)
3.	2013	K Nick Novak	91.9 (34-37)
4.	2009	K Nate Kaeding	91.4 (32-35)
5.	1990	K John Carney	90.5 (19-21)

DICKER MAKES HIS KICKS

By making 45-of-46 kicks (97.8 pct.), **K Cameron Dicker** had second-best total kick percentage by a rookie kicker since the 1970 NFL-AFL Merger (min. 20 kicks). He also had the best field goal percentage by a rookie kicker over that span (min. 15 att.), making 21 of his 22 field goals (95.5 pct.).

TOTAL KICKING PCT., ROOKIE KICKERS, MIN. 20 KICKS, NFL, SINCE 1970

Rk.	Season	Team/s	Player	Total Kick Pct. (Made-Att.)
1.	2008	N.O.	K Garrett Hartley	100.0 (41-41)
2.	2022	Phi./LAC	K Cameron Dicker[^]	97.8 (45-46)
3.	2021	Det.	K Riley Patterson	96.7 (29-30)
4.	2012	Bal.	K Justin Tucker	96.0 (72-75)
5.	2012	Min.	K Blair Walsh ^{*†^}	95.9 (71-74)

FIELD GOAL PCT., ROOKIE KICKERS, MIN. 15 ATTEMPTS, NFL, SINCE 1970

Rk.	Season	Team/s	Player	Field Goal Pct. (Made-Att.)
1.	2022	Phi./LAC	K Cameron Dicker[^]	95.5 (21-22)
2.	2018	LAC	K Michael Badgley	93.8 (15-16)
3.	2012	Min.	K Blair Walsh ^{*†^}	92.1 (35-38)
4.	1997	Dal.	K Richie Cunningham [†]	91.9 (34-37)
5.	2012	Bal.	K Justin Tucker	90.9 (30-33)

**Pro Bowl Selection*

†Associated Press First-Team All-Pro

^Professional Football Writers of America All-Rookie

DICKER KICKS TRUE

K Cameron Dicker made three game-winning kicks with less than two minutes remaining in the fourth quarter or overtime this season, becoming the ninth rookie kicker ever to do so. He's just one of three rookie kickers ever to do so for two different teams.

ROOKIE KICKERS WITH THREE-PLUS GAME-WINNING FIELD GOALS WITH LESS THAN TWO MINUTES REMAINING, NFL, SINCE 2000

Rank	Season	Team/s	Player	Game-Winning FG
1.	2011	Dal.	K Dan Bailey	4
2.	2022	Phi./LAC	K Cameron Dicker	3
	2021	Cin.	K Evan McPherson	3
	2021	N.O./Was.	K Brian Johnson	3
	1998	S.F.	K Wade Richey	3
	1989	G.B.	K Chris Jacke	3
	1988	Was.	K Chip Lohmiller	3
	1979	Pit.	K Matt Bahr	3
	1978	LAR	K Frank Corral	3

ROOKIE KICKERS TO MAKE GAME-WINNING FIELD GOAL WITH LESS THAN TWO MINUTES REMAINING FOR MULTIPLE TEAMS, NFL, SINCE 1970

Season	Player	Teams
2022	K Cameron Dicker	Eagles, Chargers
2021	K Brian Johnson	Saints, Football Team
2018	K Matt McCrane	Raiders, Steelers

CAREER NUMBERS AGAINST DOLPHINS

13		KEENAN ALLEN						WR	
REGULAR SEASON RECEIVING									
Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Rec.	Yds	Avg.	Lg	TD	
11/17/13	at Mia.	L	1/1	3	45	15.0	17	0	
11/02/14	at Mia.	L	1/1	4	47	11.8	17	0	
09/17/17	Mia.	L	1/1	9	100	11.1	24	0	
09/29/19	at Mia.	W	1/1	5	48	9.6	20	0	
11/15/20	at Mia.	L	1/1	3	39	13.0	15	1	
12/11/22	Mia.	W	1/1	12	92	7.7	18	0	
Totals			2-4	6/6	36	371	10.3	24	1

11		CAMERON DICKER						K	
REGULAR SEASON KICKING									
Date	Opp.	Res.	GP	FGM	FGA	Pct.	Lg	XPM	Pts
12/11/22	Mia.	W	1	3	3	100.0	33	3	12
Totals			1-0	1	3	100.0	33	3	12

7		GERALD EVERETT						TE	
REGULAR SEASON RECEIVING									
Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Rec.	Yds	Avg.	Lg	TD	
12/11/22	Mia.	W	1/1	5	28	5.6	11	0	
Totals			1-0	1/1	5	28	5.6	11	0

97		JOEY BOSA										OLB						
REGULAR SEASON DEFENSE																		
Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Tot	Solo	Asst	Sk	Yds	TFL	QBH	INT	Yds	Lg	TD	PD	FF	FR	Yds
11/13/16	Mia.	L	1/3	1	0	1	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0
09/17/17	Mia.	L	1/1	5	5	0	0.0	0	1	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0
09/29/19	at Mia.	W	1/1	3	1	2	0.5	2	0	1	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0
Totals			1-2	3/3	9	6	3	0.5	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

43		MICHAEL DAVIS										CB						
REGULAR SEASON DEFENSE																		
Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Tot	Solo	Asst	Sk	Yds	TFL	QBH	INT	Yds	Lg	TD	PD	FF	FR	Yds
09/17/17	Mia.	L	1/0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0
09/29/19	at Mia.	W	1/1	3	3	0	0.0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
11/15/20	at Mia.	L	1/0	5	5	0	0.0	0	1	0	0	0	—	0	2	0	0	0
12/11/22	Mia.	W	1/1	2	2	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	2	0	0	0
Totals			2-2	4/2	10	10	0	0.0	0	1	0	1	0	0	5	0	0	0

30		AUSTIN EKELER										RB			
REGULAR SEASON OFFENSE															
Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Att	Yds	Avg.	Lg	TD	Rec.	Yds	Avg.	Lg	TD	Scrim. Yds	Scrim. TD
09/17/17	Mia.	W	1/0	0	0	—	—	0	0	0	—	—	0	0	0
09/29/19	at Mia.	L	1/1	18	60	3.3	9	1	5	62	12.4	18t	1	122	2
12/11/22	Mia.	W	1/1	15	45	3.0	12	1	8	59	7.4	21	0	104	1
Totals			2-1	3/2	33	105	3.2	12	2	13	121	9.3	21	1	226

7		GERALD EVERETT						TE	
REGULAR SEASON RECEIVING									
Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Rec.	Yds	Avg.	Lg	TD	
12/11/22	Mia.	W	1/1	5	28	5.6	11	0	
Totals			1-0	1/1	5	28	5.6	11	0

15		JALEN GUYTON						WR	
REGULAR SEASON RECEIVING									
Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Rec.	Yds	Avg.	Lg	TD	
11/15/20	at Mia.	L	1/0	4	24	6.0	9	0	
Totals			0-1	1/0	4	24	6.0	9	0

56		MORGAN FOX										DL						
REGULAR SEASON DEFENSE																		
Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Tot	Solo	Asst	Sk	Yds	TFL	QBH	INT	Yds	Lg	TD	PD	FF	FR	Yds
11/01/22	at Mia.	L	1/0	1	0	1	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0
11/28/21	at Mia.	L	1/0	2	0	2	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0
12/11/22	Mia.	W	1/1	2	1	1	1.0	12	1	1	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0
Totals			1-2	3/1	5	1	4	1.0	12	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

32		ALOHI GILMAN										S						
REGULAR SEASON DEFENSE																		
Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Tot	Solo	Asst	Sk	Yds	TFL	QBH	INT	Yds	Lg	TD	PD	FF	FR	Yds
11/15/20	at Mia.	L	1/0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0
12/11/22	Mia.	W	1/1	3	2	1	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	1	1	0	0
Totals			1-1	2/1	3	2	1	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0

CAREER NUMBERS AGAINST DOLPHINS

10 JUSTIN HERBERT QB

REGULAR SEASON PASSING

Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Cmp	Att	Pct.	Yds	Y/A	TD	INT	Lg	Sacks	Yds Lost	Rating
11/15/20	at Mia.	L	1/1	20	32	62.5	187	5.84	2	1	28	2	13	86.3
12/11/22	Mia.	W	1/1	39	51	76.5	367	7.20	1	0	55	4	17	102.3
Totals		1-1	2/2	59	83	71.1	554	6.67	3	1	55	6	30	96.2

REGULAR SEASON RUSHING

Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Att	Yds	Avg.	Lg	TD
11/15/20	at Mia.	L	1/1	4	10	2.5	7	1
12/11/22	Mia.	W	1/1	4	8	2.0	10	0
Totals		1-1	2/2	8	18	2.3	10	1

91 CHRISTOPHER HINTON DL

REGULAR SEASON DEFENSE

Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Tot	Solo	Asst	Sks	Yds	TFL	QBH	INT	Yds	Lg	TD	PD	FF	FR	Yds
12/11/22	Mia.	W	1/0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0
Totals		1-0	1/0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0

27 J.C. JACKSON CB

REGULAR SEASON DEFENSE

Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Tot	Solo	Asst	Sks	Yds	TFL	QBH	INT	Yds	Lg	TD	PD	FF	FR	Yds
09/30/18	Mia.	W	1/0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
12/09/18	at Mia.	L	1/1	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0
09/15/19	at Mia.	W	1/0	2	1	1	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	1	0	0	0
12/29/19	Mia.	L	1/1	7	6	1	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0
09/13/20	Mia.	W	1/0	2	2	0	0.0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	1	0
12/20/20	at Mia.	L	1/1	4	3	1	0.0	0	0	0	1	5	0	0	1	0	0	0
09/12/21	Mia.	L	1/1	3	3	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	1	0	0	0
09/01/22	at Mia.	L	1/1	4	2	2	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	1	0	0	0
Totals		3-5	8/5	22	17	5	0.0	0	1	0	3	5	5	0	7	0	1	0

98 AUSTIN JOHNSON DL

REGULAR SEASON DEFENSE

Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Tot	Solo	Asst	Sks	Yds	TFL	QBH	INT	Yds	Lg	TD	PD	FF	FR	Yds
10/09/16	at Mia.	W	1/0	1	1	0	0.0	0	1	0	0	0	—	0	1	0	0	0
10/08/17	at Mia.	L	1/0	1	1	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0
09/09/18	at Mia.	L	1/1	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0
12/05/21	at Mia.	L	1/1	5	2	3	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0
Totals		1-3	4/2	7	4	3	0.0	0	1	0	0	0	—	0	1	0	0	0

51 SEBASTIAN JOSEPH-DAY DL

REGULAR SEASON DEFENSE

Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Tot	Solo	Asst	Sks	Yds	TFL	QBH	INT	Yds	Lg	TD	PD	FF	FR	Yds
11/01/20	at Mia.	L	1/1	5	3	2	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0
Totals		0-1	1/1	5	3	2	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0

25 JOSHUA KELLEY RB

REGULAR SEASON OFFENSE

Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Att	Yds	Avg.	Lg	TD	Rec.	Yds	Avg.	Lg	TD	Scrim. Yds	Scrim. TD
11/15/20	at Mia.	L	1/0	7	21	3.0	8	0	0	0	—	—	0	21	0
12/11/22	Mia.	W	1/0	4	29	7.3	22	0	1	6	6.0	6	0	35	0
Totals		1-1	2/0	11	50	4.5	22	0	1	6	6.0	6	0	56	0

CAREER NUMBERS AGAINST DOLPHINS

6 ERIC KENDRICKS LB

REGULAR SEASON DEFENSE

Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Tot	Solo	Asst	Sks	Yds	TFL	QBH	INT	Yds	Lg	TD	PD	FF	FR	Yds
12/16/18	Mia.	W	1/1	6	3	3	1.0	12	1	1	0	0	—	0	1	0	0	0
10/16/22	at Mia.	W	1/1	11	7	4	0.0	0	1	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0
Totals		2-0	2/2	17	10	7	1.0	12	2	1	0	0	—	0	1	0	0	0

33 DEANE LEONARD S

REGULAR SEASON DEFENSE

Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Tot	Solo	Asst	Sks	Yds	TFL	QBH	INT	Yds	Lg	TD	PD	FF	FR	Yds
12/11/22	Mia.	W	1/0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0
Totals		1-0	1/0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0

52 KHALIL MACK OLB

REGULAR SEASON DEFENSE

Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Tot	Solo	Asst	Sks	Yds	TFL	QBH	INT	Yds	Lg	TD	PD	FF	FR	Yds
09/28/14	Mia.	L	1/1	5	5	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0
11/05/17	at Mia.	W	1/1	4	2	2	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0
10/14/18	at Mia.	L (OT)	1/1	2	1	1	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0
12/11/22	Mia.	W	1/1	3	0	3	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0
Totals		2-2	4/4	14	8	6	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0

9 KENNETH MURRAY JR. LB

REGULAR SEASON DEFENSE

Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Tot	Solo	Asst	Sks	Yds	TFL	QBH	INT	Yds	Lg	TD	PD	FF	FR	Yds
11/15/20	at Mia.	L	1/1	4	2	2	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0
12/11/22	Mia.	W	1/1	7	6	1	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0
Totals		1-1	2/2	11	8	3	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0

31 NICK NIEMANN LB

REGULAR SEASON DEFENSE

Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Tot	Solo	Asst	Sks	Yds	TFL	QBH	INT	Yds	Lg	TD	PD	FF	FR	Yds
12/11/22	Mia.	W	1/0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0
Totals		1-0	1/0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0

57 AMEN OGBONGBEMIGA LB

REGULAR SEASON DEFENSE

Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Tot	Solo	Asst	Sks	Yds	TFL	QBH	INT	Yds	Lg	TD	PD	FF	FR	Yds
12/11/22	Mia.	W	1/0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0
Totals		1-0	1/0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0

5 JOSH PALMER WR

REGULAR SEASON RECEIVING

Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Rec.	Yds	Avg.	Lg	TD
12/11/22	Mia.	W	1/0	4	53	13.3	18	0
Totals		1-0	1/0	4	53	13.3	18	0

88 TRE' MCKITTY TE

REGULAR SEASON RECEIVING

Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Rec.	Yds	Avg.	Lg	TD
12/11/22	Mia.	W	1/1	1	5	5.0	5	0
Totals		1-0	1/1	1	5	5.0	5	0

89 DONALD PARHAM JR. TE

REGULAR SEASON RECEIVING

Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Rec.	Yds	Avg.	Lg	TD
11/15/20	Mia.	W	1/1	1	13	13.0	13	0
Totals		1-0	1/1	1	13	13.0	13	0

16 JK SCOTT P

REGULAR SEASON PUNTING

Date	Opp.	Res.	GP	Punt	Blk	Yds.	Avg.	Lg	TB	I20
11/11/18	Mia.	W	1	1	1	37	37.0	37	0	1
12/11/22	Mia.	W	1	4	0	176	44.0	55	0	0
Totals		2-0	2	5	1	37	42.6	55	0	1

CAREER NUMBERS AGAINST DOLPHINS

94 **CHRIS RUMPH II** **OLB**

REGULAR SEASON DEFENSE

Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Tot	Solo	Asst	Sks	Yds	TFL	QBH	INT	Yds	Lg	TD	PD	FF	FR	Yds
12/11/22	Mia.	W	1/0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	–	0	0	0	0	0
Totals		1-0	1/0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	–	0	0	0	0	0

26 **ASANTE SAMUEL JR.** **CB**

REGULAR SEASON DEFENSE

Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Tot	Solo	Asst	Sks	Yds	TFL	QBH	INT	Yds	Lg	TD	PD	FF	FR	Yds
12/11/22	Mia.	W	1/1	3	3	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	–	0	1	0	0	0
Totals		1-0	1/1	3	3	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	–	0	1	0	0	0

28 **ISAIAH SPILLER** **RB**

REGULAR SEASON OFFENSE

Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Att	Yds	Avg.	Lg	TD	Rec.	Yds	Avg.	Lg	TD	Scrim. Yds	Scrim. TD
12/11/22	Mia.	W	1/0	0	0	–	–	0	0	0	–	–	0	0	0
Totals		1-0	1/0	0	0	–	–	0	0	0	–	–	0	0	0

36 **JA'SIR TAYLOR** **DB**

REGULAR SEASON DEFENSE

Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Tot	Solo	Asst	Sks	Yds	TFL	QBH	INT	Yds	Lg	TD	PD	FF	FR	Yds
12/11/22	Mia.	W	1/1	5	3	2	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	–	0	0	0	0	0
Totals		1-0	1/1	5	3	2	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	–	0	0	0	0	0

81 **MIKE WILLIAMS** **WR**

REGULAR SEASON RECEIVING

Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Rec.	Yds	Avg.	Lg	TD
11/15/20	at Mia.	L	1/1	2	38	19.0	28	0
12/11/22	Mia.	W	1/1	6	116	19.3	55	1
Totals		1-1	2/2	8	154	19.3	55	1

48 **STONE SMARTT** **TE**

REGULAR SEASON RECEIVING

Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Rec.	Yds	Avg.	Lg	TD
12/11/22	Mia.	W	1/0	1	8	8.0	8	0
Totals		1-0	1/0	1	8	8.0	8	0

22 **JT WOODS** **S**

REGULAR SEASON DEFENSE

Date	Opp.	Res.	GP/GS	Tot	Solo	Asst	Sks	Yds	TFL	QBH	INT	Yds	Lg	TD	PD	FF	FR	Yds
12/11/22	Mia.	W	1/0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	–	0	0	0	0	0
Totals		1-0	1/0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	–	0	0	0	0	0

2023 LOS ANGELES CHARGERS PRESEASON OFFENSIVE STATISTICS

Won 2, Lost 1

8/12/2023	W	34 - 17	at Los Angeles Rams
8/20/2023	L	17 - 22	New Orleans Saints
8/25/2023	W	23 - 12	at San Francisco 49ers

	Los Angeles Chargers	Opponent						
Total First Downs	58	48						
Rushing	28	15						
Passing	22	27						
Penalty	8	6						
3rd Down: Made/Att	12/39	13/39						
3rd Down Pct.	30.8%	33.3%						
4th Down: Made/Att	4/7	1/1						
4th Down Pct.	57.1%	100.0%						
Possession Avg.	29:47	30:13						
Total Net Yards	933	912						
Avg. Per Game	311.0	304.0						
Total Plays	189	179						
Avg. Per Play	4.9	5.1						
Net Yards Rushing	601	285						
Avg. Per Game	200.3	95.0						
Total Rushes	94	74						
Net Yards Passing	332	627						
Avg. Per Game	110.7	209.0						
Sacked/Yards Lost	10/82	6/47						
Gross Yards	414	674						
Attempts/Completions	85/50	99/57						
Completion Pct.	58.8%	57.6%						
Had Intercepted	2	1						
Punts/Average	13/48.5	18/45.7						
Net Punting Avg.	45.2	39.3						
Penalties/Yards	17/142	29/307						
Fumbles/Ball Lost	3/1	3/1						
Touchdowns	8	5						
Rushing	5	3						
Passing	2	2						
Returns	1	0						
Score By Periods	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	OT	Pts		
Team	10	30	10	24	0	74		
Opponents	6	20	16	9	0	51		
Scoring	TD	Ru	Pa	Rt	PAT	FG	2Pt	Pts
C.Dicker	0	0	0	0	5/5	4/4	0	17
E.Dotson	2	2	0	0	0/0	0/0	0	12
E.Stick	2	2	0	0	0/0	0/0	0	12
D.Hopkins	0	0	0	0	3/3	2/2	0	9
D.Davis	1	0	0	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Q.Johnston	1	0	1	0	0/0	0/0	0	6
H.Kampmoyer	1	0	1	0	0/0	0/0	0	6
J.Kelley	1	1	0	0	0/0	0/0	0	6
Team	8	5	2	1	8/8	6/6	0	74
Opponents	5	3	2	0	3/4	6/7	0	51

2-Pt. Conversions: Team 0/0, Opponents: 0/1
 Sacks: B.Okoye 1.0, A.Farmer 1.0, B.Lynch 1.0, C.Rumph 1.0,
 C.Hinton 1.0, D.Henley 0.5, C.Kemp 0.5 **Team: 6.0, Opponents: 10.0**

Rushing	No.	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
E.Dotson	18	146	8.1	40t	2
J.Kelley	15	141	9.4	75t	1
E.Stick	11	82	7.5	21	2
M.Duggan	10	71	7.1	20	0
I.Spiller	15	68	4.5	18	0
T.Hoosman	12	43	3.6	12	0
D.Davis	2	19	9.5	16	0
A.Shampklin	3	10	3.3	11	0
D.Shepherd	2	10	5.0	11	0
L.Rountree	5	9	1.8	6	0
Z.Horvath	1	2	2.0	2	0
Team	94	601	6.4	75t	5
Opponents	74	285	3.9	22	3

Receiving	No.	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
K.Doss	9	95	10.6	28	0
Q.Johnston	8	62	7.8	16	1
T.Bynum	5	60	12.0	39	0
D.Davis	5	45	9.0	13	0
H.Kampmoyer	5	41	8.2	14	1
S.Smartt	5	38	7.6	19	0
I.Spiller	2	11	5.5	7	0
T.Hoosman	2	5	2.5	3	0
T.McKitty	2	-3	-1.5	2	0
O.Wilson	1	14	14.0	14	0
D.Parham	1	13	13.0	13	0
J.Hightower	1	10	10.0	10	0
L.Rountree	1	10	10.0	10	0
E.Dotson	1	9	9.0	9	0
J.Kelley	1	5	5.0	5	0
D.Shepherd	1	-1	-1.0	-1	0
M.Ezeike	0	0	0.0	0	0
M.Wright	0	0	0.0	0	0
Team	50	414	8.3	39	2
Opponents	57	674	11.8	53	2

Interceptions	No.	Yds	Avg	Long	TD			
D.Henley	1	16	16.0	16	0			
Team	1	16	16.0	16	0			
Opponents	2	24	12.0	19	0			
Punting	No	Yds	Avg	Net	TB	In	Lg	B
J.Scott	13	631	48.5	45.2	0	4	61	0
Team	13	631	48.5	45.2	0	4	61	0
Opponents	18	822	45.7	39.3	1	6	62	0

Punt Returns	Ret	FC	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
D.Davis	5	2	86	17.2	81t	1
J.Hightower	2	0	5	2.5	5	0
D.Shepherd	1	1	3	3.0	3	0
O.Wilson	1	1	0	0.0	0	0
Team	9	4	94	10.4	81t	1
Opponents	8	3	44	5.5	17	0

Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
D.Davis	5	97	19.4	29	0
E.Dotson	2	43	21.5	22	0
Team	7	140	20.0	29	0
Opponents	7	138	19.7	32	0

Field Goals	1-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+
C.Dicker	0/0	2/2	1/1	0/0	1/1
D.Hopkins	0/0	2/2	0/0	0/0	0/0
Team	0/0	4/4	1/1	0/0	1/1
Opponents	0/0	0/0	5/5	0/1	1/1

Fumbles Lost: E.Stick 1 **Total: 1**
 Opponent Fumble Recoveries: D.Leonard 1 **Total: 1**

Passing	Att	Cmp	Yds	Cmp%	Yds/Att	TD	TD%	Int	Int%	Long	Sack	Lost	Rating
E.Stick	73	44	380	60.3%	5.2	1	1.4%	2	2.7%	39	7/	59	67.2
M.Duggan	12	6	34	50.0%	2.8	1	8.3%	0	0.0%	10	3/	23	84.0
Team	85	50	414	58.8%	4.9	2	2.4%	2	2.4%	39	10/	82	69.5
Opponents	99	57	674	57.6%	6.8	2	2.0%	1	1.0%	53	6/	47	80.9

2023 LOS ANGELES CHARGERS PRESEASON DEFENSIVE STATISTICS

Official Press Box Totals — Confirmed by league review.

Player	— Tackles —						— Fumbles —					
	Total	Solo	Asst.	Sacks	Yards	TFLs	QB Hits	Interceptions	Passes Def.	Forced	Recoveries	
Daiyan Henley	13	9	4	0.5	4	0	1	1	4	0	0	
JT Woods	13	8	5	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	
Amen Ogbongbemiga	11	6	5	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	
Tiawan Mullen	10	7	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	
Blake Lynch	10	6	4	1	9	1	1	0	0	0	0	
Cam Brown	9	8	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	
Andrew Farmer	7	4	3	1	11	1	2	0	0	0	0	
Mikel Jones	7	4	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	
Jerrold Clark	7	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Raheem Layne	6	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Chris Hinton	6	4	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	
AJ Finley	6	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Deane Leonard	6	3	3	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	1	
Ja'Sir Taylor	6	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	
Michael Jaquet	6	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	
Amechi Uzodinma	6	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Brevin Allen	6	0	6	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	
Nick Niemann	4	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	
CJ Okoye	4	2	2	1	16	1	1	0	0	0	0	
Carlo Kemp	4	2	2	0.5	4	0	3	0	0	1	0	
David Moad	4	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Scott Matlock	4	2	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	
Ty Shelby	3	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	
Matt Hankins	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	
Terrance Lang	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	
Tuli Tuipulotu	2	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	
Mark Webb Jr.	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Chris Rumph II.	1	1	0	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	
Tyler Baker-Williams	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Tae Crowder	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Totals	170	101	69	6	47	10	17	1	17	1	1	
<i>Defensive Backs</i>	<i>74</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	
<i>Linebackers</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>1.5</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	
<i>Outside Linebackers</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>1.5</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	
<i>Defensive Line</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	

SPECIAL TEAMS TACKLES

Player	Total Tackles
Tiawan Mullen	2
Tuli Tuipulotu	2
Cam Brown	1
Keelan Doss	1
Josh Harris	1
Daiyan Henley	1
Zander Horvath	1
Raheem Layne	1
Deane Leonard	1
Mikel Jones	1
AJ Finley	1
Hunter Kampmoyer	1
Tre' McKitty	1
Stone Smartt	1
Amechi Uzodinma	1
Totals	17

SUPPLEMENTAL BIOS



TANNER MUSE ⚡ 44

LINEBACKER | CLEMSON

6-2 | 227 lbs | BELMONT, N.C.

WAIVERS (PIT) — 2023

EXPERIENCE: 4TH NFL SEASON

1ST YEAR WITH CHARGERS

2023: After spending the offseason program and training camp with the Pittsburgh Steelers, was waived during final roster cuts and subsequently claimed by the Los Angeles Chargers.

2022: In his third NFL season, appeared in all 17 games for the Seattle Seahawks, totaling nine tackles (four solo), along with one pass defended...Finished the season with a career-high seven special teams tackles, ranking tied for fourth-most on the team over the duration of the season...Through the first four weeks of the regular season, led the Seahawks' special teams unit in total tackles...Made first career start in Seattle's Week 18 overtime win against the Rams...The following week, received the starting nod in the Wild Card Round matchup against the 49ers, his first career postseason appearance and starting nod...**vs. Denver (Sept. 12):** Opened the season with two special teams stops, leading the Seahawks in the Week 1 win over the Broncos on *Monday Night Football*...Both tackles occurred on kickoff coverage...**at LA Rams (Dec. 4):** Secured the stop on the game's opening kickoff, collecting his career-best sixth special teams tackle of the season...**vs. San Francisco (Dec. 15):** Totaled a career-high four tackles (one solo) on *Thursday Night Football* against the division-rival 49ers...Secured three of the tackles on the game's final drive...**vs. NY Jets (Jan. 1):** Amassed two solo stops, a single-game career-best, as well as his first-career pass defended...In the third quarter, deflected away a pass intended for WR Garrett Wilson, causing the incompleteness...**vs. LA Rams (Jan. 8):** Started at LB, the first starting nod of his career, and notched three tackles (two solo) in the overtime home victory...**at San Francisco (NFC Wild Card, Jan. 14):** Started at LB, marking his first career postseason appearance and postseason start, securing four tackles (two solo) and one pass defended...On third-and-three late in the second quarter, provided coverage on WR Deebo Samuel and knocked away a QB Brock Purdy pass intended for Samuel, forcing a third-down for the 49ers...On San Francisco's opening drive of the third quarter, totaled three tackles inside of the 10-yard line, thwarting RB Christian McCaffrey on three-straight rushes up the middle...Also partnered with OLB Bruce Irvin on a run stuff of McCaffrey late in the third quarter, causing a loss of one yard.

2021: Appeared in six games for the Seahawks, including each of the final four outings...Primarily contributed on special teams totaling, four stops...**vs. Jacksonville (Oct. 31):** In his NFL debut, secured two special teams tackles, one on kickoff coverage and one on punt coverage.

2021: After being selected by the Las Vegas Raiders in the third round (100th overall) of the 2020 NFL Draft, spent the duration of his rookie season on Reserve/Injured (toe).

COLLEGE: Appeared in 59 career games (39 starts) at safety for Clemson (2015-19), finishing his collegiate career with the most career games played in program history...Totaled 192 tackles (105 solo), four sacks, seven interceptions, 15 passes defended, one forced fumble and one fumble recovery returned for a touchdown during his career with the Tigers...As team captain as a senior in 2019, was also named a Jim Thorpe Award semifinalist, which is presented annually to the top defensive back in the nation, and earned third-team All-America and first-team All-Atlantic Coast Conference honors.

TANNER MUSE NFL STATISTICS

Year	Team	GP	GS	— Tackles —						— Interceptions —					— Fumbles —				
				Total	Solo	Asst	Sacks	Yds	TFL	No.	Yds	Lg	TD	PD	FF	FR	Yds	ST Tackles	
2021	Seattle	6	0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2022	Seattle	17	1	9	5	4	0.0	0	0	0	0	—	0	1	0	0	0	0	
NFL Totals		23	1	9	5	4	0.0	0	0	0	0	—	0	1	0	0	0	0	
POSTSEASON		GP	GS	— Tackles —						— Interceptions —					— Fumbles —				
Year	Team			Total	Solo	Asst	Sacks	Yds	TFL	No.	Yds	Lg	TD	PD	FF	FR	Yds	ST Tackles	
2022	Seattle	1	1	4	2	2	0.0	0	0	0	0	—	0	1	0	0	0	0	
Postseason Totals		1	1	4	2	2	0.0	0	0	0	0	—	0	1	0	0	0	0	

2023 LOS ANGELES CHARGERS NUMERICAL ROSTER

ACTIVE ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Age	Exp.	College	Hometown	How Acq.
0	Daiyan Henley	LB	6-0	225	23	R	Washington State	Los Angeles, Calif.	D3-'23
1	Quentin Johnston	WR	6-2	208	21	R	TCU	Temple, Texas	D1-'23
2	Easton Stick	QB	6-1	224	27	5	North Dakota State	Omaha, Neb.	D5-'19
3	Derwin James Jr.	S	6-2	215	27	6	Florida State	Haines City, Fla.	D1-'18
5	Joshua Palmer	WR	6-1	210	23	3	Tennessee	Brampton, Ontario, Canada	D3a-'21
6	Eric Kendricks	LB	6-0	232	31	9	UCLA	Fresno, Calif.	FA-'23
7	Gerald Everett	TE	6-3	240	29	7	South Alabama	Atlanta, Ga.	UFA (Sea)-'22
9	Kenneth Murray Jr.	LB	6-2	241	24	4	Oklahoma	Houston, Texas	D1b-'20
10	Justin Herbert	QB	6-6	236	25	4	Oregon	Eugene, Ore.	D1a-'20
11	Cameron Dicker	K	6-1	216	23	2	Texas	Austin, Texas	FA-'22
12	Derius Davis	WR	5-8	165	22	R	TCU	St. Francisville, La.	D4-'23
13	Keenan Allen	WR	6-2	211	31	11	California	Greensboro, N.C.	D3-'13
16	JK Scott	P	6-5	208	27	5	Alabama	Denver, Colo.	FA-'22
22	JT Woods	S	6-2	193	23	2	Baylor	San Antonio, Texas	D3-'22
24	AJ Finley	S	6-0	188	21	R	Mississippi	Mobile, Ala.	FA-'23
25	Joshua Kelley	RB	5-11	212	25	4	UCLA	Lancaster, Calif.	D4-'20
26	Asante Samuel Jr.	CB	5-10	180	23	3	Florida State	Fort Lauderdale, Fla.	D2-'21
27	J.C. Jackson	CB	6-1	198	27	6	Maryland	Immokalee, Fla.	UFA (NE)-'22
28	Isaiah Spiller	RB	6-1	215	22	2	Texas A&M	Spring, Texas	D4-'22
30	Austin Ekeler	RB	5-10	200	28	7	Western State Colorado	Eaton, Colo.	FA-'17
31	Nick Niemann	LB	6-3	234	25	3	Iowa	Sycamore, Ill.	D6a-'21
32	Alohi Gilman	S	5-10	201	25	4	Notre Dame	Laie, Hawaii	D6-'20
33	Deane Leonard	DB	6-0	195	23	2	Mississippi	Calgary, Alberta, Canada	D7a-'22
36	Ja'Sir Taylor	DB	5-10	185	24	2	Wake Forest	Asbury Park, N.J.	D6b-'22
41	Raheem Layne	S	5-11	192	24	2	Indiana	Deland, Fla.	FA-'22
42	Elijah Dotson	RB	5-9	202	24	R	Northern Colorado	Sacramento, Calif.	FA-'23
43	Michael Davis	CB	6-2	196	28	7	Brigham Young	Glendale, Calif.	FA-'17
44	Tanner Muse	LB	6-2	227	26	4	Clemson	Belmont, N.C.	W (Pit)-'23
45	Tuli Tuipulotu	OLB	6-3	266	21	R	Southern California	Hawthorne, Calif.	D2-'23
47	Josh Harris	LS	6-1	224	34	12	Auburn	Carrollton, Ga.	UFA (Atl)-'22
51	Sebastian Joseph-Day	DL	6-4	310	28	6	Rutgers	Stroudsburg, Pa.	UFA (LAR)-'22
52	Khalil Mack	OLB	6-3	269	32	10	Buffalo	Fort Pierce, Fla.	T (Chi)-'22
56	Morgan Fox	DL	6-3	275	28	7	Colorado State-Pueblo	Fountain, Colo.	FA-'22
57	Amen Ogbongbemiga	LB	6-0	231	25	3	Oklahoma State	Calgary, Alberta, Canada	FA-'21
63	Corey Linsley	C	6-3	301	32	10	Ohio State	Boardman, Ohio	UFA (GB)-'21
64	Brenden Jaimes	G/T	6-5	300	24	3	Nebraska	Austin, Texas	D5-'21
68	Jamaree Salyer	OL	6-4	325	23	2	Georgia	Atlanta, Ga.	D6a-'22
70	Rashawn Slater	T	6-4	315	24	3	Northwestern	Sugar Land, Texas	D1-'21
71	Jordan McFadden	OL	6-2	303	23	R	Clemson	Spartanburg, S.C.	D5-'23
73	Foster Sarell	T	6-6	322	25	2	Stanford	Tacoma, Wash.	FA-'21
76	Will Clapp	C/G	6-5	311	27	6	Louisiana State	New Orleans, La.	FA-'22
77	Zion Johnson	G	6-3	316	23	2	Boston College	Bowie, Md.	D1-'22
79	Trey Pipkins III	T	6-6	307	26	5	Sioux Falls	Apple Valley, Minn.	D3-'19
81	Mike Williams	WR	6-4	218	28	7	Clemson	Santee, S.C.	D1-'17
84	Stone Smartt	TE	6-4	226	24	2	Old Dominion	Sacramento, Calif.	FA-'22
88	Tre' McKitty	TE	6-4	246	24	3	Georgia	Wesley Chapel, Fla.	D3b-'21
89	Donald Parham Jr.	TE	6-8	237	26	4	Stetson	Lakeland, Fla.	FA-'20
91	Christopher Hinton	DL	6-4	310	22	1	Michigan	Johns Creek, Ga.	FA-'22
94	Chris Rumph II	OLB	6-2	244	24	3	Duke	Gainesville, Fla.	D4-'21
95	Nick Williams	DL	6-4	310	33	9	Samford	Birmingham, Ala.	FA-'23
97	Joey Bosa	OLB	6-5	280	28	8	Ohio State	Fort Lauderdale, Fla.	D1-'16
98	Austin Johnson	DL	6-4	314	29	8	Penn State	Galloway, N.J.	UFA (NYG)-'22
99	Scott Matlock	DL	6-4	296	23	R	Boise State	Homedale, Idaho	D6-'23

PRACTICE SQUAD

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Age	Exp.	College	Hometown	How Acq.
8	Max Duggan	QB	6-1	207	22	R	TCU	Council Bluffs, Iowa	D7-'23
20	Dean Marlowe	S	6-1	205	31	8	James Madison	Queens, N.Y.	FA-'23
23	Matt Hankins	CB	5-11	185	24	1	Iowa	Lewisville, Texas	FA-'23
29	Chris Wilcox	CB	6-2	195	25	1	Brigham Young	Fontana, Calif.	FA-'23
35	Terrell Bynum	WR	6-0	188	25	R	Southern California	Long Beach, Calif.	FA-'23
67	CJ Okoye	DL	6-6	315	21	R	—	Abuja, Nigeria	FA-'23
72	Jerrrod Clark	DL	6-3	334	23	R	Coastal Carolina	Dorchester, Mass.	FA-'23
75	Austen Pleasants	G/T	6-7	330	26	1	Ohio	Ironton, Ohio	FA-'22
78	Zack Bailey	T	6-5	300	27	2	South Carolina	Summerville, S.C.	W (Was)-'22
82	Alex Erickson	WR	6-0	195	30	7	Wisconsin	Madison, Wis.	FA-'23
83	Nick Vannett	TE	6-5	257	30	8	Ohio State	Westerville, Ohio	FA-'23
86	Keelan Doss	WR	6-3	215	27	2	UC Davis	Alameda, Calif.	FA-'22
87	Hunter Kampmoyer	TE	6-4	243	25	1	Oregon	Bishop, Calif.	FA-'21
90	Brevin Allen	OLB	6-3	265	22	R	Campbell	Greensboro, N.C.	FA-'23
92	Andrew Farmer	OLB	6-4	250	23	R	Lane (Tenn.)	Jacksonville, Fla.	FA-'23
96	Christian Covington	DL	6-2	300	29	9	Rice	Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada	FA-'23

RESERVE/INJURED

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Age	Exp.	College	Hometown	How Acq.
35	Amechi Uzodinma	CB	5-11	189	23	R	Ball State	Orlando, Fla.	FA-'23
38	Milton Wright	WR	6-3	195	22	R	Purdue	Louisville, Ky.	FA-'23
62	Andrew Trainer	T	6-7	320	25	2	William & Mary	Alexandria, Va.	FA-'22

RESERVE/PHYSICALLY UNABLE TO PERFORM

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Age	Exp.	College	Hometown	How Acq.
15	Jalen Guyton	WR	6-1	212	26	4	North Texas	Allen, Texas	FA-'19
93	Otito Ogbonnia	DL	6-4	320	23	2	UCLA	Houston, Texas	D5-'22

2023 LOS ANGELES CHARGERS ALPHABETICAL ROSTER

ACTIVE ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	DOB	Exp.	College	Hometown	How Acq.
13	Allen, Keenan	WR	6-2	211	4/27/92	11	California	Greensboro, N.C.	
97	Bosa, Joey	OLB	6-5	280	7/11/95	8	Ohio State	Fort Lauderdale, Fla.	D1-'16
76	Clapp, Will	C/G	6-5	311	12/10/95	6	Louisiana State	New Orleans, La.	FA-'22
12	Davis, Derius	WR	5-8	165	9/11/00	R	TCU	St. Francisville, La.	D4-'23
43	Davis, Michael	CB	6-2	196	1/6/95	7	Brigham Young	Glendale, Calif.	FA-'17
15	Dicker, Cameron	K	6-1	216	5/6/00	2	Texas	Austin, Texas	FA-'22
42	Dotson, Elijah	RB	5-9	202	1/19/99	R	Northern Colorado	Sacramento, Calif.	FA-'23
30	Ekeler, Austin	RB	5-10	200	5/17/95	7	Western State Colorado	Eaton, Colo.	FA-'17
7	Everett, Gerald	TE	6-3	240	6/25/94	7	South Alabama	Atlanta, Ga.	UFA (Sea)-'22
24	Finley, AJ	S	6-0	188	9/14/01	R	Mississippi	Mobile, Ala.	FA-'23
56	Fox, Morgan	DL	6-3	275	9/12/94	7	Colorado State-Pueblo	Fountain, Colo.	FA-'22
32	Gilman, Alohi	S	5-10	201	9/17/97	4	Notre Dame	Laie, Hawaii	D6-'20
47	Harris, Josh	LS	6-1	224	4/27/89	12	Auburn	Carrollton, Ga.	UFA (Atl)-'22
0	Henley, Daiyan	LB	6-0	225	11/18/99	R	Washington State	Los Angeles, Calif.	D3-'23
10	Herbert, Justin	QB	6-6	236	3/10/98	4	Oregon	Eugene, Ore.	D1a-'20
91	Hinton, Christopher	DL	6-4	310	9/14/00	1	Michigan	Johns Creek, Ga.	FA-'22
27	Jackson, J.C.	CB	6-1	198	11/17/95	6	Maryland	Immokalee, Fla.	UFA (NE)-'22
64	James, Brenden	G/T	6-5	300	5/28/99	3	Nebraska	Austin, Texas	D5-'21
3	James Jr., Derwin	S	6-2	215	8/3/96	6	Florida State	Haines City, Fla.	D1-'18
98	Johnson, Austin	DL	6-4	314	5/8/94	8	Penn State	Galloway, N.J.	UFA (NYG)-'22
77	Johnson, Zion	G	6-3	316	11/18/99	2	Boston College	Bowie, Md.	D1-'22
1	Johnston, Quentin	WR	6-2	208	9/6/01	R	TCU	Temple, Texas	D1-'23
51	Joseph-Day, Sebastian	DL	6-4	310	3/21/95	6	Rutgers	Stroudsburg, Pa.	UFA (LAR)-'22
25	Kelley, Joshua	RB	5-11	212	11/20/97	4	UCLA	Lancaster, Calif.	D4-'20
6	Kendricks, Eric	LB	6-0	232	2/29/92	9	UCLA	Fresno, Calif.	FA-'23
41	Layne, Raheem	S	5-11	192	7/2/99	2	Indiana	Deland, Fla.	FA-'22
33	Leonard, Deane	DB	6-0	195	11/20/99	2	Mississippi	Calgary, Alberta, Canada	D7a-'22
63	Linsley, Corey	C	6-3	301	7/27/91	10	Ohio State	Boardman, Ohio	UFA (GB)-'21
52	Mack, Khalil	OLB	6-3	269	2/22/91	10	Buffalo	Fort Pierce, Fla.	T (Chi)-'22
99	Matlock, Scott	DL	6-4	296	6/28/00	R	Boise State	Homedale, Idaho	D6-'23
71	McFadden, Jordan	OL	6-2	303	11/16/99	R	Clemson	Spartanburg, S.C.	D5-'23
88	McKitty, Tre'	TE	6-4	246	1/12/99	3	Georgia	Wesley Chapel, Fla.	D3b-'21
9	Murray Jr., Kenneth	LB	6-2	241	11/16/98	4	Oklahoma	Houston, Texas	D1b-'20
44	Muse, Tanner	LB	6-2	227	9/6/96	4	Clemson	Belmont, N.C.	FA-'23
31	Niemann, Nick	LB	6-3	234	12/2/97	3	Iowa	Sycamore, Ill.	D6a-'21
57	Ogbongbemiga, Amen	LB	6-0	231	9/4/98	3	Oklahoma State	Calgary, Alberta, Canada	FA-'21
5	Palmer, Joshua	WR	6-1	210	9/22/99	3	Tennessee	Brampton, Ontario, Canada	D3a-'21
89	Parham Jr., Donald	TE	6-8	237	8/16/97	4	Stetson	Lakeland, Fla.	FA-'20
79	Pipkins III, Trey	T	6-6	307	9/5/96	5	Sioux Falls	Apple Valley, Minn.	D3-'19
94	Rumph II, Chris	OLB	6-2	244	10/19/98	3	Duke	Gainesville, Fla.	D4-'21
68	Salyer, Jamaree	OL	6-4	325	7/13/00	2	Georgia	Atlanta, Ga.	D6a-'22
26	Samuel Jr., Asante	CB	5-10	180	10/3/99	3	Florida State	Fort Lauderdale, Fla.	D2-'21
73	Sarell, Foster	T	6-6	322	8/28/98	2	Stanford	Tacoma, Wash.	FA-'21
16	Scott, JK	P	6-5	208	10/30/95	5	Alabama	Denver, Colo.	FA-'22
70	Slater, Rashawn	T	6-4	315	3/26/99	3	Northwestern	Sugar Land, Texas	D1-'21
84	Smartt, Stone	TE	6-4	226	10/4/98	2	Old Dominion	Sacramento, Calif.	FA-'22
28	Spiller, Isaiah	RB	6-1	215	8/9/01	2	Texas A&M	Spring, Texas	D4-'22
2	Stick, Easton	QB	6-1	224	9/15/95	5	North Dakota State	Omaha, Neb.	D5-'19
36	Taylor, Ja'Sir	DB	5-10	185	1/8/99	2	Wake Forest	Asbury Park, N.J.	D6b-'22
45	Tuipulotu, Tuli	OLB	6-3	266	9/3/02	R	Southern California	Hawthorne, Calif.	D2-'23
81	Williams, Mike	WR	6-4	218	10/4/94	7	Clemson	Santee, S.C.	D1-'17
95	Williams, Nick	DL	6-4	310	2/21/90	9	Samford	Birmingham, Ala.	FA-'23
22	Woods, JT	S	6-2	193	6/10/00	2	Baylor	San Antonio, Texas	D3-'22

PRACTICE SQUAD

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	DOB	Exp.	College	Hometown	How Acq.
90	Allen, Brevin	OLB	6-3	265	9/22/00	R	Campbell	Greensboro, N.C.	FA-'23
78	Bailey, Zack	T	6-5	300	11/8/95	2	South Carolina	Summerville, S.C.	W (Was)-'22
35	Bynum, Terrell	WR	6-0	188	8/3/98	R	Southern California	Long Beach, Calif.	FA-'23
72	Clark, Jerrod	DL	6-3	334	11/16/99	R	Coastal Carolina	Dorchester, Mass.	FA-'23
96	Covington, Christian	DL	6-2	300	10/16/93	8	Rice	Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada	FA-'21
86	Doss, Keelan	WR	6-3	215	3/21/96	2	UC Davis	Alameda, Calif.	FA-'22
8	Duggan, Max	QB	6-1	207	3/12/01	R	TCU	Council Bluffs, Iowa	D7-'23
82	Erickson, Alex	WR	6-0	195	11/6/92	7	Wisconsin	Madison, Wis.	FA-'23
92	Farmer, Andrew	OLB	6-4	250	4/19/00	R	Lane (Tenn.)	Jacksonville, Fla.	FA-'23
23	Hankins, Matt	CB	5-11	185	2/22/99	1	Iowa	Lewisville, Texas	FA-'23
87	Kampmoyer, Hunter	TE	6-4	243	2/6/98	1	Oregon	Bishop, Calif.	FA-'21
20	Marlowe, Dean	S	6-1	205	7/25/92	8	James Madison	Queens, N.Y.	FA-'23
67	Okoye, CJ	DL	6-6	315	10/20/01	R	-	Abuja, Nigeria	FA-'23
75	Pleasants, Austen	G/T	6-7	330	8/22/97	1	Ohio	Ironton, Ohio	FA-'22
83	Vannett, Nick	TE	6-5	257	3/6/93	8	Ohio State	Westerville, Ohio	FA-'23
29	Wilcox, Chris	CB	6-2	195	10/30/97	1	Brigham Young	Fontana, Calif.	FA-'23

RESERVE/INJURED

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	DOB	Exp.	College	Hometown	How Acq.
62	Trainer, Andrew	T	6-7	320	12/18/97	2	William & Mary	Alexandria, Va.	FA-'22
35	Uzodinma, Amechi	CB	5-11	189	6/1/00	R	Ball State	Orlando, Fla.	FA-'23
38	Wright, Milton	WR	6-3	195	9/28/00	R	Purdue	Louisville, Ky.	FA-'23

RESERVE/PHYSICALLY UNABLE TO PERFORM

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	DOB	Exp.	College	Hometown	How Acq.
15	Guyton, Jalen	WR	6-1	212	6/7/97	4	North Texas	Allen, Texas	FA-'19
93	Ogbonnia, Otito	DL	6-4	320	8/25/00	2	UCLA	Houston, Texas	D5-'22

2023 LOS ANGELES CHARGERS POSITION ROSTER

QUARTERBACKS (2)

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Age	Exp.	College	Hometown	How Acq.
2	Easton Stick	QB	6-1	224	27	5	North Dakota State	Omaha, Neb.	D5-'19
10	Justin Herbert	QB	6-6	236	25	4	Oregon	Eugene, Ore.	D1a-'20

RUNNING BACKS (4)

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Age	Exp.	College	Hometown	How Acq.
25	Joshua Kelley	RB	5-11	212	25	4	UCLA	Lancaster, Calif.	D4-'20
28	Isaiah Spiller	RB	6-1	215	22	2	Texas A&M	Spring, Texas	D4-'22
30	Austin Ekeler	RB	5-10	200	28	7	Western State Colorado	Eaton, Colo.	FA-'17
42	Elijah Dotson	RB	5-9	202	24	R	Northern Colorado	Sacramento, Calif.	FA-'23

WIDE RECEIVERS (5)

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Age	Exp.	College	Hometown	How Acq.
1	Quentin Johnston	WR	6-2	208	21	R	TCU	Temple, Texas	D1-'23
5	Joshua Palmer	WR	6-1	210	23	3	Tennessee	Brampton, Ontario, Canada	D3a-'21
12	Derius Davis	WR	5-8	165	22	R	TCU	St. Francisville, La.	D4-'23
13	Keenan Allen	WR	6-2	211	31	11	California	Greensboro, N.C.	D3-'13
81	Mike Williams	WR	6-4	218	28	7	Clemson	Santee, S.C.	D1-'17

TIGHT ENDS (4)

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Age	Exp.	College	Hometown	How Acq.
7	Gerald Everett	TE	6-3	240	29	7	South Alabama	Atlanta, Ga.	UFA (Sea)-'22
48	Stone Smartt	TE	6-4	226	24	2	Old Dominion	Sacramento, Calif.	FA-'22
88	Tre' McKitty	TE	6-4	246	24	3	Georgia	Wesley Chapel, Fla.	D3b-'21
89	Donald Parham Jr.	TE	6-8	237	26	4	Stetson	Lakeland, Fla.	FA-'20

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN (9)

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Age	Exp.	College	Hometown	How Acq.
63	Corey Linsley	C	6-3	301	32	10	Ohio State	Boardman, Ohio	UFA (GB)-'21
64	Brenden Jaimes	G/T	6-5	300	24	3	Nebraska	Austin, Texas	D5-'21
68	Jamaree Salyer	OL	6-4	325	23	2	Georgia	Atlanta, Ga.	D6a-'22
70	Rashawn Slater	T	6-4	315	24	3	Northwestern	Sugar Land, Texas	D1-'21
71	Jordan McFadden	OL	6-2	303	23	R	Clemson	Spartanburg, S.C.	D5-'23
73	Foster Sarell	T	6-6	322	25	2	Stanford	Tacoma, Wash.	FA-'21
76	Will Clapp	C/G	6-5	311	27	6	Louisiana State	New Orleans, La.	FA-'22
77	Zion Johnson	G	6-3	316	23	2	Boston College	Bowie, Md.	D1-'22
79	Trey Pipkins III	T	6-6	307	26	5	Sioux Falls	Apple Valley, Minn.	D3-'19

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN (6)

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Age	Exp.	College	Hometown	How Acq.
51	Sebastian Joseph-Day	DL	6-4	310	28	6	Rutgers	Stroudsburg, Pa.	UFA (LAR)-'22
56	Morgan Fox	DL	6-3	275	28	7	Colorado State-Pueblo	Fountain, Colo.	FA-'22
91	Christopher Hinton	DL	6-4	310	22	1	Michigan	Johns Creek, Ga.	FA-'22
95	Nick Williams	DL	6-4	310	33	9	Samford	Birmingham, Ala.	FA-'23
98	Austin Johnson	DL	6-4	314	29	8	Penn State	Galloway, N.J.	UFA (NYG)-'22
99	Scott Matlock	DL	6-4	296	23	R	Boise State	Homedale, Idaho	D6-'23

LINEBACKERS (6)

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Age	Exp.	College	Hometown	How Acq.
0	Daiyan Henley	LB	6-0	225	23	R	Washington State	Los Angeles, Calif.	D3-'23
6	Eric Kendricks	LB	6-0	232	31	9	UCLA	Fresno, Calif.	FA-'23
9	Kenneth Murray Jr.	LB	6-2	241	28	4	Oklahoma	Houston, Texas	D1b-'20
31	Nick Niemann	LB	6-3	234	25	3	Iowa	Sycamore, Ill.	D6a-'21
44	Tanner Muse	LB	6-2	227	26	4	Clemson	Belmont, N.C.	W (Pit)-'23
57	Amen Ogbongbemiga	LB	6-0	231	25	3	Oklahoma State	Calgary, Alberta, Canada	FA-'21

OUTSIDE LINEBACKERS (4)

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Age	Exp.	College	Hometown	How Acq.
45	Tuli Tuipulotu	OLB	6-3	266	21	R	Southern California	Hawthorne, Calif.	D2-'23
52	Khalil Mack	OLB	6-3	269	32	10	Buffalo	Fort Pierce, Fla.	T (Chi)-'22
94	Chris Rumph II	OLB	6-2	244	24	3	Duke	Gainesville, Fla.	D4-'21
97	Joey Bosa	OLB	6-5	280	28	8	Ohio State	Fort Lauderdale, Fla.	D1-'16

DEFENSIVE BACKS (10)

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Age	Exp.	College	Hometown	How Acq.
3	Derwin James Jr.	S	6-2	215	27	6	Florida State	Haines City, Fla.	D1-'18
22	JT Woods	S	6-2	193	23	2	Baylor	San Antonio, Texas	D3-'22
24	AJ Finley	S	6-0	188	21	R	Mississippi	Mobile, Ala.	FA-'23
26	Asante Samuel Jr.	CB	5-10	180	23	3	Florida State	Fort Lauderdale, Fla.	D2-'21
27	J.C. Jackson	CB	6-1	198	27	6	Maryland	Immokalee, Fla.	UFA (NE)-'22
32	Alohi Gilman	S	5-10	201	25	4	Notre Dame	Laie, Hawaii	D6-'20
33	Deane Leonard	DB	6-0	195	23	2	Mississippi	Calgary, Alberta, Canada	D7a-'22
36	Ja'Sir Taylor	DB	5-10	185	24	2	Wake Forest	Asbury Park, N.J.	D6b-'22
41	Raheem Layne	S	5-11	192	24	2	Indiana	Deland, Fla.	FA-'22
43	Michael Davis	CB	6-2	196	28	7	Brigham Young	Glendale, Calif.	FA-'17

SPECIALISTS (3)

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Age	Exp.	College	Hometown	How Acq.
11	Cameron Dicker	K	6-1	216	23	2	Texas	Austin, Texas	FA-'22
16	JK Scott	P	6-5	208	27	5	Alabama	Denver, Colo.	FA-'22
47	Josh Harris	LS	6-1	224	34	12	Auburn	Carrlonton, Ga.	UFA (Atl)-'22

HOW THE 2023 CHARGERS WERE BUILT

YEAR	NFL DRAFT	FREE AGENCY	TRADE/WAIVERS
2013	WR Keenan Allen (3)		
2014			
2015			
2016	OLB Joey Bosa (1)		
2017	WR Mike Williams (1)	CB Michael Davis (UDFA) RB Austin Ekeler (UDFA)	
2018	S Derwin James Jr. (1)		
2019	T Trey Pipkins III (3) QB Easton Stick (5)		
2020	S Alohi Gilman (6) QB Justin Herbert (1a) RB Joshua Kelley (4) LB Kenneth Murray Jr. (1b)	TE Donald Parham Jr.	
2021	G/T Brenden Jaimes (5) TE Tre' McKitty (3b) LB Nick Niemann (6a) WR Joshua Palmer (3a) OLB Chris Rumph II (4) CB Asante Samuel Jr. (2) T Rashawn Slater (1)	C Corey Linsley (UFA-GB) LB Amen Ogbongbemiga (UDFA) T Foster Sarell	
2022	G Zion Johnson (1) DB Deane Leonard (7a) OL Jamaree Salyer (6a) RB Isaiah Spiller (4) DB Ja'Sir Taylor (6a) S JT Woods (3)	C/G Will Clapp K Cameron Dicker TE Gerald Everett (UFA-Sea) DL Morgan Fox LS Josh Harris (UFA-Atl) DL Christopher Hinton CB J.C. Jackson (UFA-NE) DL Austin Johnson (UFA-NYG) DL Sebastian Joseph-Day (UFA-LAR) S Raheem Layne (UDFA) P JK Scott TE Stone Smartt (UDFA)	OLB Khalil Mack (T-Chi)
2023	WR Derius Davis (4) LB Daiyan Henley (3) WR Quentin Johnston (1) DL Scott Matlock (6) OL Jordan McFadden (5) OLB Tuli Tuipulotu (2)	RB Elijah Dotson (UDFA) S AJ Finley (UDFA) LB Eric Kendricks DL Nick Williams	LB Tanner Muse (W-Pit)

2023 LOS ANGELES CHARGERS COACHES

Head Coach	Brandon Staley	Defensive Quality Control	Robert Muschamp
Defensive Coordinator	Derrick Ansley	Offensive Line	Brendan Nugent
Special Teams Coordinator	Ryan Ficken	Quarterbacks	Doug Nussmeier
Offensive Coordinator	Kellen Moore	Defensive Run Game Coordinator/Defensive Line	Jay Rodgers
Passing Game Specialist	Tom Arth	Assistant Offensive Line	Shaun Sarrett
Wide Receivers	Chris Beatty	Offensive Assistant	Phil Serchia
Defensive Passing Game Coordinator/Secondary	Tom Donatell	Outside Linebackers	Giff Smith
Running Backs	Derrick Foster	Assistant Defensive Line	John Timu
Assistant Special Teams	Chris Gould	Offensive Assistant	Pat White
Assistant Secondary	Will Harris	Offensive Quality Control	Chandler Whitmer
Front Seven Specialist	Mike Hiestand	Director of Sports Performance	Anthony Lomando
Linebackers	Jeff Howard	Head Strength & Conditioning	Jonathan Brooks
Tight Ends	Kevin Koger	Assistant Strength & Conditioning	Lucius Jordan

2023 LOS ANGELES CHARGERS DEPTH CHART

Depth Chart is unofficial and compiled by Chargers Communications

OFFENSE

WR	13	Keenan Allen	<u>1</u>	<u>Quentin Johnston</u>	
LT	70	Rashawn Slater	73	Foster Sarell	
LG	77	Zion Johnson	<u>71</u>	<u>Jordan McFadden</u>	
C	63	Corey Linsley	76	Will Clapp	
RG	68	Jamaree Salyer	64	Brenden Jaimes	
RT	79	Trey Pipkins III	73	Foster Sarell	
TE	7	Gerald Everett	89	Donald Parham Jr.	88 Tre' McKitty 84 Stone Smartt
WR	81	Mike Williams	<u>12</u>	<u>Derius Davis</u>	
WR	5	Joshua Palmer			
QB	10	Justin Herbert	2	Easton Stick	
RB	30	Austin Ekeler	25	Joshua Kelley	28 Isaiah Spiller <u>42</u> <u>Elijah Dotson</u>

DEFENSE

EDGE	52	Khalil Mack	<u>45</u>	<u>Tuli Tuipulotu</u>	
DL	51	Sebastian Joseph-Day	56	Morgan Fox	91 Christopher Hinton
DL	98	Austin Johnson	95	Nick Williams	<u>99</u> <u>Scott Matlock</u>
EDGE	97	Joey Bosa	94	Chris Rumph II	
LB	6	Eric Kendricks	31	Nick Niemann	<u>0</u> <u>Daiyan Henley</u>
LB	9	Kenneth Murray Jr.	57	Amen Ogbongbemiga	44 Tanner Muse
CB	27	J.C. Jackson	33	Deane Leonard	
S	3	Derwin James Jr.	41	Raheem Layne	
S	32	Alohi Gilman	22	JT Woods	<u>24</u> <u>AJ Finley</u>
CB	26	Asante Samuel Jr.	-OR-	36 Ja'Sir Taylor	
CB	43	Michael Davis		33 Deane Leonard	

SPECIALISTS

K	11	Cameron Dicker		
P	16	JK Scott		
KO	11	Cameron Dicker		
H	16	JK Scott		
LS	47	Josh Harris		
KR	<u>12</u>	<u>Derius Davis</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>Elijah Dotson</u>
PR	<u>12</u>	<u>Derius Davis</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>Elijah Dotson</u>

NOTE: Rookies are underlined

2023 LOS ANGELES CHARGERS PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

Jerrod Clarkjuh-ROD
 Max **Duggan**DUG-in
 Austin **Ekeler**ECK-ler
Alohi Gilmanuh-LOW-hee
Daiyan HenleyDAY-on
 Brenden **Jaimes**HIGH-miss
 Zion JohnsonZEYE-uhn

Nick **Niemann**KNEE-min
Amen Ogbongbemiga
AY-mihn awg-BONG-buh-mee-guh
Otito Ogbonniaoh-TEET-oh oh-BONE-yuh
 Donald **Parham Jr.**par-HAM
 Jamaree **Salyer**SAL-yur
 Foster **Sarell**SUH-rell

Rashawn Slaterruh-SHAWN
Ja'Sir TaylorJAH-sear
Tuli TuipulotuTOO-lee TOO-ee-poo-LOW-too
Amechi Uzodinma
uh-MAY-chee OO-zuh-den-muh
 Nick **Vannett**vuh-NETT

2023 TRANSACTIONS BY DATE

<p>Jan. 16 Signed T Zack Bailey, WR Keelan Doss, WR John Hightower, TE Hunter Kampmoyer, OLB Carlo Kemp, LB Tyreek Maddox-Williams, DL David Moad, G/T Austen Pleasants, WR Larry Rountree III, OLB Ty Shelby and DB Mark Webb Jr., to Reserve/Future contracts.</p> <p>March 14 Re-signed T Foster Sarell. Extended exclusive rights tender to K Cameron Dicker.</p> <p>March 15 Signed LB Eric Kendricks. Re-signed T Trey Pipkins III and QB Easton Stick. Released G Matt Feiler.</p> <p>March 16 Re-signed DL Morgan Fox.</p> <p>March 21 Re-signed P JK Scott.</p> <p>March 22 Re-signed K Cameron Dicker and CB Kemon Hall.</p> <p>March 23 Re-signed TE Donald Parham Jr.</p> <p>April 6 Re-signed C/G Will Clapp.</p> <p>April 17 Re-signed WR Jalen Guyton.</p> <p>May 12 Signed OLB Brevin Allen, S Tyler Baker-Williams, C Johari Branch, CB Cam Brown, WR Terrell Bynum, DL Jerrod Clark, WR Derius Davis, RB Elijah Dotson, QB Max Duggan, LB Nathan East, TE Michael Ezeike, OLB Andrew Farmer, S AJ Finley, LB Daiyan Henley, RB Tyler Hoosman, WR Quentin Johnston, LB Mikel Jones, DL Terrance Lang, DL Scott Matlock, OL Jordan McFadden, OL Nic Melsop, CB Tiawan Mullen, DL CJ Okoye, CB Amechi Uzodinma, WR Pokey Wilson. DL CJ Okoye given exempt status by Commissioner.</p> <p>May 19 Signed DL Nick Williams.</p> <p>May 31 Waived LB Damon Lloyd.</p> <p>June 2 Signed WR Darrius Shepherd.</p> <p>June 26 Signed OLB Tuli Tuipulotu.</p> <p>July 17 Declared Non-Football Illness for WR Pokey Wilson.</p> <p>July 26 Signed QB Justin Herbert to contract extension. Removed WR Pokey Wilson from Active/Non-Football Illness. Declared WR Jalen Guyton, DL Austin Johnson and DL Otito Ogbonnia Physically Unable to Perform.</p> <p>July 27 Signed WR Milton Wright.</p> <p>July 28 Signed LB Blake Lynch. Waived LB Tyreek Maddox-Williams.</p> <p>Aug. 9 Signed T Matt Kaskey. Waived/Injured OL Nic Melsop.</p>	<p>Aug. 10 Placed OL Nic Melsop on Reserve/Injured.</p> <p>Aug. 14 Waived RB Larry Rountree III.</p> <p>Aug. 15 Signed RB Aaron Shampklin.</p> <p>Aug. 16 Signed CB Matt Hankins. Waived/Injured CB Kemon Hall.</p> <p>Aug. 17 Removed DL Austin Johnson from Active/Physically Unable to Perform. Placed CB Kemon Hall on Reserve/Injured.</p> <p>Aug. 18 Reached injury settlement with OL Nic Melsop.</p> <p>Aug. 22 Signed LB Tae Crowder. Waived/Injured T Andrew Trainer.</p> <p>Aug. 23 Placed T Andrew Trainer on Reserve/Injured. Reached injury settlement with CB Kemon Hall.</p> <p>Aug. 28 Traded K Dustin Hopkins to Cleveland for 2025 seventh-round selection.</p> <p>Aug. 29 Placed WR Jalen Guyton and DL Otito Ogbonnia on Reserve/Physically Unable to Perform. Released WR Keelan Doss. Waived OLB Brevin Allen, T Zack Bailey, S Tyler Baker-Williams, C Johari Branch, CB Cam Brown, WR Terrell Bynum, DL Jerrod Clark, LB Tae Crowder, QB Max Duggan, LB Nathan East, TE Michael Ezeike, OLB Andrew Farmer, CB Matt Hankins, WR John Hightower, RB Tyler Hoosman, CB Michael Jacquet, LB Mikel Jones, TE Hunter Kampmoyer, OLB Carlo Kemp, DL Terrance Lang, DL David Moad, CB Tiawan Mullen, DL CJ Okoye, G/T Austen Pleasants, RB Aaron Shampklin, OLB Ty Shelby, C Isaac Weaver, DB Mark Webb Jr., and WR Pokey Wilson. Waived/Injured T Matt Kaskey, LB Blake Lynch, WR Darrius Shepherd, CB Amechi Uzodinma and WR Milton Wright</p> <p>Aug. 30 Claimed LB Tanner Muse off waivers. Waived FB Zander Horvath. Placed LB Blake Lynch, WR Darrius Shepherd, CB Amechi Uzodinma and WR Milton Wright on Reserve/Injured. Placed T Matt Kaskey on Reserve/Injured and subsequently reached an injury settlement. Signed OLB Brevin Allen, T Zack Bailey, WR Terrell Bynum, DL Jerrod Clark, DL Christian Covington, WR Keelan Doss, QB Max Duggan, OLB Andrew Farmer, CB Matt Hankins, TE Hunter Kampmoyer, DL CJ Okoye and G/T Austen Pleasants to practice squad.</p>	<p>Aug. 31 Reached injury settlement with LB Blake Lynch. Signed WR Alex Erickson, S Dean Marlowe and TE Nick Vannett to practice squad.</p> <p>Sept. 1 Reached injury settlement with WR Darrius Shepherd. Signed CB Chris Wilcox to practice squad.</p>
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2023 TRANSACTIONS BY PLAYER

Allen, Brevin — OLB

May 12 Signed
 Aug. 29 Waived
 Aug. 30 Signed to practice squad

Bailey, Zack — T

Jan. 16 Signed to Reserve/Future contract
 Aug. 29 Waived
 Aug. 30 Signed to practice squad

Baker-Williams, Tyler — S

May 12 Signed
 Aug. 29 Waived

Branch, Johari — C

May 12 Signed
 Aug. 29 Waived

Brown, Cam — CB

May 12 Signed
 Aug. 29 Waived

Bynum, Terrell — WR

May 12 Signed
 Aug. 29 Waived
 Aug. 30 Signed to practice squad

Clapp, Will — C/G

April 6 Re-signed

Clark, Jerrod — DL

May 12 Signed
 Aug. 29 Waived
 Aug. 30 Signed to practice squad

Covington, Christian — DL

Aug. 30 Signed to practice squad

Crowder, Tae — LB

Aug. 22 Signed
 Aug. 29 Waived

Davis, Derius — WR

May 12 Signed

Dicker, Cameron — K

March 14 Extended exclusive rights tender
 March 22 Re-signed

Doss, Keelan — WR

Jan. 16 Signed to Reserve/Future contract
 Aug. 29 Released
 Aug. 30 Signed to practice squad

Dotson, Elijah — RB

May 12 Signed

Duggan, Max — QB

May 12 Signed
 Aug. 29 Waived
 Aug. 30 Signed to practice squad

East, Nathan — LB

May 12 Signed
 Aug. 29 Waived

Erickson, Alex — WR

Aug. 31 Signed to practice squad

Ezeike, Michael — TE

May 12 Signed
 Aug. 29 Waived

Farmer, Andrew — OLB

May 12 Signed
 Aug. 29 Waived
 Aug. 30 Signed to practice squad

Feiler, Matt — G

March 15 Released

Finley, AJ — S

May 12 Signed

Fox, Morgan — DL

March 16 Re-signed

Guyton, Jalen — WR

April 17 Re-signed
 July 26 Declared Physically Unable to Perform
 Aug. 29 Placed on Reserve/Physically Unable to Perform

Hall, Kemon — CB

March 22 Re-signed
 Aug. 16 Waived/Injured
 Aug. 17 Placed on Reserve/Injured
 Aug. 23 Reached injury settlement

Hankins, Matt — CB

Aug. 16 Signed
 Aug. 29 Waived
 Aug. 30 Signed to practice squad

Henley, Daiyan — LB

May 12 Signed

Herbert, Justin — QB

July 26 Signed contract extension

Hightower, John — WR

Jan. 16 Signed to Reserve/Future contract
 Aug. 29 Waived

Hoosman, Tyler — RB

May 12 Signed
 Aug. 29 Waived

Hopkins, Dustin — K

Aug. 28 Traded to Cleveland

Horvath, Zander — FB

Aug. 30 Waived

Jacquet, Michael — CB

Jan. 16 Signed to Reserve/Future contract
 Aug. 29 Waived

Johnson, Austin — DL

July 26 Declared Physically Unable to Perform
 Aug. 17 Passed Physical

Johnston, Quentin — WR

May 12 Signed

Jones, Mikel — LB

May 12 Signed

Kampmoyer, Hunter — TE

Jan. 16 Signed to Reserve/Future contract
 Aug. 30 Signed to practice squad

Kaskey, Matt — T

Aug. 9 Signed
 Aug. 29 Waived/Injured
 Aug. 30 Placed on Reserve/Injured and reached injury settlement

Kemp, Carlo — OLB

Jan. 16 Signed to Reserve/Future contract

Kendricks, Eric — LB

March 15 Signed

Jones, Mikel — LB

May 12 Signed
 Aug. 29 Waived

Lynch, Blake — LB

July 28 Signed
 Aug. 29 Waived/Injured
 Aug. 30 Placed on Reserve/Injured
 Aug. 31 Reached injury settlement

Maddox-Williams, Tyreek — LB

Jan. 16 Signed to Reserve/Future contract
 July 28 Waived

Marlowe, Dean — S

Aug. 31 Signed to practice squad

Matlock, Scott — DL

May 12 Signed

McFadden, Jordan — OL

May 12 Signed

Melsop, Nic — OL

May 12 Signed
 Aug. 9 Waived/Injured
 Aug. 10 Placed on Reserve/Injured
 Aug. 18 Reached injury settlement

Moa, David — DL

Jan. 16 Signed to Reserve/Future contract
 Aug. 29 Waived

Mullen, Tiawan — CB

May 12 Signed
 Aug. 29 Waived

Ogbonnia, Otito — DL

July 26 Declared Physically Unable to Perform
 Aug. 29 Placed on Reserve/Physically Unable to Perform

Okoye, CJ — DL

May 12 Signed
 Aug. 29 Waived
 Aug. 30 Signed to practice squad

Parham Jr., Donald — TE

March 23 Re-signed

Pipkins III, Trey — T

March 15 Re-Signed

Pleasants, Austen — G/T

Jan. 16 Signed to Reserve/Future contract
 Aug. 29 Waived
 Aug. 30 Signed to practice squad

Rountree III, Larry — RB

Jan. 16 Signed to Reserve/Future contract
 Aug. 14 Waived

Sarell, Foster — T

March 14 Re-signed

Scott, JK — P

March 21 Re-signed

Shampklin, Aaron — RB

Aug. 15 Signed
 Aug. 29 Waived

Shelby, Ty — OLB

Jan. 16 Signed to Reserve/Future contract
 Aug. 29 Waived

Shepherd, Darrius — WR

June 2 Signed
 Aug. 29 Waived/Injured
 Aug. 30 Placed on Reserve/Injured
 Sept. 1 Reached injury settlement

Stick, Easton — QB

March 15 Re-signed

Trainer, Andrew — T

Aug. 22 Waived/Injured
 Aug. 23 Placed on Reserve/Injured

Tuipulotu, Tuli — OLB

June 26 Signed

Uzodinma, Amechi — CB

May 12 Signed
 Aug. 29 Waived/Injured
 Aug. 30 Placed on Reserve/Injured

Vannett, Nick — TE

Aug. 31 Signed to practice squad

Webb Jr., Mark — DB

Jan. 16 Signed to Reserve/Future contract
 Aug. 29 Waived

Wilcox, Chris — CB

Sept. 1 Signed to practice squad

Williams, Nick — DL

May 19 Signed

Wilson, Pokey — WR

May 12 Signed
 July 19 Declared Non-Football Illness
 July 26 Passed Physical

Wright, Milton — WR

July 27 Signed
 Aug. 29 Waived/Injured
 Aug. 30 Placed on Reserve/Injured

MEDIA INFORMATION

CHARGERS RADIO NETWORK: iHeartMedia Los Angeles will again air all regular season and postseason Chargers games on ALT 98.7 FM – Los Angeles' New Alternative – complete with a two-hour pregame and one-hour postgame show.

Calls from Matt "Money" Smith, Daniel Jeremiah and Shannon Farren will be heard over the airwaves across Los Angeles and four affiliate stations in California, Nevada and Oregon.

The Chargers Spanish broadcast called by Adrian Garcia-Marquez and Francisco Pinto will be locally broadcast on Que Buena Los Angeles (105.5/94.3 FM).

CHARGERS RADIO NETWORK AFFILIATES

- Los Angeles (KYSR-FM & KBUE-FM)*
- Bakersfield (KBFP-AM)
- Eugene, Oregon (KORE-AM)
- Palm Springs/Yucca Valley (KNWZ-FM, KNWH-AM)
- San Bernardino (KATY-FM)

**Flagship Stations*

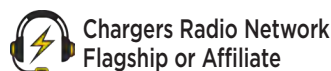
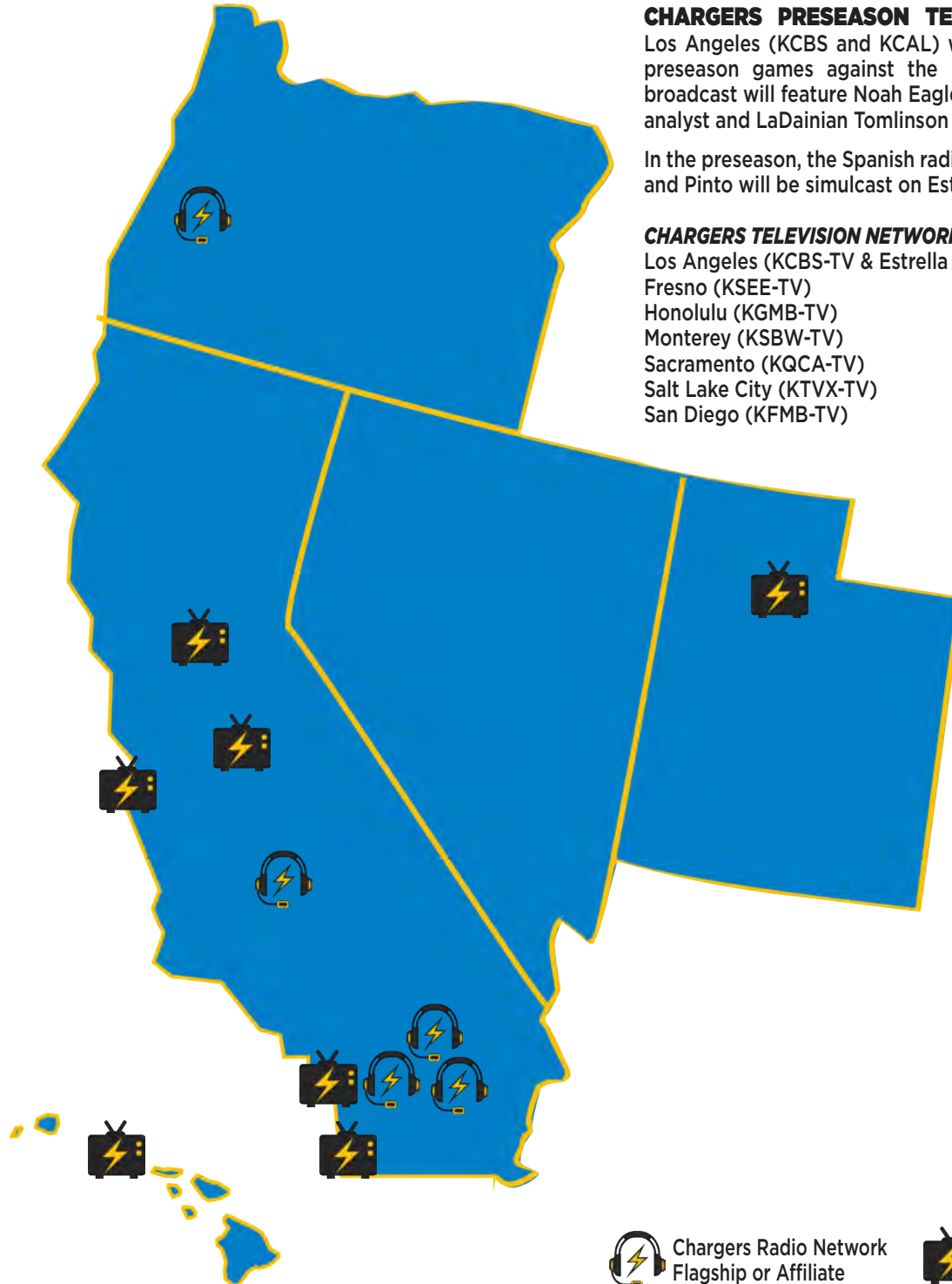
CHARGERS PRESEASON TELEVISION NETWORK: CBS Los Angeles (KCBS and KCAL) will locally broadcast Chargers preseason games against the Rams, Saints and 49ers. The broadcast will feature Noah Eagle on play-by-play, Dan Fouts as analyst and LaDainian Tomlinson as the sideline reporter.

In the preseason, the Spanish radio broadcast of Garcia-Marquez and Pinto will be simulcast on Estrella TV.

CHARGERS TELEVISION NETWORK AFFILIATES

- Los Angeles (KCBS-TV & Estrella TV)*
- Fresno (KSEE-TV)
- Honolulu (KGMB-TV)
- Monterey (KSBW-TV)
- Sacramento (KQCA-TV)
- Salt Lake City (KTVX-TV)
- San Diego (KFMB-TV)

**Flagship Stations*





LAST WEEK'S
GAME BOOK

National Football League Game Summary

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Date: Friday, 8/25/2023

Los Angeles Chargers at San Francisco 49ers

Start Time: 7:05 PM PDT

at Levi's Stadium, Santa Clara, CA

Game Day Weather

Game Weather: Sunny
Open Stadium on Natural Grass

Temp: 72° F (22.2° C) Humidity: 63%, Wind: SE 9 mph
Outdoor Weather: Sunny

Officials

Referee: Hill, Adrian (29) Umpire: Ellison, Roy (81) Down Judge: Oliver, David (24)
Line Judge: Bergman, Brett (17) Field Judge: Robinson, Mearl (31) Side Judge: Quirk, Jim (5)
Back Judge: Steed, Greg (12) Replay Official: Ames, Roddy (0)

Lineups

Los Angeles Chargers

San Francisco 49ers

Los Angeles Chargers			San Francisco 49ers				
Offense		Defense	Offense		Defense		
TE	88 T.McKitty	DT	99 S.Matlock	WR	19 D.Samuel	DT	99 J.Kinlaw
LT	73 F.Sarell	DT	50 D.Moa	LT	76 J.Moore	DL	94 C.Ferrell
LG	71 J.McFadden	DL	91 C.Hinton	LG	65 A.Banks	DL	90 K.Givens
C	76 W.Clapp	OLB	54 C.Kemp	C	64 J.Brendel	DL	95 D.Jackson
RG	75 A.Pleasants	OLB	59 T.Shelby	RG	74 S.Burford	LB	54 F.Warner
RT	78 Z.Bailey	LB	31 N.Niemann	RT	68 C.McKivitz	LB	45 D.Flannigan-Fowles
WR	84 J.Hightower	LB	57 A.Ogbongbemiga	TE	85 G.Kittle	LB	59 C.Robinson
WR	1 Q.Johnston	DB	29 M.Webb	WR	11 B.Aiyuk	DB	2 D.Lenoir
QB	2 E.Stick	DB	36 J.Taylor	QB	13 B.Purdy	CB	7 C.Ward
FB	40 Z.Horvath	DB	33 D.Leonard	FB	44 K.Juszczyk	S	41 T.Hawkins
RB	25 J.Kelley	S	22 J.Woods	RB	24 J.Mason	S	27 J.Brown

Substitutions

Substitutions

LB 0 D.Henley, K 4 D.Hopkins, QB 8 M.Duggan, K 11 C.Dicker, WR 12 D.Davis, P 16 J.Scott, WR 20 D.Shepherd, CB 23 M.Hankins, RB 23 A.Shampklin, S 24 A.Finley, RB 28 I.Spiller, WR 35 T.Bynum, CB 38 C.Brown, CB 39 M.Jacquet, CB 42 T.Mullen, RB 42 E.Dotson, S 44 T.Baker-Williams, RB 44 T.Hoosman, LB 46 N.East, TE 46 M.Ezeike, LS 47 J.Harris, TE 48 S.Smartt, LB 49 M.Jones, LB 58 T.Crowder, C 60 I.Weaver, C 61 J.Branch, G/T 64 B.Jaimes, DL 67 B.Okoye, DL 69 T.Lang, DL 72 J.Clark, T 74 M.Kaskey, WR 83 O.Wilson, WR 86 K.Doss, TE 87 H.Kampmoyer, OLB 90 B.Allen, OLB 92 A.Farmer

CB 0 S.Womack, WR 2 I.Winstead, QB 4 B.Allen, TE 9 B.Willis, WR 10 R.Bell, QB 14 S.Darnold, WR 15 J.Jennings, WR 17 C.Conley, P 18 M.Wishnowsky, CB 20 A.Thomas, CB 22 D.Jamison, CB 26 I.Oliver, RB 32 T.Davis-Price, FB 33 J.Colletto, CB 35 T.Swilling, CB 36 N.Brooks, RB 36 B.Hill, S 38 M.Hartsfield, LB 40 M.McCrary-Ball, CB 43 Q.Knight, LS 46 T.Pepper, DB 47 A.Parker, LB 50 J.Graham, LB 51 K.Tezero, OL 51 J.Poe, LB 53 D.Winters, OL 55 J.Feliciano, DL 56 A.Bryant, DL 58 A.Barrett, LB 60 L.Hamilton, OL 60 I.Manning, OL 61 C.Luciano, DL 62 M.Davidson, OL 63 N.Zakelj, DL 66 B.Speaks, OL 66 J.Fisher, OL 67 K.Ismael, DL 69 S.Waage, OL 75 M.Pryor, OL 77 A.Gutierrez, OL 78 L.Watson, TE 81 C.Latu, TE 82 R.Dwelle, WR 83 W.Snead, WR 84 A.Miller, WR 86 T.Martin, TE 88 T.Fumagalli, TE 89 C.Woerner, DL 92 K.Hyder, DL 93 K.Davis, DT 96 T.McGill

Did Not Play

Did Not Play

S 3 D.James, WR 5 J.Palmer, LB 6 E.Kendricks, TE 7 G.Everett, LB 9 K.Murray, QB 10 J.Herbert, WR 13 K.Allen, WR 15 J.Guyton, CB 26 A.Samuel, CB 27 J.Jackson, RB 30 A.Ekeler, S 32 A.Gilman, CB 35 A.Uzodinma, WR 38 M.Wright, S 41 R.Layne, CB 43 M.Davis, OLB 45 T.Tuipulotu, DL 51 S.Joseph, OLB 52 K.Mack, LB 53 B.Lynch, DL 56 M.Fox, C 63 C.Linsley, OL 68 J.Salyer, T 70 R.Slater, G 77 Z.Johnson, T 79 T.Pipkins, WR 81 M.Williams, TE 89 D.Parham, DL 93 O.Ogbonnia, OLB 94 C.Rumph, DL 95 N.Williams, OLB 97 J.Bosa, DL 98 A.Johnson

WR 3 R.McCloud, K 4 J.Moody, QB 5 T.Lance, WR 6 D.Gray, K 10 Z.Gonzalez, RB 22 J.McNichols, RB 23 C.McCaffrey, RB 25 E.Mitchell, CB 28 D.Luter, S 29 T.Hufanga, S 30 G.Odum, S 31 T.Gipson, LB 48 O.Burks, DL 55 R.Beal, LB 57 D.Greenlaw, T 71 T.Williams, DL 91 A.Armstead, DL 98 J.Hargrave

Not Active

Not Active

Field Goals (made () & missed)

C.Dicker (24) (35)
D.Hopkins (27)

		1	2	3	4	OT	Total
VISITOR:	Los Angeles Chargers	7	3	10	3	0	23
HOME:	San Francisco 49ers	6	0	6	0	0	12

Scoring Plays

National Football League Game Summary

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Team	Qtr	Time	Play Description (Extra Point) (Drive Info)	Visitor	Home
49ers	1	4:00	B.Purdy 5 yd. run (kick failed, wl) (9-53, 3:48)	0	6
Chargers	1	3:16	J.Kelley 75 yd. run (D.Hopkins kick) (2-81, 0:44)	7	6
Chargers	2	2:10	C.Dicker 24 yd. Field Goal (15-62, 7:11)	10	6
49ers	3	10:38	W.Snead 6 yd. pass from S.Darnold (pass failed) (7-67, 3:27)	10	12
Chargers	3	3:56	H.Kampmoyer 3 yd. pass from M.Duggan (D.Hopkins kick) (11-77, 6:42)	17	12
Chargers	3	1:55	C.Dicker 35 yd. Field Goal (4-1, 1:30)	20	12
Chargers	4	1:11	D.Hopkins 27 yd. Field Goal (14-66, 7:57)	23	12
Paid Attendance: 52,653				Time: 2:44	

Los Angeles Chargers vs San Francisco 49ers
8/25/2023 at Levi's Stadium

Final Individual Statistics

Los Angeles Chargers

San Francisco 49ers

RUSHING						RUSHING					
	ATT	YDS	AVG	LG	TD		ATT	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
J.Kelley	2	78	39.0	75	1	T.Davis-Price	10	61	6.1	15	0
M.Duggan	6	51	8.5	20	0	J.Mason	9	59	6.6	22	0
T.Hoosman	12	43	3.6	12	0	B.Purdy	1	5	5.0	5	1
E.Dotson	6	33	5.5	16	0	B.Hill	2	2	1.0	3	0
D.Davis	2	19	9.5	16	0	B.Allen	2	-2	-1.0	-1	0
I.Spiller	5	14	2.8	4	0						
A.Shampklin	3	10	3.3	11	0						
D.Shepherd	2	10	5.0	11	0						
E.Stick	2	7	3.5	8	0						
Z.Horvath	1	2	2.0	2	0						
Total	41	267	6.5	75	1	Total	24	125	5.2	22	1

PASSING									PASSING								
	ATT	CMP	YDS	SK/YD	TD	LG	IN	RT		ATT	CMP	YDS	SK/YD	TD	LG	IN	RT
E.Stick	11	9	38	2/15	0	8	0	81.1	S.Darnold	11	6	89	0/0	1	34	0	111.6
M.Duggan	9	4	15	0/0	1	9	0	88.7	B.Purdy	9	5	73	0/0	0	35	0	82.2
									B.Allen	6	2	23	0/0	0	14	1	6.2
Total	20	13	53	2/15	1	9	0	85.4	Total	26	13	185	0/0	1	35	1	70.2

PASS RECEIVING								PASS RECEIVING							
	TAR	REC	YDS	AVG	LG	TD		TAR	REC	YDS	AVG	LG	TD		
K.Doss	3	3	14	4.7	8	0	I.Winstead	2	2	32	16.0	18	0		
Q.Johnston	2	2	15	7.5	8	0	W.Snead	3	2	21	10.5	15	1		
T.Bynum	4	2	8	4.0	4	0	D.Samuel	3	2	18	9.0	11	0		
H.Kampmoyer	2	2	7	3.5	4	1	T.Davis-Price	3	2	16	8.0	12	0		
E.Dotson	1	1	9	9.0	9	0	B.Aiyuk	3	1	35	35.0	35	0		
S.Smartt	2	1	6	6.0	6	0	C.Conley	3	1	34	34.0	34	0		
D.Shepherd	2	1	-1	-1.0	-1	0	J.Mason	1	1	13	13.0	13	0		
T.McKitty	2	1	-5	-5.0	-5	0	B.Hill	2	1	9	9.0	9	0		
J.Hightower	1	0	0	0.0	0	0	K.Juszczyk	1	1	7	7.0	7	0		
							T.Martin	2	0	0	0.0	0	0		
							C.Latu	1	0	0	0.0	0	0		
							G.Kittle	1	0	0	0.0	0	0		
							J.Jennings	1	0	0	0.0	0	0		
Total	19	13	53	4.1	9	1	Total	26	13	185	14.2	35	1		

INTERCEPTIONS						INTERCEPTIONS					
	NO	YDS	AVG	LG	TD		NO	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
D.Henley	1	16	16.0	16	0						
Total	1	16	16.0	16	0	Total	0	0	0	0	0

PUNTING								PUNTING							
	NO	YDS	AVG	NET	TB	IN20	LG		NO	YDS	AVG	NET	TB	IN20	LG
J.Scott	4	203	50.8	47.3	0	2	61	M.Wishnowsky	5	203	40.6	39.6	0	1	49
Total	4	203	50.8	47.3	0	2	61	Total	5	203	40.6	39.6	0	1	49

PUNT RETURNS								PUNT RETURNS							
	NO	YDS	AVG	FC	LG	TD		NO	YDS	AVG	FC	LG	TD		
D.Davis	2	2	1.0	0	1	0	R.Bell	1	16	16.0	0	16	0		
D.Shepherd	1	3	3.0	1	3	0	A.Miller	1	-2	-2.0	0	-2	0		
[DOWNED]	1	0	0.0	0	0	0	[DOWNED]	2	0	0.0	0	0	0		
Total	3	5	1.7	1	3	0	Total	2	14	7.0	0	16	0		

KICKOFF RETURNS								KICKOFF RETURNS							
	NO	YDS	AVG	FC	LG	TD		NO	YDS	AVG	FC	LG	TD		
E.Dotson	1	21	21.0	0	21	0	D.Jamison	1	32	32.0	0	32	0		
D.Davis	1	10	10.0	0	10	0	[TOUCHBACK]	5	0	0.0	0	0	0		
[TOUCHBACK]	1	0	0.0	0	0	0									
Total	2	31	15.5	0	21	0	Total	1	32	32.0	0	32	0		

Los Angeles Chargers

FUMBLES											
	FUM	LOST	OWN-REC	YDS	TD	FORCED	OPP-REC	YDS	TD	OUT-BDS	
M.Duggan	1	0	1	-10	0	0	0	0	0	0	
C.Kemp	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	

Los Angeles Chargers vs San Francisco 49ers

8/25/2023 at Levi's Stadium

Final Individual Statistics

D.Leonard	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Total	1	0	1	-10	0	1	1	1	0	0	0

San Francisco 49ers

FUMBLES	FUM	LOST	OWN-REC	YDS	TD	FORCED	OPP-REC	YDS	TD	OUT-BDS
A.Miller	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
J.Mason	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Final Team Statistics

	Visitor Chargers	Home 49ers
TOTAL FIRST DOWNS	19	14
By Rushing	13	6
By Passing	5	8
By Penalty	1	0
THIRD DOWN EFFICIENCY	5-14-35.7%	4-9-44.4%
FOURTH DOWN EFFICIENCY	2-2-100.0%	0-0-0.0%
TOTAL NET YARDS	305	310
Total Offensive Plays (inc. times thrown passing)	63	50
Average gain per offensive play	4.8	6.2
NET YARDS RUSHING	267	125
Total Rushing Plays	41	24
Average gain per rushing play	6.5	5.2
Tackles for a loss-number and yards	4-4	1-1
NET YARDS PASSING	38	185
Times thrown - yards lost attempting to pass	2-15	0-0
Gross yards passing	53	185
PASS ATTEMPTS-COMPLETIONS-HAD INTERCEPTED	20-13-0	26-13-1
Avg gain per pass play (inc.# thrown passing)	1.7	7.1
KICKOFFS Number-In End Zone-Touchbacks	6-6-5	3-1-1
PUNTS Number and Average	4-50.8	5-40.6
Had Blocked	0	0
FGs - PATs Had Blocked	0-0	0-0
Net Punting Average	47.3	39.6
TOTAL RETURN YARDAGE (Not Including Kickoffs)	21	14
No. and Yards Punt Returns	3-5	2-14
No. and Yards Kickoff Returns	2-31	1-32
No. and Yards Interception Returns	1-16	0-0
PENALTIES Number and Yards	1-10	6-55
FUMBLES Number and Lost	1-0	2-1
TOUCHDOWNS	2	2
Rushing	1	1
Passing	1	1
EXTRA POINTS Made-Attempts	2-2	0-2
Kicking Made-Attempts	2-2	0-1
Passing Made-Attempts	0-0	0-1
FIELD GOALS Made-Attempts	3-3	0-0
RED ZONE EFFICIENCY	1-4-25%	2-3-67%
GOAL TO GO EFFICIENCY	0-1-0%	1-2-50%
SAFETIES	0	0
FINAL SCORE	23	12
TIME OF POSSESSION	35:16	24:44

Los Angeles Chargers vs San Francisco 49ers
8/25/2023 at Levi's Stadium

Ball Possession And Drive Chart

Los Angeles Chargers

#	Time Recd	Time Lost	Time Poss	How Ball Obtained	Drive Began	# Play	Yds Gain	Yds Pen	Net Yds	1st Down	Last Scrm	How Given Up
1	9:54	7:48	2:06	Fumble	LAC 20	3	-12	0	-12	0	LAC 8	Punt
2	4:00	3:16	0:44	Kickoff	LAC 19	2	81	0	81	1	LAC 25	Touchdown
3	1:10	11:46	4:24	Punt	LAC 33	7	20	0	20	2	SF 47	Punt
4	9:21	2:10	7:11	Punt	LAC 32	15	56	6	62	5	* SF 6	Field Goal
5	0:17	0:00	0:17	Punt	LAC 17	1	-1	0	-1	0	LAC 17	End of Half
6	15:00	14:05	0:55	Kickoff	LAC 25	3	-10	0	-10	0	LAC 15	Punt
7	10:38	3:56	6:42	Kickoff	LAC 23	11	77	0	77	5	* SF 3	Touchdown
8	3:25	1:55	1:30	Interception	SF 18	4	1	0	1	0	* SF 17	Field Goal
9	0:48	12:18	3:30	Punt	LAC 39	6	17	-10	7	1	LAC 46	Punt
10	9:08	1:11	7:57	Punt	LAC 25	14	66	0	66	5	* SF 9	Field Goal

(315) Average LAC 32

San Francisco 49ers

#	Time Recd	Time Lost	Time Poss	How Ball Obtained	Drive Began	# Play	Yds Gain	Yds Pen	Net Yds	1st Down	Last Scrm	How Given Up
1	15:00	9:54	5:06	Kickoff	SF 25	10	74	0	74	3	* LAC 2	Fumble
2	7:48	4:00	3:48	Punt	SF 47	9	63	-10	53	4	* LAC 5	Touchdown
3	3:16	1:10	2:06	Kickoff	SF 25	3	9	-9	0	0	SF 25	Punt
4	11:46	9:21	2:25	Punt	SF 8	5	18	0	18	1	SF 26	Punt
5	2:10	0:17	1:53	Kickoff	SF 25	4	53	-20	33	1	LAC 42	Punt
6	14:05	10:38	3:27	Punt	SF 33	7	67	0	67	4	* LAC 6	Touchdown
7	3:56	3:25	0:31	Kickoff	SF 25	2	0	0	0	0	SF 25	Interception
8	1:55	0:48	1:07	Kickoff	SF 18	3	3	0	3	0	SF 21	Punt
9	12:18	9:08	3:10	Punt	SF 1	5	25	0	25	1	SF 26	Punt
10	1:11	0:00	1:11	Kickoff	SF 25	2	-2	0	-2	0	SF 24	End of Game

(232) Average SF 23

*** inside opponent's 20**

Time of Possession by Quarter		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	OT	Total
Visitor	Los Angeles Chargers	4:00	10:42	9:55	10:39		35:16
Home	San Francisco 49ers	11:00	4:18	5:05	4:21		24:44
Kickoff Drive No.-Start Average		Chargers: 3 - LAC 22			49ers: 6 - SF 24		

Los Angeles Chargers vs San Francisco 49ers
8/25/2023 at Levi's Stadium

Final Defensive Statistics

Los Angeles Chargers	Regular Defensive Plays											Special Teams					Misc			
	TKL	AST	COMB	SK	/ YDS	TFL	Q	IN	PD	FF	FR	TKL	AST	FF	FR	BL	TKL	AST	FF	FR
J.Woods	6	1	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A.Ogbongbemiga	3	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A.Finley	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C.Brown	2	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
M.Jones	2	1	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C.Kemp	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C.Hinton	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
D.Leonard	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
M.Hankins	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
M.Jacquet	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B.Allen	0	2	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A.Farmer	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
T.Shelby	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
M.Webb	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
D.Moa	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
N.Niemann	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
T.Crowder	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
J.Clark	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
T.Lang	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
J.Taylor	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
S.Matlock	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
D.Henley	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
T.Mullen	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
J.Harris	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
K.Doss	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
M.Duggan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	28	15	43	0	0	1	2	1	6	1	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

TKL = Tackle AST = Assist COMB = Combined QH=QB Hit IN = Interception PD = Pass Defense FF = Forced Fumble FR = Fumble Recovery

Los Angeles Chargers vs San Francisco 49ers
8/25/2023 at Levi's Stadium

Final Defensive Statistics

San Francisco 49ers	Regular Defensive Plays											Special Teams					Misc			
	TKL	AST	COMB	SK	/ YDS	TFL	QH	IN	PD	FF	FR	TKL	AST	FF	FR	BL	TKL	AST	FF	FR
M.McCrary-Ball	4	4	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
S.Womack	5	1	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
D.Winters	5	0	5	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
I.Oliver	4	1	5	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
J.Graham	3	2	5	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
K.Hyder	2	2	4	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A.Barrett	1	3	4	0.5	2.5	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
T.Hawkins	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
D.Flannigan-Fowles	2	1	3	0.5	2.5	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
D.Jamison	2	1	3	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Q.Knight	1	2	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B.Speaks	1	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
J.Brown	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
K.Davis	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
T.McGill	1	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A.Bryant	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C.Robinson	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
F.Warner	1	0	1	1	10	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
K.Givens	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
M.Davidson	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
T.Swilling	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
N.Brooks	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
D.Jackson	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
M.Hartsfield	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C.Woerner	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A.Parker	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B.Willis	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C.Latu	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A.Miller	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
W.Snead	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Total	45	22	67	2	15	8	6	0	5	0	0	5	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0

Los Angeles Chargers vs San Francisco 49ers
8/25/2023 at Levi's Stadium

First Half Summary

	PERIOD SCORES		TIME OF POSSESSION
Chargers	7 3 = 10	Chargers	14:42
49ers	6 0 = 6	49ers	15:18

Scoring Plays

Team	Qtr	Time	Play Description (Extra Point) (Drive Info)	Visitor	Home
49ers	1	4:00	B.Purdy 5 yd. run (kick failed, wl) (9-53, 3:48)	0	6
Chargers	1	3:16	J.Kelley 75 yd. run (D.Hopkins kick) (2-81, 0:44)	7	6
Chargers	2	2:10	C.Dicker 24 yd. Field Goal (15-62, 7:11)	10	6

	Los Angeles Chargers	San Francisco 49ers
TOTAL FIRST DOWNS	8	9
First Downs Rushing-Passing-by Penalty	4 - 3 - 1	4 - 5 - 0
THIRD DOWN EFFICIENCY	1-5-20.0%	3-6-50.0%
TOTAL NET YARDS	144	217
Total Offensive Plays	27	31
NET YARDS RUSHING	121	79
NET YARDS PASSING	23	138
Gross Yards Passing	38	138
Times thrown-yards lost attempting to pass	2-15	0-0
Pass Attempts-Completions-Had Intercepted	11 - 9 - 0	17 - 9 - 0
Punts-Number and Average	2 - 50.0	3 - 37.0
Penalties-Number and Yards	0 - 0	5 - 45
Fumbles-Number and Lost	0 - 0	1 - 1
Red Zone Efficiency	0-1-0%	1-2-50%
Average Drive Start	LAC 24	SF 26

Los Angeles Chargers

San Francisco 49ers

RUSHING						RUSHING					
	ATT	YDS	AVG	LG	TD		ATT	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
J.Kelley	2	78	39.0	75	1	J.Mason	9	59	6.6	22	0
D.Davis	2	19	9.5	16	0	T.Davis-Price	4	15	3.8	7	0
I.Spiller	5	14	2.8	4	0	B.Purdy	1	5	5.0	5	1
E.Stick	2	7	3.5	8	0						
Z.Horvath	1	2	2.0	2	0						
E.Dotson	2	1	0.5	2	0						
Total	14	121	8.6	75	1	Total	14	79	5.6	22	1

PASSING										PASSING									
	ATT	CMP	YDS	SK/YD	TD	LG	IN	RT		ATT	CMP	YDS	SK/YD	TD	LG	IN	RT		
E.Stick	11	9	38	2/15	0	8	0	81.1	B.Purdy	9	5	73	0/0	0	35	0	82.2		
									S.Darnold	8	4	65	0/0	0	34	0	77.6		
Total	11	9	38	2/15	0	8	0	81.1	Total	17	9	138	0/0	0	35	0	80.0		

PASS RECEIVING								PASS RECEIVING							
	TAR	REC	YDS	AVG	LG	TD		TAR	REC	YDS	AVG	LG	TD		
K.Doss	3	3	14	4.7	8	0	D.Samuel	3	2	18	9.0	11	0		
Q.Johnston	2	2	15	7.5	8	0	T.Davis-Price	2	2	16	8.0	12	0		
T.Bynum	2	2	8	4.0	4	0	B.Aiyuk	3	1	35	35.0	35	0		
S.Smartt	1	1	6	6.0	6	0	C.Conley	3	1	34	34.0	34	0		
T.McKitty	2	1	-5	-5.0	-5	0	W.Snead	1	1	15	15.0	15	0		
J.Hightower	1	0	0	0.0	0	0	J.Mason	1	1	13	13.0	13	0		
							K.Juszczyk	1	1	7	7.0	7	0		
							J.Jennings	1	0	0	0.0	0	0		
							G.Kittle	1	0	0	0.0	0	0		
							T.Martin	1	0	0	0.0	0	0		
Total	11	9	38	4.2	8	0	Total	17	9	138	15.3	35	0		

Los Angeles Chargers

Regular Defensive Plays

Special Teams

Misc

Play By Play

First Quarter

8/25/2023

SF wins toss, elects to Receive, and LAC elects to defend the North goal.

C.Dicker kicks 65 yards from LAC 35 to end zone, Touchback.

San Francisco 49ers at 15:00

1-10-SF 25	(15:00) B.Purdy pass short left to K.Juszczyk to SF 32 for 7 yards (M.Webb, A.Ogbongbemiga).	
2-3-SF 32	(14:24) (Shotgun) B.Purdy pass short right to D.Samuel to SF 39 for 7 yards (J.Woods).	P1
1-10-SF 39	(13:48) B.Purdy pass incomplete short right to G.Kittle.	
2-10-SF 39	(13:44) (Shotgun) J.Mason up the middle to SF 44 for 5 yards (T.Shelby).	
3-5-SF 44	(13:02) (Shotgun) B.Purdy pass short middle to J.Mason to LAC 43 for 13 yards (A.Ogbongbemiga).	P2
1-10-LAC 43	(12:19) J.Mason right tackle to LAC 37 for 6 yards (A.Ogbongbemiga; B.Allen).	
2-4-LAC 37	(11:40) B.Purdy pass incomplete short right to D.Samuel.	
3-4-LAC 37	(11:35) (Shotgun) B.Purdy pass short right to B.Aiyuk to LAC 2 for 35 yards (A.Ogbongbemiga).	P3
1-2-LAC 2	(10:48) J.Mason up the middle to LAC 2 for no gain (D.Moa).	
2-2-LAC 2	(10:04) J.Mason up the middle to LAC 1 for 1 yard (C.Kemp). FUMBLES (C.Kemp), RECOVERED by LAC-D.Leonard at LAC -1. Touchback.	

Timeout at 09:54.

Los Angeles Chargers at 9:54

1-10-LAC 20	(9:54) J.Kelley right guard to LAC 23 for 3 yards (K.Givens).	
2-7-LAC 23	(9:21) E.Stick pass short middle to T.McKitty to LAC 18 for -5 yards (D.Flannigan-Fowles).	
3-12-LAC 18	(8:39) (Shotgun) E.Stick sacked at LAC 8 for -10 yards (F.Warner).	
4-22-LAC 8	(8:01) J.Scott punts 61 yards to SF 31, Center-J.Harris. R.Bell to SF 47 for 16 yards (J.Harris).	

Timeout at 07:48.

San Francisco 49ers at 7:48

1-10-SF 47	(7:48) (Shotgun) J.Mason up the middle to LAC 48 for 5 yards (C.Hinton).	
2-5-LAC 48	(7:11) J.Mason right end pushed ob at LAC 35 for 13 yards (J.Woods). <i>PENALTY on SF-B.Aiyuk, Offensive Holding, 10 yards, enforced at LAC 45.</i>	
2-12-SF 45	(6:54) (Shotgun) B.Purdy pass short left to D.Samuel to LAC 44 for 11 yards (M.Hankins).	
3-1-LAC 44	(6:13) (Shotgun) J.Mason right tackle to LAC 40 for 4 yards (C.Hinton).	R4
1-10-LAC 40	(5:36) B.Purdy pass incomplete short left to B.Aiyuk.	
2-10-LAC 40	(5:31) (Shotgun) J.Mason right tackle to LAC 27 for 13 yards (J.Woods).	R5
1-10-LAC 27	(4:49) J.Mason left tackle to LAC 5 for 22 yards (J.Woods).	R6
1-5-LAC 5	(4:10) B.Purdy pass incomplete short left to B.Aiyuk.	
2-5-LAC 5	(4:06) (Shotgun) B.Purdy scrambles left end for 5 yards, TOUCHDOWN. M.Wishnowsky extra point is No Good, Wide Left, Center-T.Pepper, Holder-K.Juszczyk.	R7

Timeout at 04:00.

LAC 0 SF 6, 9 plays, 53 yards, 3:48 drive, 11:00 elapsed

M.Wishnowsky kicks 56 yards from SF 35 to LAC 9. D.Davis to LAC 19 for 10 yards (S.Womack).

Los Angeles Chargers at 4:00, (1st play from scrimmage 3:56)

1-10-LAC 19	(3:56) E.Stick pass short left to S.Smartt pushed ob at LAC 25 for 6 yards (J.Brown).	
2-4-LAC 25	(3:28) J.Kelley up the middle for 75 yards, TOUCHDOWN. D.Hopkins extra point is GOOD, Center-J.Harris, Holder-J.Scott.	R1

Timeout at 03:16.

LAC 7 SF 6, 2 plays, 81 yards, 0:44 drive, 11:44 elapsed

D.Hopkins kicks 65 yards from LAC 35 to end zone, Touchback.

San Francisco 49ers at 3:16

1-10-SF 25	(3:16) (Shotgun) T.Davis-Price up the middle to SF 27 for 2 yards (J.Clark; A.Farmer).	
2-8-SF 27	(2:38) T.Davis-Price right tackle to SF 34 for 7 yards (J.Woods; T.Lang).	
3-1-SF 34	(1:52) T.Davis-Price up the middle to SF 39 for 5 yards (A.Farmer). <i>PENALTY on SF-N.Zakelj, Offensive Holding, 9 yards, enforced at SF 34 - No Play.</i>	
3-10-SF 25	(1:28) (Shotgun) S.Darnold pass incomplete short right to C.Conley (D.Leonard).	
4-10-SF 25	(1:20) M.Wishnowsky punts 43 yards to LAC 32, Center-T.Pepper. D.Davis to LAC 33 for 1 yard (C.Woerner).	

Los Angeles Chargers at 1:10

Los Angeles Chargers vs San Francisco 49ers at Levi's Stadium

1-10-LAC 33 (1:10) D.Davis right end to LAC 36 for 3 yards (I.Oliver).

2-7-LAC 36 (:32) E.Stick pass short right to Q.Johnston pushed ob at LAC 44 for 8 yards (S.Womack).

END OF QUARTER

	Score	Time Poss	First Downs				Efficiencies	
			R	P	X	T	3 Down	4 Down
Los Angeles Chargers	7	4:00	1	1	0	2	0/1	0/0
San Francisco 49ers	6	11:00	4	3	0	7	3/4	0/0

Second Quarter

8/25/2023

Play By Play

Los Angeles Chargers continued.

<u>1-10-LAC 44</u>	(15:00) I.Spiller up the middle to LAC 47 for 3 yards (D.Flannigan-Fowles).	
2-7-LAC 47	(14:28) (Shotgun) E.Stick pass short right to Q.Johnston to SF 46 for 7 yards (S.Womack).	P3
<u>1-10-SF 46</u>	(13:54) I.Spiller left tackle to SF 43 for 3 yards (J.Graham; K.Hyder).	
2-7-SF 43	(13:19) I.Spiller right guard to SF 42 for 1 yard (A.Barrett).	
3-6-SF 42	(12:37) (Shotgun) E.Stick sacked at SF 47 for -5 yards (sack split by D.Flannigan-Fowles and A.Barrett).	
4-11-SF 47	(11:58) J.Scott punts 39 yards to SF 8, Center-J.Harris, downed by LAC-A.Finley.	

San Francisco 49ers at 11:46

1-10-SF 8	(11:46) S.Darnold pass incomplete deep right to J.Jennings.	
2-10-SF 8	(11:41) S.Darnold pass short right to T.Davis-Price to SF 20 for 12 yards (A.Ogbongbemiga).	P8
<u>1-10-SF 20</u>	(11:00) T.Davis-Price left end to SF 21 for 1 yard (J.Woods).	
2-9-SF 21	(10:16) (Shotgun) T.Davis-Price left guard to SF 26 for 5 yards (N.Niemann, D.Leonard).	
3-4-SF 26	(9:34) (Shotgun) S.Darnold pass incomplete deep middle to C.Conley.	
4-4-SF 26	(9:30) M.Wishnowsky punts 43 yards to LAC 31, Center-T.Pepper. D.Davis to LAC 32 for 1 yard (A.Parker).	

Timeout at 09:21.

Los Angeles Chargers at 9:21

1-10-LAC 32	(9:21) (Shotgun) E.Stick pass short right to K.Doss to LAC 36 for 4 yards (S.Womack).	
2-6-LAC 36	(8:48) (Shotgun) E.Stick pass short right to T.Bynum pushed ob at LAC 40 for 4 yards (S.Womack). <i>Penalty on LAC-Z.Bailey, Ineligible Downfield Pass, declined.</i>	
3-2-LAC 40	(8:25) (Shotgun) E.Stick left end to LAC 48 for 8 yards (J.Brown).	R4
<u>1-10-LAC 48</u>	(7:48) I.Spiller left end to SF 49 for 3 yards (T.Hawkins, D.Jamison).	
2-7-SF 49	(7:10) (Shotgun) E.Stick pass short left to T.Bynum to SF 45 for 4 yards (M.McCrary-Ball).	
3-3-SF 45	(6:34) (Shotgun) E.Stick pass short right to K.Doss to SF 43 for 2 yards (I.Oliver).	
4-1-SF 43	(6:09) Z.Horvath right guard to SF 41 for 2 yards (K.Davis, S.Womack).	R5
<u>1-10-SF 41</u>	(5:30) E.Dotson right tackle to SF 42 for -1 yards (J.Graham).	
2-11-SF 42	(4:47) (Shotgun) E.Stick pass incomplete short left to K.Doss. <i>PENALTY on SF-I.Oliver, Defensive Pass Interference, 6 yards, enforced at SF 42 - No Play.</i>	X6
<u>1-10-SF 36</u>	(4:43) E.Dotson left tackle to SF 34 for 2 yards (A.Bryant).	
2-8-SF 34	(4:08) (Shotgun) E.Stick pass short left to K.Doss pushed ob at SF 26 for 8 yards (M.McCrary-Ball).	P7
<u>1-10-SF 26</u>	(3:39) D.Davis right end to SF 10 for 16 yards (J.Graham).	R8
<u>1-10-SF 10</u>	(2:56) (Shotgun) I.Spiller right tackle to SF 6 for 4 yards (S.Womack).	
2-6-SF 6	(2:22) E.Stick pass incomplete short right to T.McKitty (K.Hyder).	
3-6-SF 6	(2:17) (Shotgun) E.Stick pass incomplete short right to J.Hightower (T.Hawkins) [K.Hyder].	
4-6-SF 6	(2:12) C.Dicker 24 yard field goal is GOOD, Center-J.Harris, Holder-J.Scott.	

Timeout at 02:10.

LAC 10 SF 6, 15 plays, 62 yards, 1 penalty, 7:11 drive, 12:50 elapsed

C.Dicker kicks 65 yards from LAC 35 to end zone, Touchback.

San Francisco 49ers at 2:10

1-10-SF 25	(2:10) (Shotgun) S.Darnold pass deep right to C.Conley to LAC 41 for 34 yards (D.Leonard).	P9
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Two-Minute Warning

<u>1-10-LAC 41</u>	(2:00) (Shotgun) S.Darnold pass short left to T.Davis-Price to LAC 37 for 4 yards (J.Woods).	
2-6-LAC 37	(1:18) (Shotgun) S.Darnold scrambles left end to LAC 32 for 5 yards (J.Woods). <i>PENALTY on SF-N.Zakelj, Offensive Holding, 10 yards, enforced at LAC 37 - No Play.</i>	
2-16-LAC 47	(1:04) (Shotgun) S.Darnold pass incomplete short middle to T.Martin.	
3-16-LAC 47	(:59) (Shotgun) S.Darnold pass short right to W.Snead to LAC 32 for 15 yards (M.Hankins; J.Taylor) [S.Matlock]. Timeout #1 by SF at 00:33.	
4-1-LAC 32	(:33) (Shotgun) S.Darnold pass short right to T.Martin to LAC 10 for 22 yards (D.Leonard). <i>PENALTY on SF-T.Martin, Offensive Pass Interference, 10 yards, enforced at LAC 32 - No Play.</i>	
4-11-LAC 42	(:27) M.Wishnowsky punts 25 yards to LAC 17, Center-T.Pepper, downed by SF-C.Latu.	

Los Angeles Chargers at 0:17

Los Angeles Chargers vs San Francisco 49ers at Levi's Stadium

1-10-LAC 17 (:17) E.Stick kneels to LAC 16 for -1 yards.

END OF QUARTER

	Score	Time Poss	First Downs				Efficiencies	
			R	P	X	T	3 Down	4 Down
Los Angeles Chargers	10	10:42	3	2	1	6	1/4	1/1
San Francisco 49ers	6	4:18	0	2	0	2	0/2	0/0

Third Quarter

8/25/2023

Play By Play

LAC elects to Receive, and SF elects to defend the North goal.

M.Wishnowsky kicks 65 yards from SF 35 to end zone, Touchback.

Los Angeles Chargers at 15:00

- 1-10-LAC 25 (15:00) M.Duggan pass incomplete short left to T.Bynum (D.Jackson).
 2-10-LAC 25 (14:58) M.Duggan FUMBLES (Aborted) at LAC 18, and recovers at LAC 15. M.Duggan to LAC 15 for no gain (D.Jamison).
 3-20-LAC 15 (14:21) (Shotgun) M.Duggan pass incomplete short left to T.Bynum.
 4-20-LAC 15 (14:18) J.Scott punts 52 yards to SF 33, Center-J.Harris, downed by LAC-T.Baker-Williams.

Timeout at 14:05.

San Francisco 49ers at 14:05

- 1-10-SF 33 (14:05) T.Davis-Price up the middle to SF 48 for 15 yards (A.Finley) R10
1-10-SF 48 (13:32) (Shotgun) T.Davis-Price up the middle to LAC 43 for 9 yards (A.Finley, C.Brown).
 2-1-LAC 43 (12:48) S.Darnold pass short left to I.Winstead ran ob at LAC 25 for 18 yards (M.Jacquet) P11
1-10-LAC 25 (12:16) T.Davis-Price right end to LAC 12 for 13 yards (A.Finley) R12
1-10-LAC 12 (11:37) T.Davis-Price right tackle to LAC 6 for 6 yards (C.Kemp).
 2-4-LAC 6 (10:51) (Shotgun) S.Darnold pass incomplete short left to C.Latu (D.Henley).
 3-4-LAC 6 (10:43) (Shotgun) S.Darnold pass short middle to W.Snead for 6 yards, TOUCHDOWN [B.Allen] P13
 TWO-POINT CONVERSION ATTEMPT. S.Darnold pass to I.Winstead is incomplete. ATTEMPT FAILS.

Timeout at 10:38.

LAC 10 SF 12, 7 plays, 67 yards, 3:27 drive, 4:22 elapsed

M.Wishnowsky kicks 63 yards from SF 35 to LAC 2. E.Dotson to LAC 23 for 21 yards (B.Willis).

Los Angeles Chargers at 10:38, (1st play from scrimmage 10:32)

- 1-10-LAC 23 (10:32) E.Dotson up the middle to LAC 26 for 3 yards (C.Robinson; M.McCrary-Ball).
 2-7-LAC 26 (9:57) (Shotgun) E.Dotson left guard to LAC 34 for 8 yards (M.McCrary-Ball; I.Oliver) R9
1-10-LAC 34 (9:19) E.Dotson up the middle to 50 for 16 yards (D.Jamison) R10
1-10-50 (8:37) T.Hoosman up the middle to SF 38 for 12 yards (T.Hawkins) R11
1-10-SF 38 (7:57) T.Hoosman right end to SF 36 for 2 yards (C.Robinson, A.Barrett).
 2-8-SF 36 (7:14) (Shotgun) M.Duggan up the middle to SF 31 for 5 yards (M.McCrary-Ball).
 3-3-SF 31 (6:34) (Shotgun) M.Duggan left end pushed ob at SF 11 for 20 yards (T.Hawkins) R12
1-10-SF 11 (5:57) (Shotgun) T.Hoosman up the middle to SF 8 for 3 yards (K.Hyder).
 2-7-SF 8 (5:24) (Shotgun) M.Duggan left end to SF 3 for 5 yards (M.McCrary-Ball).
 3-2-SF 3 (4:43) T.Hoosman up the middle to SF 3 for no gain (K.Hyder, M.McCrary-Ball).
 4-2-SF 3 (4:04) M.Duggan pass short right to H.Kampmoyer for 3 yards, TOUCHDOWN [I.Oliver] P13
 D.Hopkins extra point is GOOD, Center-J.Harris, Holder-J.Scott.

Timeout at 03:56.

LAC 17 SF 12, 11 plays, 77 yards, 6:42 drive, 11:04 elapsed

D.Hopkins kicks 65 yards from LAC 35 to end zone, Touchback.

San Francisco 49ers at 3:56

- 1-10-SF 25 (3:56) T.Davis-Price left guard to SF 25 for no gain (M.Jones, B.Allen). LAC-B.Okoye was injured during the play.

Timeout at 03:49.

- 2-10-SF 25 (3:34) (Shotgun) B.Allen pass short right intended for T.Martin INTERCEPTED by D.Henley (C.Brown) at SF 34. D.Henley pushed ob at SF 18 for 16 yards (W.Snead).

Los Angeles Chargers at 3:25

- 1-10-SF 18 (3:25) T.Hoosman left guard to SF 16 for 2 yards (D.Winters, K.Hyder).
 2-8-SF 16 (2:44) (Shotgun) T.Hoosman up the middle to SF 17 for -1 yards (M.Davidson, A.Bryant).
 3-9-SF 17 (2:06) (Shotgun) M.Duggan pass incomplete short left [T.McGill].
 4-9-SF 17 (1:58) C.Dicker 35 yard field goal is GOOD, Center-J.Harris, Holder-J.Scott.

LAC 20 SF 12, 4 plays, 1 yards, 1:30 drive, 13:05 elapsed

C.Dicker kicks 69 yards from LAC 35 to SF -4. D.Jamison to SF 30 for 34 yards (C.Brown).

PENALTY on SF-W.Snead, Illegal Block Above the Waist, 10 yards, enforced at SF 28.

San Francisco 49ers at 1:55, (1st play from scrimmage 1:46)

- 1-10-SF 18 (1:46) T.Davis-Price right tackle to SF 21 for 3 yards (A.Farmer; M.Jones).

Los Angeles Chargers vs San Francisco 49ers at Levi's Stadium

2-7-SF 21 (1:07) (Shotgun) B.Allen pass incomplete short left to T.Davis-Price (T.Shelby).

3-7-SF 21 (1:03) (Shotgun) B.Allen pass incomplete short right to W.Snead (T.Mullen).

4-7-SF 21 (:59) M.Wishnowsky punts 43 yards to LAC 36, Center-T.Pepper. D.Shepherd to LAC 39 for 3 yards (C.Latu).

Los Angeles Chargers at 0:48

1-10-LAC 39 (:48) M.Duggan pass short right to D.Shepherd to LAC 38 for -1 yards (D.Winters).

2-11-LAC 38 (:07) (Shotgun) E.Dotson right tackle to LAC 43 for 5 yards (J.Graham; Q.Knight).

END OF QUARTER

	Score	Time Poss	First Downs				Efficiencies	
			R	P	X	T	3 Down	4 Down
Los Angeles Chargers	20	9:55	4	1	0	5	1/4	1/1
San Francisco 49ers	12	5:05	2	2	0	4	1/2	0/0

Fourth Quarter

Play By Play

Los Angeles Chargers continued.

- 3-6-LAC 43 (15:00) (Shotgun) M.Duggan pass short middle to E.Dotson to SF 48 for 9 yards (J.Graham). P14
- 1-10-SF 48 (14:21) E.Dotson up the middle to SF 46 for 2 yards (D.Jamison).
- PENALTY on LAC-H.Kampmoyer, Offensive Holding, 10 yards, enforced at SF 48 - No Play.*
- 1-20-LAC 42 (14:01) M.Duggan pass incomplete deep right to D.Shepherd (D.Jamison).
- 2-20-LAC 42 (13:54) (Shotgun) A.Shampklin left guard to LAC 42 for no gain (T.McGill; Q.Knight).
- 3-20-LAC 42 (13:14) (Shotgun) M.Duggan pass short right to H.Kampmoyer to LAC 46 for 4 yards (I.Oliver).
- 4-16-LAC 46 (12:29) J.Scott punts 51 yards to SF 3, Center-J.Harris. A.Miller MUFFS catch, and recovers at SF 3. A.Miller to SF 1 for -2 yards (K.Doss).

Timeout at 12:18.

San Francisco 49ers at 12:18

- 1-10-SF 1 (12:18) B.Hill left tackle to SF 4 for 3 yards (C.Brown, M.Jacquet).
- 2-7-SF 4 (11:37) B.Allen pass short middle to I.Winstead to SF 18 for 14 yards (C.Brown). P14
- 1-10-SF 18 (10:57) B.Hill right end to SF 17 for -1 yards (M.Jones).
- 2-11-SF 17 (10:12) (Shotgun) B.Allen pass short right to B.Hill to SF 26 for 9 yards (T.Crowder).
- 3-2-SF 26 (9:23) (Shotgun) B.Allen pass incomplete short right to B.Hill.
- Penalty on SF-J.Poe, Tripping, declined.*
- 4-2-SF 26 (9:16) M.Wishnowsky punts 49 yards to LAC 25, Center-T.Pepper, fair catch by D.Shepherd.

Timeout at 09:08.

Los Angeles Chargers at 9:08

- 1-10-LAC 25 (9:08) (Shotgun) T.Hoosman up the middle to LAC 31 for 6 yards (B.Speaks; A.Barrett).
- 2-4-LAC 31 (8:34) (Shotgun) T.Hoosman up the middle to LAC 35 for 4 yards (B.Speaks; M.McCrary-Ball). R15
- 1-10-LAC 35 (7:54) D.Shepherd right end to LAC 46 for 11 yards (T.McGill). R16
- 1-10-LAC 46 (7:15) (Shotgun) T.Hoosman up the middle to 50 for 4 yards (B.Speaks).
- 2-6-50 (6:34) M.Duggan pass incomplete short right to S.Smartt (M.Hartsfield).
- 3-6-50 (6:29) (Shotgun) A.Shampklin left tackle to SF 39 for 11 yards (D.Winters). R17
- 1-10-SF 39 (5:50) (Shotgun) M.Duggan left end ran ob at SF 23 for 16 yards (T.Swilling). R18
- 1-10-SF 23 (5:21) (Shotgun) M.Duggan left end to SF 18 for 5 yards (D.Winters).
- 2-5-SF 18 (4:38) (Shotgun) T.Hoosman up the middle to SF 14 for 4 yards (I.Oliver).
- 3-1-SF 14 (3:56) (Shotgun) T.Hoosman up the middle to SF 11 for 3 yards (D.Winters). R19
- 1-10-SF 11 (3:14) D.Shepherd left end to SF 12 for -1 yards (Q.Knight).
- 2-11-SF 12 (2:32) (Shotgun) T.Hoosman up the middle to SF 8 for 4 yards (K.Davis).

Two-Minute Warning

- 3-7-SF 8 (2:00) (Shotgun) A.Shampklin right end to SF 9 for -1 yards (N.Brooks).

Timeout #1 by LAC at 01:14.

- 4-8-SF 9 (1:14) **D.Hopkins 27 yard field goal is GOOD, Center-J.Harris, Holder-J.Scott.**

LAC 23 SF 12, 14 plays, 66 yards, 7:57 drive, 13:49 elapsed

D.Hopkins kicks 65 yards from LAC 35 to end zone, Touchback.

San Francisco 49ers at 1:11

- 1-10-SF 25 (1:11) B.Allen kneels to SF 24 for -1 yards.
- 2-11-SF 24 (:35) B.Allen kneels to SF 23 for -1 yards.

END OF QUARTER

	Score	Time Poss	First Downs				Efficiencies	
			R	P	X	T	3 Down	4 Down
Los Angeles Chargers	23	10:39	5	1	0	6	3/5	0/0
San Francisco 49ers	12	4:21	0	1	0	1	0/1	0/0

Miscellaneous Statistics Report

Los Angeles Chargers vs San Francisco 49ers
8/25/2023 at Levi's Stadium

Ten Longest Plays for Los Angeles Chargers

Yards	Qtr	Play Start	Play Description
75	1	2-4-LAC 25	(3:28) J.Kelley up the middle for 75 yards, TOUCHDOWN.
20	3	3-3-SF 31	(6:34) (Shotgun) M.Duggan left end pushed ob at SF 11 for 20 yards (T.Hawkins).
16	2	1-10-SF 26	(3:39) D.Davis right end to SF 10 for 16 yards (J.Graham).
16	3	1-10-LAC 34	(9:19) E.Dotson up the middle to 50 for 16 yards (D.Jamison).
16	4	1-10-SF 39	(5:50) (Shotgun) M.Duggan left end ran ob at SF 23 for 16 yards (T.Swilling).
12	3	1-10-50	(8:37) T.Hoosman up the middle to SF 38 for 12 yards (T.Hawkins).
11	4	1-10-LAC 35	(7:54) D.Shepherd right end to LAC 46 for 11 yards (T.McGill).
11	4	3-6-50	(6:29) (Shotgun) A.Shampklin left tackle to SF 39 for 11 yards (D.Winters).
9	4	3-6-LAC 43	(15:00) (Shotgun) M.Duggan pass short middle to E.Dotson to SF 48 for 9 yards (J.Graham).
8	1	2-7-LAC 36	(:32) E.Stick pass short right to Q.Johnston pushed ob at LAC 44 for 8 yards (S.Womack).

Ten Longest Plays for San Francisco 49ers

Yards	Qtr	Play Start	Play Description
35	1	3-4-LAC 37	(11:35) (Shotgun) B.Purdy pass short right to B.Aiyuk to LAC 2 for 35 yards (A.Ogbongbemiga).
34	2	1-10-SF 25	(2:10) (Shotgun) S.Darnold pass deep right to C.Conley to LAC 41 for 34 yards (D.Leonard).
22	1	1-10-LAC 27	(4:49) J.Mason left tackle to LAC 5 for 22 yards (J.Woods).
18	3	2-1-LAC 43	(12:48) S.Darnold pass short left to I.Winstead ran ob at LAC 25 for 18 yards (M.Jacquet).
15	2	3-16-LAC 47	(:59) (Shotgun) S.Darnold pass short right to W.Snead to LAC 32 for 15 yards (M.Hankins; J.Taylor) [S.Matlock].
15	3	1-10-SF 33	(14:05) T.Davis-Price up the middle to SF 48 for 15 yards (A.Finley).
14	4	2-7-SF 4	(11:37) B.Allen pass short middle to I.Winstead to SF 18 for 14 yards (C.Brown).
13	1	3-5-SF 44	(13:02) (Shotgun) B.Purdy pass short middle to J.Mason to LAC 43 for 13 yards (A.Ogbongbemiga).
13	1	2-10-LAC 40	(5:31) (Shotgun) J.Mason right tackle to LAC 27 for 13 yards (J.Woods).
13	3	1-10-LAC 25	(12:16) T.Davis-Price right end to LAC 12 for 13 yards (A.Finley).

Touchdown Scoring Information

		Offense	Defense	Special Teams
VISITOR	Los Angeles Chargers	2	0	0
HOME	San Francisco 49ers	2	0	0

Player Scoring Information

Club	Player	TD	Rush TD	Rec TD	KO TD	Punt TD	Int TD	Fum TD	Misc TD	FG	XP	2Pt Rush	2Pt Rec	Sfty	Points
LAC	J.Kelley	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
LAC	H.Kampmoyer	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
LAC	C.Dicker	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	6
LAC	D.Hopkins	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	5
SF	B.Purdy	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
SF	W.Snead	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6

Possession Detail

	First Half		Second Half		Game	
	Visitor	Home	Visitor	Home	Visitor	Home
Largest Lead	4	6	11	2	11	6
Drives Leading	3	0	4	0	7	0
Time of Possession Leading	11:52	0:00	13:52	0:00	25:44	0:00
Largest Deficit	-6	-4	-2	-11	-6	-11
Drives Trailing	1	3	1	5	2	8
Time of Possession Trailing	0:44	6:24	6:42	9:26	7:26	15:50
Times Score Tied Up		0		0		0
Lead Changes		2		2		4

B Okoye	DT	19	35%			A Bryant	LB	31	48%	2	8%
S Matlock	DT	14	26%	5	21%	A Barrett	DE	29	45%	1	4%
M Jones	LB	12	22%	6	25%	J Brown	SS	28	43%	9	38%
D Henley	LB	10	19%	7	29%	K Davis	DT	27	42%	2	8%
T Mullen	CB	9	17%	8	33%	D Jackson	DE	26	40%	1	4%
T Crowder	LB	8	15%	11	46%	T McGill	DT	24	37%	2	8%
N East	LB	7	13%			D Winters	LB	23	35%	9	38%
T Baker-Williams	SS	3	6%	9	38%	T Swilling	CB	23	35%	8	33%
J Scott	P			9	38%	Q Knight	CB	23	35%	6	25%
J Harris	LS			9	38%	M Davidson	DT	23	35%	2	8%
D Hopkins	K			6	25%	J Kinlaw	DT	22	34%	1	4%
C Dicker	P			5	21%	K Givens	DT	21	32%	2	8%
M Ezeike	TE			1	4%	C Robinson	LB	19	29%	9	38%
						K Hyder	DE	17	26%	3	12%
						S Waege	DE	13	20%	1	4%
						B Speaks	DE	13	20%	1	4%
						D Flannigan-Fowles	LB	12	18%	6	25%
						C Ferrell	DE	7	11%	1	4%
						L Hamilton	LB	7	11%	1	4%
						C Ward	CB	5	8%	1	4%
						D Lenoir	CB	5	8%	1	4%
						K Tezino	LB	4	6%	7	29%
						F Warner	LB	3	5%		
						A Thomas	CB	2	3%	5	21%
						N Brooks	CB	1	2%	9	38%
						M Wishnowsky	P			9	38%
						T Pepper	LS			6	25%
						A Parker	CB			5	21%
						A Miller	WR			2	8%

The background is a solid blue color with a repeating pattern of the words "BOLT UP" in a white, outlined, sans-serif font. Each word is accompanied by a white lightning bolt icon. The pattern is arranged in a grid that covers the entire page.

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LOS ANGELES CHARGERS

Why Chargers' hiring of Kellen Moore is giving Brandon Staley vibes of Sean McVay

By Daniel Popper
The Athletic
July 25, 2023

On quiet evenings in February, a ritual was forming inside the Chargers facility. Each night, after a day of offseason work — self-scouting, evaluating, planning — Brandon Staley and Kellen Moore would convene for one-on-one meetings.

Moore was less than a month into his new job as Chargers offensive coordinator. His wife and three kids were still in Dallas, where the family had lived for the past eight years. The full-time move to Southern California would come later. Moore had his nights free, and he spent them debriefing with his recently discovered kindred spirit. A nightcap of film for Staley and Moore was the only item on the cocktail menu.

These recap sessions were a dream for the football-obsessed coaches in the infancy of their partnership. No idea too lofty. No concept or play design off the table. The meetings were part creative expression, part bonding experience, part football history discourse.

"We were able to kind of do this problem-solving quest together," Moore said.

Moore would offer up a concept he thought might work for Justin Herbert and the Chargers' talented skill players. Staley would reply with four or five examples, when similar concepts gave his defenses fits.

Staley poured his encyclopedic knowledge of NFL defensive schematics onto Moore — structures, systems, rules and the stress points an offensive play caller can exploit.

"Guys like him love that," Staley said of Moore.

For Staley, this process marked a 180-degree role reversal. Because three years ago, Staley was catalyzing a similar exchange of ideas with Rams coach Sean McVay.

After the 2019 season, McVay had parted ways with defensive coordinator Wade Phillips, an original member of his staff. McVay and Phillips had made the Super Bowl together in 2018. The following year, the Rams finished 9-7 and missed the postseason, but Phillips' defense finished in the top 10 in multiple advanced statistical metrics.

McVay nonetheless decided to move on from Phillips. There was a level the Rams defense had not yet reached, and McVay went looking for a forward-thinking defensive mind who could push the unit there. He found that in Staley, who was hired as Rams defensive coordinator in January 2020 after a 12-hour in-person interview with McVay in Los Angeles.

The Rams finished 2020 ranked No. 1 in weighted DVOA, a Football Outsiders efficiency metric. Staley was hired as Chargers head coach weeks later.

Staley is now entering his third season with the Chargers. And as those nightly February meetings with Moore set the foundation for a 2023 season teeming with expectations, Staley could not help but compare his current situation to the 2020 offseason with McVay.

"The parallels were crazy," Staley said.

Staley fired offensive coordinator Joe Lombardi three days after the Chargers' historic playoff collapse at the Jaguars in January.

Lombardi's offense was not poor. The Chargers were tied for sixth in offensive scoring over his two seasons calling plays. But as Staley assessed where his team was and where it needed to go after the shocking defeat in Jacksonville, he came to a familiar conclusion.

"Just like Sean felt like he needed to make that change, I felt like I was in a very similar spot," Staley said during a June sit-down interview in his office. "There were a lot of good things that have happened for two years. But you knew that there was another level that you could get to."

What transpired next over a whirlwind weekend in late January led Staley, officially, to that someone — Kellen Moore.

Unknowingly, the two started laying the groundwork for the partnership as early as 2020.

One could call it luck, or destiny, or merely preparation meeting opportunity. Regardless, Staley has found what he says is a true "competitor" and "energizing" force in Moore.

How Moore performs in building this Chargers offense and elevating Herbert will, more than anything, be the deciding factor in the team's 2023 season — and Staley's future as head coach.

Staley debuted as Rams defensive coordinator on Sept. 13, 2020, at SoFi Stadium. It was the first time he called plays in an NFL game.

Standing on the other sideline calling plays for the Cowboys' offense? Kellen Moore.

Staley was familiar with Moore's career as a player and coach, admiring the former Boise State standout from afar. Moore became the winningest quarterback in college football history with 50 victories from 2008 to 2011. He went on to spend six seasons as an NFL quarterback, with the Lions and Cowboys, before joining Jason Garrett's staff as quarterbacks coach in 2018.

It was in this Rams-Cowboys game, though, that Staley started to appreciate Moore's football acumen firsthand. While preparing his Rams players for the opener, Staley had warned of the versatility of running backs Ezekiel Elliott and Tony Pollard and the potential for one of the backs to split out to receiver in certain two-back packages.

Moore took it a step further. On the Cowboys' third offensive play, Moore lined up CeeDee Lamb, then a rookie making his NFL debut, in the backfield next to quarterback Dak Prescott. Elliott was at receiver to the right side. Prescott took the snap. Lamb ran a wheel route up the left sideline. The Rams carried Lamb's route, but Elliott came open on a shallow crosser, in the space Lamb created. Prescott hit Elliott, who surged ahead for a first down.

"He's going to be a good coach," Staley remembered thinking after that play.

Staley's defense held the Cowboys to 17 points, and the Rams escaped with a three-point victory, closing the game out in a two-minute drill.

He walked away impressed.

"It definitely started that first night at SoFi," Staley said.

Moore had a similar experience. Staley, at that point in his career, was a relative mystery. Moore knew Staley had coached under Vic Fangio for three seasons, in Chicago and Denver, before taking the Rams job. But the preseason was canceled in 2020. There was no film of Staley's scheme and play-calling. Moore and the Cowboys staff had to do some guesswork to figure out what his defense would look like.

During lunch breaks in the week leading up to that game, Moore and a couple of his younger offensive coaches watched YouTube clips of Division III John Carroll's 2016 defense.

That was the last time Staley had called plays.

"There's just such an element of unknowns," Moore said.

Those unknowns transformed into respect over 60 minutes.

"He just gave you so many different looks and so many different presentations," Moore said. "Usually on the offensive side, you're trying to create this for the defense, and he's doing it in the reverse order."

Moore and Staley faced off again in Week 2 of 2021. Moore was still calling plays for Mike McCarthy's Cowboys. Staley, of course, had moved on to take the Chargers job. Moore got redemption, helping Dallas to a 20-17 victory in another tight game that came down to the wire.

"Playing against him the second time, I was like, 'He really makes it easy for his guys, but he makes it tough for you,'" Staley said. "That's what good coaches do."

The following summer, the Cowboys came to Orange County for joint practices with the Chargers ahead of the teams' preseason matchup in Los Angeles.

The respect developed during the preparation and competition through those first two games. But it is difficult to truly understand what makes another coach tick — demeanor, personality, style — without interacting up close.

The two joint practices in August 2022 afforded Moore and Staley that opportunity.

The Cowboys and Chargers coaches collaborated on scripts and practice structure. Staley brought player leaders from both teams together to emphasize the importance of clean practices.

The process added depth to the burgeoning relationship.

"The whole operation for two straight days was just phenomenal," Moore said.

Staley and Moore called plays against each other for the two days.

"He's got a great way about him — really good presence, very calm, really smart, and I really value that," Staley said. "And the ball was really good."

Staley and Moore chatted before the preseason game, and the two vowed to stay in touch during the season.

As the Chargers were battered with injuries, so were the Cowboys. Left tackle Tyron Smith suffered a significant hamstring and knee injury in practice, after the Chargers-Cowboys preseason game. Prescott missed four games with a thumb injury.

The two coaches commiserated about these harsh NFL realities over text: "Hey, love what you're doing, know how impossible it is."

The Cowboys went 4-0 with Cooper Rush starting in place of Prescott and made the playoffs at 12-5. The Chargers won four straight games in December and January to clinch a playoff spot. The texts continued through the season. Neither Staley nor Moore knew in the moment how consequential the communication would end up being.

On the night of Sunday, Jan. 29, McCarthy announced that the Cowboys and Moore had reached a "mutual decision to part ways." This came one week after the Cowboys' 19-12 loss to the 49ers in the divisional round of the playoffs and five days after Moore interviewed for the Panthers head job.

As the Cowboys entered a transition phase with their coaching staff, the Chargers were in the midst of their own shakeup in the aftermath of the Jacksonville loss. They fired Lombardi and quarterbacks coach Shane Day on Jan. 17.

The decision was painful for Staley. He and Lombardi had a longstanding relationship dating to when Staley played for Lombardi at Mercyhurst College in 2005. Day and Herbert had developed a close relationship over two years.

"You know it's impossible, but you know that you have to do it," Staley said in June. "You have to do what's right."

The day after the Chargers announced the firings, Staley identified three areas in which his offense had to improve: running game, marriage of the run and pass, and creating more explosive plays on early downs.

Over Lombardi's two seasons calling plays, the Chargers ranked sixth in expected points added per play, according to TruMedia. The unit had taken a clear step back in 2022, but injuries were an unavoidable factor. Rashawn Slater, out for the season after a torn biceps in Week 3. Keenan Allen, seven games missed with a hamstring injury. Mike Williams, high ankle sprain and fractured back. Herbert, fractured rib cartilage and torn labrum. Despite that, the Chargers made the playoffs and then built a 27-0 lead in their first postseason game since 2018.

Still, the issues Staley pinpointed were real. Lombardi's offense was too reliant on third-down performance. Over two seasons, the Chargers ranked 11th in EPA per play on first and second down, including 16th in 2022. On third and fourth down, they ranked third. The Chargers also ranked 20th in explosive-play rate on early downs; an explosive play is defined by TruMedia as any rush over 11 yards or any completion over 15 yards.

The rushing scheme never established an identity either. Part of that was some transition, as run game coordinator Frank Smith left for the Dolphins' offensive coordinator position last offseason. Part of that was offensive line injuries in 2022, particularly losing Slater. But part of that too was Lombardi's scheming and play-calling. The Chargers ranked 22nd in EPA per rush in 2022 — a sluggish overall season that was epitomized by the second half in Jacksonville, when Lombardi's offense mustered just 7 yards on seven carries while trying to protect a 27-point lead.

"We didn't ever get good at one thing last year in the run game," center Corey Linsley said in June. "We had our plays that were successful, but they were individual plays. There wasn't a scheme, and we never felt like we got in a flow."

Staley needed more — more energy, more creativity, more innovation. He needed alignment. He needed a challenger.

"It was about joining up with someone who can think the way that I do," Staley said, "and with that type of agility."

Staley and the front office dove into their offensive coordinator search. They announced five interviews, all with either direct or indirect ties to McVay: Rams passing game coordinator/QBs coach Zac Robinson, Rams senior offensive assistant Greg Olson, Vikings assistant quarterbacks coach Jerrod Johnson, Rams assistant head coach Thomas Brown and Titans tight ends coach Luke Steckel.

In the background of the search, though, there were murmurs of a potential divorce in Dallas.

Moore had been elevated to offensive coordinator in 2019 by Garrett. In January 2020, the Cowboys fired Garrett, replacing him with McCarthy. The Cowboys kept Moore as offensive coordinator and play caller, setting up an arranged marriage with McCarthy. Moore achieved considerable success over three seasons, but by the end of the 2022 season, the partnership had run its course.

The Chargers announced their final interview with Steckel on Thursday, Jan. 26. By the weekend, their focus had shifted to Moore, who at the time was still under contract with the Cowboys.

Moore did not come from the McVay-Kyle Shanahan coaching tree, which had been the focus of the Chargers search thus far. That tree — highlighted in The Athletic's recent narrative podcast, "The Playcallers" — includes several of the NFL's brightest young offensive minds, such as Packers coach Matt LaFleur, Vikings coach Kevin O'Connell and Dolphins coach Mike McDaniels, the latter two of which Staley had tried to hire as his offensive coordinator when he first got the Chargers job in 2021.

But Moore, even without a direct connection, is considered almost an unofficial part of the tree.

"It's really about how you think, not, like, did you work with them or did you learn from them?" Staley said. "Do you think like them? Do you create like them? ... There's a very specific number of people, and it's not a very long list, who are wired that way. And he may not have worked with those guys, but the amount of respect that they have for him, they see him as peers, and they don't really view people like that very often."

The Chargers put in an official request to interview Moore. The Cowboys granted permission. And by the end of the weekend, Staley was on the phone with Moore.

Staley started the conversation with all his fundamental, big-picture football tenets: team-building, culture, relationships and competition, character and capacity, situational masters.

Next, he delved into schematic philosophies: weaponizing personnel groupings, motion, playing with pace, putting maximum pressure on a defense via play-calling and personnel usage.

As Staley dove deep into his football ideology, all he heard were affirmations and agreements on the other end of the line: "Yes, yes, yes."

"There was the finishing of each other's sentences," Staley said.

"You got really, really excited," Moore said.

As that excitement crescendoed over the phone, Staley was reminded of the 12-hour interview that landed him the Rams defensive coordinator job.

"You're just building. Everything is like a build, and that's how it was with Sean and I," Staley said. "You knew that he was up for it. You just knew that he's up for all of it."

The only difference is Staley's phone call with Moore did not last 12 hours. As Staley joked, "There was a lot less competition for my services."

Moore was not lacking in opportunities when it became clear that his time in Dallas was coming to an end.

"He could have gone anywhere in the NFL," Staley said. "And when I say anywhere — anywhere."

The connection with Staley was a factor. But what offensive play caller wouldn't want the opportunity to coach Herbert, one of the most talented quarterbacks in football who is still just scratching the surface of his limitless potential?

"Justin's combination of arm talent, size and athleticism is very rare," Moore said. "Not just now, but ever."

Moore's diverse schematic background as a player and coach has allowed him to both build a system tailored to Herbert and ease the transition.

Most notably, Moore played for Lombardi in 2014 with the Lions. So when he first picked up Lombardi's playbook, he recognized pretty much all of the verbiage and concepts. No learning or adjustment period necessary.

"Everybody's saying the same stuff, but we're talking in different languages," receivers coach Chris Beatty said. "Some is Spanish, some is French, some is English. Kellen's fluent in a couple of the languages."

For Moore, the process this offseason started with bridging these two worlds. "People think change has to be a reset. No," Moore said. "Part of this transition is to make sure you don't lose all the good that's going on at a place."

"It doesn't have to be Dallas. It doesn't have to be 2022 Chargers. It can be ultimately whatever we want it to be."

What will that look like?

On a general level, it will revolve around Moore's three core philosophies: play smart, play fast, attack.

On a more specific level, Moore's passing game will be more spread out than it was under Lombardi. Varying tempos will be a staple of the offense. And Moore will encourage an aggressive mentality from Herbert, both in the structure of the system and how he calls plays on game day. Moore will also implement a simplified run scheme that has an identity rooted between the tackles.

This is the vision that resonated with Staley on that phone call in late January.

"It's like we've known each other our whole lives," Staley said. "It's like we've worked together for years. You got this instant chemistry, and you can take it really far that way."

Still, there is a reality here: No one outside of the Chargers facility really knows what a Kellen Moore offense looks like. Moore carved out a seat among the elite offensive play callers in four seasons in Dallas. But he did so under certain constraints. He was calling plays for two accomplished offensive coaches with clearly defined schematic philosophies in Garrett and McCarthy.

What else can Moore achieve when there are no limitations?

Staley is determined to give Moore that space, because it is the same space McVay afforded him in 2020.

He remembers the feeling.

"I'm going to have the latitude to go places I haven't," Staley said, "and that's going to be better for me and it's going to be better for us."

FMIA: Chargers' Pace and Space Strategy

By Peter King
NBC Sports
August 28, 2023

COSTA MESA, Calif.—Scenes from the summer, as Chargers quarterback Justin Herbert adjusts to his third coordinator, Kellen Moore, in his fourth NFL season:

One. Offensive coordinator Kellen Moore and coach Brandon Staley cue up a training-camp practice play from Aug. 8 on the screen in Staley's office. First-team offense versus first-team defense. Herbert in shotgun. He has four plays in "his toolbox," as Moore calls his options here. Three pass plays, one run play, in a "check with me" call—the 10 guys on offense won't know the play till they hear Herbert's coded cadence. He sees the defense playing man. Herbert moves Austin Ekeler from sidecar right to left, and calls for one of the three passes he knows will work best against man coverage—a 15-yard "in" cut, right to left, to Keenan Allen, in single coverage. Works perfectly.

Two. Same series, a couple of snaps later. Playing fast now. Mike Williams on a deep post, and Herbert flicks the ball 43 yards in the air—so easy—and Williams catches it in stride. Touchdown.

Three. Rewind to June, to the first OTA practice with ones against ones. Moore's calls are new, the verbiage is mostly new. The specific call isn't important here—let's just say it was Gun roy left, paint right, Boise H-angle, which is a real play-call—but Moore says the call into Herbert's helmet. He starts to repeat it. There's so much new here, and he wants to be sure Herbert's got it. And Herbert waves him off, like, Got it, coach. He runs the play. Herbert never needs the call repeated.

Four. One day, Herbert looks at the script for practice. He notices something that seems off. "Did you mean 'Y' or 'F' on this play?" he asks Moore. F denotes the slot receiver (who could be a tight end or wide receiver), Y the tight end. Chagrined, Moore admits his mistake. "F.' That was a typo. You got me on that one," Moore says.

The coordinator's a football nerd. The quarterback's a football nerd.

The quarterback has one of the best arms in football. But he has one of the best brains too. He has to, to understand the "Pace and Space" concept Staley and Moore have set up for an offense that underachieved last year (13th in scoring) and must be more explosive for the Chargers to have a chance to catch Kansas City in the AFC West.

Everybody's optimistic in August.

But you look at the Chargers, and you watch this quarterback, and you think there's reason for optimism here. A lot of it.

Pace and Space

Brandon Staley has spent time with Golden State basketball coach Steve Kerr. He admires Kerr a lot. And Staley thinks there's one significant commonality between a basketball star like Steph Curry and a quarterback. They've got a big edge when putting pressure on the defense.

Kerr explained to Staley: When a defense can get set for Curry, there's a lot of different ways the defense can take him out of the game. Then we're grinding every possession, and it's an 83-79 game. When we don't let a defense get set, we can be in a free-flowing state. We can pressure the defense. We can dictate.

When Staley and Moore started talking about this job—the Chargers dismissed offensive coordinator Joe Lombardi after last season, figuring he hadn't maximized their weaponry—they agreed on lots of things, including the pressure-the-defense-through-tempo stuff.

But that isn't to say the Chargers will be all speed, all the time. They just want to have the ability to run the offense at tempo when they want, when they think it fits either in the gameplan or to tire out a defense.

Pace and Space. Playing fast, finding holes in the defense on every play—by giving Herbert the toolbox with multiple plays in it and allowing him to make the decisions in seconds while the defense, the Chargers hope, will be on its heels a bit.

"When we talked," Staley said, "we were like, 'How can we take this concept of pace and space and like be able to run our entire offense that way?' Like, no matter what time of the game. First quarter. Second quarter. Two-minute. Whenever. Challenge the defense's ability to communicate, to substitute."

Staley never doubted Herbert's ability to process quickly, even with the newness of Moore's imported schemes. Moore had to see it, though.

"You see all the physical tools that Justin has from afar," Moore said. "Then there's the element of once you start teaming up from a football intelligence standpoint, from a big-picture standpoint, how much can he handle? That's the stuff that's blowing me away—how much volume he can handle, and how fast he masters it."

In practice, what I noticed about Herbert—the Chargers were going against the Saints on this day—is how comfortable he was, and how the entire offense looked like this was their third year under Moore, not the first summer.

"Very comfortable," Herbert said post-practice when I asked about meshing with Moore. You saw it in the huddle, at the line, and in quick confabs with Moore. Now, Herbert's the kind of coachable guy who'd make it work if the custodian were his coach. But with Moore and position coach Doug Nussmeier, Herbert looks and sounds like he's in the best place he's been in during his young pro career.

I found it interesting that when Staley went looking for a coordinator after the season, he didn't want a hired gun who'd come in with his own system and scheme and with the attitude, It's my offense, coach. Out of the way. I'll take it from here. Staley has always admired Moore.

First as an undersized and very smart player, with a 50-3 record as Boise State's quarterback. Second, as the son of a high school coach, Moore would likely be a good teacher. Moore's dad recalls Kellen, in middle school, coming to the high school football practice and drawing plays in a notebook.

Plus, Staley loved Moore's rep as a low-ego team guy—because that's exactly what the quarterback is.

When I told Herbert that the precedent-setting \$262 million contract he just signed doesn't seem to have changed him, he brightened and said, "My father will be very happy to hear that."

So now the Chargers just have to cut into that scoring gap with Super Bowl champion Kansas City atop the AFC West. 2023 points scored: KC 496, LA 391. That's a touchdown a game the Chargers have to make up.

They drafted TCU wideout Quentin Johnston in the first round to help, but Herbert will wear out Keenan Allen and Mike Williams as long as they can stay healthy.

No team in the stacked AFC West has the star-receiver depth of Allen, Williams and Johnson, with a top all-around back like Austin Ekeler. It'll be surprising if the Chargers are anywhere near 13th in scoring this year.

Two final points. Those examples I gave you up top? They say to me that Herbert's gotten better at one of the most important, and underrated, parts of playing the position. That's manipulating the defense. He knows how to use the freedom of the toolbox Moore and Staley have handed him.

But the biggest issue the Chargers may face is their conference. Look at the teams with top-flight quarterbacks in the AFC, and you understand that when the musical chairs stop, two to four strong teams will be home for the playoffs. It's asking a lot of Herbert to make the Chargers 100 points better, but that could be what he'll have to do to get this franchise to important January football again.

Chargers Are Trying to Emulate This NBA Dynasty's Culture

By Albert Breer
Sports Illustrated
August 7, 2023

Chargers coach Brandon Staley had a pretty cool experience in the spring. And it affirmed something he was feeling with his team at the time.

Over the past two years, Staley, like any new head coach, looked to instill a culture and philosophy into his locker room, something that's easier to say than it is to do.

He felt like what it would take, over time, was the Chargers' best players, first and foremost, buying into what he and his staff were selling, and then for those players to also be the best people and workers in the organization.

Then, he spent some time as a fly on the wall with one of the best organizations in sports, and all of it came together for him.

Chargers coach Brandon Staley spent some time during the NBA playoffs with Warriors coach Steve Kerr and is trying to emulate their culture with his team, including star receiver Mike Williams.

"I spent some time with Steve Kerr this spring when [the Warriors] were going through the playoffs," Staley says.

"And he said the same thing about his playing career, whether he was playing at Arizona for Lute Olson or playing for Chicago and San Antonio, certainly coaching at Golden State—your best players represent your culture. In the NFL, who you pay represents your culture."

Staley and Kerr got connected through a mutual friend and have communicated over the past few years.

That led to Kerr inviting Staley to Game 3 of the Warriors' first-round series against the Kings, just a few days before the NFL draft.

Staley traveled to San Francisco and spent time as a fly on the wall, in coaching meetings and game-planning meetings, trying to soak in all he could in watching the defending champions going to work.

As luck would have it, the trip lined up with Warriors star Draymond Green's suspension, so Staley got an inside look at a proud champion under less-than-ideal circumstances.

He saw Steph Curry shine in a teammate's absence.

He saw Klay Thompson slump early but hit two crucial shots. He saw Kerr's message to his players to play with urgency, invoking the old John Wooden quote, "Be quick, but don't be in a hurry."

He left having seen a team's culture carry it through an adverse situation because, really, that culture was owned and operated by the team's best players.

And that's one reason why Staley's so encouraged now that a breakthrough is coming in Los Angeles.

"When I became the head coach, Corey Linsley, Mike Williams, Derwin James, what we did in trading for Khalil Mack, re-signing Justin Herbert, all those big contracts we've paid for, Joey Bosa, I just think you've seen the investment from the Spanoses, and it's not only the caliber of the player but the caliber of the leader," Staley says. "And I think what we have here, you keep adding these pieces as you go. So going into Year 3, you've added all these pieces, and what you see now is a lot of hard work."

"And you see these players really driving the practice field, driving the meeting room, and that's what you want. It's a team that's close. And it takes time to get close; you can't just have it happen, so we've really had to work hard for it."

Chargers coach Brandon Staley is trying to emulate the culture created by Warriors coach Steve Kerr.

Staley illustrated his point by talking about how Williams and Keenan Allen are constantly challenging the defensive players, and Bosa and Mack are doing the same for the offensive players.

"And then I just think what we did with Justin," Staley continues, "you're seeing Justin really make this his football team."

Because Staley knew it wouldn't hurt to emphasize what he saw on the weekend in San Francisco, he did pull on his Warriors connections one last time before the season started.

He asked Kerr whether he'd come out and address the team before camp.

Kerr's responsibilities coaching Team USA prevented it from happening, but Kerr sent his top assistant Chris DeMarco instead, and DeMarco drove home a message on leadership centering on the fact that Curry, Green and Thompson weren't stars out of the gate—they had to work to get there.

Which, DeMarco said, really has marked what the Warriors' culture has become, the kind that at least one NFL team would like to emulate. And Staley, for the record, does think they're getting there.

"You're seeing these players become the culture," he says, "and that's exactly what you're looking for."

Which is to say, Staley thinks he's found it.

Chargers tout Justin Herbert's Philip Rivers-like command of new offense under Kellen Moore

By Jori Epstein
Yahoo! Sports
August 7, 2023

COSTA MESA, Calif. — Justin Herbert spotted a slot defender creeping up behind the five down linemen.

“Oh, oh, oh,” the Los Angeles Chargers quarterback alerted running back Austin Ekeler before the snap.

Ekeler noted the threat and confirmed to his quarterback that he’d pick up his responsibility. Then, Ekeler celebrated internally.

“Just that communication in the backfield that we used to have with Philip [Rivers] when he was like 17 years in, that I’m starting to see with Herbert right now,” Ekeler said, comparing his fourth-year quarterback to the eight-time Pro Bowler he began his career alongside. “He understands the protections now, he’s seeing it, he’s switching calls [and] calling plays from the line of scrimmage.

“I can start to see him really maturing into a veteran quarterback.”

The prospect of deeper awareness elevating Herbert’s talent is tantalizing for the Chargers.

Herbert’s success preceded his arrival at veteran status. The sixth overall selection of the 2020 NFL Draft won Offensive Rookie of the Year honors as he threw for 4,336 yards and 31 touchdowns to 10 interceptions while accounting for five more touchdowns rushing.

Herbert stayed relatively consistent in Years 2 and 3, his 97.7 passer rating in Year 2 just 0.6 below his initial mark. In his third year, despite fracturing rib cartilage in Week 2 and requiring surgery for a torn labrum in his left shoulder at season’s end, Herbert still played clean if less explosive football. He threw for 4,739 yards, 25 touchdowns and 10 interceptions while registering a 93.2 passer rating.

The Chargers awarded him a five-year, \$262 million contract just before training camp in a show of faith in Herbert’s ability. But Chargers brass and teammates alike tout Herbert’s contributions beyond his size, strength and arm talent.

Even in new offense under coordinator Kellen Moore, Herbert’s command has turned heads at camp. The quarterback is shuffling teammates at the line of scrimmage and corroborating his diagnoses with defenders after plays. Awareness is climbing. Execution, the Chargers hope, will follow.

“We try to disguise and play as much stuff as anybody in the NFL, but he has a way of undressing that now,” head coach Brandon Staley said of his defense. “When you can do that, you can really control the game. Because there’s not a throw or play that he can’t make on that field, but it’s a lot easier to make those plays when you can completely understand and know and command and control what’s happening on the other side.

“He’s been able to really force our hand in a lot of ways.”

For Herbert, grasping Moore’s offense doesn’t look one way

Herbert’s real-time problem solving generates varied responses. When his pocket collapsed during one early snap of Sunday’s intrasquad scrimmage, Herbert scurried to the right and scrambled up the middle of the field for a first down.

When a later red-zone situation didn’t immediately create an open defender, Herbert stayed patient in the pocket, dropping back right, exploring his left, then returning to his right where he fit a tight-window touchdown into the hands of receiver Keenan Allen.

“You talk about getting comfortable in a new system. It’s that flow to where it comes naturally and you’re working through reads and progressions naturally and you feel the pocket collapse, and you decide to take off and go or say, ‘I can wait just that fraction second longer to get a guy into an open window,’” quarterbacks coach Doug Nussmeier told Yahoo Sports.

“You have to allow the quarterback to have freedom in what he feels. It’s like playing point guard in basketball — you can’t put him in a box.

“You’ve got to allow the game to flow for them and I think Justin’s done a really good job throughout camp of working in the flow of the offense.”

That flow, the Chargers hope, will generate more explosive plays than in recent years.

Coaches and players alike are considering the “why” behind plays, be that Moore determining the reason for a play’s success and failure

Stretching the field vertically and capitalizing on Herbert’s powerful arm to increase explosive plays are focuses for the Chargers this camp.

The Chargers ranked ninth in offense, 13th in scoring offense last year, scoring top-5 in each the prior season. But diversifying how they move the chains and on which downs they generate significant yardage are emphases.

Los Angeles valued how Moore spaced the field horizontally in four years coordinating the Dallas Cowboys, Moore not only setting up the pass with the run but also pressuring the defense to lighten the box due to the downfield passing threat.

In his first year with the Chargers, Moore is eager to use Herbert’s arm to take full advantage of a receiving corps featuring Allen, Mike Williams, Josh Palmer and first-round rookie Quentin Johnston.

“His ability to just stretch the field, how easy it is to throw across the field, it’s different,” Moore told Yahoo Sports. “His ability to make throws from the far hash and get it across the field in a very casual manner? You never get used to it.

“I mean — it’s pretty when he throws it.”

And the more Herbert masters the offense mentally, the prettier the Chargers expect those throws to be.

“The biggest thing for Justin is giving him the opportunities to go downfield while still making good decisions,” Moore said. “If they’re there, take them. If they’re not, they’re not, and we’ll move on and we’ll call another one.

“I think he’s just taking this thing over. It’s really, really exciting.”

Brandon Staley's Search for New Heights on Offense

By Conor Orr
Sports Illustrated
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Brandon Staley's quest to destroy NFL secondaries in 2023 began with his love of the Chicago Bulls in the 1990s.

Their guard play was exceptional and, when considering their size for the era, most of them were outliers. Michael Jordan, Ron Harper and Scottie Pippen were all 6'6" or taller, allowing the entire offense to play a hybrid style of basketball—multiple players slashing, driving, shooting and playing inside—at a time when the game was more positionally rigid. The team could dictate their own matchups, placing players with advantageous traits on defenders ill-prepared to counter them (a faster guard drawing a slower forward, a bigger guard drawing a smaller guard, etc.).

His hypothesis—that this could be applicable to the Chargers—was solidified during a predraft visit with the Warriors before their Game 3, first-round matchup with the Kings in April (Staley and Warriors head coach Steve Kerr are friends). It's about being large, handling the ball and spacing it all out efficiently. Size, he says, increases your margin for error.

Staley says over the phone a few weeks into training camp: "I've always wanted a receiver group built like that." During the coaching interview process in 2021, when Staley was a burgeoning commodity, he felt the Chargers were the most fertile place to implement an offense that can "change the spacing on the field."

A week after the Warriors defeated the Kings en route to a surprise conference semifinal berth, the Chargers were on the clock with a handful of needs and a 6'3" wide receiver from TCU on the board, Quentin Johnston. On tape, Johnston looks a little like Kevin Garnett in football pads. In Staley's mind, he's picturing slotting Johnston next to Mike Williams (6'4"), Keenan Allen (6'3"), Donald Parham (6'8"), Gerald Everett (6'3") and Joshua Palmer, who, despite being the runt of the group, is a solid 6'1" with thickness and a diverse route tree, and is discussed by his coaches as a fourth starter of equal importance to what they are trying to present.

Having been a defensive coach for the majority of his career, Staley says he's aware of how one player of that size alters the mathematics of a defense given the extra defenders it likely takes to cover just one person.

"Now, if you've got two of those guys, what does it do?"

He keeps going ...

"Now, if you've got three of those guys, and one of them is among the best slot receivers to ever play, Keenan Allen, that's when it gets tough out there. The nickels in this league are 5'10", 5'11" at best."

There are currently three projected starting cornerbacks in the Chargers' division who are 6'0" or taller. I asked Staley whether the Chargers mapped out the remainder of the schedule as a kind of analytical exercise heading into the draft. He said—confidently—that they didn't need to.

"It just doesn't exist," he says of the requisite size at the position. We spoke just days after Johnston ran a deep route in the preseason against Rams defensive back Tre Tomlinson, who is generously listed at 5'9", drawing a chuckle from the broadcast crew.

Welcome to Staley's search for new heights. At a time when one specific kind of receiver and a few specific kinds of offenses are seemingly coveted league wide—more on that shortly—Staley and his staff are borrowing more from modern basketball. It's not only to use size to stress the limits of a defense physically, but also to space out that size to consistently disrupt the comfort of defensive backs. Size not only gives Los Angeles a margin for error, but it will also lighten the number of players defenses can put in the box, it will force defenses to constantly fear the deep shot (thus hampering their ability to cover option routes being run by the second and third wide receivers), it will result in more pass interference penalties called in its favor and, most notably, it will demoralize secondaries when the true reality of the situation hits. Quarterback Justin Herbert can put the ball almost anywhere, and if all of his receivers are bigger than all of the corners, he can almost certainly put the ball where your defense is not, even if the defense is playing it perfectly.

"Defensively, it becomes a lot more challenging when we've got a basketball team out there," Staley says.

Williams put it more bluntly: "I don't want to spill too much, but just know there's going to be some numbers put up."

"It's interesting," Staley says. "A lot of the guys in the NFL that people consider great offensive coaches, Kyle Shanahan, Sean McVay, Kevin O'Connell, Mike McDaniels—guys who are good friends of mine—the kinds of receivers they are looking for, I haven't believed in that."

Staley said he was specifically referring to the "multicut route runner, who can run the whole [route] tree." While he did not name any specific receiver (and, tonally, was not denigrating any of these players, just simply stating a preference), I would assume he's referring to players with a similar scouting report to a Brandon Aiyuk, a 6'0" wide receiver Shanahan drafted in the first round of the 2020 draft.

He pointed out that the best receiver Shanahan ever had was Julio Jones while serving as the offensive coordinator for the Falcons. In Jones's prime, he was a bruising, physical pugilist at 6'3". He was talented and versatile, but he was also massive.

"Julio changes everything because of his size," Staley says.

In a typical Shanahan offense and, to some degree, a McVay offense, they often played from a more condensed formation, which presented its own unique challenges to a defense. With the Rams, there is often an explosion of activity at the point of a handoff or fake handoff that prevents defenders from properly gauging the direction of a play. The Rams' best blocker may also be their best wide receiver in Cooper Kupp. Thus, it makes more sense to play Kupp a bit like a hybrid tight end and pass catcher closer to the offensive line. It also doesn't make sense to motion a receiver way toward the sideline when the beauty of their sweep action is the immediate threat of something happening when the receiver is behind the quarterback. In San Francisco, their speed is accentuated by bunching defenders together like herded cattle in the box. A tight formation packs linebackers, safeties and corners inside, and a rocket-boostered running back taking an outside handoff suddenly has all sorts of daylight.

"What we're trying to do is change the spacing of the field by who we're putting out there and who you have to defend," Staley says. "But we don't want to bring size in closer; we want to spread it out."

Think wider splits. Think more occupied space, which expands and perforates a defense like a piece of chewed gum.

Which brings Staley back to his first love, basketball, the Bulls, Steve Kerr and the Warriors.

"Everything has gotten so spread out because of [the increase in volume and accuracy of three-point attempts]," he says. "So it changes the spacing of the defense and how you have to play defense. Everyone has to be accounted for. And when you account for the three-point shot, it opens up more space to drive the basketball."

A three-point shot for the Chargers is going to look a lot like Herbert uncorking a 20-yard pass down the sideline. Staley's equivalent of driving the basketball? Running against defenses that, mathematically, are going to struggle to present more than six defenders in the box because they need more help in the passing game, which gives a five-man offensive line, a sixth eligible blocker (a tight end) and Pro Bowl running back Austin Ekeler a marked advantage. That, or perhaps dumping the ball over the middle to Williams and Palmer, who are a chore for defenders to bring down at full velocity.

"There's going to be a mismatch somewhere," Staley says. "Whether it's in the slot or out wide, maybe they have one good corner, and they can match up with one of the guys outside. Well, they won't have two [good cornerbacks]. If they do, are they going to have a nickel corner who can match up with Keenan [Allen]? That's going to be the game they have to play."

Staley and his coaches also believe this is true because, like Chicago's trio of guards, each of them has different ways of bypassing a defender. Williams, for example, knows his strength is in body positioning. Johnston can reach top linear speed faster, which means defenders are wary of his immediate burst at the line. Allen is a footwork specialist, which means he uses precision steps to evade a defensive back at the line.

"We have everything you want in a starting five," Allen says. "We have constructors, and, for the receivers, I'm the point guard."

This offseason, when the Chargers changed offensive coordinators and brought in former Cowboys play-caller Kellen Moore, there also emerged a desire for each of the wide receivers to learn every position on the field. There are conflicting theories within the sport as to best practices. For example, many receivers coming out of college in speed-dependent, up-tempo offenses are assigned to only one position, thus making their transition to the NFL and multiple-receiver spots difficult. Some coaches opt for efficiency and the mastery of one space at the NFL level by keeping a player in that same space. (Allen, this offseason, told reporters that he almost never left the slot under former coordinator Joe Lombardi. Lombardi, now with the Broncos, had success in Los Angeles despite the ouster and oversaw passing seasons of 5,014 yards and 4,739 yards despite rarely having Allen and Williams healthy together.)

The advantage for the Chargers as a kind of positionless unit is the ability to match up one defensive back with three or four different receivers over the course of a game who each have a completely different way of getting open. On top of the built-in height advantage, there is also a stylistic one.

I asked Staley whether he was stealing from a different sport aside from basketball here. A trend in modern baseball has been the more constant changing of pitchers so that batters cannot pick up on trends or get comfortable. Isn't it similar to—on a series of three plays—having a defensive back face your equivalent of a burner, a finesse-type player and a sledgehammer?

"That's the nature of it. You're not going to get used to the matchup," Staley says. "We're changing the pace on the defense in more ways than one."

He illustrates the point with an example.

"Let's just say, with Keenan, you felt like you had a way to cover him in the slot or something. Whether it's man-to-man or zone. All of a sudden, all we need to do is motion him to the [No. 1 receiver spot], and now he's isolated on a corner. Let's say we've cut the split where Keenan has a free run at the cornerback; he can use all his moves, and the cornerback can't press [a technique where the defender gets up in the receiver's space and utilizes his hands to slow the receiver down]. That's not good for them."

Chris Beatty is the Chargers' wide receivers coach. In previous iterations of his football life he was a high-scoring offensive coordinator at Hampton (where one year he sent more players to the combine than USC) and a wide receivers coach with a string of success stories, from DJ Moore to Tavon Austin to Maurice Ffrench who, while not a household name, broke Larry Fitzgerald's single-season reception record at Pitt with Beatty as his position coach.

Staley met Beatty when they worked together at Northern Illinois. He was one of Staley's first phone calls when he received the coaching job in Los Angeles in 2021.

"He's one of the top coaches I've ever worked with," Staley says. "He's going to be an offensive coordinator in this league soon."

Beatty promised Williams he would have a career year during their first season together, which Beatty backed up. Williams finished the season with a career-best 76 catches, a career-best 1,146 yards and nine touchdowns, one behind his career high.

This is because Williams was the foundation of the Chargers' height experiment. While Allen was already a well-versed route runner, Williams, like a lot of taller wide receivers who come out of college, got pigeonholed as a boom-or-bust specialist who almost exclusively ran deeper routes outside the numbers. The NBA's equivalent would be a dying big-man center such as Patrick Ewing or Hakeem Olajuwon.

So, he and Beatty worked to re-expand his repertoire. By the third week of the 2021 season, Williams's quick-slant route, almost never respected by defensive backs because he never ran it, was the grist for an epic double-move touchdown (the slant was respected, and thus, when faked, fooled the defender into barreling down inside before Williams sprinted straight ahead) against the Chiefs.

"[Coach Beatty] wanted me to get paid," says Williams, who signed a three-year, \$60 million contract last year. "He kept it simple but pushed us."

I asked Williams, the seventh pick in the first round in 2017, when he felt he was finally reaching his potential. "When I started getting used a little different," he says. "You get one-dimensional and you get easier to guard. It stopped being, 'Oh, he's about to run a go route, so we'll play his outside shoulder. Now, they have to respect the inside.'"

This is the granular piece of Staley's strategy. In the NBA example, the height advantage doesn't work unless the bigger players learn how to shoot, run faster and handle other responsibilities not typically assigned to people that size such as the point guard position. The Chargers are not a threat unless big receivers can run the same route tree as a smaller one. Johnston is in the midst of that transition now, having been fed a crossing route in the team's preseason opener against the Rams in an effort to get him the ball with space to run over the middle. The plan is to bring him along slowly, knowing that receivers such as Palmer give the Chargers an extended window of time for development.

"He was no huddle most of the time in college," Beatty says. "He ran off signals. But he's doing a good job with it. He's working hard. And that's why they call you a coach, right?"

He added: "We don't want to limit anything Quentin is doing. There's a huge learning curve, but that was the whole deal with Mike. Mike was asked to run outside the numbers all the time, and I was like, 'He can do more than that. We just have to ask him.' I don't see it being any different for Quentin."

Beatty has adapted his methods to each receiver's individual needs, getting to know them on a personal level. Williams, he says, is more of a doer. Beatty can describe how he wants it done and send the receiver off. Allen, he says, is a suggester. Allen, who came into the league in 2013 and made five consecutive Pro Bowls from '17 to '21, has seen almost anything possible a defense can do to him. His relationship with Beatty is more of a peer-to-peer one that includes the lobbing of ideas back and forth.

"I'm learning how to pick up on Quentin," Beatty says. "I'm learning what's best for him, because coaching is learning, too."

With all of their combined size and athleticism, one would assume the Chargers' receiving corps would allow little drips of it to spill out into normal human life. Think, an Olympic sprinter who runs a sub-10-second 100-meter dash to catch a bus, or Magnus Samuelsson one-handing a dishwasher at Lowe's.

I asked Williams about any epic basketball games in the facility, hoping for a completed metaphor about Los Angeles's search for height-centered innovation. A volleyball spike? An easier time changing a light bulb? Anything?

"Uhh, we went bowling one day?" Williams says. "I haven't been bowling in like two years, but I think I finished in second place, though."

Close enough. During that team-bonding exercise, Williams says, they all worked through the experimental phase en route to higher scores.

"We all got our game," Williams says. "We all change our technique every game. Then, you might find something that works and you stick with it."

Staley is betting on it.

Chargers hoping Kellen Moore-Justin Herbert combination will pay huge dividends

By Jeff Howe
The Athletic
August 9, 2023

COSTA MESA, Calif. — Brandon Staley has seen this caliber of relationship once before in his coaching career.

The Los Angeles Chargers coach and his new offensive coordinator Kellen Moore have quickly developed a special rapport. It's already reminiscent of Staley's season with Los Angeles Rams coach Sean McVay.

"What we're able to do together feels very similar to what Sean and I were able to do in terms of building a team together in all phases of the game," Staley said Tuesday. "It's not all about offense. It's about defense and special teams, too. That's where Sean and I connected — being a complete coach. Kellen is a complete coach."

Moore's strong offensive background complements Staley's defensive resume, so they're able to play off one another in that respect. But Staley also noted McVay was smart enough to be a great defensive coordinator, and he viewed Moore as a similarly well-rounded coach.

Moore's expertise, of course, is still on the offensive side, as he played quarterback for the Detroit Lions and Dallas Cowboys from 2012 to 2017 before joining the Dallas staff, where he spent one year as the quarterbacks coach before a quick promotion to offensive coordinator. When Cowboys coach Mike McCarthy decided to take over play-calling duties after the 2022 season, Staley quickly moved to hire Moore.

Staley admired Moore from afar. Staley's first game as a defensive play caller in 2020 was a 20-17 win over Moore's Cowboys, and they matched up again during Staley's second game as Chargers coach in 2021, a 20-17 Dallas victory. The Chargers and Cowboys also conducted joint practices in 2022.

"You're just seeing his evolution as the coach," Staley said. "You know he's a tough cover. You know offensively he's thinking about things the right way, that he understands defenses, that he's not just randomly calling plays. He's got a plan of attack. He's setting things up. I love the way he made it simple for the quarterback. The quarterback always played fast for him."

"I knew it would be a great fit for what we built with (quarterback) Justin (Herbert) to this point and to be able to take this thing to a different level. He's been awesome. It's the way we think, the way we're trying to attack, building a football team, all the leadership and the culture we've established here. He's only going to make it better. It's been an awesome fit."

Herbert's development was a pivotal draw for all parties involved. The 2020 first-round pick, who signed a five-year, \$262.5 million contract extension last month, has the most passing yards through a player's first three seasons in league history (14,089) and has the natural talent to lead the Chargers to unprecedented organizational success.

Herbert established himself with a promising rookie season under offensive coordinator Shane Steichen and built upon that success over the past two years with Joe Lombardi. Moore, who played under Lombardi in 2015, runs a similar offense — albeit one that has evolved more over the years — so it has been a smooth, productive transition.

"I see Justin taking the practice field with a lot of confidence. His pre-snap command is outstanding," Staley said. "Let's continue to build on what (Herbert) is comfortable with, what he's done at a high level, what features our team. And then let's take the elements from Dallas and Kellen's previous experience and build it so this guy is playing fast so this isn't like Year 1 for him."

"Kellen has done a great job. That's the position he played. He knows that process. He's been around that and gone through it with (Cowboys quarterback) Dak (Prescott). He's been able to take that way of thinking and get him to play fast every day. If you get a special player like Justin playing fast, it's dangerous."

Prescott played every game in two of Moore's four seasons as offensive coordinator. They (2019 and 2021) were the only two seasons of Prescott's career in which he eclipsed 4,000 yards and 30 touchdowns, and the Cowboys led the league in yards both years.

If Herbert progresses in a similar fashion, his ceiling might be even higher.

"Justin is one of the best in this league," Moore said. "We all get to see it each and every day here. It's a lot of fun. I've really enjoyed his presence on the field. He does a phenomenal job as the commander, the leader. His understanding of football, he's got a really high football IQ, and it's been fun to see him build on that this offseason with his command of the offense and all the stuff he can do within the huddle and the line of scrimmage."

"He's got a lot of attributes that we certainly want to take advantage of. I think it's just the collaboration in building something that he is really comfortable with and he can play at a high level, play and operate really fast, play confidently. That's what this is about, going through the installation process and building it, then just making little adjustments and making sure as we're heading toward September to build this thing as we need to."

Though Herbert's development and production are major components of Moore's job, Staley was also attracted to the way Moore had used the Cowboys' skill players. Running backs Ezekiel Elliott and Tony Pollard and receivers Amari Cooper, Michael Gallup and CeeDee Lamb had 1,000-yard seasons during Moore's tenure.

The Chargers already have proven commodities on offense with wideouts Keenan Allen and Mike Williams and running back Austin Ekeler. Receiver Josh Palmer took a nice jump in his second season, and rookie first-rounder Quentin Johnston already looks like a hit.

The Chargers have been gushing over the way the skill group has looked in training camp.

"It's really fun just putting these guys in different positions and then ultimately finding where we want to build it for September," Moore said. "It's a really good blend of some veteran guys who have played a lot of ball like Mike and Keenan. Lean on their experience, and continue to try to get feedback from those guys. Josh took the big step last year. Q is coming in and (is) building his role. It's been awesome."

Of course, there's some give and take with investing in a coordinator on the rise. Moore is already on the short list of head-coaching candidates who should again hit the interview circuit after the season. And if the Chargers offense performs at an even higher level in 2023, Moore could graduate from the shortlist to the priority list.

Then again, that's exactly how it played out with Staley during his only season with the Rams.

"Certainly, we all have aspirations for that," Moore said of a head-coaching opportunity. "This has been a really fun transition because you get to see a different environment. Brandon has done an awesome job building this place. Then at the same time, this has been a fun place where you just get to dig into ball as we build the system, so there's been a lot of studying football and collaborating with a lot of people. I've really enjoyed that."

Chargers' offense under new coordinator Kellen Moore is the bomb with wide-open spaces

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
September 5, 2023

His answers typically are straightforward — lacking gloss and glitz — a football coach sounding like a football coach. Mostly Xs with very few Oohs.

The Chargers didn't hire Kellen Moore to bring electricity to their news conferences, only their offense.

"He's a calm guy," wide receiver Keenan Allen said. "He's not tripping too much. Probably never seen him yell. I don't think he can get mad."

The qualities Moore hasn't shown at the podium or in practice are the same ones the Chargers hope spring to life for quarterback Justin Herbert and their playmakers in 2023:

Creativity. Explosiveness. Unpredictability.

"We want to be the aggressors," tight end Gerald Everett said. "We want to be one of those teams that people are afraid to play. We want to be known for putting up points and gaining a ton of yards."

Veteran center Corey Linsley called Moore "level-headed, very analytical, smart." He noted that those are all plus traits for a play caller, before adding "defensive coaches are the hot-headed ones."

Moore's job this season is to crank up the heat.

He was the offensive coordinator in Dallas the last four seasons, three of his Cowboys team finishing sixth, first and fourth in points. Dallas' performance dipped in 2020 after quarterback Dak Prescott was injured.

Now, Moore has a better trigger man in Herbert and the NFL's top touchdown producer over the last two seasons in running back Austin Ekeler.

He also has Keenan Allen, Mike Williams, Joshua Palmer, a first-round pick in Quentin Johnston and a pile of expectations, each of which is rooted in the notion that the Chargers are going to be more dynamic, not to mention dazzling.

As important as anything, Moore has a healthy Herbert. The quarterback played much of last season with damaged rib cartilage before ending the season with a shoulder in bad enough shape to require offseason surgery.

Who knows? If Herbert had avoided injury and reached his projected standards in 2022, Joe Lombardi still might be the Chargers' offensive coordinator.

Instead, coach Brandon Staley let Lombardi go and jumped on Moore as if he were the team's top free-agent target all along.

Allen, a lifetime Charger working with his fifth coordinator, confirmed that this new offense will take more deep shots based on film review of the Cowboys over the last few seasons.

"There's not a lot of times where everybody on the field is running short routes," Allen said, "versus Lombardi, where everybody's running short routes. Now, somebody has an opportunity every time."

Each snap in the passing game, as Allen explained it, will feature a chance for Herbert to flaunt his powerful right arm. The expectation is that Moore also will liberally align his receivers throughout the formation to create more opportunities through mismatches.

This is what the Chargers hope to show coming off a season during which the ailing Herbert connected with Ekeler 107 times, tied for the second most receptions by a running back in one NFL season. Christian McCaffrey is first (116) and second.

In 2023, at least some of those shorter tosses are forecast to soar farther downfield.

"You can see it," Palmer said. "You can feel it. We've got the guys to do it. We all see the explosive plays on social media that they're posting [during training camp]. That's one of the things we're going to do."

But will more chances lead to more risks and lead to more turnovers? Herbert has finished in the top 10 in interception percentage in two of his three seasons. The other season, he tied for 15th.

So he has taken care of the ball, while throwing more passes than every quarterback in the league other than the now-retired Tom Brady. Known for his intellect, Herbert is smart enough to understand turnovers can be killers.

"If they're not there, move on, and that gives us opportunities to keep going," Moore said. "Justin has done that throughout his career in such a phenomenal way."

Staley praised his quarterback as a decision-maker while explaining that the Chargers are "trying to walk that fine line" between being aggressive and being prudent.

He likened Herbert to a point guard, one who almost always makes the right play. With Herbert's ability to place and pace footballs, targeting experienced receivers with productive pasts, Staley said his offense is in secure hands.

"We don't ever want to take away Justin's instincts because I think those are what make him so special," Staley said. "With more experience is going to come more play making."

Williams laughed and quickly dismissed the suggestion that the Chargers could be in trouble if Herbert starts taking too many chances.

He instead sided with Allen, who noted that Herbert, through three seasons, hardly has become known for making "boneheaded plays."

"More interceptions?" Williams said. "Why not more catches for us? Why you got to look at it like a negative like that? You can be risky and not have the interceptions, you know."

"Besides, everybody's acting like we're going to throw the ball deep every play. An explosive offense really means catching a few shots a game. Do that and then you'll be known as an explosive offense."

The challenges for Moore aren't limited to the air. The Chargers also continue to search for a more reliable run game, one that doesn't have to do a lot but does have to do enough.

This is a franchise that has finished in the top half of NFL rushing offenses once since 2013. That happened five years ago and, even then, the Chargers ranked no better than 15 out of 32.

Ekeler never has had a 1,000-yard rushing season. Behind him, the Chargers will open 2023 with Joshua Kelley, Isaiah Spiller and undrafted rookie Elijah Dotson, hoping someone can provide consistency as a backup.

An improved ground game would make Herbert even more dangerous and unlock all of Moore's trumpeted concoctions, the coordinator with the muted public persona not a screamer but a schemer.

"He's pretty chill," Williams said. "I mean, he brings the energy. But you gotta kinda catch it, you know? It's not going to be just out front. Yeah, I'd say 'chill.' That's him."

Maturation of Chargers defense in focus as leader Derwin James Jr. says ‘We’ve got the pieces to do it’

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
September 4, 2023

All eyes over the next four-plus months will be on the Chargers’ offense, where the NFL’s highest-paid player will give life to the new coordinator’s celebrated scheming.

Just don’t lose sight of the defense, which almost certainly will have a greater impact on the team’s success.

Derwin James Jr., the league’s highest-paid safety, has the situation squarely in focus, the three-time Pro Bowler insisting that this fall the Chargers — finally — will be a better defense.

And what will be the cause of such a revival?

“A bunch of grown men coming together,” James said. “We’re not kids. We’re not little boys. When a bunch of grown men make up their minds and they’re tired of something, that’s when things change.”

With Justin Herbert at quarterback, the Chargers are going to be one of the NFL’s best passing teams, regardless of who’s calling the plays or executing them.

A year ago, an injured Herbert — operating behind an injured offensive line and throwing to an injured receiving group — finished second to eventual MVP Patrick Mahomes with nearly 4,800 yards through the air.

But what secured the Chargers their AFC wild-card playoff berth was a late four-game winning streak during which the defense permitted only four touchdowns.

In the first three of those victories, the offense produced but 20, 23 and 17 points, as Herbert threw for one touchdown and had three passes intercepted.

Still, the strong regular-season finish capped a year that saw the Chargers finish 20th in yards allowed and tied for 21st in points surrendered, improvements over the previous season but hardly a leap forward.

From the outside at least, this was not the expectation when the Chargers hired Brandon Staley to be their coach in January 2021 after he coordinated the NFL’s best defense with the Rams.

But switching to a significantly different, more complex system than the one employed by predecessor Gus Bradley has required time to adjust. Staley and general manager Tom Telesco also had to rework the roster to better fit the head coach’s vision.

Staley explained that the Chargers had to “kind of engineer” their personnel to reach this point, noting particularly the need to add force up front and find cornerbacks better equipped to play man coverage.

Now, two years into the transition, the Chargers believe they have a defense capable of keeping up with their offense.

“We definitely want to be that dominating group that we all know we can be,” James said. “We’ve got the pieces to do it. We’ve got the guys to change that narrative.”

They are counting on continuity. The Chargers allowed linebacker Drue Tranquill to depart in free agency and didn’t re-sign linebacker Kyle Van Noy or slot corner Bryce Callahan.

They also weren’t going to bring back safety Nasir Adderley, who announced his retirement in March.

Otherwise, all the main pieces return, supplemented mostly by two veterans, linebacker Eric Kendricks and tackle Nick Williams, and two draft picks, edge rusher Tuli Tuipulotu and lineman Scott Matlock.

In total, the Chargers league-wise have the fourth least amount of roster turnover from last season, according to Over The Cap. And they’re only nine-tenths of a percentage point behind Cincinnati and Buffalo for having the least amount.

“I really feel we’re way more connected this year, the whole defensive unit,” lineman Sebastian Joseph-Day said. “That’s what we needed. We needed time to jell with one another.”

They also are hoping for better health. Edge rusher Joey Bosa, cornerback J.C. Jackson and linemen Austin Johnson and Otito Ogbornia all missed extended stretches last season.

And the 2023 Chargers are prepared to rely heavily on Kendricks, their biggest addition in free agency and someone with an extensive background running similar defenses.

Kendricks, 31 and entering his ninth season, will relay the signals in the huddle and be in charge of ensuring that he and his teammates are properly aligned at the snap.

“Having a guy like Eric running the defense is special,” Bosa said. “I think he’s going to facilitate the defense in a way that we haven’t had. With Derwin, it’s like having two quarterbacks on defense out there.”

Kendricks has been an All-Pro once, but that was in 2019. Still, he has topped 100 tackles in each of the last seven seasons and played at least 14 games in all but one season.

Just two years ago, Kendricks had 143 tackles and five sacks, both career bests, and intercepted two passes, one of which was thrown by Herbert.

The Chargers spent all training camp praising Kendricks as a communicator, leader and stabilizer. Those characteristics are expected to particularly help in defending the run.

That’s where the Chargers struggled most in 2022, allowing a league-worst 5.4 yards per rush. Only Detroit and Chicago gave up more yards per play overall.

“You can tell he’s been holding down defenses for a long time,” edge rusher Khalil Mack said of Kendricks. “To have that experience in the middle is going to work wonders for us, especially in the run game.”

So the Chargers defenders are convinced they’re ready to do their part this season, ready to show that new offensive coordinator Kellen Moore isn’t the only reason to anticipate more explosiveness.

Moore spent the last four years in the same role with Dallas. The Cowboys averaged 29.3 points per game over the last two seasons, tops in the NFL. During that same time, they also reached a league-best 50 points three times.

The Chargers have scored 50 or more just once since 2008. That came in Week 11 of 2017 and required the opposing quarterback — Buffalo’s Nathan Peterman — to throw five interceptions.

But also understand this much: During Moore’s time in Dallas, the Cowboys won just one playoff game. Yeah, it takes more than a good offense to succeed in this league.

“We’re chasing completeness,” Joseph-Day said. “That’s what this is all about now. We don’t want to be just a one-way team.”

From the Chargers to Bills: NFL teams are winning over Gen Z

By Erika LeFlouria
ESPN.com
August 11, 2023

It's no longer a requirement to attend or watch games or don specific colors to be deemed a fan of a team. Now, fandom can come simply by following a team's account on social media. As fandom has changed, the way teams interact with fans has changed, too.

NFL social media teams across the league have made it a mission to meet fans -- and potential new ones -- where they are ... especially the younger generation.

While a 2022 study by Emory University professor Michael Lewis, found that only 23% of Generation Z -- people born from 1997-2012 -- define themselves as "avid sports fans" and 27% define themselves as "anti-sports", the NFL's success at enticing younger generations is in the numbers.

"We've seen the feedback, we've seen the engagement, that the more behind the scenes, more access, things that make you feel a part of the team -- it's our objective every day," Nilay Shah, New York Giants senior vice president of marketing and brand strategy, told ESPN.

According to the Morning Consult, about 68% of Gen Zers use the popular social media app TikTok. This usership has fared well for the NFL, with 23 teams raking in over one million followers each. Teams across the league have routinely racked up 100,000-plus views on videos no matter the time of year.

"Gen Z and Millennial social media culture, I think drives a lot of social media culture in general," Anna Stolzenburg, director of social media strategy and content at Pegula Sports and Entertainment, working with the Buffalo Bills, said. "So we have a responsibility to be attuned to that and responsive to that."

There is still a long way to go to get a majority of Gen Zers to be passionate about sports, but the NFL, with the help of TikTok, might have cracked the code on luring the newest wave of fans.

Brand recognition helps teams get views, but it's the showcasing of the players' personalities that makes them go viral.

"I think TikTok, for a lot of teams, changed the game," Los Angeles Chargers director of social media and content performance Megan Julian said.

The unique platform and loyal usership encourages teams to show an authentic look at players who once felt unavailable and untouchable to the everyday fan.

"Everyone sees them with the helmet and sees their stats and just sees you know what they're doing in between the lines, but I think [on TikTok] you get to kind of see who the players are as a person and kind of what they like and who they are," Carolina Panthers' senior social media manager Angela Denogean said.

The most popular teams pages are the ones that are the most active, have creative videos and primarily focus on showcasing the many personalities of their players (being good on the field helps, but is not essential).

"They [the fans] have a unique sense of humor. And we have to be in tune with that. And I think that's one thing that me and my team have been able to do since I've been here, is really kind of tap into that voice of the fan and communicate with them in a way that they want to be communicated with," Jacksonville Jaguars director of digital and social media Nick Birdsong said.

The Kansas City Chiefs lead the NFL's presence on the platform with 3.1 million followers and 57.5 million likes. Their 2023 Super Bowl opponent, the Philadelphia Eagles, are second with 2.3 million followers and 59.2 million likes. The Dallas Cowboys have also captured the attention of fans sporting a lofty 2 million followers and 26.4 million likes.

Some teams' TikTok accounts have the organization's largest following among all their social platforms. The Buffalo Bills have 1.9 million TikTok followers compared to 1.7 million on X, formerly known as Twitter, and the Detroit Lions' following doubles its Instagram, with 1.9 million followers compared to 997,000.

Two of the offseason's most popular videos were the Cincinnati Bengals' social team getting tackle Orlando Brown Jr. to ask players in the locker room their favorite Taylor Swift song (over 712,000 likes), and the Bills' video capturing quarterback Josh Allen failing at basketball (809,000 likes and counting).

As much as the fans love the informal social media content, the players do, too. Most of the social team's ideas are brainstormed as a group and fleshed out among the people running the accounts, but sometimes they take ideas from the players.

"They know they can always send their ideas to me. Sebastian Joseph-Day sends me ideas all the time. And I'm like, let me write this down, let me write this down," Julian said.

"We've gotten amazing buy-in from the players, like they honestly, they love it," Stolzenburg said. "And sometimes they even bring us ideas, which is amazing."

The special thing about TikTok is that its videos can be (and have been) carried over to the other popular social media apps like Facebook, Instagram and X. Social media accounts once flooded with game highlights and informative graphics now include silly videos often taken from the team's TikTok account.

TikTok's takeover can now be seen everywhere.

The creativity and diversity in content can even be seen in one of the NFL's most-hyped up offseason events: the schedule release.

"The schedule release has really just become the NFL social team's Super Bowl in a way, and I think that it's become one of the biggest pieces of content," Deanogean said.

Just ask the Tennessee Titans, whose schedule release content reigned supreme across the league -- collecting an eye-popping 29.6 million views on X. The Titans' video was reminiscent of many Q&A videos that flood TikTok's "For You" page. The Atlanta Falcons and Los Angeles Rams also turned to TikTok for inspiration.

The second most viral 2023 schedule release was a product of the Chargers studying a specific subset of the younger demographic: anime fans.

"Anime was more about reaching the anime world of the internet, right, which is a very strong presence. A lot of our players are actually big anime fans. We found that the cross section between anime fans and football is very interesting and very strong," Julian said.

The brainstorming for the video started months in advance. Every joke was planned out, every scene was hand-drawn by one of the Chargers' producers. And the success of the video can be seen in the numbers -- their schedule release video pulled in 23.4 million views on X.

Social media and the way that video content has changed the game isn't going anywhere. It's only getting bigger and better, and becoming the leading way of getting Gen Z interested in the NFL.

"I think the league and clubs have done a really good job of meeting these generations where they're at instead of trying to bring them to us," Julian said. "You don't have to be the traditional football fan, we will adapt to you because you're the next generation of fans."

Chargers' Brandon Staley: The math, mindset behind NFL's most aggressive coach

By Daniel Popper
The Athletic
August 15, 2022

COSTA MESA, Calif. — Brandon Staley is sitting on a couch in his corner office at the Chargers' facility, freshly brewed coffee in hand. He is wearing a casual offseason outfit — sneakers, shorts, a thin baby blue dri-fit hoodie and a black BNP Paribas Open hat.

He considers a question about the value of understanding mathematical advantages.

"There's a really powerful part of this book that has stayed with me ..."

Staley stands up and walks over to the bookcase along the back wall of the office, next to his desk. He kneels and scans the shelf with his index finger until he finds what he is looking for — "The Undoing Project" by Michael Lewis. Staley pulls it out and starts flipping through the pages as he walks back to the couch and sits down again. With the book resting on his lap, he turns page after page, searching for a specific passage.

His goal here is to teach — he is the son of educators, after all. His mother, Linda, who died in 2004 after a long battle with breast cancer, taught sixth-grade English. His father, Bruce, taught fourth grade for a few years before starting a second career.

The only noise in the office is the flip, flip, flip of turning pages until Staley finds the passage he is looking for and reads aloud. "The new definition of a nerd," he recites. "A person who knows his own mind well enough to mistrust it."

He looks up.

"Your instincts aren't better than everybody on Earth," Staley says. "Do I think one of the big reasons why I became the head coach of the Chargers is because I've got instincts? Yes.

"But do I think that when it comes to making these premium decisions in the heat of the moment that, man, my instincts are so much better than everybody else, and I would do a perfect job if I didn't have any information? There's just no way."

For most of football history, coaches have made game-management decisions using nothing more than tradition and gut feelings. Staley is as well versed in this history as any person on the planet. He is a walking football encyclopedia. He has read Bill Polian's "Super Bowl Blueprints" cover to cover more times than he can count.

Staley is also determined to find advantages wherever he can, to better his team and give his players the best opportunities to be successful, even if it means admitting what he does not know. Staley sees a potential advantage in the admission — and in acquiring as much information as he can from as many resources as possible, in knowing his own mind well enough to mistrust it.

We are discussing fourth downs, opportunities gained and lost in an eventful 2021 season that fell just short, and the dreaded, polarizing word

that has caused arguments and outrage across sports for most of this century.

Analytics — people in and around football spend countless hours dissecting the topic. But when the dissection happens, analytics are rarely defined as what they actually are: more information.

"I think the problem with 'analytics,' when you use that word, immediately somebody is feeling something, and they shouldn't be," Staley says. "If it was another term that people were more comfortable with, then there would be a different response. But analytics has ... it's like, well, it doesn't belong in ball. It belongs in the CIA. It belongs in investment banking. It doesn't belong in sports. And that's not true. Information has been how people have been making judgments in this game since Paul Brown and Vince Lombardi were coaching.

"What we try to do is try to use data to make better decisions."

For Staley, that process started in the winter of 2021, before he went for it on fourth down at a higher rate than any coach in the league, before his in-game decisions helped propel the Chargers to the cusp of the postseason and before the fierce backlash of the NFL world came crashing down on the then-rookie head coach when his team came up one win (or tie) short.

Staley believes in math, but he also acknowledges there is a part of the game numbers cannot and may never be able to quantify. Mindset. Emotions. Effort. The human element. And the driving force in Staley's approach to in-game decision-making was rooted in that understanding.

"There has to be a fearlessness to play in this game, and what I wanted to establish was that," Staley says. "The history of this team when I got here, it was like someone's going to get hurt, they're going to blow a lead, something catastrophic is going to happen. There's this 'Charger' thing. There's all of these external factors that I know in my life, they're just all excuses. They're just all excuses.

"And so, how do you change that? Well, you have to do things different, you have to have a different approach. ... Our mindset's going to be on us, it's not going to be on the opponent. It's going to be on us. So creating that fearless mindset of, we are going to be aggressive, we're going to put the ball in our hands, we're going to trust our guys to make plays.

"If we lose, we're going to do it on our terms, not someone else's terms."

It was crucial to Staley to instill that mindset in all of his players. But it was most crucial for his rising star quarterback Justin Herbert, who was set to enter his second pro season after an eye-opening rookie campaign. Whether he failed or succeeded, Herbert needed to experience the pressure. He needed to face the do-or-die realities of the NFL head on.

"The first person that I was thinking about was Justin. I wasn't thinking about anything or anybody else," Staley says. "For me, I came into this and I said, I know I have a special quarterback. I also know part of my responsibility is to train him. Part of my responsibility is to get him ready. And I also know that if I take the ball out of his hands, I know what that's going to do, too.

"For him to grow and be as good as he's going to be, he needs to be in these pressure-packed moments. Whether he throws it or not, it's not the point. It's that the ball is in his hands, it's in our hands as a team, and that is where it all started for me."

For his vision to be executed, Staley felt he needed to institute a clear plan for streamlined communication on game days.

Only six people would be involved in game-management discussions on the headsets. Staley and his three coordinators — offensive coordinator Joe Lombardi, defensive coordinator Renaldo Hill and then-special teams coordinator Derius Swinton — plus two staffers devoted exclusively to game-management strategy, director of football research and analytics Aditya Krishnan and offensive assistant Dan Shamash, who had previous game management experience on Anthony Lynn's staff. (Shamash was hired away in the offseason by Robert Salah to be the Jets' situational football and game management coordinator.)

"Those (six) people are in complete alignment in terms of how we're going about these decisions," Staley says. "You don't have time to have a big powwow. You don't have time to have this intricate back and forth on a headset during a game."

Next, Staley constructed the mechanics of the fourth-down decision-making in a "yes, unless" system.

At the start of each series of downs on offense, win-probability models from the Chargers football research department would indicate the number of yards the offense would have to gain on first, second and third down to make it a go-for-it — or "green," in the team's lexicon — decision.

Say the Chargers have a first-and-10 from their own 40-yard line. And say the model indicates that they would increase their win probability by going for it on fourth down as long as they have 4 or fewer yards to gain. That information is communicated to all relevant parties, including Lombardi. Lombardi can then call plays on first, second and third down knowing that if he gets to fourth-and-4 or less, the Chargers are going for it — unless Staley says otherwise.

"You can be a better decision-maker if you have things modeled ahead of time," Staley says. "You have to go into the game with a plan, and then that way you're saying, 'No,' as opposed to deciding yes or no. I'm going into it saying, we're doing this unless."

With the infrastructure built, the Chargers entered the 2021 season.

"It's not just about that one down on fourth down," Staley says. "It's what happened on the previous three. And that changes the way you play, and it changes the way they have to play you. And that's what I wanted to do, was use mindset and math to our advantage."

Back in his office, Staley is quoting "The Mighty Ducks."

He references a scene from the 1992 classic in which protagonist Gordon Bombay, a defense attorney who takes over coaching a youth hockey team to fulfill a court-mandated community service sentence, is talking to one of his players, Charlie Conway. Bombay was a star player as a kid, and he rehashes a painful childhood memory of a potential winning penalty shot hitting the post in a championship game.

"A quarter of an inch this way and it would have gone in," Bombay says in the scene. "A quarter of an inch, Charlie!"

"Well, yeah," Charlie replies, "but a quarter of an inch the other way and you would have missed completely."

Staley recites the exchange nearly word for word from memory as he discusses the 2021 Chargers season, when Los Angeles missed the playoffs after losing three of its final four games, including two losses in prime time.

They entered their Week 15 Thursday night game against the Chiefs with a chance to take over first place in the AFC West but fell in overtime after going for it on five of their six fourth downs, only converting twice.

Three weeks later, in the final game of the season at Las Vegas on Sunday night, the Chargers had a chance to make the playoffs with a win or tie. They lost to the Raiders in overtime. They went for it on seven of their 12 fourth downs, though five of those came in desperation situations in the fourth quarter and overtime.

One failed attempt — a third-quarter fourth-and-1 from the Chargers' own 18-yard line when Austin Ekeler was dropped for a 2-yard loss on a run — was a sticking point in the Monday morning quarterbacking that followed. And the failed fourth downs in prime-time games became the lasting images for what had been a promising season.

"I take full responsibility for those two games," Staley says. "There's nobody that was more devastated, that was more crushed by us losing. We're going to learn a lot from those two games. But we're going to learn a lot from all the games that we played in."

That includes wins over the Chiefs (Week 3), Raiders (Week 4), Browns (Week 5), Eagles (Week 9) and Bengals (Week 13), in which the offense went a collective 9-for-12 on fourth down.

"You have to accept it can go both ways," Staley says. "And you're ready for it."

In total, the Chargers went for it on 34 of 108 fourth downs across 17 games — a 31.5 percent go rate that was the highest in the league. Despite the high rate, the Chargers were tied for fourth in fourth-down conversion rate at 64.7 percent, making them the only team in the league with a go rate over 25 percent and a conversion rate over 60 percent.

The Chargers were highly productive on all fourth downs, despite having one of the worst punt units in the league and a field goal unit that only found its footing over the second half of the season after the team replaced kicker Tristan Vizcaino with Dustin Hopkins.

Expected points added (EPA), widely used to measure and compare efficiency in all three phases, uses historical situational data — like down, distance, score and time of game — to produce a point total a team is expected to produce on a given play. After that play, a new expected points total can be calculated based on the same factors. By subtracting the second total from the first total, you are left with the number of expected points produced on a single play.

The Chargers ranked third in the league in EPA/play on fourth downs — by going for it, punting and attempting field goals — despite ranking 25th in total EPA on punts and 16th in total EPA on field goals, according to TruMedia.

"I don't think I'm smarter than everybody else," Staley says. "I believe in myself. I believe in how we do things."

Imagine you are a contestant on "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?" You have made it to the final question. One more correct answer and you win \$1 million. The question pops up, along with your four possible multiple choice options. You are stumped. You have no clue. Luckily, you have kept one of your lifelines — phone a friend.

Now answer this: Do you make the call to get someone else's opinion? What is the downside in gathering as much information as possible before making your million-dollar decision?

The same logic should apply to any decision — even the ultra-high-stakes ones NFL head coaches must make every week in the fall: the more information, the better. And that is where the Chargers football research department comes in.

At the time of his hiring, the Chargers only had one full-time analytics staffer in the building, Krishnan, whom they hired from the Browns as director of football research in March 2020. In July 2021, the Chargers hired Alex Stern, a former consultant for the University of Virginia football team who was a finalist at the 2020 NFL Big Data Bowl — the league's annual analytics contest — and an honorable mention in 2021.

"When you say analytics, it's like, well, that's an outsider's view of the game," Staley says. "But there are people that really care about the game that are really smart. They may not be a coach, they may not be a player, they may not be an executive or front office, but they have a real place in the game."

Krishnan and Stern are responsible for producing the weekly game-specific win probability models Staley uses to inform the team's strategic decisions. The models include myriad factors, like score, time of game, down, distance, weather conditions, adjusted point spread, injury reports and histories, opposing quarterback, home vs. road game, kicking and punting efficiency and more.

The models give Staley a mathematical indication of how much value the Chargers are gaining inherently in a fourth-down decision, before the play happens. That failed fourth-and-1 from the season finale in Las Vegas is a worthy example. And we can use Ben Baldwin's fourth-down bot — an open source win probability model — as a framework.

Inputting the relevant parameters — score (Chargers down 3), quarter (third), time remaining (8:57), field position (own 18), and yards to go (1) — Baldwin's win probability model gave the Chargers a 41 percent chance of winning the game if they punted. If they successfully gained that yard and converted the fourth down, their chances of winning the game would jump to 49 percent. If they failed to convert, their chances of winning the game would fall to 32 percent.

The next step is calculating the chances the Chargers have of converting the fourth-and-1. In this case, Baldwin's model gave the Chargers a 71 percent chance of converting this fourth down. (For context, the league average conversion rate on fourth-and-1s was 68.1 percent last season.)

Next, take the difference in win probability between a successful conversion and a failed conversion — in this case, 17 percent or .17. Multiple that by the probability of conversion — 71 percent or .71 — and you get 12 percent. Add that to the win probability in the case of a failed conversion — 32 percent + 12 percent — and you get 44 percent, three percentage points higher than the win probability if the Chargers punted.

In other words: According to Baldwin's model, the Chargers had a 3 percent better chance of winning the game by going for it than by punting.

The Chargers' team-specific and game-specific models are more nuanced than Baldwin's more general model that calculates win probability for every fourth-down decision from every game all season. More factors come into play — weather, kicking situations, opposing quarterback metrics, injury reports and history, etc. The Chargers also tailor their models based on how Staley wants to play in a given week, either more conservative or more aggressive.

The win probability figures are relayed to Staley and the rest of the coaches involved in game management at the beginning of a new series of downs — the "yes, unless" system — as opposed to fourth down. Staley then has final say and can do whatever he sees fit. There is no chart or sheet, just more information put into the headset of the head decision-maker. And while he trusts the math, there is always more to the decision than just numbers. That was the case with the fourth-and-1 decision in Las Vegas, too.

"When we make this, we're going to tell that team, 'This is our game to win, not yours,'" Staley remembers thinking in that moment. "It's our game to win."

Mindset, then math.

Most often, those two things aligned. According to Baldwin's model, Staley faced 17 fourth-down decisions in which he would gain at least 3 percent in win probability by going for it. He went for it on 12 of those decisions. The Chargers failed to convert four of those 12 fourth downs, including Ekeler's run against the Raiders. Staley says he is not so process-oriented that he "can be immune to the result."

"You can't be blind and say, 'Oh man, I'm so proud of that decision. It didn't work out, but I can live with that,'" he says. "There's a reality to the result. And I think as a leader, you do have to factor that in, because there's this thing called morale and buy-in that really matters. And that's something that you have to take very seriously, and that's something that is incumbent upon me to communicate to our entire team and make sure that you don't ever cross that line."

Buy-in. Morale. Mindset. The unquantifiable human element of the game.

"It's not about me," Staley says. "The mindset, it's not about one person. It's about our team."

The loss in Las Vegas showed both sides of this coin. The fourth-and-1 attempt was the right mathematical decision. But even Staley now admits that he noticed a letdown from his offense after the failed Ekeler run, and the Chargers went three-and-out on their next two possessions.

In the fourth quarter, though, the Chargers, led by Herbert, staged an epic comeback, storming back from 15 points down with 8:23 remaining. Joey Bosa sacked Derek Carr on a third-and-6 to force a punt in the Raiders' final possession of regulation, then Herbert tied the game with a 12-yard touchdown pass to Mike Williams on the final play of regulation. Herbert had a perfect passer rating on fourth down in the game

For Staley, his vision for forging an unflappability among his players had been realized in this comeback.

Even if it ultimately fell short, does it happen if Staley does not prioritize a fearless mindset in his players from his very first day on the job? There is no mathematical model in the world that can answer that question.

"For me, coming here to this team and what I had heard about this team. I knew that mindset was something that I was going to have to establish — and that I wanted to establish," Staley says, "And I think we're in the process of doing it."

Staley is reading another passage from "The Undoing Project."

"Lung cancer proved to be a handy example," he quotes. "Lung cancer doctors in the early '80s faced two unequally unpleasant options: surgery or radiation. Surgery was more likely to extend your life, but unlike radiation, it came with the small risk of instant death.

"When you told people that they had a 90 percent chance of surviving surgery, 82 percent of the patients opted for surgery. But when you told them that they had a 10 percent chance of dying from the surgery, which was of course just a different way of putting the same odds, only 54 percent chose the surgery."

He looks up.

"I think that's a big part of the language of football," he says. "Think about science itself. Sports does an even worse job of framing. People don't always have a good reference point to help them frame some of these decisions."

Staley starts scanning again, flipping pages, reading sentences to himself under his breath. Then he finds another passage he wants to share.

"The understanding of numbers is so weak that they don't know how to communicate anything," he reads aloud. "Everyone feels that those probabilities are not real."

He looks up again.

"That's the real issue," he says. "They don't think these probabilities are real."

But they are. And they could be the difference between winning and losing.

"Facts are what bring people together," Staley says. "When I tell J.C. Jackson that a wide receiver catches 90 percent of his passes outside the numbers, that math should matter to him. When I tell Justin Herbert that over 70 percent on third-and-4-to-6, they pressure, that should matter to him. That math should matter to them. It doesn't mean that on those 4-to-6s it's always going to be pressure and vice-versa. But it's part of the calculation."

Staley held exit interviews with his players, the people who brought his mindset to life, in his office after the season. Veterans came in and delivered Staley a message, as he recalls: "Don't you ever change. Don't you even think about it."

Staley had hoped to build belief among his players. And as the Chargers turn to a new season, one with Super Bowl aspirations buoyed by a defensive overhaul, it is that belief that permeates. The returning players have it. The new faces — like Jackson, Khalil Mack, Sebastian Joseph-Day, Kyle Van Noy and Bryce Callahan — want to be a part of this team because of it.

"Where we are now, we are different because of that. It's the mindset that got us here," Staley says. "This is a different group out here than last year, and it's not just because of the additions. It's because of what we accomplished last year and what we didn't accomplish."

'A lot of food gets thrown down': Inside the Chargers' extravagant team dinners

By Lindsey Thiry
ESPN.com
December 26, 2022

COSTA MESA, Calif. -- Situated off the Pacific Coast Highway, with an expansive view of Crystal Cove on the Newport Coast, sits Mastro's Ocean Club.

It's a see-and-be-seen spot, enriched by live music, an impeccable bar and mouth-watering menu.

Seafood platters overflow with lobster, shrimp, crab and oysters. Steaks and chops of every variety fill a plate -- including rack of lamb, porterhouse, filet and wagyu beef.

There's delectable sides of white cheddar macaroni and cheese as well as truffle gnocchi. And butter cake. Lots and lots of butter cake.

In a corner of the restaurant, a separate entrance leads to a private room, enclosed by floor-to-ceiling glass. An area where the restaurant's ambiance can be felt, but one where lively conversations can flow freely without interruption.

Welcome to Friday nights with the Los Angeles Chargers' defense, and as of late, the offense, too.

"A lot of food gets thrown down," linebacker Kyle Van Noy said. "And honestly, it's awesome to be a part of, and part of something that is each and every week."

Order what you want -- veteran edge rusher Khalil Mack is happy to pick up the bill.

"Absolutely," get whatever you want, Mack says, and the price "absolutely" does not matter.

A crowd of NFL players -- somewhere between 20 to 40 at a time -- gather at some of Newport Beach's swankiest restaurants -- Mastro's, Javier's and Nobu -- to break bread, build camaraderie and forge their way to the NFL's postseason.

"We've been trying to get out," safety Derwin James Jr. said, "build that chemistry."

With three games remaining, including a "Monday Night Football" matchup against the Indianapolis Colts (4-9) at Lucas Oil Stadium (8:15 p.m., ET, ESPN), the Chargers (8-6) are on a path to potentially ending a three-year postseason drought under second-year coach Brandon Staley.

A win on Dec. 18 over the AFC South-leading Tennessee Titans (7-7) helped catapult them into the AFC's No. 6 seed.

"Because we're connected, it has allowed us to endure all that has happened this season, because that is the only explanation," Staley said. "There's no other way to explain it. Otherwise, we would be 3-9 or worse. We believe in one another."

Prior to entering the NFL, rookie defensive back Ja'Sir Taylor, a sixth-round pick from Wake Forest, heard from friends and former teammates about what life was like in the league.

"They had dinners with their position groups and all that stuff," Taylor explained. "And in the beginning of the year, we didn't have that."

Players started talking about it, but nobody organized it. Then Mack, barely a season into his Chargers tenure after an offseason blockbuster deal sent him from Chicago to L.A., stepped up.

"He just [said], 'You guys want to go out? I'll take you out,'" Taylor said.

A ninth-year pro, Mack remembered previous teammates -- former Raiders defensive linemen Justin Tuck and Antonio Smith and Hall of Fame defensive back Charles Woodson -- who took on leadership positions and left a lasting impression.

"It wasn't just about football," Mack said. "It was a brotherhood at the end of the day, and the more you cared about each other off the field, the harder you play for each other."

Mack's presence can be felt in a room, though his voice is not often heard. He considers himself someone who would rather be about action than words -- a doer, not a talker.

"But when he speaks," defensive coordinator Renaldo Hill said, "it's powerful."

"I was literally walking [into the locker room] from the hot tub and he was like, 'Oh, we're going to Mastro's,'" linebacker Kenneth Murray Jr. said.

"And I'm like, 'What? OK,' and he was like, 'Everybody be there.' And it was amazing because everybody showed up and we all were there and I feel like that's been one of the key things that's helped bring us together."

The dinners for defensive players started in September. As of late November, offensive players wanted in too after overhearing stories in the locker room and seeing the results on the field.

"They were getting together," tight end Gerald Everett said of the defense. "And I was like, 'Man, what are we doing?'"

Some guys arrive for dinner early. Others run late -- a true test in bonding as they're forced to find and sit in any empty chair. And no matter how much time is allotted, one thing is almost certain: "It's definitely hard to leave," defensive end Morgan Fox said.

They hang out. Talk about life. Talk about ball. And laugh -- a lot.

There's Mack and Joey Bosa, who has attended despite being on injured reserve since undergoing groin surgery following Week 3. Teammates describe the duo as opposites, but say they share some similar qualities. And they make the night lively.

"[Joey] doesn't try to be funny, but half of what he says, just his demeanor and how he controls himself, it's hilarious," defensive lineman Breiden Fehoko said. "And with Khalil, Khalil is just like reserved. If he's really comfortable around you, if he's around the guys, he's a clown."

There's inside jokes. There's stories about families and kids. There's a lot of talk among football players about subjects that hardly have anything to do with football.

"Being able to communicate and talk about life - - it's always good," Van Noy said.

And then there's food. Lots and lots of food, washed down by water, strawberry lemonade and magnums of Opus One wine.

"I get the bone-in ribeye, I get crab cakes, I'll get lobster tail, the white cheddar mac and cheese, I'll get calamari for appetizer, and then I'll get a butter cake," Fehoko said.

"I'll eat a butter cake there, and then I'll take another butter cake home."

Approximate cost for his meal? \$285.

"K-Mack says, 'Get whatever you all want.' Alright," Fehoko said. "You ain't got to tell me twice."

"Load up, big fella," Mack said, smiling. "I know he's going to have to take the double-teams on Sunday, so I try to feed him good."

Linebacker Chris Rumph blushes, then breaks into a laugh when he talks about his go-to order.

"I got to get the wagyu," he said, before attempting to lower his voice. "Between me and you, it's better if I'm not paying."

Mack, who is in the midst of a six-year, \$141 million contract, peers over from a few lockers down and grins at Rumph's laughter.

Then, there's the rookies -- still occasionally starstruck that they're having dinner with players whom they used to idolize, and whom they certainly don't want to embarrass when ordering.

"I always heard that when you're out with important people, you're not supposed to get your steak well done, so I've been dialing it back," Taylor said.

"I'm doing it well done ... well plus, something like that? Medium well plus, whatever. I think whatever [James] orders, that's what I get. Medium well plus."

Mack, with the veteran move, doesn't need to worry about anyone judging his steak.

"I like the roasted chicken," he said.

And in ordering sushi? No limit.

"The question is how much can he pay for," Fehoko said. "You name it, I'm killing sushi."

"Start with some spicy tuna, spicy edamame, have to do the spicy snow crab," defensive lineman Sebastian Joseph-Day said. "This is just the beginning ... the miso cod, the okra ..."

"We probably should just go in the ocean and catch it ourselves with the amount of fish we eat," Rumph said, laughing.

The growing camaraderie didn't immediately translate to the field, as the Chargers teetered through a 5-5 start that included a lopsided 38-10 loss to the Jacksonville Jaguars and a 27-23 loss to the Seattle Seahawks. But as the Chargers make a run down the stretch, their improved chemistry is apparent.

"The closer you are to someone," said cornerback Bryce Callahan, who leads the team with three interceptions, "the easier it is to play with them."

The Bolts have won two straight, in large part thanks to their defense, which has kept them in the game long enough to allow the offense to score, despite uneven performances.

In Week 14, the Chargers frustrated Miami Dolphins quarterback Tua Tagovailoa (10-of-28 for 145 yards and a touchdown) in a 23-17 victory. It was Tagovailoa's worst completion percentage in a game in his three-year career.

"I especially feel like we were playing as a unit, we really try to make a point of going out there and playing for each other, and I feel like everybody kind of -- you can kind of sense it," Murray said. "Everybody was out there playing for one another, everybody was trying to go hard so the other man can succeed."

The following week, Titans quarterback Ryan Tannehill completed 15 of 22 passes for 165 yards against the Chargers. Safety Nasir Adderley grabbed his first interception of the season and Tannehill was sacked by four different Chargers: linebackers Van Noy, Rumph and Drue Tranquill and defensive lineman Joe Gaziano. On the Titans' first six drives of the second half, Tannehill had more sacks than completions.

"It's slowly jelled together, and you can tell whether it's a starter or a backup guy, it's going to flow the same way because we all talk and we all have those off-the-field experiences," Mack said.

After allowing an average of 25.8 points per game (ranked 30th) through the first 13 games of the season, the defense clamped down the past two weeks, allowing 15.5 (fourth).

"We've really made some good strides," Staley said. "The last two weeks, in particular, I've probably felt more energy from the group for the whole game than at any other point since I've been here."

The defense recently extended an invitation to offensive players to join dinners, while, according to several players, more veterans have stepped up to help cover the tab.

"[Justin] Herbert showed up," Joseph-Day said, smiling. "It's great. We have Justin sitting by us and we just sitting down, shooting the s---, talking about life."

"[Mack] has done a great job of getting everyone involved," Herbert said. "That's huge for us."

The running backs, wide receivers, tight ends and offensive linemen are joining in, too.

"It's immeasurable," Staley said of Mack's influence on the team. "He's the one bringing us together. I think that he is bringing out the best in everybody."

Business Fridays: Chargers find levity in end-of-week tradition

By Lindsey Thiry
ESPN.com
November 11, 2022

COSTA MESA, Calif. – Los Angeles Chargers safety Derwin James Jr. jogged onto the practice field as the Sir Charles Jones end-of-the-week anthem, “Friday,” blared from the speakers.

James and the Bolts appeared to be going through the routine motions of a final practice before game day, but a quick double-take revealed something entirely unique.

Under James’ No. 3 practice jersey popped a collared shirt.

“It’s Business Friday!” James explained, smiling. “You got to come out ready for business.”

Joining James in wearing the unusual practice attire has been defensive lineman Sebastian Joseph-Day and wide receivers Keenan Allen and Mike Williams, although Williams’ time wearing a polo was short-lived.

“I didn’t like how I played [that Sunday],” Williams said. “So that was the end of that.”

“It would be hard not to notice it,” head coach Brandon Staley said, grinning, about the movement, born in Week 1 by James and Allen with an open invitation to all others wishing to join.

“It’s a little joke being about our business, taking care of the little things and staying focused,” said Joseph-Day, a team captain along with James and six others. “But also bringing some fun to it.”

The Chargers are 5-3 and on pace to earn their second playoff berth in nine seasons as they prepare for a matchup against the 4-4 San Francisco 49ers at Levi’s Stadium on “Sunday Night Football” (NBC, 8:20 p.m. ET).

Business Friday has helped translate to some Sunday success, but perhaps more than anything, it’s provided some levity through what has already been a nine-week rollercoaster, and into what can feel like a long 18-week -- and potentially longer -- season.

“You got to find those celebrations, whether it’s dressing up or something within having to play the game of football that you got to find time to have fun because it’s hard, it’s long,” said James, who became the NFL’s highest-paid safety over the offseason by signing a four-year, \$76.5 million extension. “You lose guys throughout the season with injuries and stuff, so you just got to have ways to have fun.”

The Chargers have suffered an inordinate number of injuries, placing starting edge rusher Joey Bosa, cornerback J.C. Jackson, and left tackle Rashawn Slater on injured reserve. Defensive lineman Austin Johnson is expected to also join the IR list after suffering a season-ending knee injury last Sunday. Several other players, including Allen, Williams, and kicker Dustin Hopkins have or will miss multiple games due to injury.

None of which has helped the Bolts find much-needed consistency on the field.

The offense has flashed but otherwise has been unable to repeat the success it found in 2021. Despite a recent burst of touchdowns from running back Austin Ekeler, who has scored a league-leading 10 touchdowns over the last five games, the offense ranks 18th overall in efficiency and is averaging 22.75 points per game (ranks 11th).

Quarterback Justin Herbert, playing through fractured rib cartilage since the end of a Week 2 loss to the Kansas City Chiefs, has passed for 13 touchdowns (t-ninth) with five interceptions (t-13th).

The defense, despite adding Joseph-Day and edge rusher Khalil Mack over the offseason, has underwhelmed and ranks 22nd in efficiency, while allowing 25.75 points per game and a league-worst 5.71 yards per carry.

Nevertheless, the Bolts still find themselves in position to earn a wild-card playoff spot.

“After seven games you get a real accurate picture of the fight in your football team and then you’ve had to experience all these things that most people experience in a full season,” Staley said after a 20-17 win over the Atlanta Falcons in Week 9 that required a game-winning field goal from rookie kicker Cameron Dicker.

“We haven’t performed to our capacity yet, that’s an exciting thing because we know what is in front of us and we know what we have had to absorb and now we know where we need to go and how to get there.”

Part of that journey is developing camaraderie and chemistry with teammates.

“When your guys are doing things like that, that means they like each other,” Staley said. “We’re going to need all of that, the brotherhood and our culture coming to life to play winning football down the stretch here.”
Though for some, business attire during practice doesn’t seem to be the way to go.

“I don’t know why they do that s---,” said Mack, a perplexed look on the ninth-year pro’s face.

When asked whether he’s seen – and would consider joining – the movement, it seemed a step too far for the often-serious Herbert.

“I would probably just say that I’m doing my best to go out and take care of business on Friday. Maybe that is something we can address later, but not as of now,” he said.

But for James, Joseph-Day and Allen, they intend to move forward with “Business Friday” in full effect.

“People always laugh when they see me in it,” Joseph-Day said. “It’s just a lighthearted mindset even though you know you’re serious because it’s a serious thing.”

“I’m going to continue to do it. I don’t care who does it,” said James, noting that polos are available via the equipment staff. “I feel like I’ve been playing fine doing it, so just keep doing it.”

Inside the Chargers' defensive infusion: 'They fit the way we want to play'

By Jeff Howe
The Athletic
March 25, 2022

J.C. Jackson's eyes opened wide with a smile to match.

The seafood tower dominated the middle of the table at Mastro's Ocean Club in Newport Beach, Calif., with steak, lobster, shrimp and wine passed around throughout the night. Jackson, who had just finalized his five-year, \$82.5 million contract with the Chargers, was sitting next to head coach Brandon Staley. Several Chargers assistants and members of Jackson's camp attended the welcome dinner at the high-end chop house on the Pacific coast.

Staley conversed with Jackson as though they had known each other for years rather than days. For Jackson, undrafted in 2018, the night was a celebration of how far he'd come in his career and a glimpse into a promising future in Los Angeles. For the Chargers, the night represented a significant swing in free agency, as they loaded up on defense to balance their offensively gifted roster.

"Our goal this offseason was to build a complete team, a deep team," Staley told The Athletic. "And I think we're off to a good start."

After keeping wide receiver Mike Williams on a three-year, \$60 million contract, the Chargers got to work on a defense that allowed the fourth-most points in the NFL in 2021. They were 9-8 and eliminated from playoff contention during a 35-32 overtime loss to the Raiders on the final night of the regular season. It was a squandered opportunity — losing three of their final four games and surrendering an average of 36.7 points in those defeats — in star quarterback Justin Herbert's second season.

So the defensive-minded Staley and his staff aligned with general manager Tom Telesco and key front office members, including executive vice president of football administration Ed McGuire, to pinpoint a list of players who would make an impact on defense and fit with their culture.

"The list isn't very long," Staley said.

They started with edge rusher Khalil Mack. The Chargers recognized his high cap number for the rebuilding Bears, who overhauled their leadership structure this offseason by hiring general manager Ryan Poles and head coach Matt Eberflus, and the organization might be willing to move him.

Staley, who was the Bears' outside linebackers coach from 2017-18, has long had an affinity for the former Defensive Player of the Year. Mack held out for the entire 2018 offseason and training camp with the Raiders until the Bears jumped into the mix and acquired him in a trade package that included two first-round draft picks.

Mack immediately validated the Bears' faith.

"You trade for him (in 2018) and sign him to the richest contract of any defensive player in the National Football League," Staley said. "Then he had no offseason — no spring, no training camp. So everyone is waiting to see if this guy is in shape, has he been working? His first rep, I'll never forget it. In a one-on-one against (tackle) Bobby Massie, what that looked like with all the eyes on him, what everyone witnessed at that moment, you're like, 'Oh man, this is going to be different.' Just that explosion — what that looked like, what that felt like. You're looking at one of the elite players in the game. Just a rare player.

"You knew the ability. What expressed itself quickly was just how hard he works. In between drills, when the defense would go out against the scout-team offense, Khalil Mack would sprint to the football off the sideline. He would sprint there. Pretty soon, you've got (defensive tackle) Akiem Hicks sprinting there at 335 pounds. You've got (linebacker) Roquan Smith chasing him. And (cornerback) Kyle Fuller. It became like a game of who is going to get there first. What he did from a practice standpoint, he doesn't talk. What Khalil does is he plays, he performs, he competes. He doesn't need to say anything. He gets it done. There was no better evidence of a prime-time player than what that guy did for us in 2018. Just one of the rare players in the league."

Telesco called Poles and set the parameters for a potential trade. And on March 10, within a day of that initial conversation, the teams agreed to a deal. The Chargers got Mack for a 2022 second-round pick and a 2023 sixth-rounder.

With Mack on board, it'll be a lot more of a challenge for opponents to account for Joey Bosa and his 58 career sacks on the opposite edge. But beyond that, Staley was also excited about the way the Chargers could enhance their culture.

"That's someone who is going to make (safety) Derwin James better," Staley said. "Derwin James gives so much to our team. Well, who is giving Derwin James that in return on defense? Who is filling him up? We need to give him weapons so we can get even more out of him. This is a way to do it. Khalil Mack is a culture-changing player."

The Chargers were also focused on Jackson, who was widely viewed as the top cornerback in free agency. To feel comfortable with the requisite payday, the Chargers studied cornerbacks Jalen Ramsey, Marshon Lattimore, Marlon Humphrey, Tre'Davious White and Xavier Howard — five of the league's best corners — to evaluate how Jackson compared.

They were comfortable with the film work, notably his NFL-best 25 interceptions over the past four years. They were also impressed by his durability, as Jackson hasn't missed a game due to injury in four years (three healthy scratches in 2018). And because the Chargers place an emphasis on signing players with a championship pedigree, they appreciated Jackson's time with the Patriots, who won the Super Bowl during his rookie season.

There was also the James influence. The pair were teammates on a seven-on-seven team in high school in Florida, and James went all in to recruit Jackson to the Chargers when they linked up at the Pro Bowl in February.

James tried to sell Jackson on the team culture, the staff, their young talent, the new facilities, the California lifestyle. Everything, really. James was such an integral piece to the process that Jackson left the Pro Bowl already intrigued about the possibility of moving across the country.

His heart remained in Foxboro, though. Jackson wanted to stay with the Patriots, but the negotiations made very little progress. When the Patriots declined to use the franchise tag on Jackson, his departure from New England was a near certainty. The Patriots told Jackson to return to the negotiating table if his market didn't unfold as expected.

It did. McGuire called Jackson's camp on March 14 as soon as the negotiating window opened and expressed the Chargers' seriousness in signing the cornerback. They were among six teams that showed a decent level of interest, including three that were serious suitors. He had a few competitive offers in the same range as the Chargers' proposal, according to a source.

The Chargers' push was too strong to pass up. Jackson's deal was the fourth-highest among cornerbacks in total dollars, sixth in average annual value and third in fully guaranteed money.

"I felt like he'd be an outstanding fit for us and would provide us the type of impact player at an impact position," Staley said. "What was great about the deal, it was a good deal for both sides in terms of where he was able to exist in the marketplace and for us to be able to attack the rest of free agency. We're just really excited about him and his future and how he fits for us."

The Chargers, who ranked 30th against the run last season, also added defensive tackles Sebastian Joseph-Day (three years, \$24 million) and Austin Johnson (two years, \$14 million). Staley had history with Joseph-Day during their year together with the Rams, and those additions should help the Chargers' personnel transition into Staley's system.

"They fit the way we want to play. There was a pretty big system transition," said Staley, who took over as the Chargers head coach in 2021. "They really allow us to play the way we want to play. To pair Khalil with Joey on the edge of your defense, that's really going to help your run defense in a big way. I can't state this enough. Khalil Mack is one of the complete players in the league. This guy is not just a rusher. Why he's one of the top players in the NFL is because he's a complete player."

The improved front should create more turnover opportunities for James, Jackson and cornerback Asante Samuel Jr. Likewise, the playmakers on the back end should aid the rushers. If Herbert and the highly skilled offense continue to thrive, it'll put more pressure on opponents to play out of their comfort zone, thereby marrying it all together.

And again, Staley kept harping on the chemistry, rooted in advice he once received from longtime defensive coach Ed Donatell.

“You’re not just putting together a collection of pieces,” Staley said. “These players are people, and they’re competitors. You want to make sure when you onboard people into your locker room that they fit with who is already in your locker room. (Donatelli) told me one time, and I think it’s amazing wisdom, when you go sign a guy or trade for a guy, your locker room better know why they’re there, and it shouldn’t take them forever to know why and to see why. That’s always stayed with me.”

There’s one more aspect that shouldn’t be overlooked. Of course, the Chargers want to maximize their opportunity while Herbert is playing on his rookie contract. And looking into the future, he’ll be eligible for an extension during the 2023 offseason, though he is under the Chargers’ control through his fifth-year option in 2024.

It’s becoming an increasingly attractive place to play, and the Chargers want to ensure it’s a place where Herbert will want to stay.

“We’re going to be locked in every single year to be as good as we can be for our football team and for our fans,” Staley said. “But what we’re not going to do is mortgage our future to make that happen. We’ve been tactical so we can support Justin throughout his entire career, not just the beginning of his career. What we want to make sure we do is we have the assets, the capital to build around him for years to come. That’s been our pledge to him and all of our players. We’re trying to take advantage of the circumstance that we’re in now, and I think we’re being tactical in that approach. I think what it says to him is we’re going to compete to the best of our abilities.”

This month, that approach was highlighted by a defensive overhaul.

“We had a really good game plan going into this offseason,” Staley said. “I think we’ve executed it extremely well.”

Chargers New Facility Making 'Incredible' Progress in El Segundo

By Eric Smith
Chargers.com
May 18, 2023

It was only a year ago that the Chargers new practice facility was simply a few mounds of dirt.

Fast forward to Thursday, and the Bolts vision is clearly coming to life in El Segundo.

"It was literally a year today that we had the groundbreaking," said Fred Maas, the Chargers Chief of Staff & Counsel. "I've been in the development business for most of my adult life, over 30 years, and it never ceases to amaze me how much can be done in a year. This really represents that.

"It really is incredible. I was here two weeks ago and you could see the noticeable change," Maas added. "Once the drywall goes up, things happen fast. They've just done a great job ... I've been very impressed."

Abraham Garcia, the Chargers Director of Project Management, also marveled at the change over the past 365 days.

"There's a building now," Garcia said with a laugh. "At the groundbreaking, we all saw just mounds of dirt. We had just started to move some dirt around and grade the site back then.

"Now, the building's exterior has gone up — all the frame, all the concrete, the structural members — everything is up," Garcia added. "Now we're just filling in the gaps with walls and beams and everything else. A lot of progress has been made."

The Chargers held a media tour of the new facility Thursday morning, taking reporters and news cameras on a 30-minute trip through multiple spaces of the nearly 150,000-square foot building that was designed by Gensler Sports.

The biggest takeaway? Chargers players are at the heart of the design and layout.

An expansive locker room (with a lounge) sits adjacent to updated equipment, training and weight rooms, giving players all they need in one central location. The building, which sits on 14 acres, also features three natural grass practice fields.

And when it comes time to take a break, there's a relaxation pool with a grill and patio area in the players' outdoor courtyard.

"We've got an incredible group of men here who represent this team and have made sacrifices obviously in the temporary facility we've been in now," Maas said. "It was the goal of the Spanos family and the leadership here to create an environment that was second-to-none in the league.

"I think we got that kind of individuals, and this is the kind of place they deserve," Maas added.

The tour also included glimpses of the auditorium, position rooms, a lounge for coaches, an indoor/outdoor dining area (complete with a coffee bar) and the media center.

Renderings show a modern and vibrant vibe that emulates from any aspect of the building.

"It's really intended, and hopefully you can see through the imagery, to be emblematic of our brand," Maas said. "Really be something that's serious about football, serious about winning football, but also something that's fun, that really reaches out and speaks to our broader audience how they can be incorporated here.

"Hopefully this will articulate who we are as a team," Maas added.

The exterior of the entire building takes the shape of a Bolt, which Maas said was a natural choice for architecture and branding when designing the facility.

"As you go outside, the Bolt really was the inspiration for what we can do," Maas said. "And how do we take some of the exciting things around that imagery and integrate it into the building in a way that fit and didn't look hokey, but genuine to what our brand was.

"I think Gensler ... did a brilliant job of integrating it throughout the building," Maas added.

The Bolts new facility will be just miles from both SoFi Stadium and Los Angeles International Airport. And the Chargers will soon share a city with other professional Los Angeles-based sports teams, as the Kings, Lakers and Sparks all have their practice facilities nearby.

"We had our hearts set on the South Bay when we started this process five years ago," Maas said. "We always thought this was just an important focal point. We had saw a burgeoning fanbase here and it had so many positive elements — from the proximity to SoFi, proximity to LAX, and all the teams that are here and the synergies of the other teams that we had on the South Bay. It was just an exciting opportunity to kind of blossomed and came to life a couple of years ago.

"They've been great neighbors, great friends, they've participated in the process, they've reached out, they've been collaborative," Maas added about the nearby teams. "I couldn't ask for a better group of teams or people to be associated and be close to so it's been great. And [the city of] El Segundo, I can't say enough good things about them. They've just been terrific to work with."

Garcia said as many as 250 construction workers have helped on the project, and that the facility currently has more than 150 workers.

As far as the future timeline, Maas said the Chargers will integrate into the building next spring.

"Hopefully the plan is that we have the draft here next year and then move in later in the spring or the summer," Maas said. "But we'll have training camp here in 2024."

When the Bolts do move into their new digs, it will surely be one-of-a-kind.

"We want to have a building that doesn't look like anything else throughout the city," Garcia said. "We want people to know when they see it from PCH [Pacific Coast Highway] or they come up to the building that they know it's the Chargers building.

"If you compare this to any typical office building, it doesn't look like anything in the rest of the city," Garcia said. "This is a statement piece that says, 'We're here and this is our home.'"

Joey Bosa and Khalil Mack get fresh chance to launch partnership

By Lindsey Thiry
ESPN.com
May 26, 2023

COSTA MESA, Calif. – A grin grew across the face of Joey Bosa.

What made the Los Angeles Chargers outside linebacker attend voluntary organized team activities?

“I mean, the coaches telling me,” Bosa said with a chuckle. “So, yeah, it’s no problem.”

As he prepares for his eighth NFL season, Bosa would otherwise be in Florida, training with his younger brother, San Francisco 49er and defending NFL Defensive Player of the Year Nick Bosa.

“For Joey to be here, I think that it shows all of these young players what it takes to be successful,” coach Brandon Staley said, “that you have to be here with your team to improve.”

Consider it a bonus that Bosa’s attendance will allow additional time to further develop with veteran counterpart Khalil Mack.

“It’s always good when you have Joey B out there,” Mack said. “A lot of knowledge. A good friend, a good dude to have around in the locker room and the meeting room.”

Bosa and Mack, along with safety Derwin James Jr., headline a group that returns eight of 11 starters from a 10-7 squad that made their first playoff appearance in four years. The Chargers also are expecting the return of cornerback J.C. Jackson, who is continuing to recover from season-ending knee surgery, and welcome veteran linebacker Eric Kendricks, who signed a two-year, \$13.25 million deal in free agency.

But the attention remains on Bosa and Mack. Two premium pass rushers who have another rare opportunity to line up together, and who will be depended on to perform if the Chargers want to improve on a 2022 run that ended in a brutal 31-30 loss to the Jacksonville Jaguars in a wild card playoff game.

“That’s one of the things that we talked about when we got on the plane,” Mack said of last season’s finale in Jacksonville. “We were like, ‘Man, just give me one more.’ That’s what we’re looking forward to.”

Expectations for the Bosa-Mack duo were sky high in 2022 after the Chargers acquired Mack in a blockbuster trade with the Chicago Bears. However, their partnership never grew out of its infancy after Bosa suffered a groin injury in a Week 3 loss to the Jaguars and spent 12 weeks on injured reserve.

This season the pair get another chance to prove that those expectations were not out of reach and that – despite being a year older – they can establish themselves among the best pass-rushing duos in the NFL.

It’s rare that you can find two players of that caliber that you can get together,” Staley said. “Our goal is for those two to get to play together.”

Despite a late-season surge, the Chargers’ defense in 2022 ranked 21st in the NFL, allowing an average of 22.6 points. In six games together, including a playoff matchup, Bosa and Mack combined for 7.5 sacks.

“Not even close,” Mack said about whether he and Bosa displayed their potential in 2022. “Just can’t wait to get out there with this guy. Not talk too much but get to work.”

Bosa, who turns 28 in July, insisted that this offseason felt different than any previous after he underwent in-season surgery to repair his groin, a source of chronic pain.

“I was talking a lot last year about how it was the best I’ve felt,” Bosa said. “It was true at the time, but I think I got used to a lot of the chronic pain that I was in, so it was hard to judge where I really was. Kind of getting back to work this year, it’s been fun to put up some times running and stuff. We’re getting back to the old me or whatever you want to say.”

In 2021, Bosa posted 10.5 sacks, forced seven fumbles and had 20 quarterback hits.

Now a year into his move to Los Angeles, Mack, 32, has proven more comfortable in his surroundings, even sitting courtside to watch LeBron James and the Lakers’ playoff run. The 10th-year pro has established a routine, which includes Pilates and stops at his favorite food spots.

“It feels very good not to have to figure all of that out,” Mack said. “It matters... Getting in that routine of knowing what to do and where I am going to be and what I am going to do throughout the week, it’s much-needed.”

Mack, similar to Bosa, also said that physically he’s feeling “pretty good,” a difference in what he felt a year ago as he worked to return from in-season foot surgery.

“Being able to get into it and get into a regimen faster and run and do all of the things that I would normally do during the offseason, it feels great,” Mack said.

And, in Bosa’s fashion of brutal honesty, he admitted something else. It wasn’t only at the coaches’ urging that he attended voluntary workouts. He likes being with Mack, too.

“Khalil and I, off the field, I think we’ve grown close just in the short amount of time that we’ve been together. I’m excited to keep it going,” Bosa said. “I’d say he’s definitely part of the reason that I came out early. I feel obligated to do my stuff when I have him watching me, have him counting on me. It’s nice to have that.”

'A Think Tank of Ideas': How the 7 Former College QBs on the Bolts Coaching Staff Help Guide Justin Herbert

By Eric Smith
Chargers.com
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In the days after Kellen Moore was hired in late January, the Chargers Offensive Coordinator set out to learn and evaluate the dozens of new faces on the Bolts roster.

And he began building relationships with the 20 or so fellow coaches on Brandon Staley's staff.

Players were away from the building, so Moore spent his time popping in and out of offices and meeting rooms on the second floor of Hoag Performance Center.

Moore soon had a realization: There are a lot of former quarterbacks on the coaching staff.

"I quickly became aware of it," Moore said with a smile. "Brandon has talked a lot about it in the sense that when he was with the Rams up there, they had a lot of quarterbacks on their staff.

"He kind of half-joked when I came here," Moore recalled. "He said, 'We like quarterbacks.' They like people who see it from that perspective, and we've certainly got a lot in here. It's been fun."

Moore is one of seven coaches on the Chargers staff who played quarterback in college. Not all of them played on the Division I stage, but they were all good enough to play some level after high school.

Staley, one of the seven in the group, smiled wide when asked if having so many former college quarterbacks on staff was by design.

"I don't think it's a coincidence," said Staley, who played at Dayton and Mercyhurst College. "It was the same way when I was with the Rams [in 2020], there were a bunch of quarterbacks [on staff]. I think that position is just naturally attracted to coaching.

"Some of the best coaches I know are former quarterbacks, and I just think it's about the way you think, the level of football you've been exposed to," Staley continued. "When you play that position, you're responsible for all 22 [players] on the field.

"It's one of the few positions like that in all of sports, and it naturally leads guys to want to coach," Staley added. "I love having that around our team because it multiplies the impact of that position."

If you're looking for the place where those former college signal callers often congregate, look no further than, duh, the Chargers quarterback room.

Moore is in there, of course. He was a bonafide sensation at Boise State from 2008 to 2011 and helped vault the Broncos on the national stage by going 50-3 over four seasons, becoming the first quarterback in FBS history to win 50 games in his career.

Chargers quarterbacks coach Doug Nussmeier leads the room, too. He starred at Idaho and won the 1993 Walter Payton Award, which is the FCS version of the Heisman Trophy.

Tom Arth, the Chargers Passing Game Specialist, is also a familiar figure in the room, as is Chandler Whitmer, an Offensive Quality Control coach on staff.

Arth played quarterback at John Carroll University, a Division III school he was later the head coach at while employing Staley as his defensive coordinator.

Whitmer, meanwhile, played at Connecticut after playing junior college ball ... where he twice got the best of Staley.

"I ended up going to Butler Community College in Kansas and that was in 2011 when Brandon was the defensive coordinator at Hutchinson Community College," Whitmer said. "Both were in the same conference ... played them twice, beat them twice.

"I give him a hard time, not too many people know about it," Whitmer added. "But anyways, it's kind of funny how the football world works, it's a small network."

That quartet will be a sounding board, support group and anything else Justin Herbert needs this season as he endures the usual trials and tribulations of being an NFL quarterback.

"Everyone plays quarterback in a different type of offense, so having all of those opinions — the different experiences those guys have had — it's super helpful," Herbert said. "Whether it's Pat White or Kellen Moore or Coach Nussmeier, they've all got different strengths and weaknesses, so to be able to listen to all of those guys is super helpful."

Oh yes, Pat White. You know, one of the most dynamic players in college football history?

White spent his time with the receivers in 2022, but Staley said during training camp that the West Virginia legend is helping multiple position groups in his role as an Offensive Quality Control coach.

"This guy was a former Heisman Trophy candidate, he played in the National Football League," Staley said of White. "Any time you can be around someone who had that type of career, it's great for your program.

"He can also be a bridge from the quarterbacks to the receivers, and the receivers to the quarterbacks," Staley added. "That's kind of what his role is now, he's involved in both of those rooms. He's been awesome for our staff."

If you include the expertise of Staley and White, that makes six former college quarterbacks that Herbert can lean on and ask questions to.

Staley said that is by design so that Herbert can jog onto the field with a full arsenal and also a clear mind.

"They understand the routine and the rhythm and the process of a quarterback, and how important it is to set it up for him," Staley said of the coaches in the quarterback room. "We want it to where Justin can just go attack. That position understands how sacred that is because it's a very big responsibility.

"We don't want an overcrowded quarterback room, but just the right amount of people so that our quarterbacks can operate at a premium level," Staley added. "There's a lot of work people don't see behind the scenes that needs to be done in order for guys to play their best: projects, studying opponents, studying ourselves, breaking down drills. It's just a lot of work that needs to be done to set the table for them to attack and there's no better person to do that than a former quarterback."

Moore said he's enjoyed the back and forth that takes place in that room, conversations that also include Easton Stick and Max Duggan.

"It's just a really big and open collaborative room," Moore said. "You want to utilize all of these different guys' experience, whether it was some of us who were able to play for years or guys that have coached for years or guys that have been here for years.

"Stick was here before Justin so there's things he can teach us," Moore added. "Max can teach us some stuff as we install, maybe it's, 'Hey, I've ran this play before.' That's the biggest part, let's just utilize everyone in the room."

Now six months into his time with Moore, Herbert said the chance to work with the 35-year-old has allowed him to dive a little deeper into the chapters of the Chargers offense.

The two almost speak the same language now, especially when it comes to the fact that both have stood in an NFL pocket and prepped for the barrage of defenders heading their way.

"With Kellen, he has a great feel for the game," Herbert said. "He understands the protection and how little time quarterbacks really have in being able to get the ball out quick.

"Just understanding exactly what you need to work with with the offensive line," Herbert added. "I think he's done a great job communicating with the O-line so that we have a protection plan that we want and something we feel comfortable with. Kellen has a great feel for that."

Those fascinating conversations take place when players have gone home, too.

It doesn't take much to imagine the dialogue between Staley, Moore, Nussmeier, Arth, White and Whitmer in a meeting room.

"You're just able to have that healthy discussion and that open platform to share your experiences," Staley said. "Guys come from different systems, which brings different viewpoints, and then you tie that into how we believe in doing things philosophically. It's just going to add a lot of things to your program.

"We want that platform for coaches to feel free to really express themselves," Staley added. "It's like a think tank. You want a think tank of ideas so that you're always at the cutting edge."

And if those half-dozen coaches want one of the rarer viewpoints on staff, perhaps they walk over into Jay Rodgers' office to talk ball.

Rodgers is now in his second season as the Defensive Run Game Coordinator/Defensive Line Coach for the Bolts and has been with the Chargers since Staley arrived in 2021.

But Rodgers, one of the top D-line coaches in the league, appeared in 29 games for Indiana in the mid-1990s as a quarterback.

Rodgers was asked this summer if he was a good quarterback for the Hoosiers.

"If you want to look at it in terms of statistics, no," Rodgers said with a chuckle. "If you want to look at it in terms of wins and losses, no.

"I was probably a better high school quarterback than I was a college quarterback," Rodgers added.

Now a valuable member of the Bolts staff, Rodgers has carved out a reputation as one of the top position coaches in the league. (Rodgers won the 2018 John Teerlinck Award as the best defensive line coach in the NFL while with the Bears).

And he credits his time as a college quarterback for helping him now view football on a big-picture scale.

"I think you always view the game from the eyes of what you played. I still see the game a little bit more globally than some coaches in my position," Rodgers said. "They're so used to seeing defensive lines and offensive lines, that sometimes I can see outside the box through my own experiences and having to do that as a player.

"And it also helps the learning process because I can maybe teach it a different way and with a different perspective by having eyes open rather than having blinders on," Rodgers continued. "My feedback from players I've coached is that the more they understand the game of football, the more aggressive I can play.

"Those little tips and tricks, I hope, can help each guy lengthen their football career," Rodgers added.

If there's anyone who knows Rodgers path from college quarterback to defensive NFL coach, it's Staley, who's own journey is well known.

"When you can find those offensive players that become defensive coaches, that's kind of my path but I think it's a unique path and a wise one," Staley said.

Naturally, Staley jumped at the chance to add Rodgers to his staff when he was hired three years ago.

"He's got an awesome background. He was with some great defensive coaches in Denver and then we joined up in Chicago with Vic [Fangio]," Staley said. "His background is big because he understands protections, understands formations. There's a lot of D-line guys that don't have his background and he can help his guys find some tips that allow them to play fast.

"We're always trying to incorporate the quarterback position in how we coach defense," Staley added. "It doesn't matter if you're with the D-line, linebacker or secondary player, they have to understand how that position is being coached for them to do their best."

There are 23 coaches who reside on the second floor of the Bolts practice facility. Nearly one-third of them played quarterback in college.

And this group of seven doesn't even include Tommy Donatell, the Chargers Defensive Passing Game Coordinator/Secondary Coach who went to Iowa as a quarterback but quickly shifted to safety and was never under center in a game for the Hawkeyes.

Either way, having seven former college quarterbacks on staff is something Staley believes helps make himself, the staff and ultimately the Chargers better in every aspect.

Arth reflected this summer on how being a former quarterback helps him see and approach the game.

"I think from a mindset standpoint, you have to be a really competitive person," said Arth, who joined the Colts out of college and spent time as Peyton Manning's backup. "You have to be someone who is willing to serve and bring the best out of people around you.

"But you also have to have a big-picture outlook on the game itself and understand what every situation is and understand what we're really trying to get accomplished with each play," Arth continued. "Those are some of the things I enjoy most about the game. I do think playing quarterback helped me become a good coach and there's certainly a lot that I've learned coaching that I wish I knew when I was playing.

"But with the way Brandon has created the culture here, we all have the opportunity to learn the game from each other and become the best we can be," Arth added. "In turn, that helps our players become the best that they can be."

Away from the field, Staley and the Bolts have invested in plenty of quarterback brain power to help Herbert continue to thrive as he enters his fourth season in the league.

And on the field?

Let's just say that those former quarterbacks can still spin it and love a good quarterback competition from time to time.

"They're certainly alive a little bit," Moore said with a smile.

Marco Zucconi Earns Athletic Trainer of the Year Award

By Eric Smith
Chargers.com
March 22, 2023

Marco Zucconi has made some history.

It's not a surprise to those who know the Chargers associate athletic trainer well.

Zucconi was named the AFC recipient of the Tim Davey Assistant Athletic Trainer of the Year on Tuesday evening, becoming the first Chargers athletic trainer to earn the accolade.

Zucconi was presented the award in Phoenix at a ceremony for the Pro Football Athletic Trainers Society by James Collins, the Bolts former head trainer who hired Zucconi over a decade ago.

"As soon as James got called up, my heart was beating out of my chest," Zucconi said. "I did not expect it at all. It's special because James gave me my first opportunity in the NFL, so it was special for him to be able to call me up there.

"I've seen a lot of people get this award and they are legends in this space as athletic trainers," Zucconi said. "I don't feel like I am as deserving as them. But to be seen in that light is pretty incredible."

Zucconi initially interned with the Chargers for the 2007 season but returned to the team in a full-time role in 2012. He was an assistant athletic trainer until 2016 before he was promoted to associate trainer.

Collins, now the Chargers Director of Football/Medical Services, said he has watched Zucconi flourish over the years.

"I saw something that was different than all of the other students I'd had," Collins said. "It was his ambition, character and his attitude, plus wanting to be as good as he can be.

"He had a knack for understanding how an athletic trainer should work and take care of an athlete, even at a younger stage of his career," Collins added. "And he's grown so much. His skillset is different from other athletic trainers because of how he's gone out and learned other techniques to help get athletes better."

Chargers center Corey Linsley recently spoke with Chargers.com about the impact Zucconi has on himself and his teammates on a daily basis.

"Marco and I built a great relationship from the start," Linsley said. "Coming from Green Bay, he had a pretty good relationship with some of the trainers that I was close with back there, so it was definitely a little bit easier to kind of bridge the gap there.

"But as I started to work with him on some of the things you go through during the season with general ailments and aches and pains ... the thing he does really well is finding a lot of variety of solutions to a particular problem," Linsley continued. "Like, if I say, 'Hey, my shoulder is bothering me', we do an exercise. But if I'm not really getting what I want out of it then he'll say, 'Let's switch it up and find something that works for you.'

"It's never just linear with Marco. He's always thinking of new ideas, new ways to not only fix problems, but just maintain the general maintenance of things that you have to keep up with throughout the season," Linsley added. "And his willingness to work ... he has a phenomenal work ethic. I really appreciate that."

Zucconi was nominated for the award by Chargers colleagues and fellow athletic trainers Allison Miner, Alvin Cabrera and Sam O'Leary.

The three of them raved about working with Zucconi and noted how he constantly puts others before himself in all facets of his job.

"A professional through and through," Miner said. "But he's able to have fun, too. You enjoy going to work and working with him.

"He cares so much about our department and wants us to be elite," Miner added. "He constantly pours into all of us. That's rare and doesn't always happen in professional sports. He really pours into us to make us a great functioning unit. Whether it's his co-workers or the athletes, he always has time."

O'Leary added: "It's his people skills. He can talk to anybody in a room, whether it's somebody from the front office to somebody on the practice squad. He treats them all with the same level of respect."

Cabrera said: "His professionalism and his body of knowledge is immense. It's how much he knows and how he's able to discuss things with a player so they understand it as well."

Those around the Chargers also praised Zucconi, a husband and father of three, for the way he brilliantly balances a demanding job and his family.

"It's amazing how good of a person and family man he is. He's a great role model to everything from how he treats people to how he creates time for his wife and his family," O'Leary later added. "There's no fall off between [his work and family] ... and he's elite at both."

Linsley added: "He loves dad jokes. I would say that's his forte."

Zucconi has taken on a larger role in the department in recent years as he is responsible for organizing data from player trackers in practices and games.

Miner gave an example where a running back might hit a typical yardage amount and speed in a given practice. Based on the data Zucconi is in charge of, other athletic trainers know what marks that player needs to hit while rehabbing on the side with an injury.

"You can get in the weeds looking at all that," Miner said. "But he helps you know what to look at and what we're trying to do with each player."

For all that Zucconi does for the Bolts, it's clear that he has built up a trust with those in the building.

O'Leary gave an example where a player specifically leaned on Zucconi for help in a tough situation.

"The player went out of his way to seek out Marco because he trusted him," O'Leary said.

"He was instrumental for that player because he had built up a level of comfort and trust."

Linsley expanded on how the Bolts locker room feels about Zucconi.

"You want somebody that has a heart and has a high level of character because they're dealing with your well-being to some degree," Linsley said. "They're dealing with how you feel for us day-to-day and it's part of our livelihood and part of our career.

"So, for someone like him who has our back as players and understands, is a good person in general, you know when it comes down to it, he's going to make the right decision for you," Linsley added.

Zucconi credited the team around him for helping energize him to be his best on a daily basis.

"It's all about giving care to the players and showing that you're all in it for them," Zucconi said. "That's challenging at times, to always give of yourself, so to have the staff that we have is something we try to do.

"It's amazing to have friends and family like that to recharge you and keep you doing what you love to do," Zucconi added. "It can be tough at times, but they make it all so much easier and that much better."

Collins recalled Zucconi's relationship with former Chargers running back Danny Woodhead, who was with the team from 2013-16.

"Danny was a real go-getter and always played with a chip on his shoulder, so missing practice or missing time wasn't on his agenda," Collins said. "Marco always put in whatever time he needed to make sure Danny missed as little time as possible.

"And you could tell that Danny always appreciated it," Collins added. "He doesn't just go through the motions. He genuinely wants them to get better."

Zucconi has displayed that work ethic and empathy on a daily basis with the Chargers.

And he has now been rightfully recognized for his impact within the organization.

"He's so good at what he does," Miner said. "I don't have the words to say how great he is. He's so deserving of this award.

"He's just a wonderful leader, but he's collaborative in his leadership and he's going to take you along with him," Miner added. "He's not climbing the ladder on his own. He's putting his hand back and pulling everyone along with him. That's a special and rare trait."

BRANDON STALEY

How a grueling cancer battle taught Brandon Staley he can overcome Jacksonville fiasco

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
July 30, 2023

The losses were dramatic, certainly, even historic, the Chargers' last two seasons ending in ways difficult to conceive.

But Brandon Staley is one who can relate, can relate to being repeatedly crushed, to being finished in both mind and body. Can relate to the pain of progress.

He's a fighter who, still today, summons the competitive acid that swells inside a gut trying to accept losses suffered on an AAU hoops court as a 12-year-old.

And he's a son, too, a son who watched his mother somehow cut daylight through the impossible — a winding, gnarled cancer battle that he'd eventually have to face himself.

"Because of the tough losses, the endings to the past two seasons, you're closer to the right path," Staley said. "It's exactly what my mom used to always say to us."

Linda Staley's message has shaped his life. Her words are, as Staley explained it, "what drive me from these experiences."

He used them years ago when Hodgkin lymphoma invaded his chest and demanded a response to a regimen that gives life and hope but takes so much else.

"Every one of those chemo treatments was like a football game to him," Jason, Staley's twin brother, remembered. "It was going to be a grind ... and he was going to grind the cancer right out of him."

So now, Staley is in another fight — one that isn't life or death just a whole lot of life, his life. For the second consecutive summer, he will try to steer the Chargers back from the darkest of defeats.

Understanding cancer and its ravages long before his diagnosis — the way the disease slowly consumed his mother and twice took runs at his father — Staley finds himself empowered by perspective.

"When you go through chemo, a treatment, afterward you have nothing left," he said. "It feels like losing a game. It takes the air out of you. But 13 days later you have to be ready to go do it again."

"You know what to expect now, so you build yourself up and when that date arrives, you're ready to go. And then you're actually stronger the next time. You're going to get knocked down again by the treatment, but you keep learning."

The Chargers' latest loss was so profound that the details and misery attached to it — the entire expanse of a sour-luck franchise that, in 54 years in the NFL, never has won — can be captured in a single word:

Jacksonville.

Expressed another way, it takes but two numbers:

27-0.

The league's third-worst playoff collapse spiraled the Chargers into an offseason that saw multiple assistants fired by a coach many observers believed should have been the first to go.

Worse, the 31-30 loss to the Jaguars marked Staley's second consecutive season-ending stomach kick. A year earlier, the Chargers' playoffs hopes vanished on the final play of the NFL's final regular-season game, in overtime, against the AFC West rival Raiders.

Despite starting his career with consecutive winning seasons — a more successful foundation than those laid by Bill Belichick and Andy Reid, Jimmy Johnson and Don Coryell — Staley's very competence was doubted. Even mocked.

The analysts screamed, the fans growled, the internet "internetted."

So, as he readies for his latest response in a lifetime of responses, let's offer one suggestion of what's to come by looking back at what already has been; back at the time a disease showed up to attack Staley but instead found itself under attack.

He had just spent his first year in coaching — at Northern Illinois — as a graduate assistant, a bottom-rung position where a former college standout found himself trying to discover ways to somehow impact games he previously had controlled joystick-like as a quarterback.

Staley hadn't felt well for most of that 2006 season as he dealt with a stubborn fever and re-occurring night sweats, a growth also developing on his neck and eventually turning harder.

In mid-January, at UH Cleveland Medical Center — the same hospital where his parents had been treated — Staley received the diagnosis that left both his brothers crying while he refused to waver.

"Brandon's wired differently than a lot of people," said Michael, Staley's younger brother. "I think it was tough for him to break the news to me, but the confidence he had on that call made me feel more at ease."

"He wasn't going to let people see him differently even though he was battling something terrifying. He approached things the way we saw our mom do it. She fought with such grace and elegance."

Linda Staley was supposed to live one year after breast cancer was discovered when her twin sons were 12. She lived that year and eight more before her body spent the last of its fight.

Along the way, she discovered strength by helping others on their cancer paths, continued to raise her three sons and, shining light on the grim effects of chemo, often leaned on her favorite mantra: "The sicker I get, the closer I get to getting well."

Staley's father, Bruce, already had beaten thyroid cancer and, years later, would do the same to prostate cancer. But Brandon's diagnosis hit especially hard, Michael admitting he felt fear and Jason saying he experienced something more gripping.

"There was nothing I wouldn't have done to take the cancer out of him and put it into me," Jason said. "I mean, we're twins, right? That's something I have to wake up with every day. We're blessed that he beat it, but there's still a tinge of guilt, a bit of 'Why him and not me?'"

Twelve rounds of chemo — once every other week for six months — awaited Staley. Lymphoma filled his right lung and his tumor had grown to be as visible as ever.

New Chargers coach Brandon Staley credits much of his success to the examples set by his father and mother, even as she eventually passed away from cancer.

There were unknowns, certainly, but there also was a clear picture of what was coming; a picture, Staley explained, fine-tuned by watching a pair of lifelong educators who raised him teach lessons they never envisioned teaching.

"I saw a lot from my mom and dad, especially my mom," he said. "She went through the toughest stuff you can go through. ... There was nothing in the cancer playbook that she didn't go through."

"I've seen how far the human body can go. I've seen it challenged to the edges. I know what the toughest part of life looks like because I've seen it. I've seen it and I've felt it myself."

After the ninth round of chemo, scans showed Staley to be cancer free. But the final three dosages had to go on as planned, something he said nearly staggered a mindset forged to fight.

So Brandon Zangaro, one of his former college teammates, continued to pick up Staley at the Cleveland airport, drive him to the hospital and marvel at what would happen once they arrived.

"When he would walk in, everyone's day would brighten," Zangaro said. "He's just magnifying that way, electric really. It was ironic, you know? He was going there to have poison put in his body and he was the positive one."

Following the chemo and a short break, Staley began six weeks of radiation, every morning, Monday through Friday. He would drive to Chicago, to the University of Illinois Medical Center, leaving Northern Illinois at 4 a.m. for the earliest appointment possible.

Then he'd drive back and return to work, resume building toward his dream of head coaching, the competitor in Staley choosing to embrace — no, to cherish — the two-fisted challenger before him.

The early-morning regimen brought a focus and purpose to each day. The battle generated the sort of energy he'd felt only when facing the toughest of foes. The size of the opponent demanded a response of equal stature.

"It was really good for me because it got me started in coaching the way you need to start," Staley said, "which is having the selflessness, the commitment, the dedication, the drive that ultimately gets you where you want to go."

Every day, after returning from radiation, Staley would enter the Yordon Center, which houses Northern Illinois' football offices. Amy Ward, a former Huskie volleyball player who was interning for the athletic director, worked the front desk.

The two had seen each other months earlier, at Fatty's, a local hangout known for its Cajun-fried potato salad and less famous for being Amy's former place of employment.

She would see Staley stalking his way through the Yordon Center hallways behind dark sunglasses. What Amy didn't know was those glasses were hiding a pair of eyes turned bloodshot by the drugs saving Staley's life.

Before long, they were dating, and a couple weeks into their relationship, Amy asked about the scar on Staley's neck, the spot that twice had been biopsied leading to his diagnosis.

"I was enamored at his ease in discussing his cancer," said Amy, who became Staley's wife in June 2011. "You could tell it was a big deal and it had been really hard, but he was, like, on fire about his life and what he wanted to do next."

There was passion, but there was something soothing, too. There was authenticity, the type Staley's players talk about still today. Before their first date, Staley told Amy he'd pick her up in his favorite car, bragging on his beloved ride to the point where Amy wasn't sure what to expect.

He's a car guy? Really?

Then Staley rolled up in an old Buick Skylark the color of the McDonald's character, Grimace. "The Purple Palace," as the Staley boys called it, had belonged to their grandfather, John Lucrezi, before being passed down.

There was gray paneling on the sides and some 250,000 miles on the odometer — Jason: "He drove it everywhere. We couldn't afford plane tickets." — before the poor palace, oozing oil, finally caught fire and died.

"He pulled up in that Skylark with a big smile on his face, and I was like, 'OK, this guy's different,'" Amy said. "It was just so refreshing. I knew then how original he was."

His life already buoyed by belief, Staley described himself as soaring when he appeared on the other side of cancer. His confidence surged like never before, and he worked himself into better shape than when he was quarterbacking at Dayton.

He knew he had conquered a monumental climb and just how much it had taken to reach the peak. Bigger still, Staley said, he now knew how to get where he really was going.

"There's a humility when you know how it is and how it could be," he said. "When you feel that type of stuff I felt, then everything else seems so achievable. There isn't a challenge that you don't think you can head toward."

Staley spent two more years at Northern Illinois before starting up the ladder that saw him reach Division III John Carroll for a three-year defensive coordinator run that ended in 2016.

Before his final season there, Staley, two defensive assistants and eight members of his secondary loaded into an extended van and drove two hours down I-76 to Pittsburgh, to Heinz Field, for "Race to Anyplace," a stationary bike charity event for cancer.

Even now, Staley is convinced that the trip bonded the group, helping the '16 John Carroll team play the best defense he has "ever been a part of ... and I've been a part of two No. 1 defenses in the NFL."

"A lot of people talk a good game, but he lived a good game," said Mike Hollins, one of Staley's former John Carroll cornerbacks. "What he overcame showed us we could overcome anything."

That season, Staley was named the Division III national coordinator of the year. A few months later, he was coaching outside linebackers for the Chicago Bears, an NFL assistant sprinting his way to another pinnacle with the Chargers.

Flying home from Jacksonville, Staley said he remembers wishing the NFL playoffs were like pickup basketball; he wanted to run it back against the Jaguars right then.

The next day, his brothers talked to him in separate phone conversations, both Jason and Michael saying Staley stressed to them the importance of his upcoming exit interviews with the players.

Here was a coach just flattened again by a season-sealing defeat, a coach rumored to be in danger of facing unemployment, still trying to end the year the right way, even after the season had ended with everything going wrong.

Six months later, there's evidence of healing.

"The culture this year is so much better, so much closer, so much tighter," Chargers defensive lineman Sebastian Joseph-Day said. "That's a testament to Staley, to what he's building. This is his thing, his baby. This is 100% him."

Perhaps, but Staley insisted it's a team thing, not unlike his fight against Hodgkin lymphoma; a fight that focused on one man but featured the efforts of so many others.

"You don't do it by yourself," Staley said. "You can't do it alone. You have to depend on your doctors and your nurses, your family and your friends. That's how being a head coach is, too."

"If you feel like you can do it all by yourself, you're going to fail. You won't have enough on your own. That's why you have to surround yourself with the right people. I'm not the one who beat cancer. We all did it."

The toughness required, the unpredictability involved, the perseverance needed — Staley cited each when he compared fighting cancer to head coaching in the NFL. In both challenges, he talked about the ability to feel momentum turn.

Then he talked about the Chargers' Week 14 victory last season over Miami, when a group sitting at 6-6 made one of the league's fastest offenses trudge through mud, igniting a four-game win streak that put his Chargers in the playoffs.

"I look back on my cancer path," Staley said, "and it's helped me immensely."

Each of his first two teams as a head coach had its season end when the opposition kicked a field goal as time expired. The bankrupt feeling of those empty nights — after so many fulfilling moments to get there — was conveyed poignantly by "0:00."

Now, Season 3 is beginning for Staley, and the people closest to him have little doubt how this cancer survivor will respond.

"I've seen so many things thrown his way where I think so many people would have given up or taken a different direction," Amy said. "He just digs in deeper and keeps going. I've always admired that about him. When you think his back's to the wall, he's just getting started."

FMIA: Brandon Staley Isn't Changing Who He Is

By Peter King
NBC Sports
August 29, 2022

SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO, Calif.—It's 5:39 a.m. in Orange County, and Chargers coach Brandon Staley is in a rush to get to work 25 minutes away. But he can't rush his drive too much through the thick fog enveloping the area around his home, not far from the Pacific Ocean.

"In the morning, you can get this fog, which is kind of cool," said Staley, an Ohio kid exposed to California life for the first time in 2020. He speaks of it not in annoyance for adding five minutes to his commute — but rather in a Hey, look at this awesome rolling fog tone.

"My wife is from Chicago. I'm from Cleveland. I don't know what our picture of California was, but coming to southern California we couldn't believe how much it feels like home."

Staley, 39, has a natural eagerness to him, which the football world should see a lot of this year. The Chargers were doomed by a leaky defense last year — the dramatic postseason-elimination loss to the Raiders has left a scar — and the offseason has brought in credible reinforcements: cornerback J.C. Jackson, pass rusher Khalil Mack, run-stoppers Sebastian Joseph-Day and Austin Johnson, guard Zion Johnson. With mature-beyond-his-years quarterback Justin Herbert piloting a top-five NFL offense, the pieces are in place for a young team to make a 2022 run, even in the stacked AFC West.

Staley's not just a coach, though. He's become a lightning rod for progressive football. The Chargers led the NFL in fourth-down conversions last year with 22, and they were fourth in efficiency, making a first down on 65 percent of their fourth-down tries. But it's the one they didn't convert — fourth-and-one from their own 18- in the third quarter of that final game in Las Vegas, leading to a Raider field goal in a three-point loss — that prompted a torrent of criticism.

The young coach is wounded but unbowed. The analytics community, quietly, loves Staley. "He's our Trojan horse," said one team research analyst in the growing community of numbers-crunchers throughout the league. Meaning: Staley's taking the heat from many who think it's insane to go for it on fourth-and-one deep in your own territory in a tight game, but four models say (narrowly) it was the right thing to do. Another analyst told me, "Everyone screamed about fourth-and-one from the 18-, but no one mentions the Chargers were six of seven on fourth down in their biggest game of the year, and they lost because they were awful against the run."

The Lead: Staley

Raiders 35, Chargers 32, Week 18, game 272, Sunday night. America watching.

"That was the ... that's the toughest loss that I've ever been a part of as a competitor for sure," Staley said, merging onto I-5, fog dissipating. "Then to watch the playoffs unfold how they did, you know, to see the AFC Championship Game and then the Super Bowl, that was a tough month for me. As tough a month as I've had.

"But I think it was a good month for me because I got a lot of work done in that month. I really took a hard look at myself number one, our team, our organization, how we did things, make those after-action reports in all phases. I got a lot of work done. As hard as it was, I think it set the stage for the type of offseason that we've had but it was as tough as it gets."

"Ryan Tannehill told me he got professional help," I said. "Not suggesting you did or you needed it, but can football send you into, even temporarily, a really depressed state?"

"When things matter to you so much, like I'm sure they do for Ryan...I think the finality of the NFL and sometimes how you lose, you can't help but be affected, because of how much it means, how much you care. But that's part of competition. I think when you compete, especially in the NFL, you're gonna sign up for losses like Ryan had, like we had. There's gonna be these really tough moments. That's what gets you back going again, though, knowing that you get an opportunity to prove yourself again. You have to show that resilience and I think that's what it's about for me. You learn a lot from everything and then you gotta bounce back and you gotta come back better. That's what I spent my time learning this offseason."

One thing that sticks with me about that game — and that spurred GM Tom Telesco to over-scout run defenders last winter — was the very end, the last two plays of the 2022 NFL regular season. The Raiders had second-and-11 from the LA 46 with 80 seconds left. Tie game. If it ended in a tie, both teams would have made the playoffs. Next two snaps: Josh Jacobs for seven, Jacobs for 10. Daniel Carlson's 47-yard field goal won it.

"My regret," Staley said, "is that in what should've been able to get us out of there with a tie. They ended up splitting us on a 10-yard run and that's what I've been thinking about — our execution on that last play. That's the tough side of things, having to live with that. I didn't do a good enough job. That's the tough side of things. That's what gotten me moving this whole offseason."

Staley was hired after coaching the league's top-rated defense with the Rams in 2020. The Chargers were 23rd in team defense last year, allowing more points than Jacksonville and Houston. That led to the offseason urgency to fix the defense. In Staley's first year as an NFL assistant, 2017, he coached the Bears' outside linebackers and got to know Mack well. Now he's gambling that Mack, at 31 and coming off foot surgery, can be the Mack of five years ago. It's a big gamble.

"I felt like we were missing...that presence up front," Staley said. "I think Derwin James is as good of a leader as there is in pro football. I think Joey Bosa is one of the top defensive players in pro football. But I think to establish a culture and the type of mindset, you gotta bring in players who can live that. I think there's no better example of that than Khalil. I saw it happen in Chicago. He's a fierce competitor."

Fourth-and-one. Regrets?

Of course you regret something when it doesn't work. That's human nature. But in the six or seven minutes we discussed it, these were the five words that meant the most: "The mindset, I don't regret."

I don't see Staley changing. And he shouldn't.

"I think as a coach any time something doesn't go down, you're gonna challenge yourself and say, 'Was that the best thing? Did I give myself, our team the best chance to win?' That was a moment in the game that I felt like we could take advantage of to really give our team a lift. And looking back on it, when we didn't make that fourth down, it had an impact on our offense for a couple of possessions. Defensively, we stopped them right away. I like the way we were playing but it had an impact on our offense for a few possessions and so I think I underestimated that, what that could do if we didn't make it. But the mindset, I don't regret. That's obviously something that in one of the many decisions in that game that if you had to do over again and you knew it was gonna happen, you obviously wouldn't do it. But the mindset of why we did it, I think in games like that, you have to go meet moments like that head-on."

There's a Twitter account run by a football analyst for The Athletic, Ben Baldwin, called the 4th down decision bot (@ben_bot_baldwin). Baldwin uses historical data for each team and each situation and analyzes each fourth-down decision to go for it during the NFL season. He provides, by the numbers, a percentage for the team to win if it goes for it and if it doesn't. He first-guesses, essentially. On this play — Raiders up 17-14, Chargers with fourth-and-one at their 18-, 8:57 left in the third quarter, Chargers with 15 running-back rushes for 77 yards to this point — the 4th down decision bot said the Chargers had a 44 percent chance to win the game if they went for it, a 41 percent to win if they punted. The recommendation ("STRONG") was to go for it. NFL partner Next Gen Stats and two other public analytics sites also said the right call was to go for it.

Austin Ekeler got swarmed trying to pierce the left side of the line. Loss of two. Maybe the Chargers will put the ball in Herbert's hands even on a short one the next time. Herbert was six for six throwing it for conversions on the other six times Staley went for it on fourth down.

There's a bit of an old-school/new-school divide on fourth-down tendencies. The four coaches who went for it on fourth down the fewest times in the league last year, in order: Pete Carroll (11 fourth-down attempts), Andy Reid (15), Bruce Arians (16), Bill Belichick (17). But Sean McVay (19 tries) and Kyle Shanahan (20) were close, so it's not definitive that the youngsters are all changing the landscape.

"We had two primetime games at the end of the season that were really, really, really the big games. We didn't win. There were some [fourth] downs in there that people are gonna scrutinize. That's part of it.

“But then there were five or six, seven games for sure — five games for sure, six seven depending how you look at it — where I know that we don’t win without that mindset. What you have to be able to do is look at the entire season and then in those games that everyone is rightfully talking about, just be really critical of yourself and that’s what I’ve tried to do. I know that what I’m not gonna apologize for is how our team played in those games because our team played exactly how I would want them to play.”

Fourth-down attitude is the bright shiny object; it’s easy to take shots when the team doesn’t convert a controversial one, and it’s understandable because it’s such an untraditional decision. But this was the big picture for the ’21 Chargers: They lost three of their last four. They gave up 34, 41 and 35 points in those losses. They weren’t enough of a complete team and didn’t deserve to make the playoffs. Now they’ve done something about it — but that something isn’t a change in philosophy by the head coach. It’s a change in personnel.

Now Staley was in the parking lot in Costa Mesa. Time to go to work.

“I know the mindset I tried to create within our team,” he said. “I know that’s not gonna change. Not one bit.”

Don't Knock This NFL Coach's Pregame Exercise Routine Until You Try It

By Jen Murphy
The Wall Street Journal
January 7, 2023

Every NFL coach has a reputation.

Bill Belichick of the New England Patriots is known for his hoodies. Fans associate the Seattle Seahawks' Pete Carroll with his chewing gum.

And now, Los Angeles Chargers head coach Brandon Staley has a rep for his pregame yoga pose.

Before the chilling news of the collapse of Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin swept national headlines this week, video of a much lighter NFL incident made the rounds: Mr. Staley doing cat-cow pose on the sideline.

(Mr. Staley, who recruited Mr. Hamlin out of high school during his time coaching at Division III John Carroll University in his native Ohio, noted this week that the personal connection hit particularly close to home and that he sent his deepest prayers to Mr. Hamlin and his family.)

Mr. Staley, 40, is a cancer survivor. He shrugs off the social-media naysayers, saying he puts a high value on health and well-being.

Both of Mr. Staley's parents had cancer. He lost his mother to breast cancer in 2004; his father completed treatment for prostate cancer in 2020. In 2007, as a graduate assistant at Northern Illinois and at the peak of health, he was diagnosed with Hodgkin lymphoma. Mr. Staley says he was determined to not just conquer the disease but also to emerge in the best shape of his life.

"After chemo, I made a pact with myself that I'd work out twice a day, waking at 4 a.m. to get to the gym before practice, then again after," he says. He says the discipline, focus and drive it took has helped him be the coach he is today.

While the Chargers suit up in the locker room, Mr. Staley is on the field preparing by stretching and running the stadium stairs, even in cold-weather cities late in the season.

The game is mentally and emotionally draining for a coach and takes a physical toll, too, he says. Mr. Staley is typically out on the field for an hour-long walk-through, then back out during warm-ups and constantly moving up and down the field throughout the game.

"As a head coach in the NFL, you're leading the best players in the world," he says. "You need to train and take care of yourself so you can be operating at the highest level."

The Workout

Before every practice and game, Mr. Staley runs through a 10-minute warm-up of dynamic movements and mobility drills to activate and loosen his lower back, ankles, hips and glutes.

He performs lateral and prone leg raises, single-leg glute bridges, hip rotations, cat-cow pose and calf raises. He says his calf muscles get tight from running the stadium stairs and his body reminds him when he neglects a session.

Before his first regular-season game as Chargers head coach in 2021, he ran the stairs at FedExField near at Washington, D.C., but didn't stretch. "I jumped up after [Chargers outside linebacker] Joey Bosa had a sack and pulled my calf," he says.

Next, Mr. Staley cycles through a series of dynamic exercises, including walking lunges forward, backward and sideways. He then hits the stadium stairs, typically running all the stairs of the lower bowl once at away stadiums.

At his home building, SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, Calif., he runs up and down aisles and aisles of club-level stairs, working his way around the stadium twice. Each club section has about 20 rows.

In the offseason, he spends more time in the gym, getting in four workouts a week. "I love to sweat, so on top of lifting, I bike, run and do the elliptical," Mr. Staley says. He played tennis growing up and nearly gave up football for it. Last offseason, he picked up a racket again for the first time in years and now takes lessons with a pro.

"It brought out a different person in me," he says. "I have three kids, ages 8, 6, and 4, so I don't have time to golf. Tennis allowed me to find the love of sport again."

The Diet

Keep it light: During the season, Mr. Staley doesn't like to eat much during the day to avoid feeling sluggish. He typically has a smoothie ahead of practice, hydrates with water and Gatorade, then enjoys a big dinner that includes a protein, starch and vegetables.

Well-caffeinated: He tries not to have more than three 8-ounce coffees before lunch, then a splash in the afternoon. "It's my burner to ignite myself for the second half of the day," he says.

Splurge: "I'll attack a Chipotle chicken burrito with beans, hot sauce and a side of chips and guac every now and again," he says.

The Gear

Apparel: Mr. Staley calls himself a Lululemon guy. "I've leaned into the Cali vibe since moving and love the stuff Vuori makes," he says, referring to the Carlsbad, Calif.-based athleisure brand.

Sneakers: He is a lifelong Nike fan. The team has a contract with the brand. Michael Jordan is his favorite athlete and he particularly likes Jordan sneakers and apparel.

The Playlist

The coach says he has a playlist to suit every mood. His country mix includes Florida Georgia Line, Luke Bryan and Brett Eldredge. Jay-Z, Drake and Tupac Shakur feature on his hip-hop mix.

Chargers coach Brandon Staley fulfills a dream with trip to Wimbledon

By Sam Farmer
Los Angeles Times
July 2, 2022

WIMBLEDON, England — Brandon Staley was simultaneously in his element and half a world removed from it.

The Chargers coach, a passionate tennis fan since childhood, spent the past two days watching Wimbledon matches in person with his wife, Amy. It's an anniversary trip for them and their first time in Europe.

Yet football is never too far away for Staley, who used the experience as an opportunity to hone his coaching techniques. He got a special invitation to watch his favorite player, Rafael Nadal, grind through a session on the practice courts. The Staleys also sat in the players' box for a Steve Johnson match, those prime seats courtesy of Marc Lucero, who coaches the former USC star.

"You're just trying to see how the top players in the world practice and perform," Staley said. "As a coach, you're trying to take in stuff in Rafa's practices that you kind of feel can help Justin Herbert. You're just observing. There were just a lot of moments in that hour pocket that I know I can bring back with me for Justin and Derwin James, because Rafa's the best of all time."

In March, the coach brought quarterback Herbert and safety James to the BNP Paribas Open at Indian Wells in hopes of exposing them to the focus and dedication required to play tennis at an elite level for, in Nadal's case, a generation.

"There's always something you can observe if you're willing to look and listen," Staley said. "There's going to be something that I can see with my own two eyes that can help me with coaching."

Josh Rupperecht, who runs media relations for the Chargers, arranged for the Staleys to sit in friend Pete Sampras' seats at Centre Court. Sampras was another childhood favorite of the coach.

Staley, 39, grew up playing tennis in Ohio, was a competitive youth player and briefly considered focusing on that instead of football. The lure of playing quarterback was too strong, though, and he wound up playing the position at the University of Dayton.

"I would use my athleticism to beat you when I was a kid," he said. "I'm out there wearing basketball shoes and baggy shorts. I could use my basketball, football background to beat these rich kids in tennis."

"Beat them a different way. Beat them like Rafa does, with my mindset. Playing the game a different way. If you hit a good shot, I can go get it and I'll get it back. Then I'll go get another one. I'm just going to wear you down."

Even as football took front and center in his life, his love for tennis never disappeared. It did fade, however, after he lost his mother, Linda, to cancer when he was in college. She had picked up the sport at 35 and became a relentless player in their community.

"My mom was amazing," he said. "She was a human backstop. She'd get everything back. She was so consistent."

Linda Staley's dream was to see the U.S. Open in person one day, and perhaps Wimbledon.

That never came to be. But now her son has spent time on these hallowed grounds, and while visiting the Tennis Channel set Saturday he had a conversation with Martina Navratilova, one of her sports idols.

"If my mom were here now, she wouldn't believe this," he said.

Like his mother, Staley's wife began playing at 35, this year, and she's showing a natural aptitude for the sport. Amy is a former Division I college volleyball player, and has to resist the urge to dive for every shot. When the youngest of their three sons starts school this fall, Amy will have even more time to work on her game.

"Brandon just doesn't have the time for hobbies that most people do," she said. "It's always been a childhood love of his, reminiscing and talking about tennis. He had said for years, 'When we stop moving, I swear, we're going to start playing together. It's going to be something that we can do together, we can do with our kids...'"

The Staleys have moved 11 times since 2007, including NFL stops with the Chicago Bears, Denver Broncos and Rams before Brandon was hired as head coach of the Chargers in 2021.

Now, he has rediscovered tennis. This spring, he started taking an hour-long lesson every Friday at 6 a.m. before driving to work.

"My first lesson, it all came back for me," he said. "I was like, 'I've got to do this the rest of the year, even during the regular season. I've got to do this at least once a week.' It's been like a renaissance. I remember how much I loved it and why."

He feels it also brings him closer to his mom, who was a teacher.

"I tell people I come from the Bruce and Linda Staley coaching tree," he said. "I learned everything I know about coaching from my parents."

As for that other dream his mom had?

Staley is sending his wife and her friends to the U.S. Open this year.

Half a world away. And never closer.

Chargers trade for Khalil Mack is a deviation from their norm — and hints at Brandon Staley's influence

By Daniel Popper
The Athletic
March 10, 2022

The Chargers have made their move, and Brandon Staley's fingerprints are all over it.

Khalil Mack, a four-time All-Pro edge rusher and former NFL Defensive Player of the Year, is headed to Los Angeles. The Chargers on Tuesday agreed to trade a second-round pick in next month's draft and a sixth-rounder in 2023 to the Bears in exchange for Mack. The Athletic confirmed. ESPN was first to report the trade, which will not become official until the new league year begins Wednesday.

This deal is monumental for two reasons:

1. The Chargers are adding an elite defensive player in Mack, and he will single-handedly change the makeup of a defense that ranked 26th in Football Outsiders' DVOA and 28th in TruMedia's EPA/play last season.
2. Staley is showing how much influence he has in personnel decisions, and it signifies a shift in how the Chargers are doing business.

The first point is obvious. The second point is less so.

Mack just turned 31 years old. Trading draft picks for an older player is not something general manager Tom Telesco has previously done. It goes against every fiber of his team-building philosophy. In fact, before Tuesday, Telesco had traded a draft pick for a player just two times in his nine years as GM. He traded a conditional seventh-round pick to the Cowboys for defensive tackle Sean Lissemore in 2013. And he traded a conditional seventh-round pick to the Bills for quarterback Cardale Jones in 2017.

That's it. That's the list.

In his time with the Chargers, Telesco has always stuck to a firm roster-construction strategy. Draft players, develop them and re-sign the ones who have earned second contracts. Then use free agency and trades only as a means to supplement the roster with talent.

The Mack deal is a deviation from that strategy. And it is no coincidence that this deviation is occurring as Staley is entering his first full offseason as the Chargers' head coach.

Staley has a close personal relationship with Mack. The two spent a season together in Chicago in 2018. Staley was Mack's position coach as the outside linebackers coach under defensive coordinator Vic Fangio. Mack had 12 1/2 sacks and six forced fumbles that season and earned first-team All-Pro honors. That connection was certainly a factor in this trade.

There were other important factors, too, primarily where the Chargers are currently positioned in terms of talent and finances.

The defense was not good enough last season in any facet. They could not stop the run. They could not cover consistently enough on the back

end. They did not produce enough pressure on the quarterback. That all led to the worst third-down defense in the league and a downright bad unit overall, despite star players Derwin James and Joey Bosa playing the whole season.

When Staley took the head-coaching job last winter, he made it a priority to improve and stabilize the Chargers' offensive line. They signed three new starters in free agency and drafted a franchise left tackle, Rashawn Slater, in the first round. By focusing resources on that position group, the defense was mostly neglected. The only defensive starter they added in the offseason was rookie cornerback Asante Samuel Jr. The organization felt like Staley — a respected defensive coach — could take the existing pieces, led by James and Bosa, and turn it into a functional defense. That did not happen, in large part because of depth issues.

Now we are seeing Staley's vision for his second season. He solidified the offensive line in 2021 to help ensure Justin Herbert's continued development. In 2022, he is infusing his defense with talent, and he is doing so in a manner that runs contrary to how the Chargers normally operate.

Adding to the defense was the stated goal entering this offseason, and we are seeing it come to fruition with this trade for Mack, who will impact the defense in several ways. The Chargers now have two elite edge rushers on opposite sides of their defensive line, and opposing offenses will not be able to double-team Bosa and Mack every play. The pass rush — which ranked 19th in pressure rate last season — will improve. So will the run defense.

Financially, the Chargers' ample cap space allowed them to make this deal. They entered this offseason with close to \$60 million in space, according to OverTheCap. That number decreased after they agreed to an extension with Mike Williams earlier this week. But they still had space, and they are using it on Mack. All of this, of course, is made possible by Herbert's cheap contract. You have more money to spread around to other position groups when you have an elite quarterback on a rookie deal.

"This year, we can attack it a little bit differently because we do have a lot of cap space and we do have a quarterback on a rookie deal," Telesco said at the combine earlier this month, foreshadowing what was to come. "But the goal every year is the same. The goal is to challenge and to compete for a championship."

Mack will have a cap hit of \$17.75 million in 2022, according to numbers from OverTheCap. That's going to take up a healthy portion of the Chargers' remaining spending space for this offseason. But they will still have enough room to be players in the free-agent market, particularly at cornerback and on the defensive line. Re-signing Uchenna Nwosu is now less likely.

Mack's cap hits will jump to \$22.9 million in 2023 and \$23.25 million in 2024. The Bears are reportedly eating the \$24 million in remaining prorated signing bonus on Mack's deal, which lowers the cap hits he will have with the Chargers.

"We certainly have the space, whether it's for our players or for players from the outside," Telesco said at the combine. "It's a nice resource to have right now."

Staley needed defensive talent, and the Chargers went and got a familiar player who could elevate his unit to new heights.

Herbert has two years left on his rookie deal and is eligible for a market-setting extension next offseason.

Telesco has said he does not believe in championship windows. But the time to win is now. It will only get more challenging once Herbert signs his second deal. That is undeniable. And the team making this aggressive move is proof of that window existing.

The trade was an emphatic statement.

Brandon Staley's Chargers are not your Same Old Chargers.

Staley's journey: Chargers coach's cancer battle defined him

By Joe Reedy
Associated Press
October 3, 2021

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Chargers coach Brandon Staley will be on the national stage Monday night for the first time when Los Angeles hosts the Las Vegas Raiders.

The narrative will be predictable. How Staley went from Division III defensive coordinator to NFL head coach in five years.

But the 38-year old Staley also wants the attention shifted another direction. Something that is more personal and real to him.

As the NFL begins its "Crucial Catch" initiative, Staley would like everyone to know about his most significant victory — being a cancer survivor after he was diagnosed with Hodgkin lymphoma 14 years ago.

"I wouldn't be the head coach of the Los Angeles Chargers if it weren't for my cancer journey. Cancer has been, if not the biggest, one of the biggest reasons why I'm here today," Staley said on Saturday. "I think what cancer does is that it can bring out the best in you. I know that it's brought the best out in me."

Staley was in his first season as a graduate assistant at Northern Illinois in 2007 when doctors discovered a grapefruit-sized tumor on his right lung. The Perry, Ohio, native underwent six months of chemotherapy treatments in Cleveland during offseason breaks. That was followed by six weeks of morning radiation sessions in Chicago during the season so that he could continue coaching.

Cancer has also affected more than just Brandon. His mother, Linda, died from breast cancer in 2004. Bruce, his father, had thyroid cancer when Brandon was younger and completed treatment for prostate cancer last year.

"You can't do it by yourself. I learned that by watching my mom and my dad," Staley said. "I think that so much of beating cancer is believing in yourself. A lot of times, it's knowing that there are other examples out there that show you that you should believe. I got to see it with my mom and dad. I was lucky that it was personal."

Jason Staley — Brandon's twin brother and younger sibling by 2 1/2 minutes — said that his brother's approach to beating cancer bears many resemblances to his coaching philosophy and getting those around him to buy in.

"He's always had this special way to get you to believe. Every time I talked to him, he explained, this is what's going on, this is what I'm doing, and this is how we're going to beat this," Jason Staley said.

"The way he approached it was very methodical. There were no peaks and valleys. It was one treatment at a time; find what progress you can, and continue to get stronger and better.

"His ability to stay in the present and not let it get too big was the catalyst for him. Not letting the past affect him is the same way he coaches his players. He said, 'I'm just going to compete, and I'm going to grind this thing into the ground,' and I'll be damned if he didn't do it."

Northern Illinois was the first step on a coaching road that to Staley being hired by the Chargers in January. After a second stint as John Carroll University's defensive coordinator in 2016, he was a linebackers coach in Chicago and Denver under Vic Fangio for three years before becoming the Los Angeles Rams defensive coordinator in 2020. In one season, the Rams defense went from 13th to leading the league.

Staley's communication skills have drawn rave reviews from players. Defensive lineman Linval Joseph, who is in his 12th season, said the way Staley has explained his system and philosophy has been the best he has experienced in the league.

Joseph isn't the only player to share that sentiment.

"Coach Staley is very open. He brings it to us, his plan. He listens to us, and he sees how we see it, too. He asks how we see it," safety Derwin James said. "We are constantly communicating, and that's what makes him so great as a coach. It's not just, 'Hey, you do it this way.' It's both ends of the stick."

Staley's first win as an NFL coach came on Sept. 12, when the Chargers rallied in the fourth quarter to defeat the Washington Football Team 20-16. It also was on what would have been Linda Staley's 64th birthday.

"That meant everything. That would have been the 18th birthday we celebrated without her, and this is the first one where I haven't been sad," Jason Staley said. "As a brother, that's the best gift he could have given. She loved watching us play sports."

Jason Staley said seeing his brother have the platform to reach and inform others about cancer awareness is more important than the wins and losses on the field, especially during the league's many cancer awareness programs in October.

It goes back to when they were 12 years old, sitting at a kitchen table and hearing that their mom had breast cancer.

"His goal is for the 12-year old kid that gets this news in 2021, that they don't have the same outcome we did," Jason Staley said. "From a platform standpoint, the most important thing is just his ability to make a difference and keep my mom's memory and legacy alive."

The Chargers come into Monday night's game 2-1 after a thrilling 30-24 victory at Kansas City gave them their first 2-1 start in nine years. While Justin Herbert has directed a pair of fourth-quarter comebacks this season, the defense, where Staley still calls the plays, has set up the drives with takeaways.

The Raiders, who are expected to have a large contingent of fans at the Hollywood Park stadium, are 3-0 for the first time since 2002. Derek Carr leads the league with 1,203 passing yards entering Week 4 and has led Las Vegas to two overtime wins.

While Staley is still emerging and adjusting to being an NFL head coach, he has already helped others going through their cancer journey. He met a Chargers season-ticket holder who was recently diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma during an event in April.

"You need to see other examples of why you should believe that you can do it," Staley said. "I think hopefully, from me, they can see somebody that — I'm just a kid from Pery, Ohio. I was in Division III five years ago. You can live your dreams; you can do anything that you dream of if you believe in yourself."

Unlikely interview set Brandon Staley on journey from St. Thomas to head coach of the Chargers

By Mark Craig
Minneapolis Star-Tribune
November 12, 2021

Brandon Staley, the 38-year-old cancer survivor who raised the Rams' defense to No. 1 a year ago and now has the Chargers atop the AFC West as a rookie head coach, essentially began his coaching career 12 years ago while sitting in his car at a truck stop in Beloit, Wis.

He couldn't bring himself to cross back into Illinois because of something University of St. Thomas head coach Glenn Caruso had told him hours earlier during an interview for an opening to coach the Tommies' defensive line and special teams.

"Brandon was a longtime quarterback, an offensive guy who was working in administration as a graduate assistant on Jerry Kill's staff at Northern Illinois," Caruso said. "I think he was wondering, 'Why does this guy have me up in St. Paul interviewing for a defensive job?'"

"But I liked him right away. I said to him, 'I'm going to offer you the job, and I think you're going to call me before you get to the Illinois state line, and I think you're going to accept it.'"

It was early 2009. Staley, born Dec. 10, 1982, in Perry, Ohio, was 26. He was two years removed from beating Hodgkin's lymphoma with chemo treatments at the Cleveland Clinic. And he was closing in on asking his girlfriend, Amy, to marry him.

"I pulled over because I had to make sure it was OK with my future wife," Staley said last week when asked about his fateful pit stop along I-90 West. "I knew Amy was probably going to have to stay back in Chicago while I took that job in St. Paul. I wanted to make sure we were a team that could make it happen."

"Also," he added, "I didn't want to waste time and have Glenn take the offer away from me. Meeting him, I knew he operates fast."

Staley got the job and spent the 2009 season in St. Paul helping Caruso continue turning the Tommies from the 2-8 team he inherited in 2008 to 11-2 and Division III regional finalists two seasons later.

From there, Staley's whirlwind race to the top of his profession included stints as associate head coach and defensive coordinator at Hutchinson (Kan.) Community College (2010-11); graduate assistant at Tennessee (2012); defensive coordinator and secondary coach at John Carroll University in Ohio (2013, '15-16); defensive coordinator and secondary coach at James Madison (2014); outside linebackers coach with the Bears (2017-18); outside linebackers coach with the Broncos (2019); defensive coordinator with the Rams (2020); and head coach of a Chargers team that's 5-3 and plays host to the Vikings (3-5) at SoFi Stadium on Sunday.

Sleeping in a car in Mobile

Staley played quarterback at Perry High School, the University of Dayton and Mercyhurst (Pa.) University. His graduate assistant stint at Northern Illinois started in 2006, two years before Kill's staff arrived from Southern Illinois.

"I think he was video coordinator when we got there," said Tom Matukewicz, who was Kill's linebackers coach and is now the Southeast Missouri State head coach. "In the transition, I basically fell in love with the guy and took him under my wing. There wasn't a lot of on-field coaching for him, but he was kind of my right-hand man."

So how in fact did the young administrative assistant and former quarterback end up interviewing for D-Line and special teams coach?

Well, it all started when Matukewicz and Caruso's defensive coordinator, Wallie Kuchinski, met and hit it off at a coaching clinic.

"Tom Matukewicz became a guy I really trust," Caruso said. "He called me out of the blue."

Staley says that call eventually changed the trajectory of his career, challenging him to grow and become a more well-rounded coach who learned to see the game not just from a former quarterback's perspective.

But first Caruso had to be convinced to grant the interview request in the first place.

"I came at it pretty strong in that call to Glenn," Matukewicz said. "I said, 'Hey, just do me this favor. Interview him. And if you don't hire him, I'll pay for the interview.'"

Matukewicz laughs when he hears people call Staley "an overnight sensation" after the Rams led the NFL in yards allowed (281.9) and points allowed (18.5) last year.

"I was there when he went to the Senior Bowl and slept in his car because he didn't have any money for a hotel," Matukewicz said. "My wife and I gave him gas money, but we didn't have money for a hotel."

"Brandon and Amy made a lot of sacrifices. Brandon isn't a silver spoon. He's made it because he's worked his butt off and he's great at leading and teaching football."

Cancer survivors bond

Staley and twin brother, Jason, grew up in a home where teaching and football were intertwined. Bruce, the dad, coached football. Linda, the mom, was a teacher.

Cancer first struck the home when Bruce was diagnosed while the twins were in grade school. A few years later, Linda was diagnosed with breast cancer.

Bruce survived. Linda lost her nine-year battle when Brandon was at the University of Dayton. Three years later, Brandon, then 24, received his diagnosis.

"When Tom called me about Brandon, he said, 'This young man has gone through a ton of struggles in his life, and he's overcome them all,'" Caruso said. "He's tough. The year Brandon was here, we're getting ready for our first playoff game. We're sitting around talking about this very good opponent and their very fancy schemes and plays and all that."

"At the end of the meeting, I ask if anyone has anything to add. Brandon stands up with his clipboard in his hand and says, 'I heard a lot about schemes tonight, but no one said this team is tougher than we are. Let's go win.' And we did."

Staley looked back on that season last week and credited Caruso and St. Thomas with giving him a solid foundation he still leans on.

"Glenn is the total package," Staley said. "All you have to do is look at what's happened there since he arrived. That year allowed me to see up close what a real head coach should look like. I have so much respect for those guys. St. Thomas has a blueprint that I really believe in."

Staley stays in touch with Caruso and others at St. Thomas. Last year, Caruso and his wife, Rachael, went to Tampa to watch Staley's defense beat Tom Brady and the Buccaneers.

There's another side to Staley's relationship with the Carusos, one that had Glenn choking up.

"In 2017, we're getting ready for the playoffs and Rachael goes in for a routine checkup and we find out that she has Stage 3 colorectal cancer," Caruso said. "Brandon would pray for Rachael daily. Brandon would text Rachael, and it's not like he didn't have other things going on because he's coaching in the NFL."

"If he knew she was going in for chemo, he would just send a note and say, 'Hey, I'm thinking about you. I love you. I'm with you.' If there was a surgery, I swear he would be the first one to be calling after the surgery as I'm sitting there in the waiting room."

Staley heard those words and said, "From my experience, I just know that you can't do it alone. ... Those guys are amazing people. They just mean a lot to me."

To this day, that interview with Staley back in 2009 has stuck with Caruso.

"Nowadays, when I want to strongly recommend someone for a job, I think back to Tom Matukewicz calling me about Brandon," Caruso said. "I pick up the phone and say, 'Just bring him in and if you don't hire him, I'll pay for the interview.' That sure worked with Brandon."

Chargers' new leader a family man: 'I am from the Bruce and Linda Staley coaching tree'

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
February 5, 2021

It was a single line — just 10 words — from a news conference that stretched beyond an hour and a half:

"I am from the Bruce and Linda Staley coaching tree."

When Detroit unveiled its new head coach on Jan. 21, the guy talked about biting kneecaps and kicking teeth, Dan Campbell's bizarre fit of passion stirring national attention.

On the same day, just a short time later, almost no one noticed when Brandon Staley was introduced by the Chargers and talked about his mom and dad, calling them "my heroes."

This is a coach whose first NFL job came with the 2017 Chicago Bears and noted defensive mind Vic Fangio.

When he was coaching collegiately at John Carroll, Staley was so enamored with Fangio's concepts that he would finish his meetings and game-planning, and rush off to study whatever Fangio was up to next.

Back then, Fangio was San Francisco's defensive coordinator and catching the 49ers on television in Ohio sometimes meant having to go to a nearby sports bar, where Staley would sit alone in wonderment.

After the 2018 season, Fangio left Chicago to become the head coach in Denver and took two assistants with him. One of them was Staley.

Barely a year later, Staley was hired by the Rams to be their defensive coordinator and brought along everything he had learned from his handpicked mentor.

Still, when asked to declare his roots, Staley put family over football, which is understandable given how much this family, bonded by hard reality, has persevered together and kept alive a tradition of teaching.

"I am from the Bruce and Linda Staley coaching tree."

That is Brandon Staley's line and this is the story behind that line.

Everyone else saw him coaching Jalen Ramsey that day, in a moment especially poignant and peevish.

Television cameras showed Staley reasoning with the Rams' all-everything cornerback shortly after Green Bay had taken a one-touchdown lead on an Aaron Rodgers pass.

Ramsey, his team en route to a crushing 32-18 NFC divisional-round playoff loss last month, was visibly upset on the field and now well short of pleased on the sideline.

Sitting at home just outside Pittsburgh, nearly 700 miles from Lambeau Field, Jason Staley watched his twin brother coaching, too, but saw something else entirely.

He saw the woman whose impact was so profound on the Chargers' new coach that it resonates still today, nearly 17 years after her death.

"Watching Brandon teach those guys, I get a little bit of my mom back," Jason said. "I get to see that, and it's just so cool. It's the reason I pay whatever DIRECTV charges me to get his games."

Linda Staley taught sixth-grade English in northeast Ohio before the breast cancer won, ending her 9½-year battle against a disease doctors estimated would take her life in less than one year.

Bruce Staley also was a teacher — fourth-grade math — before he and Linda learned their first child instead would be children, twin boys. A combined annual income of \$22,000 wasn't going to work for a household about to double in size.

So Bruce took a second job that eventually became a second career in adhesive materials. He was a coach, too, mostly AAU basketball, working with the twins from fifth grade through their junior years at Perry High, about a 45-minute drive from Cleveland.

He always had an even, measured demeanor on the bench and an equally steady point guard on the floor, Brandon possessing sublime ball-handling skills and the sort of passing ability that led to him setting assist records in high school.

Two decades later, while watching the Rams play the Packers, Jason said he laughed more than once at the images of his brother at work.

"He looks like my dad, kind of stalking the basketball sideline," Jason, 38, said. "It's like a flashback: 'That's my dad. That's what he would do.'"

Brandon knew only two positions growing up: point guard and quarterback. He was the sort of player who almost never was taken out of a game. He was athletic but — at 6 feet, 160 pounds — there just wasn't enough of him.

So he ended up at Dayton, which plays non-scholarship football, arriving as a fifth- or sixth-stringer. During that first year, buried on the depth chart, Brandon attempted to walk on to the school's Division I basketball team. He made the final two before being cut.

He'd end up starting for two seasons in football, operating the Flyers' option offense, being voted a captain and winning 16 of 21 games.

"He was as good as any player we had on the chalkboard," said Mike Kelly, Dayton's coach at the time. "He would always ask why. Most athletes don't ask why. It's, 'OK, Coach, got it,' and they just go to it. Brandon wanted to know why all the time."

The call to return home came during Brandon's junior year. It was his father. Mom was dying. Originally diagnosed with 21 cancerous lymph nodes, Linda's fight had been an extended and courageous one.

The disease showed up when the twins were 11 and not quite two months after they'd lost an aunt, Ann Maltarich, also to breast cancer. The first two years weren't as bad as the seven that followed as Linda's condition intensified, even as she long outlived the forecasts.

"An incredible will," said Bruce, a two-time cancer survivor himself. "Nothing ever negative, either. Not a 'why me' kind of thing. Incredible resolve. Just graceful. That's what I saw."

Linda would spend weeks at a time in the hospital, typically isolated and communicating with her three children — the Staleys have a younger son, Michael — mostly through journals the boys would write.

So they didn't always see the pain, but seeing the struggle was as unavoidable as the sound of their mother in the bathroom getting sick again. Jason said he never saw his father cry, those tears also coming only in private.

"That kind of fight leaves a mark," Jason said. "As kids, you see that and there's no way that doesn't affect you. When you think back to how they handled it and how she fought, those are the things that empower us."

At his introductory news conference, Brandon called his mother "the most graceful, loving, strongest person I know." He also said she remains his inspiration today "as a coach, as a father, as a husband."

He didn't include "as a teacher" but only because there's little difference between teaching and coaching to Brandon, who became more than a son to Linda after she was diagnosed. He and his brothers also became her students.

No longer able to work, Linda taught her sons instead, showing them the importance of building relationships with students and recognizing how each one learns and then using that foundation to build something special.

"She's the best teacher I've ever seen, certainly," Brandon said. "She was always able to reach people that were more difficult to reach. Seeing that up close when I was a little kid, I saw the power in that. I've tried to embody a lot of that as a coach."

The lesson remains powerful today and so, too, does the memory of Linda's goodbye. Jason said the turnout at her funeral was eye-opening in the number of lives his mother touched, all that love expressed after she died on Valentine's Day 2004.

Two busloads of players arrived from Dayton and two more from Mercyhurst College, where Jason played linebacker and was student body vice president. Jason that day even had to help a few of his teammates tie their ties.

"You would have thought the funeral was for a superstar," Bruce, 63, said. "The line to get in this place was unbelievable. It was more than you could have hoped for. I'm sure she would have been thrilled."

Mercyhurst is a small liberal arts school in Erie, Pa., hardly known for its athletes but famous for its underdog. Former heavyweight champion Buster Douglas was recruited to play basketball for the Lakers in the early 1980s before giving up hoops for boxing.

In 2005, the school was home to another long shot — a reunion of the Staley twins, Brandon transferring to play football with his brother one final time, both now graduate students.

They lived together and worked out together, even took a class together. Jason had considered not using his final season of eligibility, but Brandon talked him out of it.

Marty Schaeztle wrote all about the twins that season for one of the school's game-day programs. He knew their story well since Schaeztle also is the Lakers' football coach.

"I think once they lost their mom, they really realized the value of family and time," he said. "I think they believed it would be a very good thing to play one more time together. We were fortunate to be able to make that happen."

Brandon practically dragged Jason to watch film with him and catch his passes. As one of the team's new captains, Jason had no choice but go along, refusing to be outworked by someone who had just arrived on campus.

He also had no interest in looking bad in front of his big brother. See, Brandon is the older twin, by two minutes. Still, there were times when big brother was almost too driven.

"He was a classroom rat, a film rat," Schaeztle recalled of Brandon. "It was natural for him to try to put everything together, from the protections to the routes to what was going on in the backfield. It came to him very naturally."

By that point, Brandon was on his coaching path and, the next year, was a graduate assistant at Northern Illinois. Those 2006 Huskies made the Poinsettia Bowl.

It was on that trip to San Diego that the night sweats and the flu-like symptoms turned worse. Brandon, who also had a growth in his chest, called his dad, and Bruce remembers telling him, "You need to get home and get home now."

The doctors determined it was lymphoma.

"As a twin brother, it's the worst day of your life, scariest moment of your life," Jason said. "I'm feeling guilty because I don't have it. I would have given anything, anything to take that cancer out of him and put it into me."

These twins would eventually serve as each other's best man. They got engaged only two weeks apart and married just six weeks from one another.

They competed plenty as kids but, more often, teamed up. Brandon was always the better athlete. Yet, to this day, the only thing that really bothers Jason is the fact that Brandon, despite being an inch shorter, was the one who could dunk a basketball.

Brandon now calls the six months of chemotherapy and six weeks of radiation that followed his "cancer journey." He phoned his twin brother after every treatment, reassuring Jason that things would work out, the patient also the healer.

As a former college quarterback evolved into an NFL defensive coordinator, Brandon has been touted for his ability to see football from both sides. His vision goes even deeper than that.

"I looked at it as a chance to compete," Brandon said of his diagnosis. "It was a chance that could really bring out all the best in me. When you get to the other side of it, there's an energy, there's a strength, there's a feeling that you can do anything that you dream of. That's what I've been trying to do every day since."

And now, he's the Chargers' head coach, a young, sharp leader ready to pair with Justin Herbert, the team's young, sharp quarterback.

Brandon's first call after accepting the job was to his wife, Amy. His second was to Herbert.

On the day he was introduced by the Chargers, Brandon called Herbert again, this time for a video chat, explaining later that he wanted to loop in his quarterback as a way of gaining Herbert's trust.

The call included not only Brandon but also Amy and couple's three young sons — Colin, Will and Grant.

"That meant a lot to me," Herbert said. "He had so many other things to do that day. To set aside some time like that was special. I thought that was a pretty cool moment."

They talked family and relationships before they talked football, this disciple of Vic Fangio leaning instead on the lessons from home, the lessons taught by his most favorite of teachers.

At the Perry Cemetery, a family friend recently hung a Chargers lanyard over Linda's gravestone and sent the twins a photo.

Thinking back to his mother, Brandon said, "She's not here, but she's with me."

And that won't change anytime soon, not for someone who comes from a coaching tree carved from his family tree.

A brother's promise and the D-II season that led Brandon Staley to the Chargers

*By Daniel Popper
The Athletic
March 23, 2021*

Mitch Phillis was still learning, and like any 19-year-old college sophomore, he had questions. But he was afraid of asking a dumb one to his superior — in this case, his football coach.

Phillis had taken over as Division II Mercyhurst College's starting quarterback four games into the 2005 season. He was developing, there was no doubt about that. But his coach was demanding, and Phillis did not want to mar his progress with public embarrassment. So in the film room, as his coach toggled through cut-ups of an exotic defensive coverage, Phillis bit his tongue.

Luckily, he had a human answer key sitting next to him: Brandon Staley, a fifth-year grad transfer backup quarterback who, despite being only 22, already was an encyclopedia of football schematics. The film session would wrap up, and later, Phillis would find Staley in the locker room to ask the questions that had been eating at him. Staley would happily oblige: It was a split coverage, of course. Man on one side, zone on the other.

Problem solved. Embarrassment avoided.

Fifteen years before he was hired to lead the Los Angeles Chargers, Staley's remarkable capacity for teaching, distilling and communicating information already was there — it just had to be uncovered. He had started two games earlier in the fall while Phillis dealt with a training camp injury, but once Phillis was healthy, he returned under center, and Staley was faced with the finality of his playing career.

Instead of wallowing, though, Staley did what was natural, what he always was destined to do.

"He just started coaching," says his twin brother Jason.

Jason Staley was ready to break up with football. His mother, Linda, died on Valentine's Day in 2004 after a long battle with breast cancer. "She approached just a truly awful disease with an amount of grace that is really hard to put into words," Jason said.

Jason, a linebacker, spent the 2004 season at Mercyhurst that fall, but he had lost his desire to keep playing.

"I hit the point where I loved football but I wasn't in love with football anymore," he said. "That's a tough realization because you've been playing the game since you were 6. It's even tougher to make the decision to walk away."

Jason was done, and he told his brother, his "best friend" who had just finished his second winning season as Dayton's starting quarterback and who, like Jason, had one more year of eligibility

But his brother was having none of it. Brandon knew Jason would regret giving up that final season for the rest of his life. So he offered a solution.

"I'll come play with you," Brandon said.

"Excuse me?" Jason replied in shock.

Brandon could have stayed at Dayton. But the brothers, inseparable from birth, had spent the last four years apart. They were still grieving for their mother, a sixth-grade English teacher who had instilled in them the value of work ethic and empathy. Brandon wanted to be there for his twin. And so they decided to spend this final season at Mercyhurst, together.

Brandon graduated from Dayton in May. He was in Erie, Pa., days later, moving in with his brother for the first time since they were 18. Brandon picked up a summer job moving furniture around campus. And he picked up Mercyhurst's hefty playbook, literally and figuratively.

The first time Phillis sat down to watch film with Staley, he was surprised to realize the newcomer already had learned the Lakers' intricate pro-style offense.

"We did not have anybody like him," Jason said.

That was evident within days — in the weight room, on the field, in the film room.

"I probably learned more in that summer about studying opponents than I had in the prior four years combined," said John Egbert, a receiver on that 2005 team. "And it just really was evident that he was a different level of cat."

Brandon was instrumental in organizing regular 7-on-7 games between the Mercyhurst offense and defense, what Egbert described as "epic, epic duels" every Sunday. Those days were transformative for the whole team.

"A lot of competition," said Jeff Nowling, who entered 2005 as the starting quarterback. "A lot of jawing at one another."

Because most of the players grew up locally, those not staying on campus drove to Erie for those scrimmages, including Phillis, who came to a sudden realization about Brandon.

"This guy's been getting after it," Phillis said. "He knows the offense already. He's been working on that. He's not coming into camp, like, oh, I'll learn it in camp. He was someone that was like, I'm going to know this before camp, and he was on it."

Brandon galvanized the team to train harder and more frequently. He threw every day with teammates.

The day Brandon got to the Mercyhurst football office, Egbert walked into the weight room and saw his new teammate doing Olympic lifts with a barbell while balancing on one leg. Egbert looked on in bewilderment. What are you doing over there?

The previous summer, before Brandon's arrival, Egbert thought he had made dramatic strides through his workouts.

"We probably did half the amount of work that we did the summer that Brandon came in," Egbert said.

Trying to find any way to get on the field, Brandon took reps at safety during those 7-on-7 games to sharpen his defensive versatility. He had only ever played quarterback.

"He could play any position," Nowling said. "He was very athletic."

Brandon still spent enough time in the playbook to grasp the complex offense at warp speed.

"I remember within a week or two," Egbert said, "not only was he teaching concepts to the other QBs who had been in the room for one, two or in some cases three years, some of the offensive assistants, like our wide receivers coach, he was teaching things to."

Brandon Zangaro, a two-way player on that 2005 team, was not in Erie for the summer. When he arrived for the start of training camp, Brandon Staley had already mastered far more than just the quarterback's duties. He knew the responsibilities of every player on the field.

"You know his intelligence and his Xs and Os are next level within the first 30 seconds of speaking with him," Zangaro said. "You have a guy transferring in, there's going to be some skepticism. Who's this guy? He hasn't been here the past four years doing what we've all been doing. But that didn't happen, because everybody knew."

Including Joe Lombardi.

Lombardi joined the Mercyhurst staff in 2002 when Marty Schaeztle took over as head coach. And though he was coaching at a small Division II liberal arts school, Lombardi, the grandson of legend Vince Lombardi, still had Super Bowl expectations.

"Every day, every week, it seemed like he thought he was in the NFL," Egbert said. "I think in his mind he was walking out to Heinz Field instead of Tullio Field in Erie, Pennsylvania."

Lombardi demanded perfect recall. He ran Bill Walsh-inspired perfect-play drills to end practice, where one minor misstep — like running a route at 14 yards of depth instead of 15 yards — required another repetition. He scripted his first 20 plays every game when no one in Division II was implementing that level of preparation.

One day at practice, Lombardi watched a play unfold that reminded him of a film clip he showed his team two months prior. He asked Phillis if he remembered it — well, more like demanded if he remembered it.

(This might explain why Phillis would go to Staley with his questions.)

"I was kind of like, 'Ummm, I don't remember that specific play,'" Phillis remembers. "He was the type that was like, 'How could you not remember that? If you see it once, you should know it forever.'"

Thinking back, Egbert still marvels at Lombardi's attention to detail.

"Football is in his blood," Egbert added. "But honestly, there's more football in his brain than in his blood."

Staley, meanwhile, was enthralled. The two football junkies connected almost immediately.

"I really fell in love with studying the game," Staley said of his time with Lombardi at Mercyhurst. "I felt like Joe was an outstanding teacher. I felt like he was really progressive at that time. I had never been around an offense like that, that really challenged the quarterback from a mental standpoint, from a preparation standpoint."

"I love that. I couldn't get enough of it."

Specifically, Lombardi offered a diverse and layered NFL-inspired playbook that differed from the option-heavy offense Staley ran at Dayton. The quarterback had much more control at the line of scrimmage, sometimes having as many as 20 possible audibles or checks at his disposal.

"He was always trying to learn," Nowling said of Staley. "He wanted to eat it up. So he asked a million questions. ... Brandon's questions sparked a different thought in Coach Lombardi."

"The way that Joe talked to Brandon, he knew he could put more on him than other guys," Egbert said. "He would feed him more, he would pick his brain more. He talked to him more as a peer than a player because he really respected his knowledge."

The connection grew over that season, and Lombardi trusted Staley's understanding of the offense. That formed an avenue to the field for Staley. With Phillis injured, Staley replaced Nowling, the starter, in the second half of the season opener with the Lakers trailing, 28-10, to Gannon. He led an early second-half touchdown drive, but four fourth-quarter turnovers prevented a comeback.

The following week, Staley entered for Nowling in the second quarter against Northern Michigan. He helped erase a five-point deficit, and Mercyhurst took its first lead of the season. But turnovers, again, were the culprit in a loss. Staley started the next week and nearly led the Lakers to a win over 18th-ranked Michigan Tech. He gained over 100 yards on the ground and threw for 192 yards, a touchdown and two interceptions.

Phillis then replaced Staley in the fourth quarter the following week with Mercyhurst trailing Northwood, 35-0. Staley's final snaps at quarterback came two weeks later in relief of Phillis against Ashland. Staley took snaps at quarterback in five of the first six games of the season. The Lakers went 0-7 to start the year. They had a young defense that gave up at least 40 points in seven of 10 games the season.

But the Staley-Lombardi relationship was a bright spot in the disappointment. Staley had earned that trust over the course of that season, in the film room and on the practice field, even after he lost the starting job for the second time.

"Brandon was just there," Jason said. "He showed up to every practice and soaked up everything from Coach Lombardi. It was like hell trying to stop him. ... He really knew he wanted to go into coaching after interacting with Coach Lombardi."

In 2009, when Staley was an assistant at Division III St. Thomas, he traveled to New Orleans to visit with Lombardi, then the Saints quarterbacks coach. Staley embedded in the Saints QB room for a week with Lombardi and Drew Brees. Lombardi long had been an advocate for Staley in NFL coaching circles, including with Ed Donatell, with whom Lombardi coached on the Falcons staff in 2006. Staley ended up getting his first NFL gig as the outside linebackers coach for the Bears in 2017 with Vic Fangio, and Donatell, a longtime Fangio assistant, was on that staff.

“He really taught me the game at a high level,” Staley said of Lombardi. “Protections, the run game, how do these concepts fit together, how can we get in and out of plays. At that time, that’s kind of where my love for coaching offensive football really came, was from him, because I loved playing for him and I learned so much and he made me better. And I think that we saw the game the same way, and that relationship has really stood the test of time.”

“They were really good memories,” Lombardi said. “He was awfully smart and fun to be around.”

Staley’s decision to play with his brother in turn helped facilitate the relationship that led to perhaps the most important hire of his life.

Justin Herbert’s development is a priority as the Chargers enter a pivotal offseason. That responsibility will fall largely on the shoulders of his offensive coordinator: Joe Lombardi.

“There are so many coaching trees built up and circles crossing, and you hear about people hiring people they know all the time,” Egbert said. “But this does seem unique, doesn’t it?”

Zangaro broke his leg midway through the 2005 season and had a front row seat to Staley’s transformation.

He watched practice as the backup quarterback, completely comfortable in his teaching role, groomed Phillis and connected with his teammates.

Staley was finding his coaching voice.

“He’s got it. He’s just got it,” Zangaro remembered thinking at that moment. “The way that he communicates and his ability to communicate with different people at different levels, it was unparalleled.”

Phillis’ growth was most evident. And Zangaro, from his sideline seat, knew Staley played a crucial part.

Phillis, a self-proclaimed pocket passer, even scored a rushing touchdown that season when he pump-faked a linebacker and dove over the goal line. He said he picked up the move from watching Staley in training camp.

As Zangaro thinks back now, he witnessed a man born to coach football embarking on a journey that would carry him to the very pinnacle of the professional.

“You knew what he was going to do,” Zangaro said, “and where he was going to go.”

Mom’s influence inspires ex-Flyer’s meteoric rise to NFL head coach

*By Tom Archdeacon
Dayton Daily News
January 24, 2021*

The Dayton Flyers – who’d been on a 14-game winning streak – had suffered a heartbreaking, 33-28 loss to Valparaiso at Welcome Stadium.

Brandon Staley, UD’s option quarterback, had thrown for 280 yards and two touchdowns, ran for 86 yards and another score and nearly orchestrated the comeback when he drove the Flyers the length of the field in the final minutes, only to have four straight passes fall incomplete in the end zone.

After the game, he had gone around the dressing room consoling several of his teammates, but before he would talk to me he said he had to step outside to make a phone call.

As he did after every game in that 2003 football season, Staley called his mom, Linda, who was back home in their small Lake County town of Perry.

She was too ill to be at the game, but as she’d tell me that evening when we spoke, listening to the radio broadcast of the Flyers’ game and especially hearing her son’s voice afterward was “some of the best medicine I can get now.”

A longtime English teacher, she’d been diagnosed nine years earlier with breast cancer and by that late October game things had gotten “pretty tough” for her Brandon said.

Linda didn’t hold back when we spoke.

“I had three chemo treatments a week ago and I feel OK, but I don’t have much energy now,” she said quietly. “My cancer has metastasized to my liver and I know it’s kind of scary for my boys now. They know it can be brutal.

“But Brandon knows how much I look forward to Saturdays: Listening to what he’s doing out there on the field, hearing them say his name, knowing he’s on the Dean’s List at school, it makes me so proud.

“Saturdays I have a smile on my face.”

Less than four months later – on Valentine’s Day 2004 – Linda Staley passed away. She was just 46 and left three sons and Bruce, her husband of 23 years. After that emotional call back home following the Valpo game, Brandon had talked about his mom:

“You could never tell what she’s fighting through because... she never gives in, never gives up.”

“I draw on her strength every day. She’s my inspiration.”

Now, fast forward 17 years and 3 months to this past Thursday afternoon, and you heard Staley say almost the exact same thing about his mom when the Los Angeles Chargers formerly introduced him at press conference as their next head coach.

“She was an inspiration to me as a player and she is an inspiration to me as a coach and as a father and as a husband,” he said on the Zoom call. “There’s no possible way I would be here if it weren’t for her.”

Many football observers were surprised by what some called the “meteoric rise” of the 38-year-old coach. He has been in the NFL just four years. Five years ago he was an assistant coach at John Carroll University, the Division III school on Cleveland’s east side.

Before he was hired last Sunday to replace Anthony Lynn, he’d never been a head coach at any level.

The Chargers interviewed five other candidates, but Staley – who had spent the past season as the defensive coordinator on Sean McVay’s Los Angeles Rams staff and made the defense No. 1 in the NFL – was impressive in their interviews, said John Spanos, the president of football operations:

“He’s the son of a teacher and he’s the son of a coach. One of my favorite parts of the first time we sat down with Coach Staley was when he said, ‘People ask me what coaching tree I consider myself a part of.’

“This is a guy who coached with some great minds in football. He worked with Vic Fangio. He coached with Sean McVay. But he says, ‘I’m part of the Bruce and Linda Staley coaching tree. That’s my coaching tree.’

“And I think that says a lot about Brandon. It says a lot about his character, his values and who he is.”

Back in 2003, Linda talked to me about football and her family: “Football is important to our whole family. Actually, we’re pretty nuts about it.”

That October day had been proof. While Linda was at home, Bruce was at Mercyhurst College where Brandon’s twin brother Jason was a linebacker. It was Parents Weekend so he belonged there, but he wanted to know everything that was happening with Brandon, too.

“My husband and I had a phone call going and when Dayton was on offense, I’d hold my phone up to the Internet broadcast so Bruce could listen on his cell phone,” she laughed. “I got pretty animated, so I don’t know what he actually heard.”

That spunk his mom showed that day was something Brandon would draw on four years later – in 2007 – when he was a grad assistant at Northern Illinois and a grapefruit-sized tumor was found on his right lung. By then he’d lost his mom and aunt to breast cancer and his high school coach to the disease as well, but his dad had overcome thyroid cancer and would do the same (recently) with prostate cancer.

Brandon was diagnosed with lymphoma and when the season ended he returned to Cleveland to undergo chemotherapy. He returned to NIU for spring football, then went back home to finish his six months of chemo.

When the next season began, he drove regularly to Chicago for six weeks of radiation.

His scheduled his treatments at 7 a.m. so he could get back to campus in time for afternoon practice.

"When I went through my cancer journey...I thought of it as a chance to really bring out the best in me," he said Thursday. "I think when you get to the other side of it, there is an energy, a strength. There is a feeling you can do anything you dream of."

"And that's just what I've been trying to do every day since."

'I never would have been able to do it alone'

"He's what I'd call a typical Dayton Flyers football player," said Mike Kelly, who was UD's celebrated head coach back then and today is an assistant athletics director at the school. "He came from a smaller school, was multi-talented and an outstanding student."

After a stellar career at Perry High School, he was redshirted his first year at UD and the following season he was a backup. Finally, in his third year – that 2003 season – Staley won the starting job and guided the Flyers through a 9-2 campaign.

In 2004, the Flyers had added Kevin Hoyng from Coldwater. He'd go on to become the program's all-time leader in career passing yards completions and touchdowns, but that season he and Staley split the starting duties. Although he graduated after that season, Staley still has a year of eligibility left.

"He knew he was going to be in a serious battle with Kevin, but we probably would have played both of them again," Kelly said. "Like any young man, he wanted the spot himself, but we couldn't guarantee that."

He decided to transfer to Mercyhurst, whose quarterbacks' coach was former Flyers assistant Joe Lombardi, now the QB coach of the New Orleans Saints.

It hadn't been easy for Staley to leave Dayton, especially because of the way people reached out to him when his mom died.

"We brought two busloads of players – maybe 50 or 60 guys – up to the funeral," Kelly said. "It was a very emotional time for Brandon and his family."

Staley reflected on that Thursday: "I never would have been able to do it alone."

But in going to Mercyhurst, he became the starting quarterback, got to play with his brother and was a lot closer to his dad since Perry was just 70 minutes away from the Erie, Pa. campus.

His dad had been a longtime high school coach and that's something that always intrigued Brandon.

"I started drinking coffee in the first grade and reading the sports page," he laughed. "I wanted to be just like my dad."

'The best teacher I've ever seen'

During spring football drills in 2003, Staley registered the highest vertical jump on the UD team. And in landing now with the Chargers, it's evident he hasn't lost his hops as a coach.

"I've been around for three decades coaching and every once in a while a young, bright guy who sees the game globally comes around," Ed Donatell, the Denver Broncos defensive coordinator and a two-time Super Bowl winner, told the Denver Post. "(Staley) sees offense, defense, special teams and he knows how they work ... It's an extraordinary job of teaching (to get the Rams defense atop the NFL.) He's a young, bright mind that sees it all and can communicate with people."

After starting out as a defensive assistant at Northern Illinois, Staley became a defensive line and special teams coach at D-III St. Thomas University in Minnesota, then spent two seasons at Hutchinson Community College in Kansas and year as a grad assistant at Tennessee.

In 2013 he was hired as the defensive coordinator at John Carroll. He made a one-season detour to James Madison, then returned to John Carroll. In 2016, he planned to join JCU coach Tom Arth at Tennessee-Chattanooga when Vic Fangio of the Chicago Bears called.

Two seasons later he followed Fangio to Denver and last season he was hired by McVay, whose granddad, John McVay, had been the Flyers coach for eight seasons in the 1960s and '70s and later, as San Francisco's VP and director of football operations, helped lead the 49ers to five Super Bowl titles.

"I hardly know anything about professional football, but what amazes me is it's such a tight knit group of people," Kelly said. "There's a lot of networking."

And the Dayton Flyers are now a part of that network. When he was 30, Sean McVay – who went to Ascension School in Kettering – became the youngest head coach ever in the NFL. At 33, he was the youngest Super Bowl coach.

Part of his grandpa's staff at UD was Jim Gruden, whose son Jon would be a back-up quarterback for Kelly's UD teams in the 1980s and later won the Super Bowl as the Tampa Bay Buccaneers coach. He now coaches of the Las Vegas Raiders. Before him, Chuck Noll, the former Flyers lineman of the 1950s, won four Super Bowls as the Pittsburgh Steelers head coach and is enshrined in the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Jon Gruden now has Austin King, a former Flyers assistant, on his staff. And this evening former Flyers' center Terry Heffernan will help coach the Buffalo Bills line in the AFC title game against Kansas City.

Thursday somebody noted to Staley that he'd now be facing fellow Flyer Gruden twice a year in the AFC West. While he praised Gruden – "he's as good of a football coach as there is" – he also got in a puckish tweak: "We were both quarterbacks at Dayton, but I'll tell you that I was a little better quarterback than he was."

The Chargers hired him because of the way they believe he'll relate to his players and Staley was quick to give props to his mom for that:

"She was the best teacher I've ever seen. She had an amazing ability to listen. People just felt they could be themselves with her. She could really bring out the best in them ... I think seeing that up close when I was a kid, I saw the power in that. And certainly I've tried to embody a lot of that now as a coach."

"So even though my mom's not here, she's with me."

Once he lifted her. Now she lifts him.

KELLEN MOORE

What new offensive coordinator Kellen Moore sees in the Chargers run-starved offense

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
February 1, 2023

Only Patrick Mahomes threw for more yards this season than Justin Herbert, who finished tied for second in the NFL in game-winning drives.

It's little wonder then why Kellen Moore's introductory news conference as the Chargers' offensive coordinator Wednesday featured numerous questions about the team's franchise quarterback.

Still, even with Herbert's production to date and yet-unfulfilled potential entering his fourth NFL season, the biggest story for Moore is rooted on the ground.

If healthy, Herbert should continue to set records and carry this offense. But how the Chargers run the ball in 2023 will more greatly impact the overall success of their reimagined scheme.

"It's something that will take the whole process to go through," Moore said. "By no means are you going to walk in and say, 'I have all the answers here. Let's go.'"

Hired Monday about 15 hours after he and the Dallas Cowboys officially parted ways, Moore met with the media via video conference during a preplanned family vacation that included a stop at nearby Disneyland.

He gushed over Herbert, praised coach Brandon Staley and used the word "excited" almost too many times to count.

Moore said he and Staley didn't know each other well before the Chargers and Cowboys conducted joint practices in Costa Mesa in August. He said the two of them then often exchanged text messages during the season.

Moore also joked about the television commercial he shot last summer with Herbert for a local auto dealership in Oregon.

"It's amazing," he said, "how life can come full circle here on you."

In 2022, only Houston and Tampa Bay rushed for fewer yards than the Chargers. The inability to run the ball ultimately cost them everything as they couldn't put away Jacksonville in an AFC wild-card playoff loss that ended their season.

This is a franchise that hasn't had a 1,000-yard rusher since 2017. Staley often has explained how an effective ground game can only help Herbert and increase the Chargers' overall explosiveness.

Moore talked Wednesday about the importance of being able to run the ball, especially on early downs because of the influence it can have when employing play action.

Marrying the run and pass — an idea Staley preaches — will be among Moore's primary assignments.

"When those two are in sync — the presentations are similar — it puts defenses in conflict," Moore said. "That's something that we're really excited about building here and developing, the first- and second-down game. It will allow you to be more aggressive, to get the ball downfield."

During his four seasons coordinating Dallas' offense, the Cowboys finished fifth, 17th, ninth and ninth in yards rushing. Ezekiel Elliott ran for 1,000 yards twice and Tony Pollard once in that span.

Moore now finds himself armed with Austin Ekeler — the NFL's leading touchdown scorer over the last two seasons — and a running back group still searching for a second consistent contributor.

Joshua Kelley has looked capable of handling that job at times over the last three seasons but the Chargers also have tried the likes of Justin Jackson, Kalen Ballage and Sony Michel.

In Dallas, Moore also had an offensive line that generally ranked among the best in the league. The Chargers' offensive front has undergone a resurgence recently.

The team used first-round selections on left tackle Rashawn Slater and right guard Zion Johnson the last two drafts. The Chargers made Corey Linsley one of the NFL's highest-paid centers in March of 2021.

Entering his second season, sixth-round pick Jamaree Salyer now could take over at left guard if veteran Matt Feiler is released. Right tackle Trey Pipkins III, a 2019 third-round pick, is a pending free agent and could be re-signed.

Moore called Linsley "one of the best in the NFL for a number of years" and repeatedly referenced the Chargers' commitment along the offensive line over the last two years.

"There has been a lot invested there from a youth standpoint," he said. "I'm excited to just see those guys continue to develop. ... Their future is skyrocketing right now."

Moore also talked about the importance of moving Herbert from the pocket and using "the presnap to our advantage — the shifts, the motions, all the different things that you can do to present challenges for a defense."

He suggested the Chargers will employ tempo at times, too, something his predecessor, Joe Lombardi, might not have done enough. The Chargers' offense in 2022 occasionally did look stagnant.

Moore promised his offense will be a blend of what he learned coaching under Jason Garrett and Mike McCarthy in Dallas and what Herbert and the Chargers have done well since 2020. All that, plus more.

"It's building a system around the players," he said. "This thing, we'll all do it together. This isn't a drop the playbook down from Dallas and say, 'You learn this, and we'll do this.'"

"There's so much good stuff that's going on here with Justin and all the guys. ... What they've built, there's so much good. So I think we gotta make sure we incorporate that ..."

"There'll be stuff from Dallas that we want to incorporate that I certainly have familiarity with. But, once you get through those two steps, 'Let's go explore this thing together and figure out what we ultimately want this thing to be.'"

Can new Chargers OC Kellen Moore thrive after inglorious Dallas exit?

By Lindsey Thiry
ESPN.com
August 28, 2023

COSTA MESA, Calif. -- This spring, during the Los Angeles Chargers offseason program and early installation period of new offensive coordinator Kellen Moore's system, receiver Keenan Allen offered a prediction about what to expect from the offense this season.

"We're probably going to be going deep," the 11-year pro said, grinning.

As the Chargers wrap up training camp and turn to their opener against the Miami Dolphins on Sept. 10 at SoFi Stadium, it's safe to expect that if all goes to plan, Allen's prediction will come to fruition.

Now eight months into the job and with his first season in L.A. quickly approaching, Moore has implemented a system that has players on both sides of the football excited about its potential.

"He's young, knows how to get us the ball and how to move us all around, getting everyone involved," receiver Mike Williams said about Moore. "That's the main thing -- defense is sometimes keying in on certain players so you've got to adjust and he does a good job of putting us in certain spots so the defense can't key on us."

Defensive players who practice daily against the scheme have taken notice.

"They do a lot of stuff that messes with certain rules and they move around a lot," defensive lineman Morgan Fox explained. "They let [quarterback Justin] Herbert throw... and do what they do and get the running backs open, get them moving. They have great run game mechanics. It's been a challenge every day."

After a disappointing 31-30 loss to the Jacksonville Jaguars in a wild-card playoff that resulted in a stunning end to the 2022 season, the Chargers fired offensive coordinator Joe Lombardi to seek a coordinator who would upend a conservative scheme that averaged 22.47 points per game (ranked 10th in the NFL) and install one that instead creates more explosive opportunities and points.

The Chargers interviewed numerous candidates before Moore became available several days after the Dallas Cowboys 19-12 playoff loss to the San Francisco 49ers.

After eight seasons with the Cowboys, including three as a player, one as a quarterbacks coach and four as the offensive coordinator -- where he was named to the position under former coach Jason Garrett then retained the position under coach Mike McCarthy, it became time to move on.

"As we went through the process, sometimes change can be really good for all of us," said Moore, whose tenure as coordinator included two playoff appearances. "And I felt like I was in that space. It works for both sides."

The long-time playcaller while head coach of the Green Bay Packers, McCarthy will now resume the role of playcaller in Dallas. Less than 24 hours after the news of his departure, Moore found a new home with the Chargers, where a year earlier he and coach Brandon Staley began fostering a relationship during a pair of joint training camp practices.

"He has a great feel of how to fit in to the team aspect of playing and knowing how to utilize the team in front of them and how that fits into the greater scope of things," Staley said.

Players have quickly taken to the calm and collected Moore, whom several described as relatable given he starred at quarterback at Boise State and turned 34 years old last month.

"He's been incredible," Herbert said about Moore. "He's played the game quite a bit, as well. He's got a great feel for the game. Just the meeting rooms, on the field, you pick up a lot from him."

Said left tackle Rashawn Slater: "Very intense and very precise in how he wants everything. Very detail-oriented... as professionals, we all appreciate that approach."

Moore, who for four consecutive seasons helped the Cowboys to a top-four ranking in points per game, yards per game and third-down percentage, inherits a group that features players with starting experience at all 11 positions -- led by Herbert, who set a new benchmark through a player's first three NFL seasons with 14,089 passing yards, Allen, Williams and running back Austin Ekeler.

"It gives you a toolbox," Moore said of Herbert and the tools he possesses. "It allows us to make adjustments within the game based off the defensive look."

However, despite his arm strength, since entering the NFL in 2020, Herbert has ranked 28th in percentage of passes of 15-plus yards -- an area of his game that is expected to improve sharply under Moore given his arsenal of playmakers.

The Bolts also return receiver Joshua Palmer, who led the position group with 72 catches last season while Allen and Williams nursed injuries, and added former TCU receiver Quentin Johnston -- who is expected to stretch the field -- with a first-round pick in last April's draft.

Improving the run game also is an area of focus after the Chargers ranked 30th last season in both yards per rush (3.8) and rushing yards per game (89.6).

"As far as what we have going," said Ekeler, who led the league with 18 touchdowns last season, "I feel really good about it."

The Chargers have sat starters for their preseason games, opting to play it safe in attempt to reach the regular season healthy, leaving only training camp practices, an intrasquad scrimmage, and two joint workouts against the New Orleans Saints as opportunities to truly test the offense -- which has routinely demonstrated efficiency and explosiveness during routine practices.

During the intraquad scrimmage early in camp, the offense struggled with protection, causing Herbert to settle for short checkdown passes and rarely attempting a deep ball.

Then, during a pair of joint practices against the Saints, the unit turned in a pair of uneven days that included some spectacular Day 1 highlights -- including a deep one-handed grab by Allen, followed by a second day that had Herbert appearing anxious to wrap up a news conference and return to the film room to dissect what happened and how to improve.

"Kellen has been very flexible," Herbert said of the new partnership. "We've talked about what we like and what we don't like and all of the things that we wish to incorporate from last year's offense and how we want to get the guys the ball. Everyone has been on the same page so far and I think that has been the most important part -- getting the running backs in tune with the protections, getting the receivers in tune with what we want timing-wise with the routes."

Growing pains are anticipated as the Chargers deploy their new scheme for the first time in meaningful game action.

But the expectation is that with Moore, it won't take long for the offense to be moving down field.

"He lets us be free," Allen said. "And whatever we feel."

Chargers coordinator Moore taking offense through first lap through playbook

By Joe Reedy
The Associated Press
June 1, 2023

COSTA MESA, Calif. (AP) — Kellen Moore is with a new team, yet he has the same mandate.

Take a good offense and make it great.

Moore is in his first season as the Los Angeles Chargers offensive coordinator after eight years in Dallas, including the last four as coordinator. With the Bolts in their second week of voluntary on-field workouts, Moore is putting the unit through what he called a first lap through the playbook.

"It's a little bit fast," Moore said, referring to the installation process over the next couple weeks. "There is going to be some stuff that is good, plenty of stuff that we have to clean up and redefine and all of that sort of stuff. Then, you just have to kind of ace it in training camp."

Moore is quarterback Justin Herbert's third offensive coordinator in four seasons. Shane Steichen directed the Bolts offense as well as being QBs coach under Anthony Lynn in 2020 before Lynn was fired at the end of the season. Joe Lombardi was the coordinator the past two seasons under head coach Brandon Staley.

Even though Herbert was second in the league last season in completions (477) and passing yards (4,739), the Chargers were inconsistent on offense.

Los Angeles was ranked ninth in total offense, but 20th in scrimmage yards per play along with having the third-worst rushing attack in the league.

The Chargers also had the second-biggest discrepancy between passing and running plays (65% pass to 35% run).

By comparison, Dallas was fourth in total offense, ninth in rushing and 21st in scrimmage yards per play last season.

After sitting behind his desk watching film for the first three months after getting hired, Moore has been happy to get on the field the last couple weeks to start installing the offense.

"You're able to carry over what we can from the past couple of years and then build off some of the Dallas stuff that is, maybe, coming from a scheme standpoint," he said. "There are a lot of different ways of playing football, and you just have to keep it tight and condensed so that these guys can play fast."

While Moore sounded this week as if he is not planning to do much tinkering with the passing game concepts, his bigger concerns have been with trying to make adjustments to the run game to get it back on track.

The Cowboys ran it 47% of the time last season, which was tied for the ninth-highest percentage of run plays.

Moore said the biggest thing he wants to do with the run game is streamline it so the team moves at a quicker pace.

"I think it's identifying what your primary runs are going to be, your go-to runs," he said. "Trying to identify what are going to be our strengths, and then you have to have enough flavors through a season just to be able to present different things to defense, protect your primary runs."

The Dallas offense was balanced the past couple seasons because it had two great backs in Ezekiel Elliott and Tony Pollard.

Austin Ekeler, who led the league with 18 touchdowns from scrimmage last season, has emerged as one of the NFL's top all-purpose backs and will be in the backfield one more season after incentives were added to his contract. But Moore will be looking for either Isaiah Spiller or Joshua Kelley to emerge as a dependable second back.

Wide receiver Keenan Allen, who has had five offensive coordinators since being drafted by the Chargers in 2013, has been happy with Moore's approach to the offense during the offseason.

"He's played before, so he knows what we like, what we don't like, how defenses play, rather than sticking to something that has been in the offense for a long time. He's willing to change it and make it more friendly to us," Allen said.

New Chargers OC Kellen Moore looks to bring explosiveness to L.A.'s offense

By Eric Williams
FOX Sports
May 18, 2023

When Brandon Staley moved on from offensive coordinator Joe Lombardi and hired Kellen Moore this offseason, the Los Angeles Chargers' defensive-minded head coach viewed it as a chance to align himself more closely with the conductor of his offense.

Staley has been an admirer of the former Dallas Cowboys OC for years. After all, Dallas' explosive offense gave Staley fits when he served as defensive coordinator for the Los Angeles Rams.

What does Staley like most about Moore? His adaptability when players go down due to injury, including when the Cowboys went 4-1 with backup quarterback Cooper Rush last year.

"When I first became a defensive coordinator, they had a right tackle issue," Staley told FOX Sports at the NFL owners meetings earlier this year. "Terence Steele was starting, and they were kind of hurt on the O-line, and I saw [Moore] really navigate that process. Onboarding a rookie receiver in CeeDee Lamb and seeing what he did with those three receivers in [Michael] Gallup, [Amari] Cooper and CeeDee, along with the two tight ends in [Dalton] Schultz and [Blake] Jarwin. And then the work he did with Zeke [Ezekiel Elliott] and [Tony] Pollard. I just thought that was as tough a cover as I had to go against in the NFL.

"And then to see him morph through the years. ... A sign of a good coach is being able to figure it out. He's dealing with injuries at receiver. They played five games with a backup quarterback, and they went 4-1. And they were a drive away from going to the NFC Championship Game, so I just think this guy has proven production. How he leads, how he teaches, we see things very similar that way. I think the way he creates is exciting for me."

Innovation and creativity have always been at the core of Moore as a football player. He grew up around the game, carrying a notepad to design plays as a ball boy. Moore is the son of legendary high school football coach Tom Moore, who won four state titles in 23 seasons at Prosser High in a small town nestled along the Yakima River east of the Cascades in Washington state.

Those Prosser teams were known for their no-huddle offense and playing fast, using spread concepts to create big plays against more talented teams from bigger schools in the Seattle area.

Kellen Moore took that ethos with him to Boise State, where he finished 50-3 as a starting quarterback and helped the Broncos slay college football giants like Georgia and Oregon.

"I thought my dad did a really good job of having a clear vision," Kellen Moore told FOX Sports. "I thought that was always the thing about Prosser Mustang football — everyone kind of always on the same page. He always did a real good job of making the game clean and simple, while still being creative and fun. That's always a balancing act for all of us."

After four seasons as OC for the Cowboys, Moore is now tasked with creating a clear vision and foundation for a Los Angeles offense that became stagnant despite having one of the league's best young QBs in Justin Herbert.

The Cowboys averaged 391 yards and 27.7 points a contest during Moore's time as the team's offensive coordinator and playcaller, No. 2 in the NFL during that time.

More importantly to the Chargers, the Cowboys ranked No. 7 in rushing (126.6 yards per game) during that span. Running the ball effectively has been a struggle for the Bolts — one of the reasons they failed to hold onto a 27-0 lead in the AFC wild-card round in a stunning road loss to the Jacksonville Jaguars.

The Chargers averaged just 89.6 rushing yards a game last season, No. 30 in the league.

Both hailing from the Pacific Northwest, Moore and Herbert already have a connection, working together in a TV commercial for an auto group along with Cowboys linebacker Leighton Vander Esch.

"The commercial aspect, it's been kind of funny, just the way it all happened in less than 12 months," Moore said. "We spent some time doing some commercials and having some fun, and then lo and behold connecting here after the season."

"He's been awesome to work with. It's been a really fun transition, just getting to know him personally. And then just trying to build this thing together offensively."

Moore played the 2014 season as a backup QB with the Detroit Lions under the direction of Lombardi as the offensive coordinator, so he's familiar with L.A.'s offense and will keep concepts that were successful for Herbert in the past.

"With Justin, any time you have a quarterback that's played at a really high level, certain routes that he may like that we didn't run in Dallas, or I have not run — something he may be more comfortable with — let's continue to make sure we emphasize it," Moore said. "For example, Keenan [Allen] and Justin have a great feel for each other on some of these choice routes, so how do you build off that? Gerald [Everett] ran some of them. Austin [Ekeler] ran some of them. And that's just one example of 'Let's not lose this.'"

Herbert is learning his sixth different offense in eight seasons, dating back to his time in college at Oregon, so creating a smooth transition is critical for Moore.

Another area of focus for the Chargers is being explosive in three-receiver sets. The Bolts added another weapon in TCU product Quentin Johnston in the first round of this year's draft. At 6-foot-3 and 210 pounds and with 4.5-second speed in the 40-yard dash, Johnston is a big-bodied receiver who adds a vertical threat while also providing an ability to create plays with his feet on underneath routes.

According to Next Gen Stats, the 2022 Chargers ran 67.7% of their plays out of three-receiver sets. Only the Tampa Bay Buccaneers (70.5%) ran more plays out of that personnel grouping last year.

"We really liked the vertical element," Moore said about Johnston. "He did a great job down the field running by people, but more importantly attacking the football, going up and making plays in contested situations. I thought he did a tremendous job there."

"And then I think what really stood out was for his size and frame and what you traditionally expect from that, you saw all these shallow crosses, catch-and-run opportunities, the fly sweeps and bubbles. All this space player stuff that traditionally fits into the slot-receiver mold. And then you see him doing it. We just got really excited when you saw all those pieces connected."

Although he's a defensive coach, Staley played quarterback in college and, like Moore, sees the game through the QB-playcaller lens. That commonality helped bring the two together philosophically as the Chargers attempt to build an offense that can take advantage of Herbert's unique skill set and lead the team on a deep postseason run.

"It's the way he teaches, the way he leads," Staley said about Moore. "Philosophically, you're just kind of aligned with certain people. The way that he sees the game, and the way he can communicate to coaches and players to truly build an offense, I've been such a fan of his for a long time."

Chargers OC Kellen Moore Building Early Connection with Coaches, Players

By Omar Navarro
Chargers.com
May 2, 2023

Below are three takeaways from Chargers Offensive Coordinator Kellen Moore from Monday's media session:

Moore settling in with Bolts

On Monday, the Bolts took the field for Phase Two of their voluntary offseason program — this time with coaches on the field.

It was a step closer to Organized Team Activities — a chance for Chargers Offensive Coordinator Kellen Moore to continue settling in with his new team. The Chargers hired Moore in January after he spent the past four seasons in the same role in Dallas.

"It's been really good. It's been really fun just being able to collaborate," Moore said on Monday. "Obviously, with coaches, initially. Now, that we have the players here, just really starting to build that."

"It's been a lot of fun. It's been great kind of connecting with these guys," Moore added. "Today was the first day on the field to actually do some field stuff. We actually had a football out there. That was good."

Moore has spent the last couple months working to familiarize himself with both the offense and the coaching staff.

He raved about the collaboration process with Chargers Head Coach Brandon Staley, noting how Staley has helped the transition in numerous areas.

"Brandon has been awesome. He's been really, really good," Moore said. "I've just loved working together, collaborating on this thing and kind of building this offense toward 2023. Again, kind of embracing all of the good things that are going on and then, hopefully, kind of being able to add some different things that can hopefully help us as we go on in our future here."

"Brandon has been awesome through the whole transition, through the draft process," Moore added. "It's been a lot of fun."

Top 15 Shots of Offensive Coordinator Kellen Moore

The Los Angeles Chargers today agreed to terms with Kellen Moore as the team's offensive coordinator.

In addition to working with Staley, Moore mentioned how important it's been to build that trust and relationships with a new coaching staff and players.

With Moore, quarterbacks coach Doug Nussmeier and offensive assistant Phil Serchia all joining a coaching staff and roster that has largely remained the same, a lot of the process has also been building relationships so they can continue to develop as the weeks progress.

"Really, ultimately, the roster we were pretty much able to bring everyone back from last year, for the most part," Moore said. "Walking in that room today, other than Doug, Phil and myself, the three coaches that were new, everyone else was part of 2022."

"It has been really fun just to kind of start building those relationships," Moore added. "I think that's the biggest thing about this thing, is that we're doing this thing together. As we find each other, start understanding each other and start working together, I think, develop this thing and build it."

Since Moore's arrival, one of the ways he's continued to learn more and more about the roster has been through the offensive position coaches. With some of the staff having spent multiple years with the Chargers, it has allowed Moore to get a crash course on the roster.

It is all a part of the process as the Bolts continue to have their eyes set on 2023.

"I think the really cool part is listening to the position coaches, initially, because those guys have spent a lot of time with these guys over the course of the last few years," Moore said. "Really, understanding where their position is, getting to know some of the players and then, ultimately, kind of setting our eyes on 2023."

"That was our whole plan from the beginning," Moore added. "It's been really, really good."

Early thoughts on Johnston

As Moore and the staff continue to work towards the 2023 season, their offense got another weapon in the mix this past weekend.

The Chargers selected Quentin Johnston in the first round (No. 21 overall) of last week's draft. Johnston gives the Bolts a big, explosive wide receiver from TCU and another playmaker for Justin Herbert.

"Brandon is this defensive guy and he's drafting these offensive guys, I like this," Moore said with a smile. "It's a lot of fun."

With Johnston, the Chargers are getting a big receiver that has uncommon traits for someone his size. At 6-foot-3 and 208 pounds, Moore broke down what made Johnston so special and expressed his excitement for the new addition.

"Q really stood out for us as we went through the process," Moore said. "Everyone kind of sees the measurables, the size as far as the height and the weight. What he did for TCU from his versatility, I thought, was really, really special. His ability to kind of catch-and-run, he was a fly-sweep guy."

"He got the ball in a lot of different ways," Moore added. "You saw a lot of versatility in his game that maybe, initially, someone may not have necessarily anticipated. We were really excited that he was there and available for us."

Johnston was dynamic at TCU with the ball in his hands, leading the Horned Frogs in receiving yards each of the three years. In his last season, he was second in college football last year with 8.9 yards after the catch per reception and finished the season with 60 receptions for 1,069 yards — the most by a TCU player since 2018.

Anytime he gets the ball, Johnston is a home-run threat, something he showed in the College Football Playoff Semifinal against Michigan. In that game, in which he was named Offensive MVP, Johnston caught a ball across the middle of the field and took it 76 yards for a touchdown.

Moore knows how much Johnston is capable of bringing to the Bolts offense, whether it be across the middle of the field or vertically.

"There's a vertical element of it that we're really excited about," Moore said. "With Q [Johnston], just the size, catch radius. He goes up and gets the ball downfield."

"You can do it however you need to do it, whether it's size, catch radius, speed," Moore added. "He definitely brings a vertical element to us."

Moore will have a lot of weapons and skillsets to work with in the receiver room, as Johnston now joins Keenan Allen, Mike Williams, Josh Palmer and more.

"To have Q [Johnston] join that receiver room with all the talent that's in there in those guys and the experience, I think it's going to be awesome for him because he's going to learn so much from those guys," Moore said. "It's going to allow us to put these guys in different roles and different positions to allow them to be successful."

"No one is ever going to complain about having a receiver room like this room, where you have all of this talent," Moore added. "I think we're really, really excited."

Boise State connection

Make that another Boise State Bronco in the building now.

The Bolts selected defensive tackle Scott Matlock in the sixth round out of Boise State, Moore's alma mater. Moore had one of the best quarterback careers in the history of college football at Boise, including going 50-3 as a starter.

Matlock was excited to join the Chargers and Moore, whom he called the "Boise State GOAT."

This got a laugh out of Moore, who joked about finding a way to get more players from Boise State in the building.

"He's awesome. I got a chance to meet him when he was here for his visit," Moore said. "He's a stud. I'm glad we have a couple of Broncos. I think we have two now [Matlock and DL David Moa]. We need to get a couple of more somehow. We'll figure out a way."

And yes, the two did take a picture during Matlock's visit in the pre-draft process.

Matlock was an all-conference tight end, among other positions, in high school before he became a full-time defensive tackle in Boise. Still, he made sure to put those tight end skills to use in college, catching two touchdown passes in goal line situations.

Moore is well aware of this, as both Matlock and current Boise State Head Coach Andy Avalos have mentioned it to him.

"Oh yes, he's already told me," Moore said. "Andy Avalos immediately sent them to me. He's the head coach at Boise. He sent them to me as soon as [Matlock] got drafted."

"For you guys concerned about the tight end position, maybe we have something there," Moore said with a laugh.

DERRICK ANSLEY

Chargers' Derrick Ansley has new role, but same objectives

*By Joe Reedy
The Associated Press
February 28, 2023*

Derrick Ansley says he doesn't see much of a change in his role on the Los Angeles Chargers coaching staff despite being promoted to defensive coordinator.

"Nothing will change in the identification factor of the players, coaching them and developing them like we've been for the first two years," Ansley said on Tuesday during the NFL scouting combine in Indianapolis.

"The first thing is to be an extension of coach (Brandon) Staley, be a support staff for him to make sure that he can do his job at a high level and be another set of eyes to support him and his vision of the defense through the way that we see it, just be an extra set of hands."

Ansley was promoted from secondary coach to defensive coordinator on Monday. There was an opening after Renaldo Hill left to join Miami's staff as pass-game coordinator.

Staley is expected to remain the defensive play-caller though.

"I don't think words can describe how I feel about this opportunity," Ansley said. "Like you guys know, things happen fast in this NFL. When things happen, you have to be ready to adjust on the fly. Coach Staley believed in me after we interviewed a couple of guys, and the rest is history."

Ansley does have experience as a defensive coordinator. He spent two seasons leading the University of Tennessee's defense (2019-20) before joining the Chargers.

Ansley's main focus will be trying to get a underachieving defense on par with the offense.

Los Angeles spent \$218 million last offseason, most of it on defense that included six new starters. Yet, defense remained one of the team's weaknesses.

The unit was ranked eighth against the pass last season, but was 20th in total defense, 21st in points allowed per game and the fifth worst against the run. They also had the fifth-worst average in scrimmage yards allowed per play.

The Chargers made the playoffs last season and have a strong core with linebackers Khalil Mack and Joey Bosa as well as safety Derwin James. But they need to shore up a run defense prone to giving up big plays. Los Angeles had 11 opposing running backs go for at least 100 yards on it this past season, a franchise record.

"We're not looking in the past, we're going to keep our lens forward," Ansley said. "Obviously, the first two years, we had some growing pains. We also did some good things, as well. In 2023, we're going to focus on all 11 guys playing as one, just as we had the first two years. We're going to put guys into positions to make plays, coach guys hard, play to our standard, our way, and get the results that we need."

RYAN FICKEN

Ficken Maintaining High Standard for Chargers Special Teams

By Eric Smith
Chargers.com
May 18, 2023

Ryan Ficken has gained plenty of knowledge in his previous 15 NFL seasons.

Among the most important? Each season stands on its own merit.

So as the Chargers Special Teams Coordinator enters Year 2 with the Bolts (and Year 16 overall in his career), he isn't too interested in the impact he and his group made a year ago.

"The success that we had last year — you talk about field goals, punt returning, punting and these situations — all of that now is behind us," Ficken said. "It's now what can we do moving forward?"

"We have a higher standard now for us," Ficken added. "And we have to go out there, work and compete again."

Ficken helped the Chargers have perhaps their best overall season on special teams in decades.

The Bolts led the league by allowing opponents to average just 3.1 yards per punt return. And they ranked second in field goal percentage (93.94 percent) and third in team average per punt return (11.7 yards).

But with each season comes news storylines and fresh faces, and Ficken is ready to embrace them all.

Perhaps the biggest plot in mid-May is the kicking battle between Dustin Hopkins and Cameron Dicker.

Hopkins is the veteran who made nine of 10 field goals in 2022 but missed most of the season after injuring his hamstring in a Week 6 win over Denver in which he still hit a walk-off field goal.

Dicker was a rookie who hit a pair of walk-off winners and hit 19 of 20 field goals in powder blue.

Ficken on Monday said he's looking forward to what should be a tight battle in camp.

"I'm excited. They had a great year, both of them," Ficken said. "Obviously, Dustin was doing a great job before he went ahead and had the misfortune of getting injured.

"That's how every roster is structured. You want to have that competition at every position," Ficken continued. "That's what's exciting because [Chargers Head] Coach [Brandon] Staley and [General Manager] Tom [Telesco], they've structured the roster exactly that way, and that's what brings out the best in these guys. I'm really excited.

"They've done a great job the last couple of weeks. We're going on our third week of Phase Two," Ficken added. "Really, they start kicking in front of the team just so they can show the work that they've been putting into this offseason so they can go ahead and compete and win that battle."

Ficken noted the evaluation process has already started on Hopkins and Dicker, and that it will include how each performed last season.

The main points of emphasis? Consistency and ball flight, Ficken said.

"I'm just excited about those guys because they handle it as true pros," Ficken said. "They're really eager to go ahead and compete for that job."

The Chargers won't have to worry about a punter battle as JK Scott was re-signed this offseason after a stellar 2022 season.

"I was very excited [for him to come back]. I think the whole organization was, too," Ficken said. "We're very fortunate to be able to bring him back, have the organization support him.

"He believes in the organization, too," Ficken said. "We feel he had a really good year, but he complemented our unit and what we were trying to achieve as a unit. You saw the success that we were able to have."

Ficken also has his eye on a pair of rookies ahead of Organized Team Activity practices that begin next week.

Ficken said Daiyan Henley, a third-round linebacker out of Washington State, could have a big role on special teams in his first season.

"He was our top core guy, out of all positions that we wanted to bring in. We're very fired up about him," Ficken said. "What impressed me the most about him is that he was a starter on defense, and yet he was still able to make a huge impact on special teams.

"He takes a lot of pride in that, which I thought was great," Ficken added. "When we met him when he came in for his top-30 visit, I introduced myself and the first thing he said was, 'Have you seen my special teams tape?' That's really exciting."

Ficken said he's also looking forward to seeing fourth-rounder Derius Dais get reps at both returner spots but noted that the former TCU standout won't just be handed the job.

"The success that he had gives our team a lot of opportunities to go ahead and have some big plays in those return phases, which we're excited about," Ficken said of Davis, who has 4.36-second speed. "Like I told him going through this whole process, he has to go ahead and earn this position.

"Nothing is going to be handed to him. We have some guys that are capable that can go ahead and do it on the roster, as well," Ficken added. "He's also competing with other guys throughout the league, but he's excited for that challenge."

And Ficken is excited for the yearly challenge that comes on special teams.

Besides the kicking battle, he'll work to take different players on the roster and mold them into contributors in the all-important third phase of the game.

All while looking to build off the success of his first season with the Bolts.

"We're always going to have a sense of urgency in what we do. Last year doesn't mean anything," Ficken said. "Moving forward, we didn't do enough to go ahead and win the games and get the Super Bowl trophy here.

"At the end of the day, I'm very excited about this group. I understand some of what these players are and what they're made of, the veterans that have been here," Ficken continued. "I have to utilize them a little bit and put them in better situations to be successful, so that part I feel very comfortable.

"Other than that, no, we're starting from scratch," Ficken added. "We have to make sure we pump up the urgency and get the most out of all of these guys."

Ficken Changing Culture of Bolts Special Teams Unit

By Eric Smith
Chargers.com
November 10, 2022

Truth be told, Ryan Ficken wasn't even worried about himself as he prepared to transition from the only NFL organization he'd ever known.

The Chargers hired Ficken in February, less than a month after he had just completed his 15th season with the Vikings.

Ficken had held a handful of roles in Minnesota, serving as the assistant running backs coach, assistant wide receivers coach and assistant special teams coach before spending the 2021 season as the special teams coordinator.

Now, Chargers Head Coach Brandon Staley wanted him to come lead the Bolts special teams group.

Ficken was excited for the chance, but only after consulting with his family. Ficken and his wife have three children — two boys and a girl — and he knew the move would affect all of them.

"My family was the most important aspect," Ficken said. "We knew it wasn't going to be an easy transition because Minnesota was home for us.

"But doing our research and talking to Coach Staley and the Spanos family and [Chargers General Manager] Tom Telesco ... they made it feel like home and made that transition a lot easier," Ficken continued. "Knowing the culture they're trying to build here, it made it a lot easier for us. And then once we got here, the way they've treated us, it's really helped out a lot.

"Everything we thought it'd be, it's that and more," Ficken added. "Now that we're here, I just want us to win games."

The Ficken family has settled in nicely to Southern California. Ten-year-old Wyatt celebrated his birthday earlier this week, while 6-year-old Gianna and 3-year-old Jonathan have adapted well.

And Ficken is thriving in his new role, helping elevate a unit that has certainly had its fair share of ups and downs over the years.

Staley said Ficken has "really just transformed our special teams culture."

He added: "I think making everybody on our team, including coaches, just included in that, building that team culture in that everyone has a role that is important."

On the field, the Bolts special teams group has had a hand in helping the team get to 5-3 at the midway point of the season.

The Chargers punt coverage team is tops in the league, allowing just 3.0 yards per punt return (36 yards on a dozen returns).

That unit put the Bolts in position to win in Week 6 on Monday Night Football when Ja'Sir Taylor forced a muffed punt that Deane Leonard recovered. Four plays later, Dustin Hopkins sealed the win with a walk-off field goal.

The Chargers also rank in the top-10 in punt return yardage, and both kickoff units have been solid.

JK Scott has also revitalized his career under Ficken. The Bolts punter knew of Ficken from afar when they both resided in the NFC North, but jumped at the chance to work with him this spring as a free agent.

"Any opportunity I got was going to be a blessing for me," said Scott, who doesn't have a touchback this season. "But when I heard the Chargers were interested and reached out to my agent, Coach Ficken was the first one to call me.

"He told he'd been following me and that he wanted to bring me in," Scott said. "That was awesome to feel that welcome."

And then there's the kicking situation, where the Bolts will once again use their third kicker of the season Sunday in San Francisco.

Hopkins is dealing with a hamstring injury he suffered in Week 6, when he kicked four field goals on the way to AFC Special Teams Player of the Week.

Hopkins had missed the previous game with a quad injury, which meant Taylor Bertolet made his NFL debut in Week 5. All he did was make all three field goals in his NFL debut, critical points in a 30-28 win over the Browns.

But Bertolet was injured last week in practice, which meant Cameron Dicker was the latest man up at that spot. Dicker was unfazed in his Bolts debut in Atlanta, nailing a walk-off winner from 37 yards out at the buzzer in a 20-17 win.

Dicker then earned AFC Special Teams Player of the Week honors, making the Chargers — yes, the Chargers — the first team in NFL history to have two different kickers win that award.

Ficken chuckled when asked about the turnover at that spot this season.

"That's probably a record [number of kickers] for a lot of coaches," Ficken said with a laugh. "But we've been very fortunate that these three guys are all great character guys.

"We were lucky they were available, and each of them have handled it with such poise," Ficken added.

Ficken has adjusted on the fly in his first season with the Bolts, something he learned quickly while with the Vikings.

He spent eight seasons as Minnesota's assistant special teams coordinator, giving him plenty of time to craft his own approach when he got the lead role one day.

"It's more about being able to evolve because you have different players. But now people have [film] on us, what we do, tendencies," Ficken said. "Now I'm able to anticipate things a little bit more, look at things with a critical eye.

"[In Minnesota], I tried to put myself in situations where I was like, 'Alright, what would I do in this situation?' It kind of helped me get here," Ficken added.

One area where Ficken and assistant special teams coordinator Chris Gould have excelled, according to Staley, is getting contributions from the latter portion of the roster.

"What you have to do as special teams coordinators now in the NFL is you have to develop young players," Staley said. "That's such an integral part of your team is taking these young players who have maybe not played special teams very much in college and getting them up to speed, fundamentally, in understanding the pro game.

"I think that they are both excellent teachers. They set great examples," Staley added.

Chargers fullback Zander Horvath is one of the handful of young players Ficken has helped bring along this season.

Horvath plays on multiple phases of special teams, and said this week that he feels confident and prepared going into each game under Ficken's leadership.

"It's different with every guy, but he relates to you. You can go up to his office anytime and even if he's doing something, he'll stop and help with whatever you need," Horvath said. "That's great to be able to have. Just a good guy overall with great morale.

"He breaks everything down. He'll go over every play we're installing, and every position, too," Horvath later added. "If you have questions, he'll stop the meeting and make sure you understand it before we get on the field so you're not messing it up there. We make sure it's all set in stone in the meeting."

Scott echoed Horvath's sentiments.

"He's impacted us in a really positive way," Scott said. "He's done a really good job of setting the tone and creating culture. He's really good at bringing out the best in each guy.

"From a specialist standpoint, he's great at seeing what our strengths are and then using them for the advantage of the team," Scott added. "He's done a great job, man. It's been such a fun season so far."

Ficken credited Gould for helping him cultivate talent and contributions up and down the roster.

"It depends what their learning curve is, and if they've played a lot of teams or not," Ficken said of his teaching approach. "But it's a testament to the players because they want to be great, which allows us to pile on more.

"But [Gould] does a great job of getting those guys ready for certain situations. Him and I are a team," Ficken added. "It's just a matter of being open with players, being transparent and firm. Let them know what your expectations are and keep them accountable to it."

At 5-3, the Bolts find themselves in the thick of the AFC playoff picture with 10 games left.

And while who knows what the home stretch will bring, Ficken's leadership and impact has delivered a calm presence to a unit that has been erratic at times in recent seasons.

Staley said: "We're halfway through the season, almost, but as you guys have seen, it's a much different looking movie out there."

Ficken is appreciative of his time in Minnesota, and noted he wouldn't be as prepared as he is if not for the 15 seasons he spent in purple.

But he took on a new challenge with excitement and enthusiasm, even if it meant moving his family halfway across the country.

"I wanted to make sure we created an environment where we're very transparent and honest. But the biggest thing I wanted to do was create leadership on special teams," Ficken said. "This is about them, not me or anyone else. It's about the team and the players. I wanted them to have a say in it.

"We have helped our team with a goal of winning games," Ficken added. "There's a lot of plays in a game, but we just have a hand in it. This is the greatest team game there is, but we can contribute in the right direction."

So far, the Chargers special teams has done exactly that.

KEENAN ALLEN

Chargers receiver Keenan Allen talks 'The Masked Singer' appearance

By Lindsey Thiry
ESPN.com
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LOS ANGELES -- An oversized, sparkling gargoyle costume dripping in gold chains and massive gold wings weighed heavy on Keenan Allen's 6-foot-2, 211-pound frame.

The Los Angeles Chargers receiver felt hot. His eyes strained to see from behind a mask and a deep breath became difficult to take behind a foam mouth piece that was part of an ultimate effort to conceal his identity.

A 10-year NFL veteran, Allen is accustomed to playing in the spotlight, but performing on a sound stage in the heart of Hollywood felt entirely unfamiliar.

"I was way more nervous than being on a football field," Allen said.

In an earpiece, a producer counted Allen in -- "three ... two ... one ..." -- before lights flashed, backup dancers spun into motion and Allen's mind flashed, "I'm not ready! I'm not ready!" Then, his microphone went live.

"You will remember me," Allen sang. "Remember me for centuries!"

Singer Robin Thicke looked on enthusiastically from the judge's panel, and a studio audience erupted in cheers as Allen completed a short rendition of Fall Out Boy's hit "Centuries." But Allen's performance could not save him from elimination on the Fox series, "The Masked Singer," a singing competition show with a twist: The performers' identities are concealed by costumes until they are eliminated.

"It is kind of overwhelming," Allen said of the experience. "Taking off the mask was the best part."

On the field, where he has donned a Chargers uniform for his entire career, Allen has developed a reputation as a dependable playmaker, earning five Pro Bowl appearances and recording the most games (10) with at least 12 receptions in NFL history.

This season, the 31-year-old is expected to return to form after a hamstring injury sidelined him for seven games in 2022. He's expected to become a beneficiary of an updated offense installed by coordinator Kellen Moore that will create more explosive plays and open more space for Allen to maneuver as he attempts to help the Bolts to consecutive playoff berths for the first time in his decadelong career.

Even amid the preparation for what could be a memorable season, Allen's coaches and teammates were well aware of their star wideout's appearance on another type of stage.

During a team meeting to open the offseason program, coach Brandon Staley turned on the film of the gargoyle lighting up the stage.

"We showed the group that," Staley said, laughing. "I was stunned at how good this guy was. I couldn't believe what I was hearing and that that was actually him."

Left tackle Rashawn Slater looked on in amazement. "I've heard him sing in the huddle before," Slater said. "And it's pretty good, but I didn't realize he had it like that."

"That was super dope," defensive tackle Sebastian Joseph-Day said.

Herbert had an inkling that it was his top pass-catcher under the disguise.

"I had seen some of the clips," Herbert said. "I knew he had a great voice, so it was pretty impressive to watch this."

Allen loves to sing. It's a passion sparked by his mother who made him sing in the choir in Greensboro, North Carolina, when he was young. He taught himself to play the piano without learning to read music.

The 31-year-old has a fledgling music career. He has released an R&B/soul single, "Distraction," under the moniker "K. Alexander."

More than 10 years ago while in college at the University of California, Berkeley, Allen's vocal cords and love for singing sparked a love connection with his wife, Ciandra, who saw a video of him singing on Facebook.

"He was posting videos of him singing in college at the time," Ciandra recalled behind shy laughter. "That's what attracted me. I'm like, 'Wow, he's not only cute but he could sing.'"

Allen's voice now provides background music in a house bustling with four small children.

"He's been singing around the house and everywhere for as long as I can remember," Ciandra said. "To do a show like this for the first time, I was so proud of him because I knew he was ready for it."

Training for the show was intense, Allen said.

The series' production team fitted Allen for his disguise as a gargoyle, inspired in part by his 4-year-old son, Kado, who loves dinosaurs.

Once he learned which songs he would perform, Allen would sing throughout the day, wherever he was. "I just kept singing," he said, "so I didn't mess it up."

Allen officially rehearsed three days a week, putting in 15-hour days in April. He would leave his home at 7 a.m., arriving on set in time to participate in three rehearsals ahead of the live show. Time was spent with a vocal coach but not with fellow celebrity participants or judges.

Each contestant had to keep their identity concealed by wearing masks with black hoodies emblazoned with the words, "Don't talk to me," on set. He returned home around 10 p.m. each evening.

"It's very TV friendly," Allen said of the show, laughing. "Not player friendly."

Allen said he could not shake his nerves as he prepared to perform in front of a panel of judges that included Thicke, actress Jenny McCarthy, actor Ken Jeong and singer Nicole Scherzinger.

"I was so scared," Allen said of the experience, which required live singing and the memorization of songs he sometimes was previously unfamiliar with. "You're not singing your song. You're singing somebody else's song. So it's like, f---, I don't want to f--- this up!"

Allen sang four songs over two episodes before his elimination in a one-on-one battle with the season's eventual winner, British singer Bishop Briggs.

"We all felt the talent in the voice, but I saw you get a little more confident, a little more loose in each performance," Thicke told Allen. "I thought you did a great job."

"You made a lasting impact on us because you have a beautiful voice," Scherzer said, "and your heart always shone through all of your performances."

Despite positive reviews from the audience, judges and teammates, Allen has decided that for now, he will stick to karaoke, singing in his hallways and dabbling in a potential music career that does not involve wearing costumes.

"It was fun," Allen said of the show. "But I don't want to do it again."

CHRIS BEATTY

Chargers assistant Chris Beatty keeps developing receivers, looking for opportunities

By Daniel Popper
The Athletic
July 20, 2023

During the 2021 offseason, Chris Beatty sat Mike Williams down and gave the No. 7 pick from the 2017 NFL Draft a rather specific prediction.

After more than two decades coaching high school and college football, Beatty had recently achieved his longtime goal of reaching the NFL, joining Brandon Staley's Chargers staff as the receivers coach. Over the ensuing weeks, Beatty had immersed himself in the tape, learning all he could about his group.

What Beatty saw from Williams was untapped potential. Williams was entering his fifth NFL season on an expiring contract. He was a good NFL player, but he had not yet lived up to where the Chargers drafted him. Beatty had a plan to change that.

"Here's what's going to happen," Beatty remembers telling Williams that offseason. "If you do what I ask you to do, you're going to get 80 catches, 1,200 yards and 10 touchdowns and get a big contract."

Williams, a man of few words, gave Beatty a simple reply: "I got you, Coach."

What happened next provides a window into what Beatty brings to one of the most talented and expensive receiver rooms in football — and why Beatty could soon be achieving another of his coaching goals by becoming an NFL coordinator and play caller.

Beatty had a grander vision for Williams. In his first four seasons, Williams was used almost exclusively as an outside-the-numbers threat. And he made plenty of jaw-dropping plays in those areas of the field. Williams' greatest gift is how he uses his huge frame, long arms and elite body control to win jump balls.

But while watching film, Beatty could not understand why Williams wasn't being used in other areas of the field. The Chargers were building a new offense in Staley's first season, and this was the ideal opportunity to explore what else Williams could become.

Staley had tapped Joe Lombardi as his offensive coordinator. Lombardi came from the Saints, where, over the previous five seasons, Michael Thomas had set records as one of the most productive receivers in football. Thomas was the X receiver in those Sean Payton-Drew Brees offenses, typically lining up as the isolated receiver.

As the Chargers offense was developing that offseason, Lombardi approached Beatty about where Williams could fit.

"Mike can be Mike Thomas," Beatty told Lombardi.

There was some consideration into moving Keenan Allen around to fulfill some of the many duties Thomas excelled at in the Saints offense. But Allen is at his best in the slot. Giving Williams the Thomas role would put Allen in the best position to be successful and create a more dynamic passing attack overall. That is, as long as Williams was up for that challenge. And Beatty believed he was.

"He can do more," Beatty said. "You go back to Clemson, he was running in-breakers, in-cuts, slants. ... So, it was like: 'I think we can do these things with him. We don't need to move anybody there. He can do them.' He just hadn't been asked to do them."

Lombardi agreed. So did Staley.

And the vision became a reality. Williams finished 2021 with 76 catches, 1,146 yards and nine touchdowns — just missing Beatty's predictions across the board. Williams' potential was fully realized with an expanded route tree that included many of those in-breakers Beatty first pitched.

Williams signed a three-year, \$60 million extension that offseason.

"They trusted in me," Williams said at the Chargers facility a day after inking his deal.

Last season brought some adversity to Beatty's room.

Allen strained his hamstring in Week 1 and went on to miss seven games. Williams suffered a high ankle sprain in Week 7 and missed most of the next five games. Jalen Guyton, the Chargers' lone dangerous deep-field speed threat, tore his ACL in Week 3. Joshua Palmer, the Chargers' No. 3 receiver, battled through knee and ankle injuries. Palmer also missed a Week 7 loss to the Seahawks with a concussion; it was the second time he had been in the concussion protocol in two months.

Amid all the moving pieces, Beatty helped DeAndre Carter emerge as one of Justin Herbert's most reliable targets. Carter entered training camp as the fifth receiver and returner. He ended up playing close to 700 offensive snaps. Carter caught 46 passes. His previous career high was 24. He had 538 receiving yards. His previous career high was 296.

This would have been surprising to someone who isn't familiar with Beatty's career. But Beatty has been elevating and developing receivers through his 25-year coaching career that started at North Stafford High in northern Virginia.

He coached Percy Harvin at Landstown High in Virginia Beach, leading that program to a 40-2 record over three seasons. Beatty has a framed Harvin Vikings jersey hanging in his home in Maryland.

Beatty coached Tavon Austin and Stedman Bailey at West Virginia. Those two share the school single-season receptions record, which they set in the same season a year after Beatty left for a job at Vanderbilt. Austin played nine years in the NFL; Bailey played three.

At Vanderbilt in 2011, Beatty coached Jordan Matthews, who broke the school's receiving record the following season. Matthews then broke his own receiving record and set the receptions record in 2013 before being drafted in the second round.

After a year of calling plays for Illinois, Beatty left to coach receivers at Wisconsin. There, in 2013, Jared Abbrederis set the single-season receptions record for the program. In 2016, Beatty joined the staff at Maryland, where he coached DJ Moore. In his first season playing for Beatty, Moore caught 41 passes for 637 yards and six touchdowns. In his second season playing for Beatty, in 2017, Moore caught 80 passes, which remains a school record, for 1,033 yards and eight touchdowns. That spring, Moore was the first wide receiver drafted, at No. 24 to the Panthers.

Beatty coached receivers at Pitt for two seasons after leaving Maryland. In 2019, Beatty's first season, Maurice Ffrench set a school record with 96 receptions. Beatty then coached Jordan Addison in 2020. The next season, after Beatty had joined Staley's staff, Addison won the Biletnikoff Award as the best receiver in football. He caught 100 passes, breaking Ffrench's record. Addison finished just shy of the program receiving yards record set by Larry Fitzgerald Jr. in 2003.

"You hope people recognize that and will give you an opportunity," Beatty said of his career.

That opportunity, though, did not come until 2021.

"A lot of it's just perseverance," Beatty said.

Beatty and Staley first met in 2007 at Northern Illinois. Beatty was the running backs coach. Staley, two years removed from his playing career as a quarterback, was in his second season as a graduate assistant.

As Beatty recalls, Staley was working primarily with the defense but was looking to get back to the offensive side.

"He wanted to talk ball all the time," Beatty said.

So Beatty would invite Staley over for late-night discussions, scratching that offensive itch for the future Chargers head coach.

"I didn't treat him like a GA. I've never tried to treat any of my GAs like a GA," Beatty said. "That's a big thing: You treat people like coaches and like people. You don't treat them like they're lesser than you."

Almost 15 years later, Staley had a receivers coach opening on his NFL staff. He offered it to Beatty, who had maintained his desire to get to the league throughout his journey.

"It's amazing how things go full circle," Beatty said.

It is hard to square Beatty's impressive resume with how long it took for him to reach the NFL.

But, Beatty said, that can be the “frustrating” reality for Black coaches. As The Athletic’s Jim Trotter noted earlier this offseason, only five of the 33 non-interim head-coaching vacancies have been filled by Black coaches over the past five hiring cycles. And this trend is starker on the offensive side. With training camps beginning around the league this week, there is only one Black coach slated to call offensive plays in the NFL this season: Washington’s Eric Bieniemy.

Beatty has been working his whole life for that type of role — really, to become an NFL head coach. He interviewed last offseason for the Vikings’ open offensive coordinator position on Kevin O’Connell’s staff, which Beatty believes was a “positive step.”

But he added that, at times, it is hard not to “lose hope.” He last called plays in 2012 at Illinois.

“We’ve all had that feeling,” Beatty said. “If you’re never given an opportunity, how do you know that someone can’t do it?”

“If we have a real conversation, like, ‘Hey, I’m really going to interview you for my job, and I’m not interviewing you to check a box, but I’m interviewing you to see if you’ve got the smarts to run my offense and the opportunity is there,’ I think there would be more people getting hired that don’t look like everybody else that’s been hired.”

All Beatty can do for now is keep developing receivers as he has for decades.

He will keep thinking outside the box to unlock talent.

He has another such receiver this season in rookie Quentin Johnston, the Chargers’ first-round pick. And Beatty is already getting promising early returns.

One morning during OTAs in the spring, Beatty was meeting with Johnston and the rest of the receivers. The Chargers had practice scheduled for 11 a.m. Beatty wanted Johnston to try a new release called a “diamond release” at the line of scrimmage that day. Effectively, the receiver fakes a route to one side before cutting back the other way. It has the same effect as a crossover in basketball. Beatty detailed the release to Johnston in the meeting room: “Give him a little cha-cha and then beat him across the face with a foot in the ground and burst.”

As practice began, the Chargers broke into position groups. The receivers practiced diamond releases in the individual period, working against the hand shield and dummy.

When the seven-on-seven period started, Johnston got his opportunity. He was matched up one-on-one with cornerback Asante Samuel Jr. in the red zone, isolated on the right side. Johnston faked Samuel out of his shoes and caught the touchdown from Easton Stick, executing the diamond release to perfection.

“He doesn’t know what he doesn’t know, so you tell him something, and it’s almost like, ‘Oh, you can do that?’” Beatty said of Johnston. “You’re looking at it like, man, this guy, the sky’s the limit.”

Staley and the Chargers trusted that Beatty could get the most out of Johnston — “polish that raw jewel to make it into something that shines,” as Beatty put it. The same way he got the most out of Williams.

It is a safe bet. Beatty has been polishing jewels his whole career.

And one day, he hopes they all shine bright enough to help him reach his ultimate goal.

“You can’t take the fact that somebody is not opening a door,” Beatty said. “You still got to keep pounding on it. And eventually, you hope somebody opens it.”

JOEY BOSA

'I've been eating a ridiculous amount lately': Inside Joey Bosa's quest to bulk up

By Lindsey Thiry
ESPN.com
August 10, 2023

COSTA MESA, Calif. — Los Angeles Chargers outside linebacker Joey Bosa spent his offseason eating until he was uncomfortable.

Then he ate some more.

"Eating isn't really enjoyable these days," Bosa said. "It's more so just part of the job."

The calories consumed by Bosa -- he estimates between 4,500 to 5,000 per day -- were all part of a well-constructed plan to enable him to pack pounds onto his 6-foot-5 frame as prepares for his eighth NFL season.

Bosa, 28, felt a need to return to a heavier version of himself after playing last season at 250 pounds, down from the 265 to 270 range that he played at earlier in his career, and well below the 280 mark he played at during his collegiate career at Ohio State.

"I specifically tried to really eat good and put some weight on this offseason, get back to my weight I was at a few years ago, where I could really use my power," Bosa explained after a training camp practice. "Really handle guys in the run and be more effective in that part of the game."

The plan to bulk up was put into motion following a 2022 season that saw Bosa spend 12 games on injured reserve after undergoing groin surgery, and which saw the Chargers fail for a second season to stop the run, allowing a league-worst average of 5.4 yards per carry.

A discussion with position coach Giff Smith -- who has coached Bosa since he was selected with the third overall pick in 2016 -- helped further the idea that adding weight would enable him to regain power.

"When we went to this system of defense, he thought he needed to be a little bit lighter and he was dealing with some nagging injuries, so you always lose a little weight when you have some lower half injuries," Giff said. "He's finally healthy and he was able to add the muscle mass, good muscle mass, and he feels comfortable. And then it does expose the power. Everybody knows how gifted he is with his hands and his movement, but when you can shock [opponents] with the power, it just has another element to his game."

Coach Brandon Staley, who scrapped the Chargers' 4-3 defensive scheme for a 3-4 when he was onboarded in 2021, endorsed the change.

"That's where he's most comfortable," Staley said. "You have to be able to establish power as a rusher, that's what's going to make you really, really dangerous. He has some of the best hands in the NFL, which is kind of what he's famous for, but to set those hands up, you have to really establish power."

Arguably no player has felt Bosa's strength in training camp like left tackle Rashawn Slater, who must contend with him daily.

"I noticed that right away," Slater said of Bosa's weight gain. "I feel a little extra pop with him this year for sure."

To gain the weight, Bosa continued his usual offseason training regimen with his brother, 49ers star defensive lineman Nick Bosa, in Florida, but adding pounds required working closely with a nutritionist and maintaining close proximity to a refrigerator so that he could consume five to six meals per day and constantly snack.

"Was able to stay consistent with all the things that I normally would do," Bosa said. "But the key to gaining weight is just to eat a lot. Eat way more than you want to. And it's no fun a lot of the time."

Before a morning run, Bosa would drink plenty of fluids, maybe eat a little fruit. He'd follow his run with a small breakfast.

Then, the eating marathon would commence.

Five more meals with plates full of red meat, chicken or fish. A big dose of protein, some vegetables and often a version of his guilty-pleasure carbohydrates, like chickpea pasta.

And snacks. Lots of snacks -- think pretzels, nuts and fruit (But no honeydew or cantaloupe, which Bosa despises) -- often smothered in creamy peanut butter. And a smoothie.

"I'll just eat berries in the peanut butter because my chef in Florida said that the fruit, you need a fat with the fruit for it to really have its whatever benefit," Bosa said. "So that helps with the weight gain and getting all the vitamins and stuff from the fruit."

Gaining the weight while dripping sweat during hour-long workouts in the summer Florida humidity proved difficult, but perhaps not as hard as maintaining his weight during training camp in Southern California, where the Chargers spend about 2 ½ hours daily sweating on the practice field.

And Bosa's fast metabolism has required that he not miss a meal. If he does, the consequence will be felt the following day when he weighs a few pounds less.

"I've always been kinda the one that needs to eat a ridiculous amount to keep on weight," he said. "I've been eating a ridiculous amount lately."

But for all the eating and bulking up, outside linebacker Khalil Mack says you can't tell by looking at Bosa. "Which is a great thing," Mack said, before chuckling. "It's not like he has a gut or anything now."

Bosa will test the results of his offseason makeover -- which also included chopping off his long blonde locks in favor of a buzz cut -- when the Chargers open the season against the Miami Dolphins on September 10 at SoFi Stadium.

"I definitely feel stronger," Bosa said.

Bosa, Mack Aim to be 'Rare Tandem' in Year 2 Together

By Eric Smith
Chargers.com
May 24, 2023

The far corner of the practice field at Hoag Performance Center was full of accomplishments and accolades.

And still so much potential, too.

Yes, Joey Bosa and Khalil Mack were back together again Monday at the Chargers first Organized Team Activity practice of the spring.

It was the second straight year Bosa and Mack were on the field for Day 1 of OTAs and there once again is the familiar hope of what they can accomplish together.

"It was great last year, even the short amount of time that we were together," Bosa said. "Obviously, it was unfortunate that we didn't get more time to play together."

Mack added: "It's always good when you have Joey B. out there, man. A lot of knowledge. A good friend, a good dude to have around in the locker room and the meeting room."

A year ago, Bosa and Mack took the field together for the first time as teammates.

And their Week 1 performances seemingly offered a glimpse of what was to come, as Mack had 3.0 sacks and Bosa added 1.5 sacks (while both forced fumbles) in a season-opening win against the Raiders.

But those good vibes lasted just a few weeks as Bosa was lost for the majority of the season with a serious core muscle injury.

"Yeah, we were out there for six games together [including the playoffs]," Bosa said. "I think we were really growing close together during camp. We kind of feed off each other in the rush."

"I know when I went down, obviously, it kind of was a big shock for me, obviously, and for Khalil and for [outside linebackers coach] Giff [Smith] and all of those guys in the room," Bosa added. "We had been working so hard all camp and we have an idea of how we're rushing together and this and that, so it obviously throws us a curveball."

The tandem is ready to start another journey together, one that hopefully lasts longer than the previous edition.

Day 1 was on Monday.

"I really appreciate all these guys being here, because it's voluntary. I think it says a lot about the culture that we have. Your culture is your best players and the example that they set," said Chargers Head Coach Brandon Staley. "Certainly, Khalil Mack sets a high standard, and I think that Derwin [James, Jr.] and Joey are part of that."

"For Joey to be here, I think that it shows all of these young players what it takes to be successful, that you have to be here with your team to improve," Staley added. "We know that Joey has such a specific routine with his brother in Florida. For him to be here, Day 1, really excited about that."

Khalil Mack on Turning the Page to Year 2 with the Bolts

Bosa said Mack was a key reason why he showed up on Day 1 for the second straight year, noting the bond between two of them has strengthened in time.

"Khalil and I, off the field, I think we've grown close just in the short amount of time that we've been together," Bosa said. "I'm excited to keep it going."

"I'd say he's definitely part of the reason that I came out early," Bosa added. "I feel obligated to do my stuff when I have him watching me, have him counting on me. It's nice to have that."

Mack enters the 2022 season with 84.5 career sacks after posting 8.0 in 2022, a year that saw him get regular double teams after Bosa went out.

Bosa has 60.5 career sacks and is a four-time Pro Bowler.

The Chargers hope a healthy tandem can strike fear into opposing offenses this coming season.

"I think what we saw last year in training camp, at the beginning of the year, is that those two guys playing together are special tandem," Staley said. "It's rare that you can find two players of that caliber that you can get together. Our goal is for those two to get to play together."

"We know how productive they are. They're both perennial Defensive Player of the Year candidates," Staley added. "They both can play at that level and we expect them to play at that level. Excited for those guys to have another crack at it this season."

Both Bosa and Mack said they are healthier than they were a year ago at this time.

Bosa had battled chronic groin issues but said Monday he's feeling the best he has in years. And Mack, who was coming off late-season foot surgery in 2021, said Monday that a full offseason has him feeling like his old self.

"I feel pretty good. I was coming off that injury last year," Mack said. "Being able to get into it and get into a regiment faster and run and do all of the things that I would normally do during the offseason, it feels great."

The Chargers will need the duo to be at their best as they deal with a challenging 2023 schedule that features one elite AFC quarterback after another.

And the tandem's presence on the edge should help out a run defense that struggled on the outside last season.

If everything goes according to plan, the vision the Bolts had of Bosa and Mack playing together could fully come to fruition, even if it's a year later than they hoped.

"I think the more time that we're out there together, the more comfortable we're going to be together and the more that we're going to understand each other when somebody is doing something in the rush," Bosa said. "Like I said last year a bunch of times, I think we complement each other well."

"Once we get more reps and more time together, it'll start being non-verbal communication out there," Bosa added. "We'll really get a feel for each other and when a guy is going high, a guy is going low. I think we have the opportunity to really get to a special spot between us two."

Has the NFL seen what the two can do together?

"Not even close," Mack said. "Just can't wait to get out there with this guy. Not talk too much, but get to work."

Chargers Edge Rusher Joey Bosa Put Mental Health Recovery Over Football in Offseason

By Fernando Ramirez,
Sports Illustrated (Maven)
September 9, 2021

When players line up for stretching and activation for the Los Angeles Chargers, it's done in unison at Jack Hammett Sports Complex or Hoag Performance Center.

But when all players are on the ground going through a stretch, a silent figure is in the back doing his own thing.

Joey Bosa is backpedaling, doing lunges, and working out at his own speed. He is always working on his craft and always tries to improve. He works with his trainer Todd Rice in Florida, and his workout partner is his brother -- San Francisco 49ers defensive end Nick Bosa.

He is out there in Florida from the moment the season ends until mandatory minicamp. Usually, they go through numerous pass-rushing techniques or work on getting stronger and faster.

However, this year was different.

Last season was challenging all around, with the pandemic and the offseason program being shortened. It was rough, but for Bosa, the whole season was strange.

"The impact of what I went through last year was real," said Bosa with a straight face.

He sustained numerous injuries to begin the season. By the New Orleans game in Week 5, Bosa dealt with a triceps, ankle, and knee injuries that prevented him from playing any other down but third. He got a sack in the 4th quarter against Drew Brees using a spin move that would make Dwight Freeney proud.

Fast forward to Week 9 in Denver when the Chargers had a 21-point lead over the Broncos late in the third. Bosa took a hit to the head and would miss the rest of the game with a concussion. Things would change from here.

Bosa only remembered showing up at the facility on the bus. Everything else was foggy. The next few days would get even worse with him locking himself up in his room and only coming out to get his COVID test at the facility.

He would miss two games. He returned feeling a little more upbeat. He had a dominating performance against the Buffalo Bills in week 11, sacking the opposing quarterback three times, collected nine tackles and six tackles for loss.

Three weeks later, it would happen again. He sustained a second concussion in Las Vegas against the Raiders. He wouldn't return for the last two games of the season.

"I undersold how much it affected me mentally with a concussion or what I had to deal with," explained Bosa. "It was really intense, and I kind of fell into a bit of a hole at the end of last year mentally."

One of the factors that helped him get out of his hole was that the fact that he had Nick living with him in L.A. The younger Bosa brother was rehabbing from a torn ACL he sustained in week two against the Jets.

Bosa decided to room with his brother again, like when they were kids. Growing up, they competed in anything and everything. They still kind of compete to this day.

"I think we have this intense competition against each other all the time," admitted Bosa. "That's kind of unspoken like, when somebody else does something, we're happy for him, but at the same time, we're like s***, and I want to do better."

During the back end of training camp this year, the 49ers were in town to have a joint practice with the Chargers. The younger Bosa is still coming back from his torn ACL, but he was able to practice on the side.

He also watched as his brother hand swiped, outpowered, and even used his agility to get past the 49ers offensive line. He was on a mission.

"I'm happy I was able to perform well against this team, and for him to see a few reps, it meant a lot," explained Bosa. "I was going to be really, really upset if I went out there and had a bad week because I can't have him show me up."

Bosa was Mic'd up for the Chargers, and the first thing he says when he bumps into his little brother is, "what's up, small guy?" to which Nick asked his older brother what moves he used to get past the offensive line.

It is the typical big brother, little brother love relationship. You always want your little brother to do great things, but not better than you.

"Sometimes the competition gets a little too intense, but luckily we don't play ping pong anymore or paddles are flying all over the place," said Bosa.

Bosa was happy to see his brother. He was thankful that Rice and his brother helped him climb out of that dark hole. He spoke out about mental health after what he had suffered through last season and has become more and more of an advocate.

"It's your health long term, and you see so many people losing their minds," Bosa said last November. "There's people around me that have been losing their fathers from, from brain diseases, and it's just it's a scary thing to think of."

Sometimes athletes are seen as Supermen, nothing can get to them, and nothing can hurt them, but people forget that they are more like Clark Kent. A couple of years ago, Bosa started to see a therapist, who helped significantly with what was going on during the end of last season.

"Ever since then, I've been super open about all of it, my meditation, therapy sessions, and all that," said Bosa. "So, it was just a tough time, and I had him to help me every week."

Bosa is a workout warrior. So, after the season ends, he takes some time to himself then jumps back on it with Rice and his brother in Florida. This offseason, though, Bosa felt like it was more about getting back mentally.

"The last few months, I've been steadily climbing and climbing and climbing and I'm just back to my old self, you know, feeling great," said Bosa. "Feeling great physically feeling great mentally."

He took his time. While he did that, some changes were going on back in Los Angeles. The team had fired head coach Anthony Lynn and hired 38-year-old Brandon Staley.

The new head coach called every single one of his players on the phone to explain to them who he was, and he wanted to get to know them. He wanted to show the players that he cared for them as people, not only as players.

"It's pretty obvious that this is who he is, and he's really passionate and knowledgeable about every single position," said Bosa. "He's a younger guy who listens and knows how to take care of us."

The head coach would talk to Bosa here and there but knew that his star pass rusher wouldn't be coming until mandatory minicamp. When Bosa showed up in Costa Mesa, he sat down with his head coach, and they just talked for a little over two hours. Bosa opened up to his coach about what he had gone through last season.

"I think that for him to be so outspoken," said Staley. "It's very courageous to me; there's a lot of bravery. Then there's also a selflessness too because he's not thinking about himself. He's thinking about other people. Anytime you have a star player like him that thinks that way, it's amazing."

He also talked football with Staley, realizing quick that Bosa is a unique person with a high football capacity.

"He's kind of an artist," said Staley about his initial thought after meeting with Bosa. "You don't get that way without being fully invested in your game, and I think he's so insightful about the details of his craft."

Bosa was quickly impressed by his new head coach.

"He could walk in any room really and talk about technique, and it's not just like, 'Oh, yeah, what are you guys running?' It's like he breaks it down exactly what's going on technique because he loves football," explained Bosa. "He has this kind of freaky memory where he just remembers things."

Staley was also impressed with Bosa. Staley has worked with some of the best pass rushers in Chicago's Khalil Mack, Denver's Von Miller and Bradley Chubb, and L.A. Rams' Leonard Floyd and Aaron Donald.

"I learned a lot from those guys like what he sees and what his approach is, and, and tapping into that, so you can coach him better," said Staley. "I felt like he's just has a lot of insights because he's such an accomplished player."

There will be some changes to this defense, though. Since being drafted by the Chargers in 2016, Bosa has been a big reason why the defense has generated a consistent pass rush. He has played 63 games in a Bolt uniform, sacked the opposing quarterback 47.5 times, and has 109 quarterback hits.

He also had his partner in crime in Melvin Ingram. When one of them got a sack, Bosa would do his signature shrug, and Ingram would cross his arms. They were a solid duo, but that has come to an end. Ingram wasn't re-signed and is a member of the Pittsburgh Steelers.

"He was great," said Bosa about Ingram. "He was the polar opposite of me, which I mean, opposites attract. I think we had a great relationship. Great player. I learned a lot from him. But I'm just happy he found a good spot, and he's probably going to have another great year over in Pittsburgh."

The Chargers brought Kyler Fackrell from the New York Giants to compete with Uchenna Nwosu for that spot opposite the Pro Bowl pass rusher.

"I love having Kyler," explained Bosa. "I think he was a great pickup. He had a great game the other day, was really impactful. I think Chenna's definitely coming into his own. He's been a great rusher for the past few years already, and he's finally going to have a real opportunity to get a lot of reps, but I think all three of us are going to do a really good job rotating in, and we're going to all have a lot of reps every game and keep each other fresh."

The significant change in Bosa's game will be that the team will ask him to take his hand out of the dirt and drop back into coverage. "I obviously want to rush the passer," said Bosa. "It's what I love to do. It's what I love about football and what I love to work on. But this is a new skill I have to learn. So, it's been a fun challenge. It's been frustrating at times, definitely. But at the same time, anything worth doing isn't going to be easy all the time -- corny, corny saying, but it's true."

That change also came with him not being with defensive line coach Giff Smith, who has been his defensive line coach since he entered the league. Bosa has always thought highly of him.

The Chargers hired Jay Rodgers from the Chicago Bears, who coached with Staley, to be the outside linebacker's coach.

"He's definitely a very positive guy, levelheaded -- which sometimes I need that," said Bosa. "So, I'm excited to keep on getting to know him. It has been a challenge for him, too, because he was with the big guys the last few years. So, he's been open about that. It's a new situation for him. He hasn't coached edge in a while, so it's been a fun learning process for both of us."

Rodgers had spent the last five years as the defensive line coach in the Windy City before moving out west. "This guy loves football," Rodgers said about Bosa. "He's very knowledgeable about his skill set what he's trying to do. His specific blockers run and pass. So, I've really enjoyed getting to know him and see how he reacts to some of the things that we're installing."

When camp started, Bosa was excited to work with Rodgers, but there was some hesitancy about last season.

"I was a little nervous coming into camp with how I feel at some certain things that have kind of built up over the years, but I have been feeling great," said the pass rusher. "I feel like I've got my rhythm back."

When on the defensive field at Jack Hammett, Bosa did one of two things during every practice, either going through a drill or talking to Rodgers.

"He's constantly working on his body, his timing, his footwork," explained Rodgers. "And then, as far as our conversations go on the sideline, different scenarios that could come up to help him play faster because I think the more you know, the faster you can play. Faster guys like him can play the more production they wind up having."

When it was 7-on-7, or there was a special team drill, and he wasn't needed, Bosa would be at a machine or workout dummy working on his craft, as Staley put it, like an artist.

Something else that Bosa noticed without Ingram being present is that he is now the leader of the pass rushers. Make no mistake about it, Bosa isn't a ra-ra guy; he is the furthest from that. He leads by example but doesn't mind giving tips.

"I feel like it's most effective when I'm coaching guys up one on one and telling them how I see things," said Bosa. "I understand everybody rushes differently. So, I don't want to like tell him this was the only way but tell him what I see what's been successful for me."

He has been a silent leader in the pass-rushing room. He has helped guys from Nwosu to third-year player Davin Bellamy to rookie fourth-rounder Chris Rumph.

"I mean, at the end of the day, Joey has been doing this at a high level for a long time, since his rookie year, and so any advice I go to him and talk to him about anything pass-rushing wise anytime I go to him after advice," said Rumph.

Things have certainly changed a lot since last season. The team has a new head coach with a new direction. Bosa will have some new duties to go along with getting after the quarterback.

So, the fans should expect a 10-sack season and a five-interception season from Bosa?

"Hopefully, more than ten sacks, but I'll take one interception. It's all I need," joked Bosa.

Bosa said he is excited about the season to start, but there will be a lot of factors that will go into how the Chargers will do this season. He knows that one factor he can count on is his quarterback Justin Herbert, whom Bosa has been a massive advocate for a la Paul Heyman since last training camp.

"I'm excited to see what he can do this year," said Bosa about his quarterback. "Another thing that I love about him is I don't think he... I mean, he must know is that good, but I feel like he's such a humble and normal dude. So, it's like it never comes off as arrogant or full of himself for like this super talent that he is, which was he's a 6'5 fast like he's the ideal quarterback, and I think he's got a Hall of Fame future, for sure."

From everything Bosa has gone through from last season to this one, he feels re-juiced and is looking ahead and not back.

"I don't come into practice where you don't want to bump my head or anything like that," said Bosa. "I think I've done everything right to heal my brain and heal my body, so it's part of the game."

MICHAEL DAVIS

Chargers' Michael Davis' Latino Heritage Month message: 'Just be proud of who you are'

By Bridget Condon
NFL.com
October 8, 2022

Los Angeles Chargers cornerback Michael Davis is stretching ahead of the team's Week 3 matchup against the Jaguars.

The cleat on Davis' left foot is emblazoned with the colors and coat of arms of the Mexican flag, with "Yo soy Mexicano," visible across the top. On the outside of the cleat on Davis' right foot, the word "esquinero," which means cornerback in Spanish, appears in big, white lettering. "Yo soy Michael Davis," is on the front of the right cleat, and on the instep are three letters: "ANA," the first name of his mother.

In honor of Latino Heritage Month, Davis was among four players gifted specially designed 1 of 1 cleats by El Snap NFL as part of the NFL's season-long "Por La Cultura" campaign. In addition to paying homage to his mother, Ana Martinez, whom he calls his "best friend," and to their Mexican heritage, the footwear aligned with the 27-year-old's desire to serve as a role model for others who share his background.

Davis does not remember watching many Mexican NFL players in his youth. Growing up in Glendale, California, he looked up to soccer stars like Ronaldinho and Chicharito. Now, in his sixth pro season, he is determined to continue making a positive impact with his own career.

"I try to do my best representing the Hispanic culture, representing Mexico," said Davis, who is also Black. "I feel like it just shows everybody, even Hispanic kids, that it's possible, anything is possible. We are able to play in the NFL."

Davis, who regularly spent time in Mexico with his mother as a kid, said that "football is not really a big sport in Mexico. It's futbol, like soccer, and baseball and basketball. It just goes to show that Hispanics can branch out and play different sports. Play in the NFL, which is an American-dominated sport."

It was not always a given that Davis would end up in the league. Drawn to the game by a desire to "fit in" with his friends, who he says preferred football, among other sports, to soccer, Davis said he started with flag football, then graduated to tackle. After playing at BYU from 2013 to '16, Davis went undrafted in 2017, catching on with the Chargers as a free agent.

"I kept telling Michael, never give up," Martinez said. "If you want to accomplish something, you need to continue."

In addition to determination, Martinez wanted to teach him about their heritage.

"I wanted him to know where I came from and for him to know my family," said Martinez, who is from Mexico. "For him to be able to interact with everybody, my entire family. For him to see what it was like when we gathered and what we do as a family. What type of food I grew up with, the music, the Catholic beliefs that my family instilled in me. I passed that to him."

Davis was a regular presence on the Chargers' defense in the previous three seasons, starting double-digit games in each campaign. But his career trajectory has taken a turn this season, as he's assumed a backup role.

As he did in Week 1, Davis started in relief of J.C. Jackson against the Jaguars, logging 10 tackles, but in the two games Jackson played this season, Davis logged all of his snaps on special teams.

Chargers head coach Brandon Staley said Friday that Davis is "going to be a big factor for us this season." He also acknowledged the impact Davis' example can set for people watching him.

"Hopefully he can be that example of young kids, boys and girls, of where you can go," Staley said. "He's just been a great teammate and a great player to coach, for sure."

For the veteran, who listed as a goal being "an all-around better corner," Latino Heritage Month is all about seeing more representation in the league, and for kids growing up to believe that anything is possible, no matter what their background is, as long as they are willing to put in the work. It's also about continuing to persevere through life's challenges while staying true to yourself.

"Just to be proud of who you are," he said. "There have been times because I am Black and I am Mexican that everything's been pointed down toward me. Everything is stacked against me, or stacked against people like me. Who cares? Be proud of who you are and overcome the odds."

Martinez said she feels "so happy and proud of" Davis.

"I know he has a lot to accomplish still in regards to the NFL but I'm happy and thankful to God that he's still there."

MORGAN FOX

Morgan Fox Shares Excitement Over Return to Chargers

By Omar Navarro
Chargers.com
April 19, 2023

Even when free agency began, Morgan Fox knew where he wanted to be.

"I wanted to be here," Fox said.

"I love the guys, I love the coaches, I love the area, I love the fans. It's really hard not to enjoy just being here, in general," Fox later added. "Being able to have the opportunities that are presented to me with the coaching staff and just being able to play with the caliber of players that we have, it's really, really enticing to stay back here. I really wanted to be back here and help go take this team in the direction that we're all trying to go in."

The Bolts defensive lineman spoke to the media on Monday for the first time since re-signing with the team last month and expressed his level of excitement in being back with the team.

"It's really exciting," Fox said. "I'm excited to be back with staff, with the guys, first and foremost. We have a great room across the board; offense, defense.

"I just love being around the guys. Being around them, seeing all the work we put in, we're trying to go a little farther than we did. Being back with a staff that believes in you and believes in the team is awesome."

Fox returns the Chargers following his career year in 2022 that saw him post a career-high 6.5 sacks and be a force along the defensive line. In a year where injuries ravaged the team and that position group specifically, Fox became a big part of the room that helped the late season playoff push.

His play on the field spoke for itself last season, but Chargers Head Coach Brandon Staley believes his impact lies far beyond the statistics.

"Foxy, No. 1, he represents our culture," Staley said. "He represents everything that we want in a football player, but then in terms of what he can do, he has versatility in the front to play a lot of different places. Then, he brings something that's hard to find in the NFL, which is interior pass rush. He has real sack production. When you have an interior pass rusher that can rush like he can, it gives you an advantage.

"He knows how to rush as part of a team, which is important when you have to quality outside rushers like we have," Staley added. "He understands how to fit within a rush plan. He's the guy that makes plays for us and represents who we want to be, from a culture standpoint."

As Staley mentioned, Fox's versatility is what made him a big part of the Chargers defensive line last season. With his ability to line up in different spots up front, Fox gave the Bolts value as injuries came and went throughout the season.

According to Pro Football Focus, about half of Fox's defensive snaps (283 in all) came at defensive tackle last season. He also lined up at defensive end for 298 snaps, which equated to almost the rest of his snaps.

Fox credits his bounce back season to tightness of the defensive line room and the coaching staff, as they both put him in a position to succeed.

"Just having a great room, being around a great staff that knows how to put you in the right position. And, at the end of the day, gives you the opportunities that you need to make plays," Fox said. "We have a ton of guys that make plays. You just have to see where you fit into that scheme and where you can help out.

"Coach Staley and the other coaches put me in good positions and give me a ton of opportunities to make plays," Fox added. "That's something that I really appreciate and attribute to being able to have a bounce-back year. Then, just the guys that I play with, the caliber of players that we have from front to back, it's kind of easy to go in there and do your job and make plays."

Under Staley's defensive scheme, Fox has had two of his best seasons as a pro, last season and the 2020 season when both he and Staley were with the Rams.

Fox has found success in this scheme, as he has been given opportunities to succeed — and he's done just that so far.

"Like I said earlier, it's opportunities," Fox said. "Coach Staley believes in me and he gives me opportunities to go make plays. That's something that he's always done, every year that I've been with him, is just a plethora of opportunities. He puts me in positions to win and believes in my abilities to win.

"I can't do anything but attribute to guys around me, as well," Fox added. "I have nothing but great players to play off of, to play with, from top to bottom on the roster. It definitely makes it a lot easier to make plays when you're around guys like that and are given the opportunities that the coaches gave you."

With Fox back in the fold for 2023, the defensive line has kept one of its crucial pieces from a season ago, as both he and the group hope to wreak havoc in the trenches this coming season.

ALOHI GILMAN

Chargers' Alohi Gilman keeps same level-headed approach despite raised expectations

By Joe Reedy
The Associated Press
August 9, 2023

COSTA MESA, Calif. (AP) — If Alohi Gilman feels any increased pressure or expectations over being one of the Los Angeles Chargers' starting safeties, he has done a good job of not showing it.

"I think 'Lo' has been calm, as cool as the other side of the pillow," defensive coordinator Derrick Ansley said.

At first, Gilman didn't quite know how to take Ansley's compliment. After thinking about it for a minute, though, he took those words to heart.

"That means a lot, coming from Coach (Ansley)," Gilman said. "I just try to come out here and be me. That's been my mentality since I was in high school. Everything flows the way it should be if you put the right mentality to work."

Gilman is expected to start at safety with Derwin James when the Chargers open the season on Sept. 10 against the Miami Dolphins. Gilman started six games last season, including the AFC wild-card game at Jacksonville.

Gilman, a sixth-round selection in the 2020 draft out of Notre Dame, moved into a starting role late last season. When Nasir Adderley retired after four seasons, that solidified Gilman's status.

"He's a guy that has been here for three years now, so a lot of reps have been invested in him, and he's invested a lot into the defense. You can see some of those dividends paying him now," Ansley said.

Gilman and James got plenty of work together during offseason workouts, which has helped build on-field chemistry throughout training camp. That didn't happen last season when James was recovering from shoulder surgery. James also sat out the first two weeks of training camp last season before signing a contract extension.

Coach Brandon Staley lauded the communication between James and Gilman during the early stages of camp when the installation process of putting in the defense is heavy.

James described Gilman as a "ball hawk." Last season Gilman picked off Cleveland's Jacoby Brissett in the end zone during the fourth quarter to help preserve a 30-28 victory in Week 5. He also had two fumble recoveries and a forced fumble during the season. During a Week 3 game in Kansas City in 2021, Gilman's fourth-quarter interception set up a game-winning drive.

Gilman's knack for interceptions has continued during training camp, where he has picked off Justin Herbert a couple of times during team drills.

"It's the same approach since I stepped in here with the Chargers. Everything has to be earned here. I don't take that for granted," Gilman said. "Even when I was a reserve guy, I felt like I was a starter. Some people may not have agreed with it, but I have viewed myself that way. I prepared myself that way so when I did get my shot, and I was out there, it was easy for me."

Ansley said Gilman's biggest strength is making adjustments before the snap.

"The game post-snap is a lot easier for him, a lot calmer for him. That's a testament to his work ethic on the field and in the classroom. He's one of those guys that studies," Ansley said.

Gilman will play limited snaps, if any, on Saturday when the Chargers have their preseason opener against the Los Angeles Rams. His most extensive preseason tests will come on Aug. 17-18, when the Bolts host the New Orleans Saints for two days of joint practices before their Aug. 20 game.

Despite what challenges may come, Gilman figures to be ready for it.

"Yes. I mean, we all get those butterflies, those nerves, I guess. But when I'm out there, I feel like a kid," he said. "I feel like playing football for me is fun because it's creative like I can get creative. I can play the game, I can have fun. That's what drives me to just keep playing."

DAIYAN HENLEY

Conceived in prison, Daiyan Henley was born into the dangerous world of his dad, who put him on a path to the NFL

By Jeff Miller
The Los Angeles Times
August 6, 2023

What follows is a football story and a father-son story and a comeback story. Yeah, a comeback story, one for all time.

Most of all, though, this an L.A. story, a hometown tale that starts in a torrent of gang violence on the blocks of Crenshaw and ends in a cozy huddle of Chargers on the turf of SoFi Stadium.

That covers a distance of barely five miles. But this is L.A., where even the shortest commutes can unravel into an agonizing misadventure of dead ends, regrettable decisions and maddening detours.

Daiyan Henley, a Chargers third-round draft pick in April, was conceived in prison, the son of a first-generation Crip who served 13 years after being convicted of trying to rob an undercover sheriff's deputy of 33 pounds of cocaine.

Eugene Henley reemerged changed and determined to raise his third son better than he did his first two, determined to help heal the community he had wounded, determined to build, to unite, to lead.

"It's one heck of an origin story," Daiyan said. "You know how they talk about antiheroes, the people who are the bad guys but they really aren't? That's my dad."

He's still known by most people as "Big U," though the kids he mentors on the local football field call him "Coach U." Eugene is a hulking, hollering 6 feet 5 with a reputation twice that towering, dating to a time when he became, as Wiz Khalifa once declared, rap music's "godfather."

Eugene also is a multi-cellphone-wielding, Range Rover-maneuvering entertainment executive who produces documentaries, managed Kurupt and launched the career of Nipsey Hussle.

But it's in his youngest son that he has found his greatest achievement, this icon of the 'hood making his biggest moves at home.

"Daiyan's my example to the world," Eugene said. "I came out to save him and guide him. And I won, you know what I mean? I won."

This is an L.A. story, all right, a stuffed and twisting script come to life right in the shadow of Hollywood.

Eugene met Stacey Allen when they were teenagers, at World on Wheels, the Mid-City skating rink that was part of Los Angeles' early hip-hop scene and one of the places where Big U forged his image, often using his fists.

A student of martial arts with a temper that still teeters, Big U had an ability to separate another man from his wits and it became his signature. He wore long, cascading hair and sometimes giant, almost-goofy glasses — any suggestion that he might be square, however, disappeared when Big U started tossing his meaty, balled-up mitts.

In the 2021 documentary "Hip Hop Uncovered" — of which he was an executive producer — Eugene said: "Dudes knew that I was going to give a dude a head-up squabble and he wasn't going to win. I wasn't even going to mess the Jheri curl up."

"Hip Hop Uncovered" details the lives of Eugene and four other players in the music business. The first five minutes introduce Eugene by one of his police mugshots.

Raised in Santa Monica, Stacey knew nothing of the volatile world this giant man was beginning to rule just 20 minutes down the 10 Freeway. The night they met, Eugene used a word unfamiliar to her, so Stacey had to ask a friend what "homeboy" meant.

On one of their first dates, she found herself trapped in Eugene's neighborhood as a police helicopter spun overhead, search lights darted and chaos erupted around her.

"I was crying," Stacey remembered with a smallish smile. "I was saying, 'I'm never goin' back! I'm never goin' back!' I finally got home and called him, and I was like, 'When you comin' to get me again?'"

A few years later, on a drug-selling trip to Chicago, Eugene finished reading "The Autobiography of Malcolm X," a book he says he related to unlike any other. In exploring another man's life, he described himself as exploring his own.

He vowed to stop dealing drugs, to stop hustling, to distance himself from a life in which he was shot when he was 14 and then shot six more times over the years, including in both shoulders and legs.

Still, not all of Eugene reflects the streets. Calling himself "really a momma's boy," he never did drugs and has no tattoos, fulfilling promises he made to his mother.

But even while redirecting his life, Eugene had more debts than ways to settle them. So he began to steal, once busted with a stash of gold chains so extensive that he made another vow — to never wear jewelry again.

One night, he and a partner were caught in a sting when Eugene arrived at a meeting with a gun, intent on strong-arming an officer he mistakenly thought was a drug dealer.

"The police don't got to be lucky but one time. One time," Eugene said. "The criminal got to be lucky 100,000 times."

Stacey was left with two young boys as their father faced a 23-year sentence. Jabari, their middle son, was just 2 months old.

Stacey, the product of a single mother who saw the value of a two-parent home in her grandma and grandpa, said she never considered leaving Eugene, even though the couple remained unmarried.

She didn't want to do that to their children or to herself, the prospect of starting over with someone else less appealing than the reality of persevering with her first choice, a challenge she called "not easy but doable."

The simplest solution was marriage, and more than 30 years later, Stacey said she's pretty certain she was the one who proposed.

In 1992, Eugene and Stacey were married in the L.A. County jail, standing on opposite sides of a glass partition, in a hasty ceremony that might or might not have been permitted by law enforcement.

The whole thing lasted maybe 10 minutes. There was no wedding dress. There are no wedding pictures.

"It was 'I do, you do. Gotta go,'" Stacey says.

The family remained intact, if not together, Stacey encouraged by the changes she began to see in Eugene.

Long a Christian — even when he was rolling in the streets, Eugene carried a small Bible in his back pocket — he poured himself into Islam. "Daiyan" is a Muslim name, meaning mighty ruler or protector.

The prison time afforded Eugene uninterrupted hours to read and study and sketch the life he'd pursue once free again.

"He was growing as a man," Stacey said. "It helped him and it helped me too, because it took a little bit of the wild out of him."

After his release on Jan. 4, 2004, Eugene rejoined his family, wedging himself and his wall-to-wall presence into their three-bedroom, one-bath apartment that made up the bottom half of a duplex.

He'd been there for just a few days when Daiyan, who recently had turned 4, asked a question.

"Dad," the little boy said, "when are you going back home?"

"Jack," Eugene replied, "I am home. I ain't never going to be gone away from you again."

Daiyan had known his father only as property of the California penal system. Daiyan and his two older brothers, Michael and Jabari, would visit regularly, tagging along behind Stacey.

On some trips, the boys would convince Dad to play football, wadding up a sock to serve as their pigskin. They'd run and giggle and picnic on the barely edible prison food.

The sudden proximity was a tad much to the kid looking up to that father standing over him, day after day.

"I remember my dad being a staggering figure in our home," Daiyan said, laughing. "It's like he came in immediately yelling and barking. He basically messed up the feng shui of the whole house."

But that proximity was exactly the idea, the reason Eugene wanted one more son — one more chance — and tried to time the conjugal visit with Stacey at Calipatria State Prison so that Daiyan would be around 1 when his father returned home.

But then Eugene got in a fight, fracturing the face of another inmate, dislodging the guy's eyeball.

Authorities dumped Eugene in the hole, where he'd spend more than four years, his well-plotted timeline buried along with him.

Even worse, solitary meant family visits were restricted to 15 minutes, Eugene figuring that wasn't enough time to justify Stacey and the boys driving nearly three hours to the facility in Corcoran, where he had been transferred.

And there was another thing that discouraged time together.

"I didn't want them to see me in a hole, in a cage, behind glass looking the way I was looking," Eugene, now 56, said. "In hindsight, it broke the connection. I should have let them come see me once every other month."

The lost time, Eugene is certain, hurt Michael and Jabari, who already had lived the majority of their lives without a dad at home. The boys struggled with the same streets their father dominated.

"The other boys went through a lot growing up without a father and in an area where their dad had such a big name," said Eugene, who didn't meet his father until he was 16 and being released from Central Juvenile Hall. "That was my fault because I was gone. It's the story of the absentee father.

"The two who didn't have a dad went through the hard times. They were the ones gangbanging, making bad decisions. I don't knock 'em. Not one bit. I take the blame for that, 100%."

Daiyan heard the same stories of all the things his father had done, the drug dealing and fighting, the general mayhem wrought by the kingpin of the Rollin' 60s, a faction of Crips this publication once described as "heavily armed."

But Daiyan also was sitting in the backseat while his dad drove him to practice, was on the receiving end of his father's tough-love coaching and was watching as Eugene began to shine brighter in and around Crenshaw.

Initially, Eugene was thought to be facing more than 50 years in prison.

He joked in "Hip Hop Uncovered" that, by the time of his release, the world would be traveling by flying car.

As it was, being away for 13 years was more than enough, Stacey fast-tracking Eugene back to the outside world on their drive home from prison.

"He thought I was going too fast," she recalled. "He felt like he was on a spaceship. I said, 'You're used to being on that big-ass school bus going 20 miles an hour. The speed limit is 65. We doin' 80, OK?'"

Shortly after Eugene's release, the family moved to a two-story house just a few minutes from where Eugene grew up but along streets safer and saner.

This is where Daiyan first met Kurupt, whom he described as "almost like an uncle." This is also where Hussle lived with the family for a while, recording some of his first tracks in their downstairs studio.

"I got to watch Nipsey grind — literally like his name 'Hussle' — in our basement," Daiyan said. "He used to be down there for hours at a time. That was a good lesson for me."

Now fully free, Eugene began along the course he had charted. One of his first projects became Developing Options, a nonprofit involved in everything from gang intervention to feeding children.

Formerly called the Ex-Offender Fellowship Network, Developing Options aids in finding jobs for former inmates, counseling young people on life skills and providing educational opportunities for the less fortunate.

"God had a plan for me to be here as an example for my community," Eugene said. "Look at me. I came from the lowest point. I've been in the worst place America has ... a dungeon in a cage."

Around the same time, Kurupt took Eugene to Death Row Records to meet Suge Knight, a man Daiyan said is "like my god dad."

The two connected, with Snoop Dogg, in "Hip Hop Uncovered," explaining: "Suge recognized what Big U meant. This [man] moves mountains, and he's intelligent."

Knight gave Eugene money to help restart both his personal and professional lives, his introduction to music having come earlier when rapper Poppa LQ, wanting more street cred, asked Eugene to be his manager.

Eugene's No. 1 project, though, was Daiyan. He formally began coaching his youngest son in Snoop Dogg's kids football league. But the teaching started before that and lasted much longer.

Daiyan still has videos of their 5 a.m. workouts, training in the backyard or running the hills of the neighborhood. Some mornings, Daiyan would sneak in a half-hour nap before showering and running off to school.

Never once, he said, was he lured by what lurked just down the road.

"If anyone was ever to come to my dad and say, 'Hey, Big U, we saw your son doing this or that,' he would have lost it," Daiyan said. "The whole neighborhood would have been in trouble."

Their house became the gathering place for school buddies and peewee teammates.

Eugene took to referring to the boys as his sons or nephews.

Today, nothing has changed, the home still alive with neighborhood kids looking for somewhere to chill. Eugene and Stacey added to the frenzy too by having one more child, a daughter named Cherysh.

Likening their existence to "The Waltons," Stacey said her husband is the draw, the big man's vibes serving as a gravitational pull.

"A lot of kids want to be in this house because he's in this house," she said. "It doesn't matter what they've done, if they've gotten in trouble or something. When he says, 'We going to the house,' they all want to be here."

Said Daiyan: "My mom asked me the other day, 'Why can't I get rid of all these kids?' I told her, 'Because you're living with the biggest one.'"

Just three miles from the Henley home waits SoFi Stadium, where Daiyan will play this fall. After starting his college career at Nevada in 2017, he spent his final season at Washington State.

Eugene and Stacey flew to most of his home games over the last six years, but now can drive to them for the first time since Daiyan graduated from Crenshaw High.

After Chargers minicamp in June, Daiyan returned to Crenshaw to speak at an event for the football team. He told the players that he's an example of just how close the NFL really is for them, standing there just an arm's length away.

He also reminded them that he's available — as near as a DM — if they need anything, Daiyan already giving back just like his dad.

All of this feel-good was made possible when the Chargers reached just down the street to draft their latest linebacker.

Still, even with so much ground covered, Eugene's past is never more than a glimpse away. Remember that mugshot shown so early in the "Hip Hop Uncovered" doc? It serves as the wallpaper on one of Eugene's phones.

"Keeps me disciplined," he said.

Eugene was asked what makes him most proud of Daiyan.

"There's got to be a better way to ask that question," he said. "Like, 'What are you not most proud of?' He made it. He made the right decisions every step of the way and then slid on home. He really, like, ran around the bases and slid home, you know? For real."

This is an L.A. story, to be sure, another homecoming celebration for a family that knows how to embrace coming home.

JUSTIN HERBERT

Justin Herbert after megadeal: 'I just get to play football now'

By Lindsey Thiry
ESPN.com
July 26, 2023

COSTA MESA, Calif. -- A known fishing enthusiast, Los Angeles Chargers quarterback Justin Herbert will never need to worry again about budgeting for a boat, poles, tackle or bait.

Not after signing a five-year, \$262.5 million contract extension that made him the highest-paid player in NFL history.

But Herbert said that was something he'd yet to account for only hours after signing the deal, which according to ESPN's Adam Schefter includes \$133.7 million guaranteed and a no-trade clause.

"That's something to address at a later point," Herbert said with a smile on Wednesday. "Come offseason next year, we'll get around to that."

The Chargers' investment in Herbert signals their hope that the next offseason could be further away than ever in their 64-year history.

For Herbert, the record-breaking deal signals freedom to be himself.

"I just get to play football now and I think that's the best part about it is I get to play free," Herbert said. "I get to play fearless, and we go out there and we get to play our type of ball."

That appeared to be on display during the Chargers' first training camp practice as Herbert, 25, moved swiftly through drills and completed several impressive passes with apparent ease in front of screaming fans, team executives and owner Dean Spanos.

"We're very, very fortunate," Chargers coach Brandon Staley said of reaching a deal with Herbert. "To have a young player leading your team that is made up of all the right stuff, most importantly, and then who can play the game like few who have ever played the position can -- it's just really exciting for us."

Herbert has set several NFL milestones since being selected with the sixth overall draft pick in 2020, including the most passing yards (14,089) through a player's first three seasons.

Last season, despite playing through fractured rib cartilage and later an injured left shoulder that required postseason surgery, Herbert led the injury-plagued Chargers to their first playoff appearance since 2018.

The Chargers opened negotiations with Herbert shortly after their season ended with a wild-card loss to the Jacksonville Jaguars, and they expressed optimism throughout the process that a deal would be reached.

Staley said Wednesday he was not concerned with any possible distraction if negotiations lingered, but Herbert called it "huge" that the sides reached an agreement before opening camp.

"Now our focus is on football," Herbert said. "It's to be the best football team that we can be, it's not going to be a distraction for us."

While Herbert said multiple times that he now felt free to play, the fourth-year pro also acknowledged that such commitment from an organization would be accompanied by additional responsibility.

"That's kind of the role of the quarterback, is to have that big responsibility," he said. "I look forward to that challenge. I've grown each year. I've gotten better at that."

Chargers Training Camp: Justin Herbert Is Poised for a Big Year

By Albert Breer
Sports Illustrated
August 5, 2023

Front end of two Saturday camps for me, this one with the Chargers in Costa Mesa. Here's what we got ...

Justin Herbert's been locked in through two weeks of camp—playing fast and confident, throwing an accurate ball and finding his voice as a leader. There's very little question here either that he fits new coordinator Kellen Moore's scheme, which is built to force the defense to cover every blade of grass out there, something that, on paper, should unlock Herbert as a quarterback. And maybe the way that's shown itself most is in how aggressive the fourth-year man has been pushing the ball down the field. The feeling here is he's in for a very, very big year.

What's around Herbert should be improved too. The line is much healthier than it was a year ago and, if that health is maintained, that area should become a strength (especially if Zion Johnson takes the step the Chargers expect him to). And the feeling in camp is that, with the addition of impressive rookie Quentin Johnston, the receiver room should be the NFL's best. Of course, this is another area where health is a variable. But everyone knows what Keenan Allen and Mike Williams are capable of, and Josh Palmer's put together another rock solid camp, coming off a 70-catch season. Which is to say, as usual, talent is not an issue with this team.

There are two areas, though, that need some work through the rest of camp. One is at tight end, where Gerald Everett, Donald Parham and Stone Smartt are vying for the starting job. All three guys are adept in the passing game. So what's likely to determine which one plays, particularly with so many options at receiver, is who's the best blocker in the run game. And the other spot to watch would be the interior of the defensive line, where Austin Johnson's return will help, and the team is trying to develop a little more depth. The run defense could be a question otherwise.

Eric Kendricks came in highly recommended by, well, just about everyone. Kendricks had been with Jonathan Gannon, Kevin O'Connell, Ed Donatell, Wes Phillips, Justin Rascati and Chris Rumph—all good friends of Brandon Staley—as well as Chargers linebackers coach Jeff Howard. Kendricks also had an hour-long talk with Staley, over the phone from his vacation in Hawai'i back in March, just before signing. So the institutional knowledge the team had was deep and Kendricks hasn't disappointed. The 31-year-old has been a missile out there in the middle of the defense. And his presence has helped the team get a little more out of former first-round pick Kenneth Murray, who's had a really nice summer after having his fifth-year option declined by the team in the spring.

Asante Samuel is another young vet who's taking a step—he's gotten his hands on the ball a lot through camp, and looks like he's ready to take advantage of chances created by what should be, again, health-permitting, one of the NFL's best pass-rush tandems, in Joey Bosa and Khalil Mack.

'A silent killer with great hair': How Justin Herbert helped turn the L.A. Chargers around

By Tim Keown
ESPN.com
January 12, 2023

The football leaves Justin Herbert's hand and appears to travel downhill, nose down, a plane forever on approach. It rotates through the air roughly 12½ times per second, the laces spinning vertiginously into a white fuzz. A football released by Herbert's right hand and powered by his right arm has always been more than a mere object. Its path, a straight line for longer than seems possible, sends a message of hope and expectation -- for him, for his teammates, for those who run the Los Angeles Chargers. His receivers call it a heavy ball, but they're describing it solely in the literal sense. Its figurative weight can be measured only by the man who throws it.

On its own, stripped of its greater significance, the arm is a marvel. During a Friday practice more than a month ago, two days before the Chargers played the Miami Dolphins on a Sunday night, Herbert rolled about 15 yards to his right, planted his back foot, turned his hips and sent a spiral more than 60 yards to the opposite corner of the field.

After the ball landed in receiver Mike Williams' hands, muffled and polite applause sifted its way through the team. And after practice, standing at his locker next to Herbert's, third-string quarterback Easton Stick describes the throw just so he can get to the part about the applause.

"Everyone goes 'Yeah, yeah, yeah,'" Stick says, rolling his eyes and tapping the fingertips of his right hand into the palm of his left, an exaggerated, patronizing version of a golf clap. "But: No, no, no." Stick's got his right hand in the air now, like a traffic cop. "I wanted to stop practice and scream, 'Guys, that's not normal. Like, really not normal.'"

Roughly 54 hours after the throw on the practice field and roughly 56 hours after Stick's awed description, on Sunday night of Week 14 in a season-defining game against the Dolphins, in a game against a quarterback (Tua Tagovailoa) chosen one spot ahead of him in the first round of the 2020 draft, Herbert rolled about 15 yards to the right, side-stepped a rusher, planted his feet at his own 22-yard line and threw across his body to hit Williams near the opposite sideline at the Dolphins' 21. It was the same exact pass Stick described two days before: more than 60 yards in the air, never seeming to climb higher than 15 feet off the ground, plausible for perhaps four of the 7.8 billion inhabitants of the planet.

This is nothing new. Herbert has always been great at this throwing business. He was 7 when he entered his first all-comers track meet in his hometown of Eugene, Oregon, where his grandfather was a track coach. There was no discus or shot put for 7-year-olds, so Justin competed in the softball throw.

From one week to the next, he kept throwing and winning until that arm carried him all the way to Hershey, Pennsylvania, where he competed in a national meet. That arm has continued to carry him, to stardom at Sheldon High School in Eugene to the University of Oregon and now to Los Angeles.

Despite the arm -- or maybe because of it, and its near flawlessness -- the focus always seemed to shift to Herbert's personality. NFL evaluators, paid to hunt weakness, wondered if his introverted nature would translate to a professional huddle and all the attendant demands the position requires. John Elway was once asked what was harder, doing the job or having the job? Having it, he said without hesitation. It was obvious Herbert could do the job, but could he have it?

Through his first two seasons in Los Angeles, the arm sustained him.

"The throws he makes are not normal," says backup quarterback Chase Daniel, in his 13th year in the NFL. "I've been a lot of places, seen a lot of things and I'm here to tell you: That stuff ain't normal."

There were so many throws this season -- 699 attempts, 477 completions, 4,739 yards, 25 touchdowns. Many of them were made when his team needed them most, during the Chargers' stretch of four wins in their final five games, putting them in the playoffs -- a five seed, they play at the six-seeded Jacksonville Jaguars on Saturday in the AFC wild-card round -- for the first time since 2018 and third time in 13 seasons. There was an 11-yard rollout touchdown pass against Miami that blithely ignored four Dolphin defenders on its way to Williams at the back of the end zone; the sidarm throw to Gerald Everett in Week 16 that skimmed the left armpit of Colts' defensive tackle DeForest Buckner; the game- and possibly season-saving dart he threw 35 yards on a straight line off a dead sprint to Williams to set up a game-winning, last-second field goal to beat the Tennessee Titans in Week 15.

But the ball, spinning kaleidoscopically through the air toward the waiting arms of a Chargers' receiver, carries its own secret. This ball has always been the easy part.

It was early December, the Chargers were 6-6, injured and average, coming off a loss to the Las Vegas Raiders. The fate of their second-year coach, Brandon Staley, became a topic. Herbert's season -- maybe even his career -- was beginning to look like a collection of impressive but empty statistics.

He was, unquestionably, doing the job, but he came across as almost intentionally enigmatic. Uneasy in the public eye or in front of a microphone, Herbert became a vessel into which any and all theories could be deposited. In his weekly news conferences with the relatively small Charger media contingent, his motto seems to be: Speak quickly and say little. In his third season with the team, he remained just out of reach.

The Week 14 win over the Dolphins initiated an unlikely stretch for the Chargers. Herbert benefited from his top receivers, Keenan Allen and Williams, returning from injury. The offensive line, spackled together most of the season, got healthier as well. The win over the Dolphins was followed by wins over the Titans, Indianapolis Colts and Los Angeles Rams, a winning streak that earned the Chargers the fifth seed in the AFC playoffs.

How did yet another textbook Charger season -- overpromised, underdelivered -- turn into this something both unexpected and uplifting? Like everything in the NFL, the rules state it must begin with the quarterback. It's the most scrutinized position in sports, and its practitioners -- especially ones as talented as Herbert -- are expected to be vocal and motivational and even promotional. On a team fighting for traction in a saturated market, he is expected to be the face of a franchise that desperately needs one. But those rules are unenforceable and theoretical, applicable to whomever wants to adopt them. Herbert doesn't build the roads, he just drives on them.

Given that, is it heartening or disappointing to discover there was no Hollywood moment? Herbert's numbers were, for him, more of the same; over the four-game winning streak he completed 74% of his passes and averaged 281 yards passing. His teammates, some of them apologizing for the mundaneness of it all, praised him for his steadiness and attention to detail, the same qualities they've seen since he arrived.

"He's not an ego guy," says offensive tackle Trey Pipkins III. "He's not a big media-look-at-me guy. There's a balance; you want to be confident, but you don't want to be the guy who's always looking for the camera."

I began four conversations with his teammates by telling them I was there to figure out their quarterback, and each of the four responded with the same two words: Good luck. When I ask receiver DeAndre Carter, one of the well-wishers, if he has decoded the mystery of his quarterback, he laughs and says, "I have not. I have not." His words are delivered with a smile, in a good-natured tone that signifies a certain respect, an acknowledgment that if he -- a man who occupies a locker less than 15 feet away from Herbert's -- is not able to figure him out, there's no hope for an outsider.

"I don't even think Justin hates attention," Stick says. "It might come off that way, but I don't know if that's really the word for it. A lot of guys enjoy a lot of the stuff that comes with that position; he just doesn't enjoy it as much. He wants to play football and hang out in the locker room and be with the guys."

Stick stops and points a finger first at himself and then at me. "But this stuff right here?" he says. "Probably not. Definitely not in this setting."

Herbert is stubbornly unwilling to speak about himself. He can turn any question intended to elicit a personal response -- questions tailored to him and only him -- into an answer that somehow includes everybody but him.

Linguistically, it feels like a form of performance art, but in other ways it can feel almost hardwired. Questions as inconsequential as, "What do you have to do to be better this week?" are dexterously turned into answers that begin, "We need to ..." or "As a team ..." After the Chargers beat the Rams to clinch a playoff berth and win their fourth straight, I asked Herbert what he learned about himself over that stretch. "As a team," he said, "the word toughness comes to mind." When I pressed him, he said, "My most important job is to put the team in a position to win." He is not Justin Herbert, star quarterback. He is Justin Herbert, member of the Los Angeles Chargers.

He is the lowest-profile guy in the highest-profile job, a star quarterback with the mentality of a backup offensive lineman. He has asked that he not be announced with the rest of his Chargers' offensive teammates during pregame introductions at home games, preferring to run onto the field as just another guy in a uniform. Because this wish is not granted -- anonymity, after all, is not consistent with the face of a franchise seeking traction in a packed market -- he runs from the tunnel onto the SoFi Stadium field with his head down and his thoughts to himself, as if the noise has nothing to do with him.

Whenever the team presents him with a game ball, he tries to turn it down. "He's like, 'No. No. No.'" defensive lineman Breiden Fehoko says. "We've told him, 'Justin, you've got to stop being so modest.' He's like, 'No, man.' If told him, 'Man, I can't believe that sidearm throw you made against Indy,' and he said, 'It was only possible because you guys stopped them on defense.' He's just too nice, and he doesn't like being in the spotlight. He's the same with us as with everyone else. What you see is what he gives us. It's not a show or a façade. He's a humble, silent killer with great hair."

Herbert is uncommonly fastidious and conscientious, traits that are quickly becoming legendary. (In the summer of 2021, former Chargers teammate Gabe Nabers said he saw Herbert's temper flare once, when Nabers failed to return a shopping cart to its rightful place). After a recent road game, he was among the last to leave the locker room in part because he needed to find a member of the equipment staff to ask where he should leave his used towels. It didn't matter to him that every one of his teammates had left their towels where they always leave them: on the floor in front of their lockers, for the staff to pick up and toss into rolling carts. He carried his towels to the cart himself.

"That doesn't surprise me at all," says Justin's older brother Mitch, a third-year medical student at Columbia who played tight end at Montana State. "He's going to do the right thing when no one's watching."

It's a Friday afternoon tradition -- and something of a running joke -- in the Chargers' locker room for the equipment staff to walk around the room and remind players to pack their bags for that weekend's game. It's a joke because almost nobody ever does it -- they simply put their gear and their bags in front of their lockers, unzipped, and let the equipment crew round it up. Herbert, however, is the one who necessitates the almost: He dutifully packs his bag, zips it closed and carries it to the equipment room.

Whenever Mitch and youngest brother Patrick, a tight end at Oregon, travel to Justin's games, they joke about how much they want the Chargers to win so Justin is more fun to be around. If he has a bad game or the Chargers lose, his parents and brothers text him knowing they're unlikely to hear back for two or three days.

"I wouldn't say we worry about him," Mitch says.

"I think we've just accepted it at this point, and over the last couple of years he's gotten better about being more comfortable in his own skin. I think it's a healthy obsession, and I think anyone who's been around him -- teammates, coaches -- would agree. He's just ultracompetitive and ultra-focused. It's all about limiting distractions, and I think that goes along with the way he deals with the media. If he doesn't say anything wrong or controversial, he can concentrate on what's important to him."

Again, nothing new. The three brothers were home together in Eugene with Justin between the NFL combine and the 2020 draft. Justin had work to do, so the three of them would go to their high school or a neighborhood park so Justin could run through specific route trees. He would position his brothers on the field and go through his progressions. If a pass wasn't a perfectly precise spiral delivered in the perfectly precise spot, he would do it over. Mitch and Patrick would trade glances -- get a load of Mr. Perfect -- but they knew they couldn't leave until every pass met their brother's exacting standard.

"It would have been so easy for him to just go through the motions," Mitch says. "We were basically in our backyard. Nobody knew what he was doing. But he's a perfectionist."

He's trying. Give him that.

The run that put the Chargers in the playoffs might have lacked high drama, but something unexpected did happen. Staring down a season that could go either way -- the exact situation many believed he couldn't handle -- a different Herbert began to emerge. His Friday news conferences became more engaging. He cracked jokes, at one point responding to a question about whether he was aware of being one away from setting an NFL record for most touchdown passes in the first three seasons by saying, "Now ... that's something I'm aware of now." He might have even relaxed. He began showing up with some other offensive players at the defense's Friday night dinner. He shocked his teammates three times during the pivotal Sunday night win over the Dolphins, first by signaling for a first down after scrambling to convert a first down, second by spiking an NBC-bestowed game ball in the locker room (he promptly apologized if anyone at the network believed he was disrespecting it or the ball) and third by delivering a short but rousing postgame speech, the first of his career. "Pretty cool to see Justin coming out of his routine," running back Austin Ekeler said. It wasn't so much what he said -- nobody reported anything memorable -- but the fact that he said it. Staley, asked afterward for his interpretation of Herbert's intentions, said, with more than a hint of sarcasm, "I'm not going to interpret what Justin is feeling. I'm going to let him interpret his feelings for you guys, and I'm sure that will be a fun process."

As he deflects question after question, Herbert professes that winning -- as a team, not as a quarterback -- is his sole motivation. And, well, this was his chance to prove it. His teammates dismiss the idea that he knows success in the playoffs is a requirement for entry into the QB VIP room along with Patrick Mahomes, Josh Allen and Joe Burrow. "He's not the type of guy to worry about whether people are putting him in conversations with certain other guys," Pipkins says. Maybe, but being ultracompetitive would seem to entail a devotion to competition in all its forms.

"He's definitely introverted," Mitch Herbert says. "You see the rah-rah type leaders, and that's what people think is the face of leadership. They think you have to be in someone's face, do the pregame speech. The can-he-lead-a-team thing was unfair. Anyone who ever played with him or coached Justin thought that was ridiculous. He's true to himself."

Against Tennessee, after the Titans scored a game-tying touchdown with 51 seconds left in a game the Chargers had to win, Herbert stormed up and down the sideline, Brady-like, telling his teammates they were being given the only chance they needed. Forty-three seconds later, Cameron Dicker kicked a game-winning field goal.

"The difference I see is just maturity," Fehoko says. "It's weird to say, since he's a three-year starter, but it's how he's grown as a man off the field. He's finding ways to uplift guys around him, doing more of what we didn't have the past two years. He was just so quiet. He's still quiet -- he's one of the most reserved guys on the team -- but he's showing more emotion, and that stuff gets us going. I think he's starting to see that."

There's a lot going on. For every position but one, football is a grand exercise in overcomplication. But a quarterback's preparation is consuming: different game plans each week, different pressures, different coverage disguises. They have to see everything before it happens, and even if they're right there's still the biggest part of the job: making the plays work. It's why, in advance of his brother's first playoff game, Mitch says, "We won't hear from Justin this week."

"I've got to come to accept that there's more to this job than just playing football," Justin says, "and that's something I'm continuing to work on. I still have plenty of room for improvement, but my responsibility is to my team and the Chargers organization, and my first priority is always football."

Asked if he is getting more comfortable with the ancillary requirements of the job, he says, "I'm trying to. I just don't like talking about myself. I was the middle of three brothers -- they got a lot of attention and I kind of got picked on. I deserved it, but having those brothers kind of pushed me to become a better human. My older brother [Mitch] did everything right: great grades, incredible athlete, just a great human being. I tried to live up to that."

He is 24 years old and famous in a city that defines it. He's incredibly wealthy, 6-foot-6, handsome and playing the most glamorous position in sports. And yet he seems to navigate the world in a state of uncomfortable self-consciousness, keenly aware of every eye that lands on him.

"Yeah," he says. "I feel like I've gotten better at that."

The offensive linemen will be watching film of practice, ostensibly for their own improvement, but inevitably something will catch their eye. It's a constant reminder that they miss so much; heads down, legs pumping, the best parts of the game taking place outside their field of vision. So someone will interrupt. "What was that? Run that back." So they do, and this room full of massive humans will sit back, shake their heads and laugh at the ball spinning through the air. "If you watch some of the throws," Pipkins says, "it's just absurd."

The question would be ridiculous in any other context, but somehow pertinent in this one: Does Herbert understand what everybody else sees?

"I don't know," Pipkins says. "And that's his thing: He wouldn't tell you if he did or he didn't."

Whether he knows it or not, whether the world knows it or not, the ball still spins, farther on a line than anyone thought possible. It tears almost violently through the air, providing the only validation needed.

Linemen point at a screen. Wait -- run that back. Quarterbacks watch from behind him and suppress the temptation to make a scene. Guys -- that's not normal. Broadcasters gush and coaches swoon. The stage will only get bigger, but none of it matters.

Its nose forever down, the ball's apparent lightness belies everything it carries with it: promise, expectations, demands. It continues along its way -- at 12½ rotations per second -- to wherever it will take him.

Each throw is a marvel to everyone except the man who creates it. He stands back, unimpressed, perhaps knowing this ball -- this gift -- has the power to take him places he isn't entirely sure he wants to go.

Justin Herbert Is Known for His Arm. But His Mental Game May Be Even Better.

By Steven Ruiz
The Ringer
August 31, 2022

In hindsight, it was probably a bad question. That became clear as Los Angeles Chargers quarterbacks coach Shane Day looked off into the spotless Costa Mesa sky searching for an answer. I had asked him to pick out the best play he'd seen Justin Herbert make during their first year working together, and he was struggling—not because he had trouble coming up with an answer. There were just too many options to choose from.

We'd set forth some parameters: For example, he couldn't pick Herbert's big throw against the Giants, the one when the QB fled the pocket after his left tackle got beat, planted at his own 33-yard line, and then launched a pass that dropped right into Jalen Guyton's hands for a touchdown.

It was probably the throw of the 2021 NFL season, so I thought it was too easy. "I wouldn't pick that one anyway," Day reassured me.

"There were several plays in the red zone," Day continued. "A lot of times as coaches, when we watch the red zone [film], we'll talk about how most of the touchdowns are scored off schedule. But [Herbert] doesn't. He goes through the progressions. He goes, bang, bang, bang and throws touchdowns."

Suddenly Day started doing an impression of a quarterback going through a progression, bouncing on his feet as he reads an imaginary defense. That seemed to jog his memory, and he finally had an answer: It's a 4-yard touchdown pass on the opening drive of L.A.'s 41-22 win over the Bengals in Week 13. Not a gargantuan throw, a buzzer-beating strike to force overtime in the season finale against Vegas, or the 40-yard hole shot Herbert threw against the Cowboys that looked like CGI. No, this random-ass 4-yarder from a game you probably barely remember.

Day cited that play because of what happened between the moment Herbert took the snap and when he let go of the ball. Most quarterbacks aren't able to get through a full-field progression in the open field—and doing it in the red zone, where everything is condensed, basically never happens, said Day. But on this play, Herbert considered and dismissed three different options before finally making a throw to Keenan Allen, who was considered a "checkdown" option.

To fully appreciate the work Herbert did to make that touchdown, we need to break down his progression step-by-step, starting before the ball is even snapped. The Chargers motion Guyton across the formation, and the cornerback across from him follows, leaving Mike Williams one-on-one on the outside. Herbert, thinking he's getting some sort of man coverage, wants to attack that matchup. But right before the ball is snapped, Bengals safety Jessie Bates audibles into a zone coverage that takes away Williams's post route.

So option one is off the table. Herbert's next read is running back Austin Ekeler in the flat, but the cornerback had passed Williams off to Bates and was in position to rally and make the tackle short of the end zone. On fourth-and-goal, that's a no-go.

So Herbert's eyes move on to tight end Jared Cook, who's running a shallow crossing route from the opposite side of the formation. Cincinnati had that covered, too: Sam Hubbard, who typically rushes the passer, had dropped back from the line of scrimmage.

At this point, the defense had clearly "won" the play call. Time and space is limited in the red zone, so if the defense can take away even just the first option for an offense, they consider it a minor victory. Cincinnati had smothered Herbert's first three options. Most quarterbacks in this situation would panic: scramble, throw the ball away, or just take a sack. But Herbert found another answer. His eyes went straight to linebacker Logan Wilson, who was manning his zone over the middle of the field. Allen was running an in-breaking route from the backside of the formation, and there was just enough of a throwing window to fit in a pass.

"If you freeze that, where that ball location was, and you see the type of traffic that he fit that in," said Chargers coach Brandon Staley, who also brought up the same play unprompted. "That's the only place it could have been on fourth-and-4."

It was a perfectly placed pass thrown with enough velocity to beat the multiple zone defenders. But as impressive as the throw itself may have been, the process Herbert used to get to it is what made it so special. That can be hard to appreciate when watching from home without knowledge of the play call or what's expected of the QB. It's certainly harder to appreciate than a 60-yard bomb thrown under pressure. But watch that play back at normal speed. There's just about 2.5 seconds between the time the ball is snapped and when Herbert starts his throwing motion—that's all he needed to make four-plus calculations before nailing a highly difficult throw.

Highlight reel throws have accelerated Herbert's climb up the quarterback hierarchy. Everybody loves a good deep ball. And his coaches concede that his generational arm—which helped him finish second in both completion percentage and yards per attempt on deep passes (20-plus air yards) in 2021, per Pro Football Focus—allows him to pierce windows that other quarterbacks can't. But the real magic is having the imagination and foresight to make those throws in the first place. Staley brings up one of the many season-saving throws Herbert made late in the Week 18 game against the Raiders:

The velocity is unreal, but Staley was in awe that Herbert knew exactly where to place it to navigate the gauntlet of Raiders defenders standing in the way—and to do it while allowing Williams to catch it in stride and pick up a big chunk of yards. In that way, there's an underappreciated depth to Herbert's game that can be obscured by his overwhelming physical talent. The throws are awesome, but if you ask his coaches, it's the young quarterback's advanced mastery of the position that makes him so special.

"So we kind of get numb to the splash plays—the deep throws, the runs down the sideline, all that," Day said. "But I think what's most impressive about Justin [is] when you watch him play quarterback ... he goes one-two-three through progressions, and I think that's what he does better than anything."

"It's not the splash plays; it's playing quarterback."

Before Staley started on the defensive coaching track, he played quarterback at Mercyhurst University and Dayton. That gives him a unique point of view when analyzing the job his young passer is doing. The Chargers coach knows how difficult it is to play the position at a high level ... and just how difficult it is to stop a quarterback when they're operating like that.

"Hitting five in the progression" is a phrase Staley used several times during our conversation after the Chargers' annual intra-squad scrimmage. On any given passing play, there are five eligible receivers for the quarterback to throw to. It's rare that a quarterback will even get a chance to look at three of them before getting rid of the ball or taking off. Tom Brady does it every now and then, but even for the GOAT, it can be tough to process all of that information in a matter of seconds.

Brady has been running these plays for more than 20 years, so it's not a surprise that he's able to do this. But Herbert just finished his first year in offensive coordinator Joe Lombardi's scheme and is already doing it with regularity.

"He's getting through five in the progression, and you just know that many young quarterbacks in their first year in an offense aren't getting there," said Staley. "I know that because I have to defend them. So I know who's making it through and who isn't. Most guys, they get one-two-three and then they're out of there. They're moving, they're running, and they're escaping. They're getting out of trouble. Where what this guy [is doing] is playing quarterback at the highest level already."

Staley says knowing that a quarterback is willing and able to exhaust all the options available to him puts tremendous stress on a defensive play caller. There are no perfect calls, and every coverage has a weak point. But the top quarterbacks sniff out those vulnerabilities quickly and exploit them with ruthless efficiency.

"I know that our margin of error is so small on defense," Staley said of playing against quarterbacks who can hit five in the progression. "If we're not connected, if we're not on it, and if the rush isn't coming, like, he's gonna make it."

While studying the playbook certainly helps Herbert get through his progression quickly, he also possesses the innate spatial awareness that's required to do it in the heat of a game. The 2020 first-round pick says when he's reading a defense from the pocket, he's reacting to stimuli rather than actually going through the thought process the coaches design for him. Those instincts are honed by putting in the work and taking coaching well, Herbert says, but there's obviously a limit to that.

“He sees a lot more than I can coach,” Day said. “He has just a great feel for, Hey, this guy’s open. I’m going to put the ball there and I’m going to progress through the read like this. He just has a very good sense of the whole position at a very young age.”

Day brought up Herbert’s game-winning touchdown pass to Williams in a pivotal mid-season win against the Steelers as an example. Williams was so open it looked like Pittsburgh had blown a coverage.

It hadn’t.

Early in the game, Los Angeles had called an identical pass pattern with the outside receiver running straight down the field and the slot receiver running a quick out. Herbert had noticed the corner “getting nosy,” as Day puts it, trying to jump the out route for an interception—what coaches might call a “trap” coverage. So when the Chargers, trailing by three, dialed up the concept late in the fourth quarter, Herbert was ready to take advantage. As soon as he saw the corner flip his hips toward the out route, Herbert fired off a far-hash hole shot that arrived early enough for Williams to erase the safety’s tackling angle with ease. After the score, the NBC broadcast cut to a tight shot of Herbert nodding at the Chargers sideline, as if to say, “Did you see how easy that was for me?”

“I think what he does better than a lot of players, when they see that, they’ll come out and predetermine it,” said Day, who’s worked with cerebral quarterbacks like Kirk Cousins and Alex Smith while coaching in the NFL.

“And then it won’t be there and they’ll get stuck. He really plays it straight, and if he reacts to the defense and the defense makes a mistake, he makes them pay.”

You would think a young quarterback making rapid-fire decisions like that would make more mistakes, but Herbert rarely does. He threw 15 interceptions last season, but that was the product of throwing a ton of passes while trying to keep a porous defense in games. The Chargers’ typical rotten luck also played a part. Herbert had the lowest turnover-worthy play rate of any quarterback in 2021 and was the only one who finished with more interceptions than turnover-worthy plays, per Pro Football Focus.

If you just look at Herbert’s pressured dropbacks, his 1.9 percent TWP rate would have still been tied with Tom Brady’s overall figure for second lowest in the NFL.

No quarterback is immune to pressure, but Herbert is the closest I’ve ever seen. The numbers in the last paragraph show he doesn’t throw dangerous passes into coverage. He finished top 10 in pressure-to-sack rate last year, so he doesn’t take hits either. He doesn’t really even scramble as much as he probably could, finishing around the middle of the league in scramble rate on pressured dropbacks.

Herbert is consistently able to find answers built into the design of the play—the “break glass in case of emergency” options that quarterbacks rarely have the poise to consider.

“He ‘plays the play’ better than anyone I’ve ever seen,” says Day. “If you want to take something away in man coverage, he’s gonna make you pay with his legs. But it’s not forcing it. And he never does that, which is very rare for a young quarterback. Usually [they] lean on those physical gifts.”

So where does Herbert go from here? How does he get better after throwing for 5,014 yards and 38 touchdowns last season? There aren’t any glaring issues that need to be addressed before his third year. Herbert said on The Ringer NFL Show this spring that sharpening his footwork, and how it syncs up with his receivers’ routes, was his big focus of his offseason training regimen. Both Staley and Day pointed to pre-snap operation—getting in and out of the huddle faster, fixing pass protections, checking out of bad play calls before snap, etc.—as an area of growth for the third-year pro. But these are just small improvements here and there. There is no need for wide-scale corrections.

“I think the second year in the offense, you got the terminology down, you know what the coaches expect, and now you can really concentrate on the fundamentals,” Day said. “You can concentrate on fixing protections, making checks in the run game, but we put a lot of that on him last year, too. ... I think he’ll continue to grow in those areas.”

By all accounts, Herbert is a diligent worker who is constantly tinkering with his game, finding ways to get better. Last season, it often seemed like he was just running the offense as it was designed on paper, and in 2022, he should have more creative freedom to put his own twist on the scheme. Staley says that more than anything, though, it’s the quarterback’s desire to learn and improve that has driven his early success.

“It’s not just natural passing—like, this guy is pouring into his game,” Staley said. “It’s not God-given talent. It’s God-given work ethic. He’s got an incredible will to be a great player. And I think that’s what people don’t realize because of his physical gifts. They don’t realize the will that he has inside.”

Herbert’s lore will soon spread to the masses.

Playing in the AFC West, the league’s toughest division, he’ll have quite the platform to prove himself in 2022. The Chargers are scheduled to play five prime-time games, including a Thursday-night showdown with Patrick Mahomes’s Chiefs in Week 2 and a Sunday-nighter against Russell Wilson’s Broncos in Week 6. Herbert has already beaten Mahomes in his own stadium, but that game was played at 1 p.m. in September. Outplaying top quarterbacks (especially ones with rings) on the national stage will give the QB’s reputation a boost. And getting this cursed franchise to the postseason would likely push Herbert into the MVP discussion and get more people comfortable with the idea that he is elite. But Day is already there.

“I have this huge folder [on my computer] called ‘Why Justin’s the greatest quarterback of all time,’” Day says.

“It’s like 67 plays. If I’ve had a bad day, I just watch that.”

If Day is right about Herbert’s ceiling, the Chargers won’t have too many of those in the foreseeable future.

The magic and mystery of Los Angeles Chargers quarterback Justin Herbert

By Mina Kimes
ESPN.com
September 2, 2021

EUGENE, ORE. – Let's talk about the haircut.

Justin Herbert looks away, visibly distraught. Not because he's embarrassed by the haircut in question -- in December, he showed up at a Chargers news conference looking less like a golden-haired surfer god and more like a military school cadet, a visually awkward transformation that launched a thousand memes -- but because talking about the haircut means he has to talk about his least favorite subject, the one that he's been trying to avoid ever since we sat down for breakfast: himself.

Herbert stabs his pancakes with a fork. "So John Lott, our strength and conditioning coach ... he said, 'I cut my son's hair all the time.' I was like 'Sweet, you can cut mine.'" He shoves a bite into his mouth. "He cut it in the weight room, and ... that's kind of it."

But why would you let your strength and conditioning coach ...

He shrugs. "I just didn't really want to pay for a haircut, to be honest."

Offensive Rookie of the Year, \$27 million contract, face of a newly relevant franchise. And yet.

Herbert's hair has grown back, but he still looks younger than his 23 years, hunching over his plate like the biggest kid at school. He's dressed in a T-shirt and shorts that were probably sent to him by Nike; he drives an Audi sedan that was definitely a gift from an auto dealership here in Eugene (he drove it more than 13 hours from Los Angeles). Later, when I point out a Whole Foods from the car, he says he doesn't shop at the grocery store because it's too expensive. "It's just calories," he explains.

Herbert barely looks at social media. He doesn't tweet, and only joined Instagram at the end of college, when his marketing representatives made him sign up. "I don't really run it," he tells me, a little sheepishly. When I mention his public persona is somewhat inscrutable, he seems pleased. "I think the less people know about me, the better," he says. "I don't want to read an article about myself."

Herbert glances at the tape recorder. We both laugh.

When the quarterback's representative told me we were meeting here, in a crowded breakfast spot on the fringe of Oregon's campus, I was curious to see how he'd handle interactions with fans. But in the hour or so since we've arrived, no one has approached him, save the waitress who keeps wordlessly refilling his coffee (Herbert, polite to a fault, stops midsentence to thank her every time). I ask him if he's surprised he hasn't been bothered, and he shakes his head. "I don't think people care a whole lot," he says.

That is, of course, preposterous. We're in Eugene freaking Oregon; Herbert's origin story is as woven into this college town's fabric (hemp, no doubt) as beer and bicycles and Phil Knight. And unlike Knight, he actually grew up here, in the shadow of Autzen Stadium, attending football games with his grandfather as a boy. Eventually, he'd star there as the school's quarterback, solidifying his local legend by returning for a senior season with the Ducks instead of entering the draft. His picture hangs on the wall of the restaurant where we're sitting, along with Oregon sports heroes like Sabrina Ionescu, Payton Pritchard and Marcus Mariota, all clad in green and yellow.

Herbert is friendly with Mariota; the former No. 2 overall pick, now a backup in Las Vegas, owns a house in Eugene not far from where Herbert's parents live. The two quarterbacks share a marketing agency, as well as a network of Oregon alumni and friends. And while their careers seem to be headed in different directions at the moment, their NFL journeys started in the same place, with the football world questioning their ability to lead.

If the draft is a marketplace of competing ideas, the league's disdain for quieter personalities under center is one of its staler tropes -- an investing principle that persists despite numerous counterexamples, as though introversion is tantamount to sloppy footwork or a wonky release. Herbert, with his generational gifts, could be the star whose success both catalyzes a scarred fan base and shatters the myth of the outspoken Alpha. But he's reluctant to clap back, demurring when nudged for comment on how he has been perceived. So I try a different tack, pointing out that Eli Manning, two-time Super Bowl MVP, was criticized early in his career for his reserved demeanor.

Herbert furrows his brow. "I wish I knew people on the Giants roster that could explain what Eli Manning was all about -- how he acted in the huddle," he says. "I bet when he stepped onto the field, he had control of the offense. Because he had to. And maybe he is soft-spoken off the football field, and maybe he doesn't love all the attention, but I don't think loving the attention and needing it is a requirement to be a good football player."

So, yeah: Justin Herbert doesn't want to talk about Justin Herbert. But that doesn't mean he has nothing to say.

When the Chargers' offense jogged onto the field in Week 2 last season, CBS play-by-play announcer Jim Nantz was stupefied. "Well how about this," he said to his booth partner, Tony Romo. "Justin Herbert's the quarterback on the first snap!" Nantz wasn't the only one surprised to see Herbert instead of Tyrod Taylor, the team's veteran starter. When tight end Hunter Henry saw the rookie in the huddle, he asked him what he was doing on the field. "I was like, just let me call the play," says Herbert, laughing.

The quarterback, like the rest of the world, didn't know at the time that Taylor had suffered a chest injury during warm-ups when the team doctor accidentally punctured his lung ("I felt horrible for him," Herbert says. "I wouldn't wish that on anyone.") Coach Anthony Lynn told the rookie less than 30 seconds before kickoff that he was starting in Taylor's place; as the news trickled through the sideline, star edge rusher Joey Bosa walked over and slapped him on the back.

The first drive was a blur. Because the pandemic had abbreviated the NFL's offseason program and eliminated the preseason altogether, Herbert, who operated exclusively out of the gun at Oregon, was unusually green. He spent part of the summer in Eugene calling plays in an imaginary huddle, his brothers Patrick and Mitchell radioing in messages using a walkie-talkie. Now he was lining up in SoFi Stadium, with the Chiefs' defense bearing down on him like homesteaders descending on untouched land. His teammates were awestruck. Easton Stick, the Chargers' third-string quarterback, recalls watching Herbert flip his protection early in the series and go through his progressions before checking down to running back Joshua Kelley for a 35-yard gain. "He had probably never done that a single time in training camp," Stick says.

Herbert blew everyone away in his debut, but L.A. lost in overtime to the reigning Super Bowl champs. Then, the next week, the Chargers lost again, and again ... going 2-8 over the next 10 games. Some of the losses were chaotic, and others a little freaky -- standard stuff in recent years for the Chargers, a team seemingly subject to the whims of a vindictive special-teams god. Still, optimism abounded. The results mattered less to fans than the performance of their young quarterback, and the early returns were strong. Despite playing behind a leaky offensive line, Herbert dazzled with his arm and his legs, Fred Astaire-ing his way through crowded pockets and launching bombs downfield. He broke Baker Mayfield's rookie passing record with 31 touchdowns, and the team ended the season with a four-game win streak.

While Herbert was taken sixth overall, behind Joe Burrow and Tua Tagovailoa, he did encounter a fair amount of skepticism during the pre-draft process. Many analysts admired his physical tools but questioned his decision-making; in his final season at Oregon, where he lacked elite weapons, the quarterback occasionally locked onto his first read before taking off with the ball. Over breakfast, I confess to Herbert that I underestimated him coming out of college, in part because I didn't properly account for the context around him compared to what Burrow and Tagovailoa were working with at LSU and Alabama. "I appreciate you saying that," he says, with a gentle smile. "It can't be easy."

Herbert says he generally tries to avoid consuming analysis or coverage of his career. Last year, the Chargers, along with the Rams, were featured on HBO's "Hard Knocks." Even though the rookie quarterback was featured in a few scenes, he says he skipped the series (Stick tells me Herbert tried to hide from the cameras). His teammates describe him as a homebody, more keen on watching movies -- he loves Christopher Nolan films, especially "Inception" and "Interstellar" -- and playing board games than going out. During camp last year, when the rookies were quarantined together in a hotel, he insisted on buying a copy of Settlers of Catan, the Risk-like strategy game where players gather resources to accrue territory, for the group. Gabe Nabers, the team's fullback, says they played nearly every night. "He loves that game," says Nabers. "He'll do anything to win."

"The first time he lost, he looked at whoever won -- maybe Gabe or me or some other guy -- and said: "That won't ever happen again," recalls Nate Gilliam, a guard on the practice squad. He giggles. "I was like, 'Uh, OK ... I just met you.'"

Before the season started, the three rookies moved into a house near the Chargers facility in Costa Mesa. Herbert's teammates say they quickly learned that their new roommate was a something of a neat freak, with meticulous handwriting, a color-coordinated closet and a thinly veiled distaste for any sort of mess. Nabers says he has seen Herbert's temper flare up only once, when Nabers tried to abandon his grocery store cart in the parking lot. "The first time we went shopping, I was like, 'Eh, I'll leave it right here,'" he says, pantomiming a gentle push. "And he said: 'No. Take it all the way back.'"

Herbert, who lives alone now (he recently adopted a cat, which he named Nova, after a weapon in the video game Call of Duty), doesn't dispute this characterization. "I like things neat," he says. "Things have a place, and they should be put back where they come from." His preference for order extends to the football field, where he loves feeling confident in his ability to sort through the mess on defense and Marie Kondo his way to a first down -- pre-snap recognition, in quarterback terms. One of his favorite moments as a rookie took place on a seemingly unremarkable play, when he recognized a defensive look from the Raiders, killed the call, then reloaded it after Las Vegas adjusted to his adjustment.

"It was like a game of chess," he says. "If you could do that on every play, every drive ..." he sighs a little. "I think that's where success comes from."

Perhaps. But it also came when Herbert was immersed in chaos -- dodging free rushers and hurling passes across his body, breaking the rules that apply to less gifted athletes. His private quarterback coach, John Beck, says Herbert's natural arm talent is what enables him to thrive outside of structure. "I feel fortunate to have been around some really good throwers," says Beck, who has worked with Matt Ryan and Drew Brees. "There aren't that many people on the planet like that."

If Herbert wasn't a professional football player, he'd probably be a doctor or a science teacher. His dad, Mark, taught high school biology; so did his grandfather, who lived near the family in Eugene. Growing up, he and his brothers used to spend hours at the pond by their grandparents' house, chasing snakes and trying to trap nutria, a rat-like species of rodent endemic to the Pacific Northwest. Holly, his mother, says Herbert used to bring home various animals as pets, including one fish that jumped out of its aquarium while the family was out and died. "He was devastated," she says.

After Justin and I finish breakfast, he takes me to his parents' house, a rambler where he and his brothers grew up. One of them, Mitchell, is visiting from New York (he's a student at Columbia medical school), so the two of us sit outside, on a dusty patio set in the backyard. Mitchell points to the stretch of lawn where he used to catch passes from his younger brother when they were kids. "He was just always so athletically gifted," says Mitchell. "Justin would never say this, but people knew he was different. That's just kind of how he's always been."

Earlier in the day, I had asked Herbert how he ended up playing quarterback growing up. In his usual self-deprecating manner, he told me it was probably because his dad was the team's coach; everyone else says he was an obvious athletic prodigy, the sort of kid who could sling perfect spirals when he was barely out of diapers. At 4, he was out-throwing older boys at track and field events. At 5, he was pulling off unassisted triple plays. His high school football coach, Lane Johnson, says he first witnessed Herbert's "Rookie of the Year"-like throwing power at a little league game, when a young Justin whipped off his catcher's mask to field a bunt, barehanded the ball and threw a kid out. At the time, he was in the second grade.

Holly says she has only one memory of ever getting a call about Herbert's behavior, when a teacher phoned her to ask if she could get him to go easier on the other kids at recess. Watching him play youth soccer was a little embarrassing, she says, because her son scored all of the goals. As a boy, she says, Herbert was equally reluctant to tout his own accomplishments. "When the spotlight was on him, it was uncomfortable -- he was not attention-seeking." Holly describes Justin as a classic middle child. "Sort of the odd man out," she explains.

Herbert's aversion to self-promotion explains, in part, why he wasn't more heavily recruited in high school. After breaking his femur at the beginning of his junior year, he shot up several inches, approaching his current height of 6-foot-6. One would think a kid the size of a power forward with a Howitzer attached to his right shoulder would've enticed football programs far and wide, but Herbert wasn't heavily recruited, in part because, well, he rarely left Eugene. He visited only one quarterback camp, at his dad's request, and told his parents afterward he didn't plan on attending any more. "I don't think he fully understood how unique of a talent he was," says Beck, who notes that Herbert also didn't compete in The Elite 11, the throwing event widely attended by the nation's top prospects. "He never knew how he stacked up next to everyone else."

In the end, Herbert ended up at his dream school, Oregon, cracking the starting lineup as a true freshman under head coach Mark Helfrich. Though the team was very mediocre, Herbert was clearly very good. But when Helfrich was fired, the new head coach, Willie Taggart, declined to name the young quarterback as the starter from the jump, kindling a faux controversy when he told the media he was looking for a real leader. From that point on, Herbert was relentlessly critiqued for his understated attitude, figuratively poked and prodded all the way until the Chargers picked him in the draft. The quarterback studied biology and scored numerous academic honors, with near-perfect grades. Was he too smart? An unnamed lineman told a reporter that Herbert was extremely shy. Could he steer a team? Someone wrote a cute story about how he started a fishing club in high school. Did he like fish more than people?! (No one actually said the last thing, but you get the idea.)

It had to be exhausting. Herbert never complained in public, but others did -- teammates, coaches, friends. Joey Harrington, the former Oregon QB who was also panned for his cerebral vibe, tells me he gets frustrated watching history repeat itself year after year. "I think people have an idea of what a quarterback or leader should be," he says. "But a lot of times in the NFL, people just want you to shut the f--- up and do your job. I don't care if you're trying to motivate me -- if you don't play well, you're costing me money."

I ask him if he has advised Herbert to ignore the noise, and he chuckles. "He doesn't really care. He doesn't listen to this s---; he just does him."

It's true that Herbert mostly ignored the discourse ahead of the draft. ESPN's Desmond Howard questioned his ability to win over a locker room compared to Burrow; the quote spread like an oil spill, but Herbert says he didn't hear it until the comments resurfaced this spring, after he won Offensive Rookie of the Year. He insists he didn't care -- but concedes he did have to answer pointed queries from NFL teams, some of whom shared similar concerns. "I'd go to a meeting and they'd say, 'Well, we've heard some issues about your leadership ability,'" he says. "I said, 'Listen, I'm myself. Ask my teammates.' I'd give them examples."

One of the stories he brought up, he says, was a moment from his performance against Washington State in 2019, when there was less than a minute left in the game and the team was down by one. "I remember being on the sideline and saying, 'We practiced this every Wednesday, the 2-minute drill. We're absolutely fine. We'll go out there, we know what we're doing.'" Herbert went 4-for-4 on passing attempts on the final drive, and Oregon won 37-35.

"If you can look people in the eye in the huddle and say we're fine when bullets are flying and things seem bad ... that's my idea of leadership," he says. "Being yourself. Not being a rah-rah guy. Being the same person always."

He doesn't deny that he's an introvert but contends that the label is widely misunderstood. Back in college, Oregon's offensive coordinator, Marcus Arroyo, gave Herbert a book called "Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking." Herbert remembers a section about a developmental psychologist who studied hundreds of children, exposing them to stimulating noises and visuals as infants. One might expect the babies who eventually became quiet kids to turtle inward in response to hectic environments, he says, but the future introverts were actually the infants who wiggled and danced the most.

The book's author, Susan Cain, wrote: "It's as if they process more deeply -- sometimes consciously, sometimes not -- the information they take in about the world."

The day after I meet Herbert and his family, his current and former teammates descend on Eugene for a charity golf tournament he's hosting at a local country club, to benefit a nonprofit that funds youth sports programs. As the morning fog rolls off of the pines, Chargers wideout Keenan Allen, conspicuously dressed in a bright violet polo with matching sneakers, is sitting next to a buffet, plowing through a plate of biscuits and grits. I pull up a chair and ask him what it was like playing with a rookie quarterback after seven seasons of catching passes from Philip Rivers. "Phil has the knowledge, the experience," he says. "But as far as athletic ability?" He snorts. "It's not even close. The guy is throwing 70-yard bombs as he gets hit."

The wide receiver points to a play against the Raiders in Week 9 called X Tower. Herbert was supposed to throw the ball to Mike Williams on a post route, with Allen clearing space -- "running for the love of the game," he says. But when the safety abandoned his responsibility and left Allen in space, Herbert, who was looking to his left at a double-covered Williams, abruptly flicked the ball nearly 30 yards downfield to Allen, who was caught by surprise when it spiraled into his outstretched hands.

"Experienced quarterbacks wouldn't even look at that route," says Allen. Herbert's extraterrestrial arm talent has made all of the receivers work harder, he continues, because no one can take any plays off. "Now, when you're the third guy on the team, you can't think ... OK the ball is going to Keenan, so you don't have to run your route. You can always get the ball at any point in time."

Herbert is Rivers' polar opposite in more ways than one. Allen can't remember a single instance of the rookie screaming in his presence; Rivers was, of course, well known for his antics on the field. "Phil's gonna yell every play," Allen says, cackling. "His team, the other team, he don't care. Phil yellin'." But the wide receiver is quick to point out that, for all of their ostensible differences, Rivers and Herbert share the same competitive fervor, it just manifests itself in different ways. During the Chargers' losing streak last year, he says, Herbert used to sit by himself at his locker for hours after games in full pads, eyes straight ahead. "I had to tell him, 'Bro: Let it go,'" says Allen. "'It ain't got nothing to do with you. Leave it out on the field.'"

Allen pauses, then adds: "It's good to have a guy like that. You know he wants to win."

While the Chargers advanced to the playoffs seven times during the Rivers era, the team made it past the divisional round only once and never reached the Super Bowl. Even when the roster was stocked with talent, the organization seemed to be mired in perpetual misfortune, or playing out a Sisyphian drama where Rivers was doomed to lead endless comeback attempts, seemingly always culminating in a shanked field goal. Between the bizarre losses, the pervasive injuries and ownership's decision to skip town, Chargers fans could be forgiven for jumping ship. But then, Herbert entered the picture, and the franchise's prospects flipped overnight. While Kansas City still looms as the favorite in the conference, there's a sense among fans -- and analysts -- that Los Angeles could be a dark horse in the playoffs.

In a league where quarterback play matters more than ever, drafting a game-changing passer is a little like finding a working compass; no matter where you are, or where your team is going, you can always find your way north. Today, the Chargers' compass is posted up on the 10th hole, hitting the same shot over and over, exchanging pleasantries with every group that stops by his tee. Allen does a double take when Herbert smacks a perfect drive over the treetops, shaking his head. "Relax, my guy!"

Herbert grins. "Sometimes you get a good one, sometimes you get a bad one."

A few minutes later, Pep Hamilton, the former quarterbacks coach in Los Angeles, pulls up in his golf cart. Herbert hits an identical shot (I watch him take the same swing about a dozen times, and almost all of them follow a similar arc), and Hamilton, now with the Texans, whistles. "Jesus, Herbert," he says. "You been doing that all day?"

The quarterback shrugs. "I've had some good ones, some not-so-good ones," he says, tossing his driver in his bag.

As Herbert's Chargers teammates pass through, I pull them to the side, looking for insights. "He's like a sponge in the building -- eats everything up, absorbs so much info, wants to know the playbook more than anything. I mean, he's a biology major," says Scott Quessenberry, a backup guard. Herbert sidles up to us, and Quessenberry gestures in his direction. "He's like: 'Do you know the lifespan of organisms in the ocean?'"

"I've never said that," says Herbert.

Groups of golfers cycle in and out; the sun goes down and the tournament ends, giving way to a party next to the green. Hundreds more people show up for the festivities, lining up for barbecue and drinks and a glimpse of Dan Fouts. I spot Hamilton standing alone with a beer and ask him what it was like teaching Herbert last year. "I think he has a lot more in common with Andrew Luck than any other quarterback I've had a chance to be around in the NFL," says Hamilton, who spent just over two seasons as the offensive coordinator of the Colts. "He's a quiet leader -- he leads by example. He has an innate toughness about him, and he garners field credibility and respect as a result."

Hamilton smiles. "You can be tough without announcing you're tough."

We find a table and watch as a small crowd gathers around a makeshift stage, where a hired performer is playing covers of wedding songs. The singer strums the opening bars of "Sweet Caroline," then stops and calls for Herbert to join him. The quarterback shakes his head, but the guy won't take no for an answer, so Herbert trudges up the steps, where he's flanked by a couple of his offensive linemen. Before long, all of the Chargers still at the event have joined them; one of the linemen is belting out the chorus, the kicker is swaying with his eyes closed, and Allen is dancing with somebody's mom. A minute or so into the song, I spot Herbert fading into the background, then trying to slip into the crowd. So do his teammates, who pull him back on stage.

Justin Herbert's misinterpreted personality becomes Chargers' gain

By Gilbert Manzano
Orange County Register
October 31, 2020

Jana Prikryl, the director of general science at the University of Oregon, didn't realize she had helped Justin Herbert change his major until a peer advisor identified him with a scream.

"Oh, my God, that was Justin Herbert," Prikryl recalled hearing when the 6-foot-6 Oregon quarterback left the office.

Herbert, now a star quarterback for the Chargers, submitted his change-of-major form to switch from biology to general science. Herbert was the second future NFL quarterback that Prikryl had assisted. Marcus Mariota was a general science major at Oregon a few years before Herbert.

"Embarrassingly, I did not know that he was Justin Herbert," Prikryl said in a phone interview last week. "I knew we had Justin Herbert and I knew he was fantastic, but I didn't put the face to the name."

Prikryl shouldn't be embarrassed. Not many knew of Herbert before he became a star at Oregon and the latest NFL rookie sensation.

Even now, as more become familiar with the name, not many truly know Herbert. Although, there were many guesses about his personality in the lead up to the 2020 NFL Draft.

Herbert was described as an introvert, also known as a shy person, and few NFL teams want a shy quarterback. But that didn't stop the Chargers from selecting Herbert with the No. 6 overall pick in April's draft.

They were well aware of Herbert's physical gifts, just like the other 31 teams, but perhaps the Chargers dug deeper in getting to know Herbert as a person.

"I think a lot of introverts get labeled with that word shy, lack of leadership," Chargers coach Anthony Lynn said. "My son is an introvert, so I raised one. I know what the tags are, but you just look at how people respond to them. That's all you need to know."

The Chargers did their personality research on Herbert and are now getting rewarded for it with weekly touchdown passes from his rocket right arm.

"Ultimately, this guy is just very talented," said Denver Broncos coach Vic Fangio, whose team hosts Herbert and the Chargers on Sunday. "Looks to me like he's made up of the right stuff to be a quarterback in the NFL, and fortunate for (the Chargers) and unfortunate for us, I think they found their quarterback for the next 10 to 15 years."

Herbert has only started five games, but he's played so well that questions are now being asked. How did a quarterback who is enjoying a historic NFL start that rivals Patrick Mahomes and Dan Marino become available at No. 6 for the Chargers?

Why didn't the Washington Football Team take Herbert second overall and why didn't other quarterback-needy teams leapfrog the Chargers in the draft order to take him?

Many draft experts described Herbert as having all the physical tools, but somehow that wasn't enough to shake the introvert label that hung like a dark cloud.

Of course, it wasn't all because of Herbert's quiet demeanor, but it likely played a part in why teams were skeptical, and it goes to show that swag isn't everything. Sometimes saying less means there's more of other leadership qualities.

Herbert won't say teams got it wrong by passing on him and making him the third quarterback selected – that's not his personality – but he did say the introvert tag was incorrect.

"I wouldn't say that's fairly accurate," Herbert said. "I think on the surface it might appear that way, but when I really get to know people and the team, I think a lot of the guys on the team would tell you differently."

Many draft experts and talking heads have said they got it wrong with Herbert, but the Chargers should thank them because all the personality speculation they provided before the draft became their gain.

Herbert celebrated his first NFL victory against the Jacksonville Jaguars last week by giving star wide receiver Keenan Allen an enthusiastic slap on the behind.

"Yes, sir!" Herbert shouted at Allen.

That doesn't sound like a shy quarterback.

Here's how family members, teammates and former professors described Herbert as a person and leader:

THE REAL HERBERT

College recruiters also got it wrong with Herbert.

Herbert was a three-star high school recruit with no Division I FBS scholarship offers heading into his senior year at Sheldon High in Eugene, Ore. Herbert was set on attending Montana State to play with his older brother, Mitchell, before Oregon made an offer.

"He did not go to (football) camps because he practiced with his high school team," said Mark Herbert, Justin's father. "When other guys were looking for exposure to go to colleges, Justin was practicing with the little kid down the street that he'd grown up with or another kid he played middle school football with or somebody else because that was going to be their team in the fall."

Justin Herbert has a reputation for not looking ahead. He prioritizes the present and enjoyed it by playing baseball, basketball and forming a fishing club in high school.

In college, it wasn't all about making it to the NFL. It was also about improving as a biology student. Herbert agreed to be a biology professor's assistant even though it took time away from football.

But helping the little kid down the street and having extracurricular activities didn't help Herbert in the college recruiting process and it was probably ignored by some NFL teams.

Multi-sport prep athletes have become a thing of the past. It's now about specializing in one sport and getting as much exposure as possible by participating in 7-on-7 tournaments, creating Youtube highlight videos and announcing every college offer received on Twitter.

You can't find Herbert on Twitter, although he does have an Instagram account.

"He didn't enroll early (at Oregon) because he wanted to play his senior year of baseball with his buddies," Mark Herbert said.

Justin Herbert stayed in one place before the NFL called, never leaving Oregon while the university's coaching staff changed twice in four years.

Mark Herbert recalled being asked by a local reporter if Herbert would consider transferring if he lost the quarterback job when Willie Taggart replaced Mark Helfrich as head coach in 2017.

"What are you talking about?" the older Herbert remembered asking. "I don't understand the line of question. What's Justin going to do? Get his degree in biology, he's gonna play football and he's gonna go to medical school or he's going to go to the NFL."

"I don't know what he's going to do, but he's not leaving. That's not what Justin does."

Justin Herbert also didn't leave when Mario Cristobal took over in 2018 and then stayed for his senior season, despite being projected as a first-round selection.

Sticking around for an extra year to play with friends gave pundits more time to analyze Herbert as armchair psychologists.

He wasn't viewed as the committed teammate who wanted to help win a Pac-12 championship. Instead, he was the quarterback who struggled against Arizona State and lacked the alpha-male personality to lead an NFL locker room.

But Herbert proved in high school and college that he doesn't run from adversity and makes it work with what he has. Those are the leadership traits that went unnoticed, and he's showing it again in the NFL by elevating undrafted players such as Jalen Guyton, Tyron Johnson and Donald Parham and doing it without his top offensive linemen, Bryan Bulaga and Trai Turner.

Herbert gets everyone involved and is not afraid to ask for advice. But all of that was lost during the lead up to the draft and it became the Herbert family's gain.

Mark and his wife, Holly, were rooting for their son to play for the Chargers. They have family ties to Southern California.

Justin Herbert's paternal grandfather, Roger, played football and ran track for Fullerton College before transferring to Oregon State. Herbert's maternal grandfather, Rich Schwab, grew up in San Diego before playing football at Oregon.

"We looked at (the draft order), 'Hey, Los Angeles all the way.'" Mark Herbert said. "Oh my goodness, travel-wise, and family-wise, team-wise ... a lot of things pointing to the Chargers."

Mark Herbert credited the grandfathers for Justin's professionalism and said his son got plenty of good qualities from his mother Holly.

"I'd say Justin is fiercely loyal and fiercely focused and dedicated and definitely gets that from her," Mark said.

Justin Herbert's love for science likely came from his father, who was a science and biology teacher for middle school and high school students.

HERBERT, THE COMEDIAN

Chargers defensive tackle Linval Joseph played four seasons with recently retired Giants quarterback Eli Manning. The two-time Super Bowl champion was also described as an introvert.

Joseph sees similarities between Manning and Herbert.

"I felt like there was two different types of Elis," Joseph said. "You have funny Eli and then you have 'get the job done' Eli. Two minutes in the quarter, fourth quarter, need this drive and he woke up, and when he woke up, he made those big throws, made those big plays, and I see that in Herbert. I really do."

"I feel like he's going to have a great career and once we put everything in order, he's going to be elite. He's going to be great."

Chargers rookie wide receiver K.J. Hill can attest to Herbert's comedic side. Hill explained why Herbert was shown in a scene of "Hard Knocks" doing a lengthy "whassup" from the popular Budweiser commercials.

"I told him you gotta say the 'whassup' in the huddle," Hill said. "I told him to say it in the huddle before he called a play or something like that. It was something silly like that. He was practicing basically before he did it to get my OK if it was good or not."

Herbert and Hill texted each other after being drafted by the Chargers and have become close friends.

"Inside the locker room, (he's) making jokes, talking," Hill said about Herbert. "He has not been a quiet guy since I've been around him. We're always talking about anything and everything, so I feel like he got a great personality and great competitor side that I love about him, too."

Hill said he's a better "Call of Duty" player than Herbert, but he gave his quarterback the edge in golf.

"Justin likes to golf," Hill said. "I told him the only close thing I get to golf is Top Golf."

HERBERT, THE TUTOR

Mark Carrier, a professor at Oregon, was in need of a teacher's assistant for his Biology 212 course. Herbert was one of his best students, but Carrier assumed he didn't have time to teach the material to other students for the upcoming quarter.

"I figured no way a football player is going to have the time to do that, but in passing one day, I told him, 'Hey, you know if you weren't so busy being the quarterback of the football team I would definitely offer you this role,'" Carrier recalled.

Without hesitation, Herbert took the offer and assisted the class of about 200 students.

"It's a pretty interactive class time," Carrier said. "You can tell if people are going to hide what they know or help others along. Justin was the kind of guy who helped the people around him.

"It was clear to the people around him he understood the material more quickly than most. He didn't struggle as much as people tend to do. It's a very challenging course. He was very helpful to the people around him."

At the time, it wasn't certain that Herbert would be a top NFL draft pick. Carrier said Herbert expressed interest in a career in medicine or becoming a researcher.

"I was just really interested with how everything worked out (in biology) and science and kinda how your body processes things and kinda explaining the natural phenomena that happened around us," Herbert said.

Biology sounds as complex as breaking down NFL defenses. Herbert being able to grasp intricate material at a fast pace while also teaching it is perhaps another leadership sign (and an indicator of future success) that went unnoticed.

"That might be a reach, but it's a good analogy," Herbert said about comparing football to biology. "Having a good understanding of defenses, coverages and things like that. It definitely helps."

Herbert said his top passion has always been football. He'd said he would likely be a coach right now if he wasn't an NFL quarterback.

"Hopefully I'd be coaching the game or somewhere involved in the game," Herbert said. "I just love football too much to not be around it."

That's the real Justin Herbert. Passionate about football, but with other interests. Not the loudest, but a quiet genius with an occasional comedic side.

"I think he's more outgoing than what people give him credit for, but that's OK," Lynn said.

The Chargers said that's OK to Herbert's personality and now, as Fangio mused, they stand to reap the rewards for years to come.

J.C. JACKSON

J.C. Jackson eager to get back on field for LA Chargers after season-ending injury

By Tyler Dragon
USA Today
June 14, 2023

COSTA MESA, Calif. — Cornerback J.C. Jackson's 2022 campaign didn't go as anticipated.

As one of the top players on the open market, Jackson signed with the Los Angeles Chargers on a five-year, \$82.5 million deal during free agency last year and he didn't live up to expectations. He allowed a 70% completion percentage and gave up four touchdowns in five games. In his fifth game, which was Week 7 against the Seattle Seahawks, he sustained a season-ending ruptured Patellar tendon injury that required surgery.

Jackson finished the year with just 15 tackles, two pass deflections and zero interceptions. Production far below the "Mr. INT" status he gave himself when he compiled 25 interceptions in his first four seasons as a member of the New England Patriots.

"I felt like (expletive). I haven't done anything (and) got hurt. I just got paid. I still got to prove to my teammates and to myself that I'm still 'Mr. INT.' I didn't do (expletive) last year. I felt like (expletive), honestly," Jackson said of his 2022 season. "I didn't feel good."

Jackson is currently rehabbing his injured right knee. He's been at the Chargers' team facility for most of the offseason. He was working off to the side during Tuesday's mandatory minicamp.

The cornerback admitted the biggest challenge for himself this offseason has been psychological. But he's determined to prove he's still one of the top cornerbacks in the NFL.

"Most of it is mental. Every day is a challenge. You get bored sometimes. You'd be up sometimes by yourself rehabbing. It's all mental. You got to tell yourself every day that you want it. You want to be the best. I can do it. I'm gonna come back 110%. You got to have that confidence," Jackson said. "If you don't have that confidence you're not gonna do nothing in life. That's how I look at it. If you don't have confidence, you're not gonna succeed."

The 27-year-old Jackson is eager to get back on the field. He has an appointment with Dr. Neal ElAttrache on June 19 that will give him a better prognosis when he can return to action. He told reporters Tuesday that mentally he wants to be ready for training camp and Week 1.

"He's progressing. He's been working really hard," Chargers coach Brandon Staley said of Jackson. "This summer will be important for him."

Whenever Jackson does get back on the field, he's confident he'll return to the level that earned him a 2021 Pro Bowl invitation and a mega contract.

"I'm ready to get back out there. I love this game of football and I love to compete," Jackson said. "I'm excited for this year."

And his teammates echo his sentiments.

"I see him every day just grinding away," Chargers defensive lineman Sebastian Joseph-Day said of Jackson. "I expect a huge comeback from him."

Chargers CB J.C. Jackson 'right on track' in injury rehab

By Lindsey Thiry
ESPN.com
June 13, 2023

COSTA MESA, Calif. -- As the Los Angeles Chargers opened mandatory minicamp Tuesday, cornerback J.C. Jackson watched from the sideline as he continued to work through rehabilitation drills.

Nearly eight months removed from surgery to repair a ruptured patellar tendon in his right knee that sidelined him after Week 7 last season, Jackson expressed optimism that it won't be long until he is cleared to return to football activities.

"I'm right on track," Jackson said of the 7 to 8 month recovery timeline provided by doctors. "Almost there."

"He's progressing. He's been working really hard," coach Brandon Staley said of Jackson. "This summer will be important for him."

Jackson's surgery was performed last October by Dr. Neal El Attrache, who he is scheduled to meet with again next week to gain clarity on a return date.

Jackson, 27, sounded hopeful that opening training camp with the team in late July remained a possibility.

"I'm expecting to come out here and practice every day," Jackson said. "That's how I'm taking it."

Ahead of the 2022 season, the Chargers signed Jackson -- the NFL interceptions leader (25) over the previous four seasons with the New England Patriots -- to a blockbuster five-year, \$82.5 million contract.

He was anticipated to become a pillar of a defense that included outside linebackers Joey Bosa and Khalil Mack and safety Derwin James Jr., all of whom return in 2023.

However, Jackson missed Weeks 1 and 3 because of an ankle issue and struggled to adapt to Staley's scheme in five starts.

When asked about his season ending prematurely after signing a lucrative deal and producing uneven play, Jackson said he "felt like s---."

"Haven't done anything. Got hurt. And I just got paid," said Jackson, who finished the season with 15 tackles and two pass deflections. "I still got to prove to my teammates and to myself that I am still Mr. INT. I didn't do s--- last year."

Jackson described the recovery process as mentally taxing but said it has provided a unique opportunity to spend more time learning. "I've been grinding, meeting with the coaches every other day, learning, just breaking down the defense so it can slow down," Jackson said. "I'm going to be ready to go this year."

Staley said Jackson would be expected this season to return to defending their opponents' top receiver.

"That's what we brought him here to do," Staley said. "Fundamentally, we're asking him to do the things that he's done his whole career, just it's with us. It's just getting that comfort zone of being around the guys that you play with ... 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."

His family was scared he'd go to prison. How J.C. Jackson kept his NFL dream alive

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
July 25, 2022

LAKELAND, Fla. — They sold their house, their furniture, Dad's truck and his motorcycle.

Lisa Dasher and Chris Jackson surrendered their jobs and their friends and trekked 140 miles north, joining Lisa's oldest daughter in her apartment — her one-and-a-half bedroom apartment.

"We was living in the half," Lisa recalled, smiling.

Dasher, Jackson and their son, J.C., were three of the seven people wedged into the space, their lives squeezed for the most basic of reasons: They needed money.

Yes, the bills were significant. And so were the circumstances. They had to pay the attorneys trying to keep J.C. out of prison.

"Every success he's having now is very emotional to me because I know the path," Lisa said. "I tell people, 'You don't understand everything that we had to sacrifice to be here.' It just wasn't easy. But I'm glad we made it, man."

In March, J.C. Jackson signed with the Chargers, accepting a five-year contract worth up to \$82.5 million, \$40 million of which is guaranteed.

A team rebuilding its defense added one of the NFL's top cornerbacks, a tough, resilient, playmaking star coming off his first Pro Bowl appearance and four seasons removed from being a Super Bowl champion.

But the Chargers added more than that because Jackson hardly arrived on his own, his path cluttered by obstacles discouraging to staggering, including a trial that threatened not just his football but also his freedom.

Navigating such a twisting, tortured journey required the strength of more than just one man.

"J.C.," his dad said, "hasn't walked alone in his shoes."

Before he was a Hall of Famer, Edgerrin James was a blocking back, burying opposing tacklers for Chris Jackson during their time together at Immokalee High. James was two grades behind Jackson and, playing in a stacked program, had to wait his turn.

"That's how it was back in the day," said John Thomas, a longtime Immokalee coach. "The talent's usually lined up pretty good around here."

They called Chris "Action Jackson" because of his athletic prowess. He and his crew labeled themselves "The Raw Dogs" and set out to properly represent their home.

Immokalee is an everyone-knows-everyone town deep in southwest Florida and the heart of industrial agriculture in the United States. They grow an abundance of tomatoes and watermelons down here, a dusty place where there's genuine value in the dirt.

In the Mikasuki language, Immokalee means "My Home," and the pride of the people who choose to stay can be as thick as the July humidity.

"If you gonna make it out of Immokalee, you gotta get it from the mud," said Jackson, 47. "Nothing comes easy in Immokalee. It taught me to grind, to be a strong man."

Jackson had plans to leave, at least for a while, to pursue a playing opportunity at a small school in Mississippi. Lisa, who was a state-qualifying sprinter at Immokalee, remembers dropping him off at the bus station in Fort Myers and waving goodbye through streaming tears.

But after only a week or so, Jackson was on his way home, where he and Lisa soon enough were welcoming their son.

"I wanted to be in J.C.'s life," said Jackson, who was raised by his grandparents. "Everything I knew about football, I wanted to put into him."

They spent hours together in the backyard, Chris firing passes to J.C. and urging him to catch with his fingertips. At age 4, J.C. was spinning around on his father's command and snagging footballs spiraling toward his face.

Dad was training the boy's hands, hands that two decades later would carry the reminder of an Immokalee upbringing yet still ignite an NFL career rooted in the ability to catch passes thrown by the opposition.

When he was 5, J.C. scored the first touchdown of his life. It was flag football and he slipped to the outside and sprinted away from everyone. Well, almost everyone.

"I was running right with him down the sidelines, jumping and screaming," Lisa said. As she did so, she yelled, "He's gonna play for the Florida Gators! He's gonna play for the Florida Gators!"

That was the plan too, after J.C. was a four-year varsity starter at Immokalee, his two all-state plaques as a wide receiver now hanging near the school's main entrance, not far from the plaque commemorating his All-America selection as a defensive back.

Thomas has spent a quarter-century coaching at Immokalee and was in charge of the receivers when he convinced Chris that his son was too talented to play on the freshman team and instead belonged on varsity.

J.C. needed roughly one-half of one game to prove his position coach correct.

"He lit up the stadium right from the start," said Thomas, who recalls sitting in film sessions on Saturday mornings and wondering what the opposing coaches were thinking trying to cover J.C. one-on-one.

The talent was obvious, and so were the other gifts, most notably the long and athletic body that suggested J.C. could be special, as Chris remembers it, as early as elementary school.

Fort Myers-based trainer LeDondrick Rowe first worked with J.C. during the kid's sophomore season in high school. All the Immokalee players were lined up in the end zone as Rowe walked along and introduced himself one by one.

"I got to J.C. and asked him what position he played," Rowe said. "He told me wide receiver. I said, 'Dude, you're a defensive back.' Those were our first words: 'You look like an NFL defensive back.'"

All that work J.C. and his father logged in the backyard — sometimes out there past midnight — was boosted by another level of training, a tough-love regimen Chris employed throughout his son's development.

He explained that he "used to cuss J.C. out, just talk harsh to him, 'cause I knew what it takes to make it." Lisa said she often defended her son as Chris assured her his methods would pay dividends.

During an NFL game two seasons ago, while playing with New England, Jackson was beaten twice by receiver Breshad Perriman for touchdowns — 50 yards in the second quarter and 15 in the third — the latter putting the New York Jets up 27-17.

Following the second score, a television camera caught Jackson slumped on the bench, his head hanging.

"I said, 'Lisa, I'm in his ear again right now,'" Chris said, edging forward in his seat. "J.C. was hearin' his daddy. I said, 'Watch, he's gonna make a play.'"

In the final six minutes of the fourth quarter, Jackson picked off Joe Flacco. Four minutes later, New England tied the score en route to a 30-27 victory secured on the game's last snap.

"All that talking," Lisa said, "I think that's what kept J.C. strong through everything."

During his four years of two-way high school stardom, J.C. emerged as a recruit so sought after that Lisa remembers hiding when someone would show up unannounced and knock on the door.

She also recalled how the Miami coaches arrived one day for dinner in a series of black SUVs with dark-tinted windows. "They rolled up," Lisa said, "like the President."

But J.C. chose Florida — fulfilling his mother's Pop Warner projection — because he was drawn to then-coach Will Muschamp and his defensive coordinator, D.J. Durkin.

It was a shoulder injury that resulted in Jackson redshirting his first season. It was an off-field incident that cost him the rest of his Gators career.

In April 2015, Jackson was arrested and charged with four felonies in connection with an armed robbery in Gainesville. He and two companions were involved, though Jackson no longer was present when the robbery occurred, according to the police report.

Still, he faced those four counts, each carrying a minimum sentence of 10 years and a maximum of life in prison.

"I was scared. Forty years in jail? I might be dead and gone when he gets out."

— Chris Jackson, on the charges his son faced in connection to a 2015 armed robbery

When officials at Florida informed Jackson he no longer was welcome there, his desire to continue playing led him to Riverside City College, three time zones from Gainesville and an immeasurable distance from SEC country.

That November, Jackson's lone season at Riverside was interrupted when he had to return to Florida for his trial, which included five days of excruciating uncertainty for parents convinced their son had done nothing wrong but knowing a jury would make the ultimate decision.

Each morning, Chris and J.C. would drive from the cramped apartment in Lakeland to Gainesville, leaving before the sun came up, traveling the 120 miles one way in Chris' orange Dodge Charger.

Chris said they had to "scrape up gas money" to make it through the week. One of the attorneys the family hired bought J.C. a suit to wear in court.

On those otherwise quiet drives, Chris played what he called "my church music" — "Be Encouraged" by gospel singer William Beeton was in heavy rotation.

J.C. would sit back in the passenger seat and, in the darkness, Chris would stroke his son's head. "Just lovin' on him," Chris said.

"I was scared," the father acknowledged. "Forty years in jail? I might be dead and gone when he gets out."

On the morning of the final day, Lisa said she wept while wrapping her arms around J.C.

"I hugged him hard 'cause I didn't know what the verdict was going to be," she said. "I told him, 'Remember this: I love you so much.' He said, 'Ma, I'll be back.' I'm looking at him like, Do you not know what you're up against?"

Chris said he sat in the back of the courtroom each day with tears in his eyes as he listened to the prosecutor characterize his son as a criminal. At some point during the week, Chris said he stopped eating.

Lisa couldn't bring herself to attend the proceedings. She remained in Lakeland where she had just started a new job, working in early child care. She wasn't allowed to have her cell phone on during business hours, meaning she spent that entire final afternoon unaware of her son's fate. Asked to explain the experience, Lisa said, "H-e-I-I."

Up in Gainesville, the jury deliberated for approximately two hours before — in the late morning four days before J.C.'s 20th birthday — acquitting him on all four counts.

At the end of her work day, Lisa retrieved her phone from a desk drawer and turned it on.

"There was so many calls, so many messages," she said. " 'Not guilty! Not guilty! Not guilty!' All of a sudden, I'm crying and crying and trying to call everybody back at once."

The jury sided with J.C. after hearing testimony that he arranged the visit in which the robbery occurred but was not otherwise involved. His attorneys argued that the evidence against him was circumstantial.

After being cleared, Jackson returned to Riverside, a step that helped put his football career back on track, leading him to Maryland, where he reunited with Durkin, then the Terrapins coach.

In his first Maryland practice, an oft-repeated story goes, Jackson intercepted three passes. He made 23 starts over two seasons and became a draft prospect some observers forecast to go as high as the second round.

"I can't let it go unknown how much we appreciate what the people at Maryland did for J.C.," said Lisa, now 48. "We thank them so much."

It was after the combine that Jackson — back home and sitting at a Tropical Smoothie Cafe having lunch with his mother — revealed how depressed he was at times in Riverside.

"He just started crying," Lisa recalled. "I said, 'J.C., what's wrong?' He said, 'You just don't know. It was so hard out in California. I was sleeping on floors, not having food. That was the time I wanted to just forget it all.' It hurt me to my heart hearing that because I had no idea that he was struggling that bad. None of us knew."

Now, though, all the pain, all the sacrifice would be swept away by the 2018 draft. Having since moved into their own apartment in Lakeland, Chris and Lisa hosted a viewing party.

J.C. was surrounded by the love and support of more than a dozen family members and friends. There was food, including cupcakes made to look like little footballs.

Over three days and 256 selections, the name J.C. Jackson was never announced. Teams took 28 cornerbacks and passed on him every chance they had.

If he was going to make it in the NFL, this cornerback with all the ball skills was going to have to reach out and steal someone else's roster spot as an undrafted free agent.

And that's exactly what Jackson did with New England, first starring during scout-team repetitions, flustering at times even all-everything quarterback Tom Brady.

As training camp unfolded, Jackson began getting time with the first-stringers. He ended his rookie season appearing in 13 games, with five starts, and launched a four-year stretch in which he intercepted an NFL-best 25 passes.

Those hands, first trained by Dad, soon secured the second-largest signing bonus in Chargers history while offering another example of Jackson's perseverance.

When his boy was just 7 or 8, Chris got J.C. a job at a watermelon processing plant to expose him to the exact sort of existence he wanted his son to avoid in life.

While he was positioned along a conveyor belt, J.C.'s hand became entangled in the machinery. Seeing blood oozing everywhere, Chris grabbed his son and carried him to a nearby fire station.

The boy spent almost a week in the hospital and required surgery to restore the mangled mess hanging from his arm. In his right hand today, Jackson literally holds the scars of his hometown.

"J.C. is Immokalee," said Rowe, the Fort Myers-based trainer. "I saw a kid struggle. I saw a kid grow. I saw a kid overcome. If you're not tough, Immokalee can overwhelm you."

Over his first three NFL seasons, Jackson played on an entry-level deal before receiving a one-year, \$3.4-million contract for 2021.

When he signed with the Chargers, he earned a \$25-million bonus on the spot. During the next two seasons, he is guaranteed another \$15 million in base salary. The kid from Immokalee had made it, had indeed gotten it from the mud.

His big payday came after Jackson watched his father work in everything from corrections to sanitation — "throwin' trash," Chris described it — before becoming a delivery driver.

Lisa has worked extensively with teenage mothers and is employed at Pace Center for Girls.

There are plans for Jackson to buy his parents a new home, something closer to Tampa ... maybe near the water.

In May, he bought each an Audi. Lisa drives hers regularly, while Chris has his in storage. For now, he prefers the 2011 orange Charger, which has eclipsed 200,000 miles.

Chris' Audi was delivered while he was at work, with no advance warning, a surprise that came with a sticker price of \$181,790.

He simply was called outside to the parking lot, where the car was hidden under a cover, with a big red bow on the hood.

There also was a note from J.C., who signed it "#27."

"Without U," the note read, "There Is No Me."

DERWIN JAMES JR.

Once called 'Pooh Bear,' Derwin James Jr.'s Florida legacy began with famous father

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
July 27, 2022

HAINES CITY, Fla. — They can still feel the reverberations around here, the beautiful aftershocks from the ferocity produced when he flexed his uncommon level of athleticism.

Derwin James' exploits echo at his alma mater to this day, even breaking the midsummer stillness of the grassy countryside that surrounds a football field flanked by a cemetery.

Yes, the locals proudly suggest, James rocked the opposition with enough force to stir the dead.

"He came at you like a flash, just a black streak comin' and then, 'Boom!' " said Olin Gee, who spent more than three decades coaching at Haines City High. "When he got to you, he was lightin' you up good."

Fans of the Chargers can nod knowingly at Gee's recollections, their eyes confirming as genuine any tale of James' ability to separate a man from his senses.

An All-Pro as a rookie, James now enters his fifth year in the NFL coming off a season in which he made 118 tackles and his second Pro Bowl.

But here's what Chargers fans don't know: Gee wasn't talking about that Derwin James — but their Derwin James.

He was recalling the original Derwin James, the father of the Chargers' safety, the Haines City Hornet they nicknamed "Blue" because, when he dropped his shoulder into someone, the poor mark turned that most unnatural of colors.

"The son was a hell of a hitter," said Gee, who coached both versions of Derwin James. "But the father, he came with bad intentions every time. People ran away from him in high school."

So the story of Derwin James Jr. can rightly start only here, with Derwin James Sr., who gifted his son everything from athletic prowess to mannerisms to an easy smile, helping shape the boy many in these parts still call by a childhood nickname: "Pooh Bear."

It was Derwin Jr.'s sister, Shaderrika, who recently had to be reminded of the order of business in this family.

"She told me, 'You act just like 'Pooh Bear,' " Derwin Sr. recalled with that identifiable grin. "I told her, 'No, 'Pooh Bear' acts just like me.' "

He was a high school running back, as well, Derwin Sr. blessed with the kind of speed that made him an annual participant in Florida's state track championships.

But he really excelled at middle linebacker, where he could smear chaos sideline to sideline and orchestrate the defense like another coach, making sure everyone was lined up properly.

If that again sounds familiar to Chargers fans, well, Derwin Sr. passed those qualities to his son, too, Derwin Jr. one of the few NFL defensive backs who calls signals in the huddle.

"His father was faster than Derwin," said longtime Florida State assistant Odell Haggins, who recruited both Derwin Jameses. "His father would knock your face off. His daddy was unreal."

Yes, Derwin Sr. had the game. He just didn't have the grades, his academic issues preventing him from fully seizing his athletic talents.

During his final year of high school, Derwin Sr. discovered he was going to be a father. Derwin Jr.'s mom, Shanita Williams, gave birth the summer before her senior year.

She had to give up going to college and running track at Haines City, where she also stood out as a sprinter.

Shanita took one job at the nearby Publix and another at a day-care center and got her own place, a \$315-a-month one-bedroom apartment. She said she still graduated on time and with honors.

Derwin Sr. was at college then, his football career expiring after two seasons at a small school in Michigan because of a knee injury.

He returned to Florida and remained with Shanita until 2001, the couple splitting when their son was 4, by which point they were convinced they had produced something special.

Although he was "Pooh Bear" — Shanita: "He always looked like a little bear to me, so plump and round and hairy." — Derwin Jr. was tough as a toddler, a burly ball whose first word actually was "ball."

By middle school, he was running past, around or through kids his size and larger.

"You could see where Derwin was going with it," Shanita said. "Even that early on I felt it. I believed it."

There remain conflicting accounts about how many times a young Derwin Jr. was hit by a car while riding his bike. Some say it happened twice; others contend it was three times. Either way, the point is "Pooh Bear" grew up as a rumbly sort of child.

Derwin Sr. said he was coaching a team of 6- and 7-year-old kids when he finally relented to the tugging on his pants leg and allowed Derwin Jr. to join them. He recalled his boy being 4 at the time.

"He was just begging to play," Derwin Sr. said. "We put that kid in some pads and the rest is history."

Having worked two places at once when Derwin Jr. was an infant, Shanita said she assumed another significant responsibility later. She emphasized the importance of succeeding in school, too, understanding the possibilities awaiting her firstborn.

"That was my other job," she said. "I made sure I did that."

Derwin Jr. began high school next door in Auburndale, where he arrived with a familiar name and too much talent and want-to to go unnoticed. He was long and lanky, an eye-grabbing sort of sleek.

The kid's body was different. Derwin Jr. was stronger than he appeared to be, ran faster than he looked to be moving and could dunk a basketball with an almost bizarre ease.

"It was crazy how freakish of an athlete he was at 15," said Auburndale basketball coach Eric Robinson. "He had that crazy athletic build. His body looked all — I don't know how else to say it — crazy."

Still, the rules were simple as presented by the man who was then the school's head football coach. No freshmen on varsity. Period.

Rick Smith was a defensive assistant at the time and still can recall the reaction when the edict was presented.

"Every one of the varsity coaches was like, 'There's no way you're keeping Derwin down,' " Smith said. "He was probably our best player already. I mean, we almost said it in unison."

By then, they had identified the enormous potential and everything else that suggested Derwin Jr. was a rarity.

The kid would lift weights to the point where coaches had to tell him to stop. He was smart and continually asking questions because he wanted to be smarter. He didn't just watch film; Derwin Jr. decoded it.

In something that felt like an instant, he was escaping his father's shadow as an ascending college football recruit but also reflecting light back on everything Derwin Sr. had been by reminding locals of the stories of "Blue" James.

Derwin Jr. has said he knew he wanted to play for Florida State as early as first grade. Then-Seminoles head coach Jimbo Fisher wasn't that far behind in that thinking.

Haggins visited Auburndale during Derwin Jr.'s first season, noticed him lining up all over the place — on both sides of the ball — and then looked at a roster. Speaking to no one in particular, Haggins recalled saying aloud, "You're telling me that's a freshman?"

When he returned to Tallahassee, Haggins said he walked into the football offices and, so excited about what he had just witnessed, couldn't resist presenting his findings in a way what would be memorable.

He opened by apologizing to Fisher for missing on Derwin Jr., admitting a kid that noticeable somehow had ducked his radar. Then Haggins played the video from Auburndale, pointed to Derwin Jr. streaking across the screen and told Fisher he was a senior.

With Fisher about to explode, Haggins said he laughed and informed his boss that Derwin Jr., in truth, was just a freshman. Fisher's response: "We need to offer him now!"

The offer did come, after just another day or two, Haggins remembering tears pooling in the eyes of both Derwin Sr. and Jr., who committed immediately. They called Shanita with the news and she cried, as well.

During his two years at Auburndale, Derwin Jr. became a star in football and track and a team-first grinder in basketball, one who applied his abundant athletic talents to the grunt work. Setting screens. Rebounding. Blocking shots.

He also emerged quickly as a leader despite being an underclassman at a new school and playing a sport that was no better than his third-best.

“Everyone heard his voice when he talked,” Robinson said. “There were things I didn’t have to worry about. I knew he’d take care of it. I mean, who’s gonna bow up to Derwin James?”

For his final two high school years, Derwin Jr. attended Haines City High, rejoining many of the kids with whom he grew up.

He continued roaming the entire field — too dynamic for one position, Derwin Jr. played them all — often accurately calling out the opposition’s plans pre-snap because he recognized what was coming from his Monday film study.

He kept pushing iron until finally, as a senior, he passed even Gee, his old Haines City coach, in the bench press. To fully grasp the significance of that accomplishment, realize that today all the Hornets’ athletes work out in the Coach Olin Gee Weight Room, named this spring after the thick, broad-shouldered career educator.

Having started at 135 pounds, Derwin Jr. maxed out in high school with a bench press of 415.

But here’s the thing about Derwin Jr. and his strength: He always has displayed a capacity to lift more than just weight.

“What you see in L.A., that’s what we saw in Polk County,” Robinson said. “Fun-loving, always smiling, always positive. People loved Derwin. And I mean not just on Friday nights.”

Said Haggins: “He puts others before him. ... Guys like that, they come around once in a lifetime.”

The display is entirely fitting, if not completely accurate. A small gold plate near the bottom identifies Derwin Jr. as the 17th overall pick of the 2018 draft — all true — but selected by the “San Diego” Chargers.

Though he changed high schools, Derwin Jr.’s commitment to Florida State remained permanent, just like the Seminoles tattoo he wore on his upper left arm long before he played for Florida State.

During his senior year, Derwin Jr. even told Haggins that the coach didn’t have to continue calling him every week, that his promise to be a Seminole couldn’t be shaken.

“He never deviated,” Haggins said. “He told me once, ‘Look on my arm, Coach. You’ve seen it. I’m coming to Florida State.’ That kind of commitment tells you something about a young man.”

If a single play could define Derwin Jr.’s time in Tallahassee, it came during his freshman season, against rival Florida.

Lined up at defensive end in a pass-rush situation, he bullied to the ground a fifth-year senior named Mason Halter, who was listed at 6 feet 6, 295 pounds, four inches taller and 80 pounds heavier than Derwin Jr. weighs to this day.

“As coaches, we all looked at each other like, ‘What?’ ” Haggins recalled. “One of the greatest plays I’ve ever seen.”

After beginning his time at Florida State with only “James” on his back, Derwin Jr. later added the nod to his father after he approached Derwin Sr. and shared his intentions.

The decision meant a jersey alternation that was minor — just the inclusion of “Jr.” — yet carried significance that was anything but.

“It was a proud moment,” Derwin Sr. said. “I told him, ‘OK, do your thing, baby.’ That was cool.”

With the Chargers, the “Jr.” appeared at the start of his second season. By then, Derwin Jr. had made an impact that was just as impressive and equally as immediate as the moment he demolished that Florida offensive lineman.

In his NFL debut, against AFC West rival Kansas City, Derwin Jr. broke up a pass some 40 yards downfield to open the second quarter.

Two snaps later he was in the backfield, sacking Patrick Mahomes.

Turns out, Derwin Jr. had time-stamped his arrival in the league even before facing the Chiefs. That August, he sent his father a training-camp video of him intercepting Philip Rivers in practice.

“He picked off Phil at the goal line,” said Derwin Sr., who still has the video on his phone. “Oh yeah, baby. That was big. I came off my seat on that one. ‘My boy! Ain’t nobody gonna stop him from bein’ great!’ ”

After signing his rookie deal, Derwin Jr. bought his mother a five-bedroom, four-bath home in a gated community in Auburndale. For his father, he purchased a truck.

Both parents still work and said they will continue to do so even if, as expected, Derwin Jr. soon signs an extension that could make him the highest-paid safety in the league.

Shanita, who has been employed at McKesson Pharmaceutical for 17 years, said she prefers to earn her own money, and that she can make no claim to the millions her son has collected.

Having spent 26 years working with at-risk youth, Derwin Sr. looks at the situation through eyes so familiar with sometimes-stark, often-unforgiving central Florida.

“I like to sit back and reflect on where we come from,” he said. “I grew up picking oranges. And not just me, but his momma’s side of the family, too. I mean, picking oranges! We all did harvest work. That’s just the way it was.”

After missing the first 11 games of the 2019 season because of injury, Derwin Jr.’s second game back came in his home state, in Jacksonville. He finished with six tackles, including one for loss, and a pass breakup as the Chargers won by five touchdowns.

Sitting in the stands that overcast December afternoon, Derwin Sr. said he stared down and marveled at what he was witnessing, the reality hitting him deeper than ever before.

“I’m looking at my son and saying, ‘Man, he’s dominating out here. He’s the best of the best,’” Derwin Sr. remembered.

“Just a little country boy from ol’ Polk County. That was like, ‘My boy is here to stay.’ ”

Having been to Southern California several times for games, Derwin Sr. said he still isn’t accustomed to seeing his son’s face all over town, whether on a billboard for Oakley or a mural in Venice Beach.

He said a friend recently sent him a picture of Derwin Jr. featured on an advertisement in a Las Vegas mall.

The image caused chills, similar to the ones Derwin Sr. said he feels when seeing “Pooh Bear” on the giant SoFi Stadium video board.

“He’s everywhere,” Derwin Sr. said. “You can’t get rid of him. ‘Damn, you everywhere, son.’ You just have to think about it, think about where we come from and say, ‘Wow!’ ”

Derwin Jr. is everywhere — on the field and off it. Sometimes, it’s like there are two Derwin Jameses. Yeah, sometimes. Like now.

'He can do it all': Derwin James remains a rare constant for Chargers defense

By Lindsey Thiry
ESPN.com
November 19, 2022

COSTA MESA, Calif. -- Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce caught a pass, then spun to his left for a sprint downfield.

The 6-foot-5, 250-pound tight end dodged two Los Angeles Chargers defenders, but had no luck avoiding a third.

At the Chargers three-yard line, Bolts safety Derwin James Jr. upended Kelce in a move that resembled a signature slam from the WWE's most famous wrestler the Undertaker.

"WWE style right there!" Chargers defensive lineman Sebastian Joseph-Day said of James' tackle.

"That was crazy," Chargers wide receiver Mike Williams said. "D.J., he brings the wood, he tackles real hard."

James' stop was one that even Kelce had to admire.

"You good, brother?" James asked after the ensuing snap.

"That was a hell of a play," Kelce admitted.

The Bolts fell to the division-rival Chiefs in that Week 2 matchup, 27-24, but will have a chance to split the season series when they meet again at SoFi Stadium on "Sunday Night Football" (8:20 p.m. ET, NBC).

Void of a postseason appearance since 2018, the Chargers (5-4) are clinging to the final spot in the playoff race, and are chasing the division-leading Chiefs (7-2) in the AFC West.

The Bolts have a 48 percent chance to make the playoffs entering Week 11, and their chances improve to 69 percent with a win, but fall to 42 percent with a loss, according to ESPN's Football Power Index.

This will be the Chargers' second consecutive game in primetime, a place James has shined this season, but where his team has otherwise fallen flat at 0-2.

Last Sunday night, in a 22-16 loss to the San Francisco 49ers, James set the tone early in a stout defensive performance when he delivered a punishing hit to strip the ball loose from wide receiver Brandon Aiyuk, forcing a turnover recovered by cornerback Asante Samuel Jr.

"We had really talked about attacking the football in that game," coach Brandon Staley said. "It was kind one of those virtuoso Derwin performances. He was everywhere, doing everything, for us."

"Teamwork made the dream work," said Samuel, who made initial contact with Aiyuk before recovering the loose ball. "Derwin was right there."

Being "right there" is a common theme for James, a 26-year-old, fifth-year pro, who signed a record-breaking four-year, \$76.5-million extension before the season.

"Derwin James is a guy that just is all over the place," Jacksonville Jaguars coach Doug Pederson said before facing James in Week 3.

"They line him up as an outside rush or a stack back, or they line him up in as a secondary safety position, potentially a nickel guy. I mean it's just all over the field and it's a credit to him and his knowledge and understanding of the defense."

Prior to handing Houston a loss in Week 4, Texans coach Lovie Smith said, "He can do it all ... He's one of those guys that you love watching and you're not all excited when he is on the other side of the football field."

James has played free safety for most of the snaps this season and spent significant time lining up as an outside linebacker and slot cornerback, while also competing as a cornerback and inside linebacker.

He has amassed 85 tackles, a league-high among defensive backs, and three sacks, ranking him tied for second among DBs.

"To be able to do as much as he does on the football field, not only what he is doing, but how he is doing it -- and how challenging that is physically and mentally, like the tax -- it would just be hard to explain to people the tax that Derwin has on him during a week," Staley said. "That's what special players in the league get paid for, for that tax. But he always answers the bell and there is no role that he won't perform."

This season, arguably more than any other recently, the Bolts have needed it.

The Chargers entered the season expecting to field playmakers, like edge rushers Khalil Mack and Joey Bosa, at every level of the defense. Interior linemen Joseph-Day and Austin Johnson, both signed in free agency, along with cornerback J.C. Jackson.

But they have been decimated by injuries.

Bosa, Jackson and Johnson all have been placed on injured reserve, along with backup linemen Obito Ogbornia and Christian Covington.

Tempered optimism remains that Bosa could return this season, but no timeline has been provided.

The Bolts defense ranks 23rd in efficiency, allowing 25.3 points per game (Ranks 29th), an average of 146.8 rushing yards (30th) and 5.4 rushing yards per attempt (31st).

The crux of their run defense has been explosive plays. The Bolts have allowed six runs this season of more than 40 yards and four that have gone for 50 or more yards --- the most in the NFL in both categories.

"It's been a huge emphasis for our team. We're going to continue to do it," defensive coordinator Renaldo Hill said of limiting explosive runs. "The only way that I know how to get better is to continue going onto the practice field, continue trying to meet together, make sure that we're seeing the puzzle in the run game the same way."

Coaches and players have avoided using injuries as an excuse for any shortcoming, and some have gone so far to say that no excuses are even necessary.

"We can't make excuses, no one cares," James said. "KC don't care. So we have to go play."

"We've kind of been winning," Samuel said. "We can't just give excuses. This is the NFL and other people are getting hurt on other teams."

The Chiefs boast the top-scoring offense, averaging 29 points per game behind quarterback Patrick Mahomes league-best 25 passing touchdowns.

"He's one of the best, mobile quarterback, being able to not only throw from the pocket but being able to throw on the run," James said.

"Right when you think you got him, he can make that last throw or right when you have him, he can make it, so just being able to play him honest, straight up, so you got to be ready."

The Chargers will look to James, who is often described by coaches and teammates as the "heartbeat" of the team, to establish a presence early.

"Tough, rugged, physical, smart, dependable and he's not afraid to get his nose bloody," Joseph-Day said of James.

James said he has not watched his WWE-style tackle on Kelce since Week 2.

"I've been every week worrying about the next team," he said.

However, Hill said the body slam has appeared in film sessions throughout the week and that an encore would be welcome.

"It has shown up just being a crossover game and we're gonna look back at that game and it's still the oohs and ahhs," Hill said.

"We know we have to be physical with these guys and it's going to take everybody, not just Derwin. But if he can do that again I think it would be a tone-setter."

QUENTIN JOHNSTON

The Inside Story of How the Chargers Drafted Quentin Johnston

By Eric Smith
Chargers.com
May 23, 2023

Mike Jasinski knew two things were certain as he arrived on the campus of Texas Christian University on August 11.

The first was that it was going to be hot. After all, it was Texas in mid-August.

The second was that he wanted to get to TCU as early as possible, and not to beat the heat.

Jasinski, less than three months into his new role as Chargers area scout for the Southwest, needed to get a head start on making connections and finding out as much information as possible about potential TCU draftees.

What Jasinski didn't know was that the Horned Frogs were about to embark on a magical season that would culminate with an appearance in the National Championship.

Or that he was about to get his first in-person look at TCU's best offensive playmaker, someone who would eventually become the Bolts' first-round pick in the 2023 NFL Draft.

Wide receiver Quentin Johnston — all 6-foot-3 and 208 pounds of him — didn't take long to make an impression on Jasinski.

"I was talking to the strength coach off to the side, and they were just doing some routes on air and warming up," Jasinski recalled. "But out of the corner of my eye, I see a red-zone fade ball that Quentin goes up for. It felt like the guy was just levitating in the air.

"That was my first live exposure to him, and you felt it," Jasinski continued. "Guys that end up as first-round players, their movements just feel different. There's no doubt about it.

"The strength coach saw it, too," Jasinski added. "He had a wry smirk and just kind of said, 'Oh yeah, he can do that.' You see stuff on film but then you see that and it was just so effortless. It was just like, 'Wow, OK. This guy is different.' His explosiveness just really stood out."

Jasinski wasn't the only person connected to the Chargers in attendance for that summer practice in Fort Worth.

Hall of Fame running back LaDainian Tomlinson was there, too, back on the campus where TCU's all-time leading rusher established himself as a college football legend.

Roughly nine months later, everything came full circle.

On the clock with the 21st overall pick — and Tomlinson himself on stage at the team's draft party — the Chargers selected Johnston with both a short and long-term vision in mind for him to boost the offense.

"He's big, strong and fast. That's a good way to start it off as a player," Chargers General Manager Tom Telesco said of Johnston after Round 1. "Great work ethic that we love. We know all these players that are drafted, they're all talented. But once they get in this league, it takes a lot of work to get to where you want to go and keep improving.

"He has some physical characteristics that we think he can add to our offense in a different role," Telesco added. "We're trying to give Justin [Herbert], our whole offense and [Offensive Coordinator] Kellen Moore a lot of different styles of players to use in different situations. We think he can fit that."

Here is the inside story of how the Chargers scouted Johnston, the impression he made on them and how the wide receiver eventually ended up in powder blue.

That scorching August day wasn't the first time Johnston appeared on the Chargers radar.

While the focus of the NFL Draft ramps up each spring, teams often scout players years before they even declare for the draft.

Johnston — who was a top-75 overall recruit in the nation coming out of high school — began generating buzz as far back as his freshman season.

The job of an area scout is to evaluate which players could be drafted the following April. But it's also to keep tabs on players who could be top prospects a year or two down the road.

Tyler Lyon, a Pro and College Scout for the Bolts working out of the team's training facility, was the Chargers area scout for the Southwest before Jasinski took over that role roughly a year ago.

If you're looking for the first person who scouted Johnston for the Chargers, it's Lyon.

Lyon said he knew of Johnston in 2020 when the freshman wide receiver led the Horned Frogs in receiving yards — the first of three straight seasons he'd accomplish that.

And while Johnston had shown flashes of potential, his breakout game came in mid-October of 2021 against Oklahoma.

Johnston did it all against the Sooners, catching seven passes for a whopping 185 yards and three touchdowns.

"He had a big running catch down the sideline, got behind the defense ... you could see the speed," said Lyon, who was in attendance that day in Norman. "After that I kind of honed in on him a little more even though he was a sophomore. Just watched him a little more to see how he got out of his breaks.

"That's the thing for me, how big he is, how he's able to move like that," Lyon added. "Like, 'OK, this is the real deal right here'. He was also a high recruit, he's one of the best recruits TCU's gotten in a long time. When you go in as an area scout, that's something you look at. If he's a top recruit and he has production, easy start."

Two weeks after Johnston's performance against Oklahoma, TCU and longtime football coach Gary Patterson mutually agreed to part ways.

With the staff on the way out, Lyon took advantage of the turnover to get as much info as possible on Johnston despite the fact he was still a sophomore and a year away from possibly declaring.

"I made sure I got their opinion on him before the next staff came in," Lyon said.

Not much changed with Johnston in the first six months of 2022.

The Chargers front office and personnel department was focused on the 2022 NFL Draft, which included the likes of Zion Johnson, Jamaree Salyer and others.

But a few weeks after that ended, the Bolts held their annual summer meetings to get a head start on the 2023 NFL Draft.

Johnston was about to pop up on many people's radars with the Chargers. He was certainly on Jasinski's, who'd already done a deep dive into his film.

"He jumped off right away. I had heard of his name, so I was intrigued," Jasinski said. "But as soon as you watch film on him ... guys that end up going high kind of jump off the screen a little bit and move a little different.

"He certainly did ... it was pretty instantaneous that you knew he had a lot of ability," Jasinski added.

So, when Jasinski was asked to submit his list of the Top 30 players in his area heading into the 2023 season, Johnston was on the top tier.

For many within the Bolts front office, including Justin Sheridan, it was their first exposure to Johnston. Sheridan is a national crosschecker for the Chargers, meaning he dives into prospects after the initial evaluations have been completed.

Sheridan offered high praise of Johnston, who immediately stood out as one of the best wide receivers in the nation.

"It wasn't hard to see that this kid was really talented," Sheridan said. "But when you look at the whole country, he was the best in the West for me from the jump.

"Just the combination of the stuff he did and put on tape, he stood out to me," Sheridan added. "Q was on the radar early and often. Big, fast and strong ... and he affects the game at all three levels."

It was no surprise then that Sheridan's first in-person college football game of the 2023 season was to see Johnston.

TCU was on the road in Colorado, and Sheridan was fired up to watch No. 1 for the Horned Frogs as he settled in next to Jasinski in Boulder.

But the life of a scout is about riding the ups and downs, especially as Johnston tallied just three catches for 22 yards in a season opener that was delayed nearly 45 minutes due to lightning in the area.

The Horned Frogs, under new coach Sonny Dykes, mustered just 63 yards of offense and no offensive points in the first half.

And while they turned it on in the second half for a 25-point win, Johnston wasn't targeted much as the Horned Frogs also underwent a change at quarterback.

"Mike and I were both at the game, we sat side-by-side," Sheridan said. "TCU was stuck in the mud almost and had nothing going offensively.

"It's luck of the draw in scouting. You schedule them when you can," Sheridan added.

Jasinski said he felt the same sentiments as Sheridan after the Colorado game.

"You knew it was going to happen, it was just a matter of time before everything would click," Jasinski said of a possible big-time performance from Johnston.

Sure enough, Johnston got the nation's attention on October 8 on the road against Kansas.

With both teams undefeated and ranked in the Top 20, Johnston announced his presence with career-best totals of 14 catches and 206 yards.

Jasinski, who had watched the Texas-Oklahoma game, could only smile as he listened on the radio in his rental car.

"You could see the guy's body movement and you knew it was coming," Jasinski said. "Would it have been great to see it in person? Maybe.

"But in the grand scheme of scouting, you can't put too much stock into one game. It just skews your opinion," Jasinski added. "It doesn't matter when it happened, just that it did happen."

Johnston was just getting started, posting multiple mega games while helping lead TCU to the National Championship.

There was his 180-yard performance against Oklahoma State, a 139-yard showing against Kansas State in the Big 12 title game and, of course, his 163-yard masterpiece in the College Football Playoff semifinal.

By the time Johnston officially declared for the NFL Draft in mid-January, the Chargers knew all about him.

"The size that he has, he can run, he's long, he can run, he's athletic, he can make plays with the ball in his hands," said JoJo Wooden, the Chargers Director of Player Personnel. "You see him make big plays down the field, you see him make big plays between the numbers as well. You just saw him do it a lot.

"Obviously, great program, had a lot of success this past year so you knew about the quarterback and some of the other guys they had down there as well," Wooden added. "Just jumps out on you when you watch one guy and you see this other guy making all the plays as well, so it's pretty easy scouting."

Hoag Performance Center was bustling in mid-February.

The 2023 NFL Scouting Combine was two weeks away and the Chargers' entire scouting department had assembled in the Draft Room for important meetings.

Jasinski could likely tell you about Johnston in his sleep by this point. And others around the organization were also high on the 21-year-old from TCU.

"What stood out for me was the consensus on it. We all felt the same way," said Kevin Kelly, the Chargers Senior Director of College Scouting. "Q is exactly what you look for in a receiver – he's big, he's fast, his catch radius, his competitiveness, his production.

"We just really liked the whole package," Kelly added.

At this point, Jasinski had talked to Johnston by phone to get a sense of the person and not the player.

Both of Johnston's parents, Carl and Sherry, are Army veterans. Carl was in Kuwait in 1995 and Sherry served during Operation Desert Storm.

A day after getting drafted, Johnston credited his parents for helping him reach the NFL.

"Both of my parents were in the Army. The baseline of who I am, of Quentin, is based on discipline and respect," Johnston said. "That's something that I feel like has stayed with me from the time I could talk until now, and something that I'm going to keep doing.

"There was a lot of waking up early in the morning just to do whatever — a lot of everything, being on-point. I got used to it and that's just how I move now," Johnston added.

When asked for his biggest inspiration, Johnston referenced his parents again.

"That's who I am, as a person. I see a lot of myself in them, whether it's something that I say, it's something that my dad would do," Johnston said. "For sure, them."

Jasinski said he picked up on Johnston's strong upbringing when the two talked by phone.

"He's a very humble guy. You could tell he was brought up right," Jasinski said. "Parents were in the military, his uncle was in the Navy. Very respectful, very direct.

"He was open and honest, but just a humble guy," Jasinski added. "Not lacking confidence but he had a sense of humility about it, which I appreciated."

And when it came time to bring Johnston up to a packed room of NFL evaluators, Jasinski didn't mince words.

"I do my best to be as consistent as I can in terms of talking about the player, wherever they may be stacked or wherever you may have them," Jasinski said. "But your enthusiasm for a guy will show through a little bit.

"You imagine in your own head the vision you can see on your roster and how he could help the room and elevate our offense," Jasinski continued. "You want to make it be known you like this player and that he could do X, Y and Z for us. Make sure that everyone who is in the room feels the emotion of where I'm at with that.

"He was always one of the top guys. He jumped out and stayed that way throughout," Jasinski added. "There was the Texas running back [Bijan Robinson] that people were high on, and Q was right there as well. He was a guy we were really interested in."

Two weeks later, the Chargers and the rest of the NFL descended upon Indianapolis for the Combine.

Johnston was about to meet key Chargers decision makers for the first time in person. He made sure to not waste the opportunity.

One of the most frenzied weeks of the NFL year takes place in Indianapolis at the Combine.

For a player like Johnston — a junior who was too young to participate in annual All-Star games — the Combine is where teams get an in-depth, in-person look at certain college players.

And when it comes time for those ever-important 15-minute interviews, teams try to cram as much information as they can into that small window.

Whatever Johnston said during his 15 minutes certainly stuck with Chargers Head Coach Brandon Staley, who referenced that initial meeting in a phone call to the wide receiver on draft night.

"Q! Hey, this is Coach Staley. You made a big time first impression on me in that Combine interview," Staley said. "We've been studying you ever since and we were hoping this day would come, man."

An hour later, Staley referenced that Combine interview in a post-draft press conference.

"There are some times when you don't learn anything from those interviews," Staley said. "And then there are some times where you just have a feeling from a guy that, 'Man, I'd like to join up with him.'

"I think there are some times when a guy leaves a 15-minute interview and you look at each other and say, 'Yeah, that's one of us,' and that's how we felt. All it is a feeling," Staley added. "Then, you have to dive deep into the player. But it's one of those impressions that he made on us where there's just a focus, there's a maturity, there's a pride."

Kelly and Chargers wide receivers coach Chris Beatty led the interview that night in Indianapolis.

Each recalled what they took away from their short time with Johnston.

"You could tell he was 'Yes, sir. No, sir.' The military background kind of shows up when you meet him," Beatty said. "I think he had better knowledge of the offense and what the position entails than most because sometimes you get in there and certain college systems don't teach a lot of the things that translate to the pros, but he had some of that in his game.

"He had been coached up by those guys pretty well, so I think those things showed up," Beatty added. "Really it's more about getting a feel — because the meetings are so short — so it's really more getting a feel of would this guy fit in our room, does he fit in our culture, those kinds of things, which I thought he did."

Kelly added: "Oh yeah, there really was [a good vibe]. He's just a tremendous young man. It was reminiscent of Mike [Williams] when we interviewed, scouted and recruited him out of Clemson. He's just got a real positive vibe; confident guy like Mike. Players like that, you just want to find a way to get them on your team. The other 31 teams are watching the film and interviewing the same players. Quentin, he'll impress everybody."

With one box clearly checked, Johnston then impressed on the field at Lucas Oil Stadium.

While he didn't do any running or agility drills, Johnston wowed in a pair of jumps, showing off his elite athleticism in both the vertical jump (40.5 inches) and the broad jump (11 feet, two inches).

Johnston's broad jump was in the 98th percentile of prospects, and his vertical jump was in the 96th percentile of this year's class.

"It's more of a checks and balances. You never want to be swayed way high or way low on a guy because of what he does in a pair of shorts," Sheridan said. "He did the jumps in Indy but jumped out of the gym. You could see the twitch and athleticism from his background as a basketball player."

Johnston would eventually run the 40-yard dash and do other agility drills at TCU's Pro Day in late March.

And with the 2023 NFL Draft creeping up on the calendar, Johnston had cemented himself as one of the top wide receiver prospects across the league.

The Chargers drafted board had been set, and the hay was in the barn.

Now it was a waiting game until April 27.

Tom Telesco had a feeling that the latter half of the first round would see a run on wide receivers.

No receivers had been taken by the middle of Round 1, but teams who were potentially interested in drafting one were looming.

Sure enough, Seattle took Ohio State's Jaxon Smith-Njigba with the 20th overall pick. The run commenced, as the Chargers took Johnston followed by Zay Flowers landing in Baltimore and Minnesota taking Jordan Addison.

It was the first time in draft history that four wide receivers had been drafted in succession.

Up at the Chargers draft party at Westfield Century City in Los Angeles, the Bolts were elated.

"No question. I thought as far as the things that we look for, he's a really good fit short term and long term," Beatty said. "We were really happy with the one that we got. At the end of the day, as soon as you make the pick and you celebrate, then you start thinking of how we're going to use them."

Was Beatty pushing for a wide receiver at No. 21 overall?

"Everyone is selfish," Beatty said with a laugh. "Everybody wants their position to get drafted so at the end of the day when you get to 15, 16, 17 and you're like 'Man, no receivers have gone,' you're always hoping one of them falls that we have a high grade on."

Telesco and Wooden, two of the Chargers' top decision makers, credited the Bolts front office for hours and hours of prep work.

And when the board unfolded the way it did, nobody was fazed when the Chargers were on the clock.

"You don't go into the draft saying, 'Hey, this is the position that we're going to take.' We've never done that before. We didn't do that today," Telesco said after Round 1. "As we got about six or seven picks away, we kind of saw what our group was with that pick."

"Do we want to trade out? Do we want to stay and pick? We decided to stay and pick," Telesco added.

Wooden said: "There was a good plan in place in terms of the different scenarios or possibilities that were there. It wasn't a surprise that it kind of ended up the way it did, at least for me. We knew we were going to have options there and again, all the work we had done up to that kind of played out exactly that way when it came to that pick."

So, after months and months of scouting and evaluating Johnston, what made him the pick?

To start, there was the rare combination size (6-foot-3 and 208 pounds) and athleticism (see those testing numbers above).

Everyone with the Chargers who scouted Johnston all expressed similar versions of their evaluations of him.

"We love his run-after-catch skills," Telesco said. "He's a big receiver, but he has really quick feet to change directions — so he can not only try and make somebody miss to make yards but also, he's big and strong to pull through some tackles."

Jasinski added: "When he was running routes, you felt like he was a 5-foot-11 guy. He can really sink his hips and you really don't see that with second-level routes like Quentin had. It was pretty rare. He can run curls, digs, outs ... and run it like a smaller guy."

Wooden said: "He's built like an NFL receiver. That was a big thing for us as well, he had NFL size, he runs well, he can catch the ball, he's athletic. The way they used him at TCU, he wasn't just running deep balls, he was doing other things that you saw him do as well, just like the whole package."

Beatty also offered his pre-draft scouting report on Johnston's all-around game.

"I thought he was really light on his feet. Really good after the catch. The first thing that popped out to me was his ability to transition into a ball carrier, like, right now," Beatty said. "His RAC [run after catch] was tremendous. He doesn't have a lot of wasted motion, he makes people miss without having to come to a stop and he can make people miss on the move."

"I think he's got some small forward to his game, but he also has the ability to be a power forward and dunk on guys and go over their heads. He can do both of them at the same time," Beatty continued.

"He checked all the boxes," Beatty added.

The Chargers are not going to ask Johnston to be WR1 as a rookie. Not in a room with Keenan Allen, Mike Williams and Joshua Palmer.

But Beatty wants him to compete for playing time as if he is a top target, a role he certainly might grow into down the road.

"At the end of the day, making him feel at ease that he doesn't have to carry us," Beatty said. "That's one of the great things about this situation is. He's got Mike Williams, he's got Keenan Allen and he's got Josh Palmer ... they've been in this league over time. So it's not like we're counting on you to come in and be the No. 1 receiver on Day 1, but that being said, he should compete to be the No. 1 receiver on Day 1. They kind of both go together," Beatty added.

Johnston said the established trio of receivers stopped by his hotel room in Southern California after he was drafted to check in on him and welcome him to the squad.

"Letting me know that we were all family. Letting me know what to expect," Johnston recalled of the first interaction. "Kind of a crash course they gave me of what to expect, how stuff is run, a baseline so that I could get an understanding and feel for the football team, as much as I can at that point."

"That's everything," Johnston added. "I feel like I came into a good situation, starting off initially under some guys that have been in the league, playing at a high level for a minute. I feel like I can pick a lot of their game, apply it to mine, then kind of expand from there."

The man tasked with finding a way to get Johnston involved in the Bolts offense said he can't wait to get started on that process.

"Q really stood out for us as we went through the process," said Chargers Offensive Coordinator Kellen Moore. "Everyone kind of sees the measurables, the size as far as the height and the weight. What he did for TCU from his versatility, I thought, was really, really special."

"His ability to kind of catch-and-run, he was a fly-sweep guy. He got the ball in a lot of different ways," Moore added. "You saw a lot of versatility in his game that maybe, initially, someone may not have necessarily anticipated. We were really excited that he was there and available for us."

On a larger scale, the selection of Johnston makes it three straight years the Chargers have drafted an offensive player to build around quarterback Justin Herbert.

"Certainly, as you're building your offense, we're building it around our franchise quarterback," Telesco said.

The Chargers hope Johnston makes an immediate impact as a rookie as he goes through the rookie learning curve in the NFL.

But they also have lofty plans for him down the line, too.

"Taking a guy in the first round, you're not taking him for the next three or four years, you're taking him for the next 10 years. That's the plan," Lyon said. "That is something to definitely consider and for him, he fits in short term and long term."

Johnston donned a Chargers jersey for the first time earlier this month at rookie minicamp.

And while Johnston's official NFL debut (Week 1 at home against the Dolphins) is still roughly four months away, the wide receiver's journey with the Bolts has just begun.

It was the culmination of incredible effort from tons of people over multiple years.

"I've moved onto 2024," said a laughing Jasinski, who was already grinding the tape on a prospect for next year. "I don't see it as a feather in my cap because we're all working for the same goal. But I'm genuinely excited to get him because I think he can add another element to our offense."

"Quentin, in some ways, is still kind of new to the game," Jasinski added. "The fact that he's going to be in a room with Mike Williams and Keenan Allen and what makes those guys great, plus adding what Quentin can do, he can just elevate our whole offense. The validation is just being able to watch him play and add to our offense."

Chargers rookie makes good on draft-night promise: His mom's officially retiring

By Lindsey Thiry
ESPN.com
June 15, 2023

COSTA MESA, Calif. -- With his parents Sherry and Carl Johnston standing at his side, Quentin Johnston watched on television as commissioner Roger Goodell announced that the Los Angeles Chargers were selecting him with the No. 21 overall pick in the 2023 NFL draft.

"Yesss!" Carl shouted amid boisterous cheers at his son's draft party in Dallas.

"You did it baby!" Sherry screamed.

When emotions simmered, the wide receiver stood up to deliver a speech to his family and friends.

"I just want to give a big shout-out to my mom," he said in a steady voice. "She's going to be putting her two weeks' notice in today. She can retire. I don't want you working another day."

Thursday is Sherry's final day at the VA Hospital in Temple, Texas, where she has worked as a secretary for 24 years after serving in the U.S. Army. She will now join Carl in retirement.

"When he said that to me, I couldn't believe it," Sherry said, describing Quentin's draft-night speech. "It was mind-blowing."

The Chargers selected the 6-foot-3, 208-pound Johnston with a first-round pick to provide a deep-threat target for quarterback Justin Herbert and round out a receiving corps that includes Keenan Allen, Mike Williams and Joshua Palmer.

His four-year rookie contract, with a fifth-year team option, is worth \$14.19 million and fully guaranteed. It also includes a signing bonus of \$7.32 million.

"The money is cool, but I don't plan on sitting there and blowing it," Johnston said. "I'm going to have it in my savings account. I'm not really focused on the money, I'm focused on football."

And his family.

Johnston's dream of making it to the NFL came into focus while playing at TCU. His draft grade as a junior soared after helping the Horned Frogs to a national championship appearance last season.

"We could see what type of player that he was, what he meant for TCU," coach Brandon Staley said. "On the field, he's capable of so much, but when you can get a special person, a special leader, like him, that makes it even a stronger pick."

Johnston says he wouldn't be in a position to achieve his goals if it weren't for the sacrifices of his parents.

Sherry constantly put Quentin and his younger brother, Xavier, ahead of herself. He recalled a specific time when his mom had to forgo her own favorite pastime of singing in church to shuttle him to a basketball tournament.

Sherry expressed amazement that Quentin remembered that instance, because to her, it was inconsequential; she was doing what she believed any mom should.

"It was nothing for me to just not do whatever -- whether it's singing or doing something else that I wanted to do, I don't think about that kind of stuff," Sherry said. "You just do it and for him to ... that touched me for him to think about something like that."

Carl, also a U.S. Army veteran, slipped on a pair of dark shades to hide the tears when the commissioner announced his son's name. And he knew more would come streaming after spending several months helping Quentin perfect his mom's surprise.

"We went over that a few times and once it came to it, the way he put it out there, it was just so eloquent," Carl said. "The way he did it, it was flowing. I said, 'Man, you did a great job.'"

For Sherry, the decision to leave her job and retire wasn't automatic. She planned on working about 10 more years and mulled for weeks over the decision before Quentin provided a final nudge.

"He was like, 'Mama, I don't want to hear it,'" Sherry said. "I was trying to explain to him why I felt like I should work and he said, 'Mama, you always talk about how God blesses us with stuff,' and he said, 'Bless me with this opportunity to retire you.'"

"Well, that makes sense," Sherry thought.

Seven weeks to the day her son began his professional career, Sherry Johnston is officially retired.

How Quentin Johnston can help Chargers, Justin Herbert take the top off defenses

By Lindsey Thiry
ESPN.com
May 10, 2023

COSTA MESA, Calif. -- Los Angeles Chargers general manager Tom Telesco says he's never met a coach who didn't want speed on his roster.

Telesco's staff is no different.

However, the 2022 Bolts lacked the type of speed that's crucial to create an explosive offense.

That no longer is expected to be an issue.

With a first-round pick, the 21st overall selection, the Chargers selected TCU receiver Quentin Johnston, a 6-foot-4, 208-pound deep-threat target who also possesses an ability to create after the catch.

"He's big, strong and fast," said Telesco, entering his 11th season as general manager. "He has some physical characteristics that we think he can add to our offense in a different role."

Translation: Quarterback Justin Herbert should have every opportunity to air the ball out in 2023.

"What I can do with the ball in my hands is something that, I feel like, it's a no-brainer for somebody to pick me," Johnston said after his selection.

Herbert, entering his fourth season, has a complete arsenal of playmakers, including receivers Keenan Allen, Mike Williams and Joshua Palmer, running back Austin Ekeler and tight end Gerald Everett. The Chargers will attempt to improve on their 10th-ranked average of 22.5 points per game last season.

First-year offensive coordinator Kellen Moore, who held the same post with the Dallas Cowboys the past four seasons with his offense ranking in the top four in points per game (27.7), yards per game (391) and third-down conversion percentage (44%), said creating explosive opportunities has been among topics discussed throughout the offseason.

"It's a collaborative effort," Moore said. "At the end of the day, when you do have explosive opportunities, you need to take advantage of those. It's a quicker way to get to the end zone and, ultimately, when you look at the statistics, explosive plays [have] a huge impact on who's winning games."

The Cowboys under Moore ranked 11th in rate of explosive plays (10.1%), qualified as a 10-yard run or 20-yard pass play, while the Chargers the past two seasons under former coordinator Joe Lombardi ranked 30th (8.1%).

"Kellen's offense is going to bring some more explosions with it," Telesco said, "and then adding this receiver in the draft, who had a ton of explosive plays in college -- both on long balls and on short passes that he took the distance, I think he can add there."

Last season, the Chargers ranked fifth in the NFL in receiving yards after contact (688), while Johnston ranked third among all Power 5 players in receiving yards after contact (241). And the Bolts had only two players who averaged more than two yards per route run last season with Allen and Williams averaging 2.22 and 2.0, respectively, while Johnston averaged

3.04 -- the best in the Big 12 and eighth in the FBS.

"All Quentin needs to do is come be himself," coach Brandon Staley said. "He's a weapon to score the ball any time that he touches it."

Johnston, who turns 22 in September, credits his ability to create after contact with also competing in basketball and track, along with his competitive mindset.

"It's a want to get extra yards, a want to keep fighting for yards, a first down, things like that," said Johnston, who produced 1,069 receiving yards and six touchdowns for the Horned Frogs, who played in the national title game last season. "I feel like it has been instilled in me long ago in high school and it's just something that's been carried out with me throughout my college career."

Among areas he must improve include dropped passes, but neither Moore nor Staley expressed concern.

"There are no perfect players, all of these guys have something," Staley said.

And, as Moore described, what Johnston has is a "vertical element" that can make an explosive impact.

"We're really excited," Moore said. "With Q, just the size, catch radius. He goes up and gets the ball downfield. You can do it however you need to do it, whether it's size, catch radius and speed. He definitely brings a vertical element to us."

If Johnston's speed alone wasn't enough, the Chargers also added his TCU teammate, Derius Davis, with a fourth-round pick. Following the departure of DeAndre Carter to the Las Vegas Raiders in free agency, Davis will step in immediately as a kick and punt returner, but Staley said he could provide an added weapon as a fifth receiver.

"Was the fastest guy at the combine, a 4.3 guy, real juice. Five returns for touchdowns. Proven production in both phases," Staley said. "Then, gives you that fifth receiver element, too. He was an outstanding offensive weapon for that team, as well, factoring in your offensive football team."

When asked to evaluate his first draft with the Bolts, Moore grinned.

"Brandon is this defensive guy and he's drafting these offensive guys, I like this," Moore said, referencing Staley's role also as defensive playcaller. "It's a lot of fun."

ZION JOHNSON

How a bus driver nudged Zion Johnson on his unlikely path to the Chargers

By Gilberto Manzano
Orange County Register
May 4, 2022

Hank Lloyd had lost track of Zion Johnson until the plumber from his church mentioned the name while fixing the hose in Lloyd's backyard.

"That name sounds familiar," Lloyd said. "That sounds like this kid that I asked, could he play football? Why didn't he play?"

Lloyd was the mystery school bus driver that Johnson credited during pre-draft interviews for getting him to play football as a junior at Riverdale Baptist High School in Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

"Well, you must be the guy," said the plumber, who heard the bus driver story from other church members.

A few weeks before last week's NFL draft, Lloyd was made aware that the lanky golfer he encouraged to play football had transferred to Boston College and developed into a first-round prospect. In a span of seven years, Johnson went from being the "nerdy kid" who was clueless about football to the most NFL-ready offensive guard in the draft.

The Chargers selected the 6-foot-2, 312-pound Johnson with the 17th overall pick last week, viewing him as an immediate starter at right guard and a cornerstone piece to their offensive line for years to come.

"What you don't want to do is reach for a tackle and then you have an issue somewhere else," Chargers coach Brandon Staley said. "We just really felt like (Johnson) is a really complete player and this guy is a first-round-level guard."

It was a stretch to assume Johnson would become a reliable offensive lineman after what he displayed in his first spring workouts at Riverdale Baptist. Johnson spent most of his first year in football in the weight room and standing on the sideline before seeing game action as a senior, including a tussle against Chase Young, the star edge rusher for the Washington Commanders.

"Undersized is an understatement," Johnson said. "I was 225 pounds and I played right tackle and our team played Chase Young, so it wasn't like we were playing scrubs or anything."

NO REGRETS

Initially, Johnson wasn't interested in football, but Lloyd kept asking and mentioned the idea to his mother, Tammie Edwards, and recommended him to the high school's football head coach, Caesar Nettles.

"He would come home and say, 'Mommy, the bus driver keeps saying why do I keep getting on the bus with these golf clubs,'" Edwards recalled. "He had to haul those to school every day."

Johnson eventually agreed to try football and Edwards gave Nettles permission to meet Johnson at his bus stop.

"I was talking to his bus driver and said, 'Well, can you point out Zion for me'" Nettles said. "He came on out (with the football team) and he was really, really raw."

Lloyd pushed football and Nettles showed interest because of Johnson's long arms and large hands and feet. He was a few inches shorter than most offensive linemen, but once he filled out his arms, he made up for it with strength.

At the NFL Scouting Combine in March, Johnson had 32 reps on the bench press, the most among offensive linemen who participated. He was measured with 34-inch arms, an 82-inch wingspan and 10 5/8-inch hands.

"With that size he had, he needs to be playing football," Lloyd said. "When you get blessed with a body like that and you're smart ... I thought he would have no problems picking up the offense."

But there were problems early on, and Johnson's size wasn't enough for Keith McIver, Riverdale Baptist's then-offensive line coach. After what would become the first of many rides home, Johnson explained to McIver in detail why the garage was structured near the front of the house.

"He was saying this and that," McIver recalled. "I was like, 'Son, just get out my car.' The first thing I thought was, 'This kid ain't going to make it.'"

McIver didn't realize it then, but Johnson's technical side and affinity for learning the ins and outs were reasons why he quickly developed into a polished offensive guard.

Staley called Johnson pro-ready and Chargers general manager Tom Telesco raved about Johnson's strength and determination. Johnson continued football at Davidson, where he struggled financially for two years due to the private college's non-scholarship program. He then went on to earn a scholarship at Boston College and left with a master's degree in cybersecurity policy and governance.

Johnson had the right coaches and mentors during his meteoric rise in football, but it was Edwards, who raised Johnson as a single mother, who made this improbable football story possible. James Stacy Edwards, Johnson's uncle, also played a role in why Johnson went from no-star recruit to the Chargers' prize first-round selection.

"It was really my mom who pushed me to play," Johnson said. "She always taught me that you should try things so that you don't have regrets later on in life. I'm glad that I tried football because that would've definitely been a regret that I would have had."

DRAFT EXPERIENCE

McIver has been one of Johnson's strongest supporters since he started football, but he was still surprised about being in the draft green room with Johnson in Las Vegas.

"If we look back and look at when you first started and look at where we are at now, we would never have believed it," McIver told Johnson before the draft began.

Johnson said he was glued to the prospect's chair, a location for TV cameras to easily spot the draftees, for the first hour until he learned he was allowed to walk around. The draft experience moved rapidly after Johnson left his seat.

Johnson was expecting to get drafted after the 19th pick, with the Dallas Cowboys at No. 24 being the most likely destination. Johnson grew up in Bowie, Maryland, an area outside of Washington D.C. Most of his friends and relatives are fans of the Commanders and dislike the Cowboys.

"Then the Cowboys were calling, that would have been very difficult," McIver recalled. "I had mentioned to (Johnson), it might be nice to go to the Chargers. He was just chilling and then the phone rang. I knew something was up because the cameras came over."

Nettles wasn't surprised about Johnson being the 17th pick and thought he would go sooner after speaking with about 20 teams who showed interest in Johnson, including the Chargers.

"Zion was one of those prospects that teams didn't really try to find dirt on because they know they couldn't," Nettles said. "He's that good of a kid. He's his authentic self. They were just trying to see what made him tick and all of that, because the film doesn't lie. And once you meet him, he's infectious."

Johnson had a whirlwind first 24 hours with the Chargers and briefly met some of his new teammates. Johnson will have plenty of time to get to know them, especially on the Chargers' starting offensive line with left tackle Rashawn Slater, left guard Matt Feiler and center Corey Linsley.

"From everybody that I've talked to, people that know him, they have all raved about him," Linsley said. "The kind of person that he is and, obviously, the kind of football player."

NEW KID ON THE O-LINE

Johnson played golf and basketball before the bus driver suggested football.

Tammie Edwards was a basketball standout at Virginia Tech, where she set rebounding records, but she knew basketball wasn't for her son.

"He didn't have the passion for basketball like I did," Edwards said. "But football, I saw it differently in his eyes. He has the passion, he loves the game. I think he loves the mechanics of it. He loves figuring things out. He likes breaking it down."

But before Johnson gave up basketball, he won back-to-back championships with his mom as the head coach of his youth team. Edwards was the only female coach in the U13 basketball league.

"Some of the fathers who would come with their kids and they would say, 'Dad, here's my coach,' and they would walk past me and look for somebody else," Edwards recalled. "No, it's me."

Johnson credited his mom for his athletic gifts and some of his coaches credited her for Johnson's competitive side.

“He is the most articulate, genuine, young man I’ve probably come in contact with,” Nettles said. “But on the field, he’s going through the whistle on every play, and he’s gonna give you 110 percent on every play. And it doesn’t matter if somebody gets him on one play. . . . He’s coming right back and he’s going 1,000 percent at his throat. I think (the Chargers) have a silent assassin.”

For a period, Johnson’s passion was golf. He was the only middle-school student on the high school’s golf team. Johnson learned to golf during summers spent with his grandmother, Rosa Edwards, who was a principal at a school in Norfolk, Virginia.

Johnson participated in the school’s golf camps and received coaching from a golf instructor. But Johnson stopped carrying his golf clubs after Lloyd physically nudged him to play football.

“I gave him a little elbow to the chest,” Lloyd said. “I asked him, ‘Did you feel it?’ He said, ‘I didn’t even feel it.’ I was just telling him you ain’t going to get hurt because you’ll be doing the hitting.”

Johnson gained the respect of Mclver and Nettles with his work ethic and how quickly he learned the playbook, but the coaches didn’t rush his development. Johnson weighed only 225 pounds when he joined the football team.

“This is a very bright kid,” Mclver said. “I’m thinking, like, ‘OK, this is a little nerdy kid. Not sure how much he’s gonna play or anything like that.’ But his work ethic changed everything.”

Johnson bench-pressed 135 pounds the spring before his junior season and increased that to 225 by the fall.

Johnson didn’t see the field until the final game of his junior season when he filled in at left tackle for Christian Darrisaw, who later starred at Virginia Tech and was a first-round pick of the Minnesota Vikings last season.

“You need to give (Johnson) a test,” Mclver remembered telling the coaches. “He did a heck of a job (at left tackle) and he proved that he belonged on the team.”

Johnson had a productive senior year at right tackle with Darrisaw patrolling the left side, but Johnson joined the recruiting process too late and went unnoticed until Davidson called.

“Me and Christian were pretty close in high school because our O-line coach (Mclver) would have us over to the house,” Johnson said. “With him going to Virginia Tech, we weren’t able to stay as close because it’s like, ‘I want to beat you.’ He’s definitely someone who has pushed me, especially in high school and throughout my career, because with his level of play, I’ve always wanted to outdo him as a rival sort of thing.”

Johnson improved at Davidson under the guidance of Matt Applebaum and Phil Trautwein and later reunited with the offensive line coaches at Boston College. With Johnson in the ACC, he got to measure his skills against Darrisaw and Virginia Tech.

Mclver wore a Boston College shirt with a Virginia Tech hat when the game was at Boston College and vice versa for the game at Virginia Tech.

“I would sit on the Virginia Tech side for one half and the Boston College side for the other half,” Mclver said.

CREDIT TO THE BUS DRIVER

On Sunday, Johnson called Lloyd to reconnect and told his former bus driver that his advice got him drafted to the NFL.

“I told him, ‘That’s gonna be my second team now (the Chargers) that I’m gonna be rooting for,’” said Lloyd, a fan of the Commanders.

Lloyd, 68, coached high school basketball, volleyball and softball for 40 years before being a school bus driver. He coached former NBA players Michael Beasley, Nolan Smith and Thomas Robinson, and WNBA players Shakira Austin and Tianna Hawkins.

Lloyd’s only request for Johnson was to get one of his Chargers jerseys to hang next to his Wanisha Smith jersey – another former basketball standout he coached.

“He’s a great kid,” Lloyd said. “He’s going to be a great asset to the Chargers.”

Zion Johnson reveals inside info on journey to become Chargers' new starting guard

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
April 29, 2022

Zion Johnson spent most of his first full day as an NFL player in a place he'd never been before: Southern California.

The Chargers' 2022 first-round pick grew up in Maryland and went to school at Davidson and Boston College before being selected 17th overall in the NFL draft Thursday.

On Friday, Johnson traveled to meet his new team in person and take questions from the local media.

"When I was driving from LAX, I was like, 'It kind of does look like L.A. on TV with the palm trees,'" he said.

"There's this certain lighting ... it's like this vibe ... I don't know how to explain it, but it looks like L.A. on TV, like one of the cop shows."

Highlights of Johnson's first face-to-face session with reporters covering the Chargers:

Humble first steps

Johnson never played football until his junior year at Riverdale Baptist School in Upper Marlboro. Instead, he was a member of the school's golf team, having picked up that sport after trying it during a summer camp.

The first person who suggested he might be good at football was the driver of a bus Johnson rode home after golf practices. But he wasn't the one most instrumental in launching Johnson's career.

"It was really my mom who pushed me to play," Johnson said.

"She always taught me that you should try things so you don't have regrets later on in life. I'm glad I tried football because that would definitely be a regret I had."

Tammie Edwards played basketball at Virginia Tech, where she was a record-setting rebounder as a center and power forward. Johnson said his mother has been the most influential person in his life, noting her work ethic.

"A lot of the qualities she taught me," he said, "have made me the person I am today."

Asked if he also inherited his athletic ability from his mom, Johnson smiled and said: "I think most of it comes from her. She was definitely a force in the post."

From undersized to big-time

When he began playing football, Johnson said he was a 225-pound right tackle. Today, he's a 6-foot-3, 314-pound right guard.

"Undersized is an understatement," he said. "Our team played Chase Young. It wasn't like we were playing scrubs or anything."

Young, who went to DeMatha Catholic, was the No. 2 overall pick of the 2020 draft, selected by Washington. He made the Pro Bowl as a rookie defensive end.

"Really for me at that point, I wanted to play football, wanted to prove that I could be a good player," Johnson recalled of his debut in the sport. "Being undersized, I just had to strain on every play and try not to give up a sack."

Said Chargers coach Brandon Staley: "It's one of those great stories of a guy that really worked at it, really developed his game. He worked at it, and here he is today."

One of Johnson's high school teammates was offensive tackle Christian Darrisaw, who was the No. 23 overall pick by Minnesota last year.

"He's definitely someone who has pushed me throughout my career with his level of play," Johnson said of Darrisaw. "I've always wanted to outdo him, kind of like a rival."

The road to BC

Because he was a strong student, Johnson made it into Davidson, where he played for two seasons on a partial scholarship before money became an issue.

"There was a financial strain to my family that I didn't want to happen anymore," Johnson said.

So he entered the transfer portal and ended up at Boston College, he explained, because he liked the school's academics and the football program's history of developing offensive linemen.

In three seasons with the Eagles, Johnson grew from being a nice story of perseverance to the fifth offensive lineman selected Thursday.

Man of many languages

Johnson graduated from Boston College in 2020 with a degree in computer science and earned his master's degree in cyber security last fall.

He said he does computer programming "in my spare time" and has coded in at least six languages.

"When you learn one language, it's not that hard to learn a new one," he said, "because there's a lot of similarities and things you can pick up on after you learn your first one."

SEBASTIAN JOSEPH-DAY

Sebastian Joseph-Day brings a load of experience to middle of Chargers' defense

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
March 17, 2022

Having had one of the worst run defenses in the NFL last season, the Chargers added what they believe will be 624 pounds of improvement this week.

Tackles Sebastian Joseph-Day and Austin Johnson agreed to free-agent contracts, both deals announced Wednesday when the new league year opened.

On Thursday, Joseph-Day met with the Chargers media for the first time.

Highlights from the day at the team's Costa Mesa headquarters:

A Rams redux? With the Chargers, Joseph-Day will reunite with Brandon Staley, who is now his head coach after serving as his defensive coordinator with the 2020 Rams.

Joseph-Day smiled widely — something he does often, by the way — when he recalled his first meeting with Staley. At the time, Joseph-Day was a relative unknown having not played during his first season in the NFL before starting 15 games in 2019.

The Rams' defensive front that season also had included, among others, Aaron Donald, Michael Brockers and Dante Fowler. Still, when he introduced himself to Staley, Joseph-Day said Staley told him, "I know who you are."

Staley then proceeded to praise Joseph-Day and tout him as someone on the verge of breaking through.

"Hearing that as a young player," Joseph-Day said, "that gave me a different kind of confidence."

Under Staley, Joseph-Day started all 16 games in 2020 and totaled career highs in tackles (55) and snaps (481). He was on his way to an even better season last year before suffering a pectoral injury in late October.

The defense rushes in: During the 2020 season, Joseph-Day had his best grades against the run and overall, according to Pro Football Focus. Last season, he was showing an improved pass rush — with a single-season best three sacks in only seven games — before getting hurt.

But he and Johnson were acquired to — first and foremost — upgrade the Chargers' run defense. Both players arrive with reputations as stout stuffers up front who have performed with some consistency.

Joseph-Day said that, along with being "strong" and "powerful at the point" and "heavy handed," in order to play the position well in Staley's scheme "you have to be intelligent, be able to read what you see, read formations ... stuff like that."

He said the lasting lesson from his previous experience under Staley was the importance of film study.

A year ago, in their first season running Staley's system, the Chargers struggled early on grasping and executing concepts. Joseph-Day will have no such issues when he joins his new teammates on the field.

Where does Tillery stand? Barring anything unforeseen, the defensive line in 2022 will include Jerry Tillery in some role. But Staley has indicated the Chargers aren't done adding help up front, so the circumstances remain unsettled.

On Thursday afternoon, they re-signed veteran defensive tackle Christian Covington, who had a career-high 52 tackles in 16 games as a rotational player last season.

The Chargers appear to be at least one defensive lineman short, with both Justin Jones and Linval Joseph free agents.

Tillery, a first-round pick in 2019, started 15 games last season and has 26 starts over the last two years. He has had his moments but overall has not distinguished himself. Tillery especially has lacked the sort of consistency NFL teams crave.

The intangibles: On Wednesday, Staley noted that Joseph-Day will bring a "spirit" that he said the Chargers lacked on defense in 2021. In his session with reporters, Joseph-Day practically oozed personality.

Asked specifically about the spirit to which Staley referred, Joseph-Day said: "I can't really explain it. It's just me being myself. I'm just a happy guy. I appreciate each day. ... You'll have to see, honestly. I can't really describe it."

About more than football: Joseph-Day called switching from one L.A. team to the other "a perfect mesh" since the transition will allow him to continue his off-field interests.

He is extensively involved in several charities and started a program called "Dine N Bash" that highlights and assists local restaurants. Joseph-Day also co-hosts a podcast with Mike Tyson.

"I obviously take pride in playing football and what-not," he said. "But I don't try to box myself in as that."

One more to go: Cornerback J.C. Jackson, the Chargers' biggest-ticket free agent, is scheduled to meet with reports Friday morning. He was undergoing his physical Thursday.

Jackson has agreed to terms on a five-year deal that guarantees him \$40 million and is worth up to \$82.5 million. That average annual value of \$16.5 million is tied for the fourth-highest among all free agents this year.

ERIC KENDRICKS

Why LB Eric Kendricks is critical to Chargers' defensive ambitions

By Lindsey Thiry
ESPN.com
August 6, 2023

COSTA MESA, Calif. -- Los Angeles Chargers coach Brandon Staley vividly remembers his sales pitch to then-free agent linebacker Eric Kendricks.

From his home in Southern California, Staley sat on the phone with Kendricks, who was vacationing in Hawaii with his wife, Ally, before the anticipated arrival of their baby.

The call lasted about an hour, with the two able to connect on the topics of family and football. For Staley, the conversation easily could have stretched longer if he didn't feel an obligation to allow Kendricks to return to vacationing.

"There's some times where you just feel like you've known someone a lot longer than you have," Staley said. "And he's one of those players that I had never coached, but I felt like I knew his game... I think we knew that we were going to have a special thing and that the fit was right."

With a glaring need at the position after deciding not to retain linebacker Drue Tranquill in free agency, the Chargers signed Kendricks to a two-year, \$13.25 million contract.

Through nearly five months, including the offseason program and nearly two weeks in training camp, Kendricks is proving a perfect fit in a defense that features standout edge rushers Joey Bosa and Khalil Mack and safety Derwin James Jr.

"He takes command in the middle and has been a calm presence in there," first-year defensive coordinator Derrick Ansley said. "It's been really good for us."

In eight seasons with the Minnesota Vikings, who released him last March due to salary cap constraints, Kendricks piled up 919 tackles, second in the NFL over that time span behind Bobby Wagner, with 15 sacks and nine interceptions.

"As a linebacker, he's a very complete player," Staley said. "[He can] key diagnose, concept-trigger, open-field tackle, box tackler, passing-game blitz. He just brings a lot to the table."

Now entering his ninth season, the 31-year-old Kendricks is tasked with playing alongside fourth-year pro Kenneth Murray Jr. and helping a unit that last season ranked 25th in efficiency and must improve dramatically against the run after allowing a league-worst 5.4 yards per carry.

"The whole learning the terminology, the switching over is a little bit different," Kendricks said of the transition. "I feel like they've been very good at explaining why we do things and having reasons for them. When you have a reason for why we do stuff and you pair it together, you can understand better."

Kendricks' biggest impact could be his intangibles, including his experience, leadership and communication, as he takes over as the defensive signal-caller -- the player who relays coach Brandon Staley's defensive playcalls on the field.

"Having a guy like Eric running the defense is special," said Bosa, who's entering his eighth season. "He's a great leader out there. I think he's going to facilitate the defense in a way that we haven't had."

"Talk about knowledge and the experience of having him in the middle, you can already hear the voice, and the power and inflection in his voice, whenever he is calling the calls and putting people into position," Mack said. "It's going to be great, it's going to be fun playing with him."

Kendricks' ability to communicate with not only teammates, but Staley, will be key.

"It just goes so far beyond going through the play call," Staley said. "It's the personal relationship, it's the professional relationship. You want him to be able to think and see just like you do. You also want to give him the freedom too. He's the one out there. If he can see something that he feels like can help us, you want to give him that green light to do it."

Kendricks knows based on experience that the role will only grow more complicated as they reach deeper into the scheme and begin to game-plan for opponents, but for now, he said it's been going "great."

"I've been getting the calls out quick," Kendricks said. "We've been getting lined up and playing football."

As for all the early praise from his teammates, Kendricks expressed an appreciation for their comments, but emphasized that he merely has been playing his part.

"I haven't made, really, any big plays, for me, personally," Kendricks said. "I'm just doing my job. I'm trying to do it at a high level."

Eric Kendricks Ready to Embrace Leadership Role with Bolts

By Eric Smith
Chargers.com
April 18, 2023

Eric Kendricks had plenty of butterflies Monday morning as he drove to Hoag Performance Center for the first day of the Chargers voluntary offseason program.

The Chargers new middle linebacker, who joined the Bolts last month after eight seasons in Minnesota, was the fresh face in a locker room full of players that knew each other.

"It was like I was the new kid in school," Kendricks said. "It was a little bit nerve-wracking for me.

"I've met people but didn't really know anybody on that level. Not yet. I'm looking forward to building those relationships and things like that," Kendricks later added. "I've obviously played against a lot of people. Familiarity-wise, that's why I'm here, so I can get to know all of the players and build that camaraderie."

At least Kendricks was in somewhat familiar colors (and his old college number) in a new environment. A former star at UCLA, he donned the powder blue and gold for an on-field workout where he began the acclimation process.

The California native mingled with Khalil Mack and Morgan Fox among others, going through his workout with a smile on his face.

Kendricks said he's going to take a simple approach to getting to know his new teammates.

"Just lifting, running and shooting the [breeze] on the side," Kendricks said. "Do little things like that. Not do too much, just be myself and come in here and just learn."

Kendricks was welcomed with open arms Monday by teammates and coaches.

Fox said he knew of Kendricks from afar and was fired up to be on the same team with him.

"He's awesome. We actually have a lot of mutual friends," Fox said. "[Monday] was the first time that I've met him in person, but everyone that I know that knows him speaks very highly of him, nothing but great things about him.

"It was awesome to actually meet him today, get to work with him," Fox added. "I'm excited to see what the season is going to look like with him."

Kendricks was released by the Vikings earlier this offseason after making 113 starts and racking up 900-plus tackles, earning All-Pro and Pro Bowl honors in 2019.

He said his initial conversation with Chargers Head Coach Brandon Staley lasted 90 minutes as the two talked ball and what Kendricks' role would be with the Bolts.

"It was 11 o'clock at night and I got to know his personality a lot," Kendricks said. "I'm glad that I can fit into this program, into this system, but also, I don't have to do too much as I come in.

"I can get to know the guys, get to know the leaders on the team, like Khalil, and things like that and just play my role," Kendricks added. "This is my ninth year in the league. I've seen a lot. I've done a lot. Hopefully, my experiences can help everybody else around me. Like I said, I'm not pushing for that. I'm just going to come in here, be myself and play the game that I love to play."

Staley said Monday that he jumped at the chance to add Kendricks' pedigree and leadership skills to the roster.

"A lot of experience, a lot of play-making ability. He's been at the heart of one of the top defenses in the NFL his entire career," Staley said. "He's a very complete player and he's also one of the best leaders that you're going to be around. I'm excited about joining up with him. We're going to have a lot of work ahead of us."

Staley later referenced how Kendricks' experience will translate to his scheme and affect those around him.

"I think the intangible part of that position is that you're truly connecting both places, you're connecting the front of your defense to the back of your defense. You're in the middle of everything," Staley said. "In the NFL, any time that you play a position that's in the middle – inside linebacker, safety, quarterback, center – any time that you're in the middle, you have to be a connector. That's part of your value to the football team that goes far beyond height, weight, speed.

"As good of a player as he is, the fact that he has that type of leadership capacity multiplies his impact on the team," Staley continued. "What he did in Minnesota, I got to witness firsthand because I was in the division when I was in Chicago and played him when I went to Denver and played him as a head coach here.

"Some of my best friends have been a part of coaching him," Staley added. "Watching him from afar, just the level of respect that I've had for him, not just as a player, but as a leader – Walter Payton Man of the Year, you're talking about the highest caliber that you could join up with."

Kendricks will slide right into a starting role for the Chargers, but his impact will go beyond his play on the field.

The Bolts brought him in to be a leader in the huddle, yes, but he'll also be one in the locker room and the community, too.

As soon as the butterflies wear off, expect Kendricks and his easy-going personality to fit right in back in Southern California.

"My goal is not to do too much. Not try to overextend. Just do what I've done my whole career," Kendricks said. "I feel like I came into UCLA kind of as the underdog in the same situation, not really knowing anybody. I'm just kind of taking that approach, just like when I was a rookie — put my head down and work. Do things that I'm good at and we'll go from there.

"Coming to the Chargers, especially being around a bunch of great players, it's going to bring another level to my game," Kendricks later added. "It's going to make me feel like I'm the underdog again. I'm back to the bottom of the totem pole. I have to prove myself to everybody."

Chargers gush over addition of Eric Kendricks, 'one of the most complete linebackers'

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
March 27, 2023

PHOENIX — Drue Tranquill just led the Chargers in tackles, finished tied for third in sacks and established himself as a down-in, down-out defensive leader.

Still, coach Brandon Staley said Monday that the allure of free agent Eric Kendricks was too much to pass up.

"He's one of the most complete linebackers in the last decade," Staley, speaking at the NFL's owners meetings, said of Kendricks. "You're talking about five to seven players that are as complete a linebacker as he is."

So the Chargers signed Kendricks this month after Minnesota released the eight-year veteran.

Tranquill, a 2019 fourth-round pick of the Chargers, then signed with Kansas City, one of their AFC West rivals.

"I love the way he plays the game," Chiefs coach Andy Reid said of Tranquill. "He's smart. He's aggressive, good cover guy. He's big."

Staley praised Tranquill for his contributions and wished him luck with Kansas City.

Staley then turned his attention to Kendricks, who likely will assume Tranquill's role of relaying the signals in the defensive huddle.

"A true commander," he said. "A tackling machine — sideline to sideline, in the box, physicality. He's one of the best passing-game linebackers in the last decade."

Staley also noted Kendricks' instincts, energy and ability to communicate. He said he expects the transition to the Chargers to be "seamless" because the Vikings employ a similar scheme.

KHALIL MACK

How Khalil Mack's family helped him annihilate his 'soft' reputation

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
July 26, 2022

FORT PIERCE, Fla. — He could see the potential in all that mass and all those muscles, the physical promises so pronounced that the kid's high school coach begged his father to let him play.

Robert Wimberly knew Khalil Mack could fit in at Liberty University right away and maybe, if things went well, with two more years of development be ready for a larger football program.

Then a Liberty assistant, Wimberly was the only college coach who showed interest in Mack, a prospect left on the periphery because of a high school career that covered a single season.

The staff at Florida said Mack couldn't play in the Southeastern Conference. Miami's coaches expressed similar doubts about his Atlantic Coast Conference chances. Others questioned whether Mack was explosive enough or flexible enough.

A sport that values so highly what it can see on tape lacked sufficient evidence — just 12 games? — on Mack.

But Wimberly had seen enough of his 140 stops during that one fall at Westwood High to appreciate that, as a linebacker, he played with something all defensive coaches believe they can build upon: a solid base.

What Wimberly didn't realize until he sat down with Mack one night for dinner — along with Mack's parents and two brothers — was how impressive the kid's foundation was, as well.

"It was almost like the Huxtables, you know, on the 'The Cosby Show,' " Wimberly recalled. "There was sincere love among them. Everyone was genuinely excited for Khalil. Just a lot of love and respect in that household."

When the Chargers aimed to rebuild their defense this offseason, the first move was to trade for Mack, who came from Chicago in mid-March at the cost of two draft picks — a second-round selection in 2022 and a sixth-round selection in 2023.

With Mack now 31 and trying to rebound from a season in which he missed 10 games because of a foot injury, it is fair to wonder where the sixth-time Pro Bowl pick is heading.

But there can be no questioning where Mack came from, a former two-star recruit reared in a five-star home that as recently as last year gained even more glow.

"It's just all the grace of God," Mack's father, Sandy, said. "This couldn't be orchestrated. You couldn't write this. We don't take any credit for what God has done. That would be robbery."

The name "Khalil" came from one of Sandy's muscle magazines and proved prophetic when the baby boy debuted at nearly 11 pounds and with definition in his arms, legs and everywhere else.

This was a toddler with traps. Doctors were so concerned about Mack's size that they had him tested for diabetes.

"He came out with quads," Sandy said. "Big shoulders. Big legs. Right away I thought, 'This boy's different.' "

Sandy and his wife, Yolanda, were high school sweethearts at Fort Pierce's Central High. They were married in the cafeteria of another school nearby, Lincoln Park Academy, where Yolanda's mother worked.

Having lost his father at an early age, Sandy never had the chance to play high school sports despite his own muscular, athletic frame. He and twin brother Sammie Jr. had to work instead.

"Mom told us," Sandy explained, " 'You can either play sports or you can eat.' "

As an adult, he became a corrections officer at the St. Lucie County Jail, and, concerned with protecting himself, Sandy began working out at a local gym. He and Sammie Jr. soon were battling to see who could get bigger.

That's the way it was with these twins, who competed against each other with the intensity of worst enemies or best friends.

And that's also how it was for Sandy's three sons — Sandy Jr., Khalil and Ledarius. As the oldest brother, Sandy Jr. loved challenging Khalil, the quietest of the Mack boys. So did Dad.

Years later and still today, observers marvel at Mack's ability to go from talking soft to hitting hard in the time it takes to stride across the white lines that define a football field.

"Between Sandy Jr. and I, we used to put it on him pretty good," Sandy, 57, said. "Khalil got it from both of us. You better throw a switch in that situation because crying's not going to work."

He took it, but Mack also gave it back. Sandy recalled more than once having to halt a backyard basketball game to remind Mack that Dad had to go to work in the morning and he'd prefer to do so without multiple bruises. Yolanda's half of the family is where the quiet comes from. Mack loved spending time with his maternal grandfather, Alfred Booker, the two bonding after Booker would pick him up from school.

"He has a personality like my dad — real laid back, no worries," Yolanda said. "Khalil is just Khalil, you know. He was kind of a homebody."

"Boring and focused" is how Mack has described himself when he was growing up, those qualities leading some people around the family to question his toughness. The doubters included a cousin who used to call Mack "soft."

The fact he wasn't especially drawn to football added to the notion that a kid who would become a three-time NFL All-Pro and quarterback terrorizer somehow lacked sufficient aggression.

"He just never really wanted to play the sport," Sandy said. "But I'd tell people all the time, 'If I get him off this leash, you'll see.' "

When he was 12, Mack decided to give organized football a shot. First, though, he and his father had a discussion.

"I sat him down and told him, 'OK, these guys are saying you're soft,' " Sandy remembered. " 'The first guy you hit out there, I don't want him to get up.' That was my little pep talk."

To understand how things went from there, it's not inaccurate to report that Mack put the pop in Pop Warner. Early in his first game, Sandy recalled, Mack caused a violent collision near the sidelines after appearing only as a blur.

"I didn't even know it was Khalil," Sandy said. "People were saying, 'Mack, that's your son!' I was like, 'Yeah!' While I was celebrating, I didn't see the paramedics coming to get the other guy. I didn't know Khalil was going to do it for real. The kid had to go to the hospital. I felt kind of guilty about that."

Still, Mack, more interested in basketball, wouldn't play football again until late in high school, during the spring before his senior year. By then, a torn patella tendon had sidetracked his hoops plans and, while rehabbing from the injury, Mack had thrown himself into weight lifting, first asking to join his father at the gym and later insisting on it.

At the time, Sandy had concerns about his son's academic standing, particularly Mack's struggles with math. Admitting he hadn't been a great student, Sandy said he understood the difficulties in falling behind in school.

Sandy also had worked at a juvenile detention center and was aware of the dangers that lurked for teenagers, especially outside a structured life. He figured the military might be Khalil's best chance to get out of Fort Pierce.

But one day at work, Sandy's phone rang and it was Westwood High's new coach, a man named Waides Ashmon, who had just pulled Mack out of class to talk to him about playing football again. Mack's response: "You need to talk to my dad."

"I called and said, 'Mr. Mack, I've been doing this a long time,' " Ashmon said. " 'I've never guaranteed a parent that their kid's gonna go to school. But if you allow Khalil to play for me, I promise you he'll go to school free.' "

Ashmon was so certain of Mack's potential that he made the assurance even after glimpsing Mack only in a collared shirt and shorts. He figured that physique alone would be too enticing to college coaches.

The conversation — and enclosed guarantee of a continued, free education — convinced Sandy, who agreed by the end of the call to allow his son to return to football.

With that decision, Mack went into full pursuit, this player who later would become famous for his ability to chase down quarterbacks.

In one of his first practices that spring, Mack proved he could do more than just look as if he belonged. With Yolanda waiting in the parking lot to take her son to a class at a nearby community college, Westwood's coaches told Mack to go first during a tackling drill.

"Khalil beat the block and smacked the running back and it was like, 'Oh, you're done. Go to class, kid,'" said Jabari Williams, then a Westwood assistant. "It took just one hit. After that, we knew we had ourselves something."

Yet, Mack was regarded as only the third-best prospect on a team that would finish 10-2. Defensive lineman Luther Robinson, who went to Miami and eventually to the Green Bay Packers, and quarterback Isaac Virgin, who played at South Florida as a tight end, were ranked ahead of him.

As much as the Westwood staff promoted Mack — Williams: "We were begging schools to take him." — the pleas went unheard.

"I was like, 'What are y'all ... we can't be watching the same film,'" Ashmon said. "But I also knew Khalil's work ethic and how with college coaching he would get a lot better."

Mack's lone offer came from Liberty, which is where he was headed until Wimberly left to take a job at Buffalo. Mack followed him, receiving the full-ride Ashmon had promised Sandy.

That summer and into training camp, Wimberly remembers the Bulls' coaches debating about whether to play Mack or redshirt him. Asked his opinion, Wimberly sided with redshirting, noting that Mack, with more experience, could be "super special."

Buffalo did redshirt him, slowing the start of Mack's college career but hardly the beginning of his rapid growth. Actually playing wasn't a requirement to show he could make plays.

One day, a reporter from upstate New York called Sandy with a question:

"Mr. Mack, do you know what your son is up here doing?"

"No. No I don't."

"Your son's doing some things we've never seen before."

"Really?"

"Mr. Mack, I think your son is going to be something real special here at Buffalo."

Wrecking practices, that's what Mack was doing, to the point where Wimberly said he was asked more than once by a fellow Buffalo assistant, "Wimbo, can you talk to him, please?"

Mack was leaving impressions — the black-and-blue kind, and others much more permanent.

Sandy took another call from Buffalo one afternoon. This time, it was an assistant coach telling him his son was doing something the coach had never seen before: Mack was cleaning the locker room.

When his boys were young, Sandy would bring them along anytime he would do volunteer work in and around Fort Pierce. "Because it's just the right thing to do," he said he'd tell them if they asked why they had to go.

Today, Mack is widely recognized for giving back. His foundation made a \$500,000 donation to a Fort Pierce park that now includes a football field bearing Mack's name.

Westwood needed football uniforms a few years back and, the school's athletic director said, Sandy wrote a \$20,000 check. Just a couple weeks ago, a box full of several pairs of cleats showed up unannounced at Westwood, compliments of Mack, who also has done things such as pay off all the layaway bills at the local Walmart around Christmastime.

"It's a family thing," Ashmon said. "Khalil's mimicking his dad. His dad was giving back way before Khalil became Khalil."

After he signed his first NFL contract, Mack bought his parents a home in nearby Vero Beach. He also paid off his dad's truck.

The BMW and Mercedes in the driveway of that Vero Beach house came from Mack, who has rewarded some of the younger members of the extended household with cars in exchange for maintaining their grades.

This is a family anchored in its faith and its church, Sandy and Yolanda both deacons at the Miracle Prayer Temple Worship Center. They all love music and have been part of the church band. Sandy has written and recorded gospel songs.

Mack can sing, too, and also taught himself to play the guitar while in college. Sandy thought he was the best piano player in the family until Ledarius came along.

As the church's music director, Sandy would arrange songs so that the Macks could sing four-part harmony. They still can do it, on cue, which happened recently when the boys were back together.

So, when that Buffalo assistant called with the news that Mack was picking up his teammates' trash, Sandy said the words came wrapped in reassurance.

"That made me feel like, 'Wow, he got it,'" Sandy said. "For me to get a call from somebody way up in Buffalo to tell me that made me think Khalil's going to be OK."

OK, plus plenty more. With the Bulls, Mack would develop into a freakish force — one capable of lifting offensive linemen off the ground one-handed — and easily the greatest player in program history.

As a senior, he had 2½ sacks, nine tackles and an interception for touchdown against Ohio State in the game that cemented Mack's status as an NFL prospect and a Bulls legend.

"Buffalo plays in the MAC," Sandy said. "It can't be coincidence that that happened. I told him, 'Khalil, they're spelling Mack wrong. Make sure they know how to spell Mack before you leave.' And that's what he did."

(Five years after Khalil left Buffalo, Ledarius joined the Bulls' football program for two seasons. He debuted in the NFL last year, appearing in three games for the Bears. How rich is the athletic DNA in this family? Ledarius attended a high school — Lincoln Park Academy — that didn't have a football team and then went to a small college in Miami to play basketball before giving football a try.)

The story goes that in the lead-up to that 2013 season opener in Columbus, then-Buckeyes coach Urban Meyer was talking about Mack when, suddenly forgetting his name, referred to him as "No. 46."

After Ohio State's 40-20 victory, Mack approached Meyer, extended his right hand and introduced himself.

Longtime coach Lou Tepper was Buffalo's defensive coordinator during that time. He spent nearly a half-century in football and literally wrote the book on linebacker play, putting Mack on the cover of the second edition of "Complete Linebacking."

To grasp the totality of Mack's impact, though, consider that Tepper, to this day, texts Mack a Bible verse every Saturday morning and speaks of him with a reverence rooted in nothing having to do with football.

"I love him," Tepper said, "and if he had never played a down in the NFL, if he had never been drafted, I wouldn't love him any differently."

So what's left? Just this: Remember that line about the five-star home gaining more glow? In June of 2021, Sandy and Yolanda heard from a man named Jalen Parmele, who, using one of those ancestry programs, discovered he was a Mack boy, as well. The original Mack boy.

Sandy and Yolanda had a son before Sandy Jr. arrived. At the time, they both thought they were too young to properly handle the responsibility, so they put the baby up for adoption.

Parmele grew up in Michigan to be a football player and made the NFL, a running back who spent parts of five seasons with Baltimore, Jacksonville and Arizona.

A month after Parmele reached out to the Macks, everyone reunited in Florida for a genuine Sunshine State celebration. They filled in the gaps of their life stories and shot selfies, embracing a previously unknown family chapter.

Sandy smiled when he pointed out that Parmele played in college at Toledo, which is in the same conference as Buffalo. That's right, another Mack in the MAC.

"I'm telling you, you couldn't orchestrate this," Sandy said. "No way. This was orchestrated at a higher level."

Chargers Khalil Mack Paid a Tax, and Now He's Ready for a 'Special' Year

By Albert Breer
Sports Illustrated
August 16, 2023

For a minute there, it looked like the shared vision of the Chargers and Khalil Mack for 2022 was about to play out in a very, very big way.

Set opposite Joey Bosa, easily the best bookend Mack has ever had, the 2016 Defensive Player of the Year registered three sacks in the opener against the team that drafted him.

What's more, it was back-to-back sacks from him and Bosa that closed the Raiders out. It was, as those guys saw it, just the beginning. Or so they thought.

"It was like a high. Man, it's going to be like this? This could be a 20-sack year," Mack said, sitting at a picnic table after an early August practice.

"We were rolling, getting everything we wanted. Run game, pass game, three sacks. I'm like, Oh man, you could take a deep breath. Going into the K.C. game, rough game for us, but still had them where we wanted them. It was kind of one of those things where you're building."

And then, they weren't. Bosa tore a groin muscle the next week against the Jaguars. Mack remembers thinking, Holy s----- I have to do this by myself. Everything after that was different, for sure.

Ten months later, no one on the Chargers' roster would say it was better, in a good way. It wasn't. Losing a player like Bosa can't be, not for Mack, and not for the team. But if there was a silver lining that the Chargers could take from it, it was that everyone got to see how Mack, in his ninth NFL season, would handle such an adverse situation.

Mack had only four sacks in the 14 (and three-quarters) games after Bosa was injured. He fought through chips and double teams and protection sliding to him over that time, with offenses not needing to worry as much about anyone else making them pay for it.

And, over time, Mack opened up chances for others simply by not taking his foot off the gas, or letting any opponent think it could back off in sending the cavalry after him.

Most of all, he was selfless, in seeing the bigger picture of what he was bringing to his team.

He had to be, because every game plan was engineered for him, whether it was in the pass protection game or run game," coach Brandon Staley says.

"When you lose a guy like Joey, then you have to pace yourself a little bit too. It happened to Von [Miller]. When I coached Von in 2019 and Bradley [Chubb] got hurt, I saw the same thing happen. You just know, O.K., all the attention is going his way, and there's just a real tax to that.

...

"He had an incredible year, but because of the amount of attention, you didn't see that splash year that I think he was capable of, that he was headed towards. But what he did was, from a leadership standpoint, when we played that great defense down the stretch, he's the one that willed us there. ... I think we'll look back on it and say, Man, the impact that Khalil Mack had on this football team, really getting it to go this way, he'll be looked at within this franchise as one of the guys that really changed the course of it."

And that's because of what Mack meant, as a tone-setting veteran, to the younger guys on Staley's roster—"he's been just fantastic for the whole group"—and what he could mean going forward, with Bosa back and healthy, and hopes high within the organization for the year ahead.

With that as the backdrop, we got the chance to catch up on a bunch of things with Mack last week.

Here's more of our conversation.

Sports Illustrated: How are you trying to take care of yourself differently?

Khalil Mack: It's night and day. You're talking about three times a week, massages, needling, stretching, even just from stress level, frame of mind, when I get home, there's a home environment and life, having my wife. All that's new. It's getting in that groove and settling in and not doing too much. I used to be on the go, doing this and that in between what I had going on already. It's just nice to be in the space that I'm in.

SI: How did losing Joey change things for you last year?

KM: You understand that it was no longer Joey and Khalil that teams worry about. The focus on the edge was solely on me. Just to take that on, I remember talking to Giff Smith, the position coach, and he's like I know you feel like you have to carry everything, but don't feel like you have to carry everything. Just make sure you're you on Sundays. I did everything in my power to make sure I was myself on Sundays. ... I just had to move a lot smarter and use that wisdom that Coach Staley was talking about.

SI: Brandon said there was a tax you paid with the attention you got after Joey was hurt ...

KM: That thought process alone, it was like, Damn, this is going to be a lot harder than I thought when we first started. It definitely took a toll because your body's still getting used to it. I had to get back used to football coming off of that injury from the previous year. It was a lot of taxing things that was happening body-wise, I carried a little lighter. I'm back to my normal weight. I was at 255 [pounds]. Some weeks I'd come in 252, 250. Now I'm at 265 to 268. That's my normal weight. That's where I feel the most comfortable, the most explosive.

SI: Was there a point where last year felt hard?

KM: [After] that Raiders game, against Kansas City was like, Damn, I didn't really know if I could play. Talk about sore; it was a different type of sore coming in from that Raiders game. It was like, Damn, not used to feeling like this the second week. It was new. Just kind of grinding that whole process out and trying to take care of my body to where I could keep going throughout the year, 17 games, playoff game was hard. This year, just understanding that and having the whole offseason, it's going to be fun.

SI: Have you lost anything from your prime?

KM: No, if anything it's just staying healthy, understanding that teams are going to scheme against the outside guy and just preparing for that as well as making sure everybody's bringing everybody else along. It was not just me solely acting by myself. It was 10 other guys. ... We're trying to get everybody together so that we can bring that fist together in one punch.

SI: Is the standard rising here?

KM: Absolutely. It's rubbing off. We see it every day, especially in our room. Chris [Rumph II] and Tuili [Tuipulotu], the two main [backups]. We're playing at a high level. Whenever we need a breather, or Joey and I need a breather, there's no letup in these tackles, either. That's understood. The standard is the standard, and you can't hop off from there.

SI: How do you feel about people not talking about you much?

KM: I love it. I use anything to fuel me.

SI: Do you think people have forgotten about you?

KM: I hope so. This year's going to be fun.

SI: Maybe one of your best years?

KM: Absolutely. It's going to be fun. It's going to be special.

SI: How good can you and Joey be together?

KM: It could be a special year. It could be a very special year. Like I said, defensive line, if everything goes as planned, it can be a special year.

SI: What individual career goals do you have left?

KM: A goal of mine: I have to touch 100 sacks, at least. If I can do it this year, that'll be my goal. Get 10, at least touch 100.

SI: How about the Hall of Fame?

KM: That's always been at the forefront of my mind. I've been in huddles with Charles Woodson. You understand that level of greatness. You see it every day, and you try to apply it to your game and your lifestyle. The plan is there to be the best.

SI: Do you see other guys here who could reach that level?

KM: Absolutely. You see sparks over there. It's all about consistency. That's what I'm trying to bring to this team, make sure they know I'm bringing my lunch pail every day to the practice field.

SI: It sounds like you still love it ...

KM: Absolutely. I thought seeing Wood [Woodson] was crazy, 18 years. But I see why he did it for so long. He loves the game. It's a blessing.

SI: Have you thought about how much time you have left?

KM: I used to, but I got hurt the year before last and got to make up for it.

SI: What was the plan before?

KM: It was going to be 10, and I was going to be done, but I still look a little fast and athletic out there, so who knows?

How the Bears and Chargers became perfect trade partners for Khalil Mack

By Daniel Popper & Kevin Fishbain
The Athletic
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The Chargers introduced Brandon Staley as their new head coach on Jan. 21, 2021. Speaking to reporters on a video call from the team's facility in Orange County, Staley knew a long process awaited.

Roster turnover is a painstaking, meticulous process. Staley was inheriting a talented collection of players, led by emerging superstar quarterback Justin Herbert. He had a clear vision of where he wanted to go and what he needed to get there. But it was going to take time and patience.

"You know that you got to do things in a sequence," Staley said earlier this month. "It's not college, where you can recruit and turn things over and just have everything at once."

That sequence had to begin with creating the best possible structure for Herbert, from the coaching staff down to the supporting cast of players. So in that first offseason, Staley and general manager Tom Telesco invested in that structure — step one in what Staley has referred to as a "two-year vision." The offensive line was a mess. They bolstered that group through free agency and the draft. They added weapons and a veteran backup quarterback in Chase Daniel, who was familiar with new offensive coordinator Joe Lombardi's scheme from their time together in New Orleans.

The structure they built worked. Herbert excelled. The Chargers had a top-five offense. But they missed the playoffs, primarily because Staley's defense did not coalesce or perform as expected.

And that brings us to the second step in Staley's roster-turnover plan. This offseason was always going to be the time to overhaul the defense and rebuild that side of the ball with players that truly fit Staley's vision.

They needed playmakers. They needed more elite talent that could help take Staley's system — a system that, with the right players, proved to be one of the best and most innovative in football with the Rams in 2020 — and make it come alive on the field.

There was a player who could be available via trade, the type of edge rusher who the Chargers felt could improve all of the defense's weaknesses and provide the pedigree, standard of performance and mentality that could reshape the unit's identity: Khalil Mack.

Meanwhile in Chicago, Ryan Poles took over a franchise that had gone from 12-4 with the best defense in football — led by Mack — in 2018 to 6-11 last season, firing both general manager Ryan Pace and head coach Matt Nagy.

The Bears' roster is nowhere near Super Bowl-caliber, and as Poles hopes the Bears have a quarterback in Justin Fields to build around like the Chargers do in Herbert, the process of doing so required tough decisions, such as potentially moving the highest-paid player in franchise history.

Teams had begun to inquire, and the more calls Poles received, the more the 37-year-old, first-time GM realized that trading Mack was a possibility. It would signal the start of a roster makeover and could get the Bears some badly needed draft capital.

Mack had arguably the best season of his career with the Bears in 2018 when Staley was his position coach under then-defensive coordinator Vic Fangio. Staley was determined to push for Mack. Telesco, who has always listened to his head coaches and tried to provide them with the tools they need, was on board. With Herbert on a rookie deal and a championship window clearly open, owner Dean Spanos and president of football operations John Spanos were in lockstep with their coach and general manager.

"It showed the alignment of our organization, starting with Dean and John Spanos, starting with the Spanos family," Staley said. "Because that's where it begins: with leadership."

A similar sense of agreement was taking place in Chicago.

"There was buy-in from (head coach) Matt (Eberflus), from ownership, from everyone," Poles said. "They understood that it was the right move at the right time."

The Chargers possessed the cap space to take on Mack's initial \$17.75 million cap hit. But they were not going to overpay in draft capital. It is doubtful the Chargers would have made the deal if the Bears and Poles had demanded a first-round pick in return. But a 2022 second-round pick? That was a sweet spot.

"Any time that you're going to get involved in a move like that, there are very few players that you're going to do that for," Staley said. "That list is not very long, and so when you assess, OK, this player — doesn't matter what position — hey, this is what we think that he's worth. The Khalil trade, that's representative of that. We feel like that was really good value for a player of his caliber."

The final price: A 2022 second-round pick and a 2023 sixth-round pick.

"We made a trade that we felt like really added a premium player to our team, but without it mortgaging our future," Staley said.

Poles' familiarity with the star pass rusher came predominantly when the two were both in the AFC West — Poles in the personnel department with the Chiefs and Mack as an NFL Defensive Player of the Year with the Raiders.

He'd have to have a tough conversation with a player he never acquired in the first place — part of the gig for a new GM.

Poles didn't necessarily owe Mack anything, but he understood the magnitude of the trade and what Mack meant to the Bears.

When it became time to make a trade, Poles called Mack to tell him that he wanted to put the player in a good situation. Poles considered everything about the situation he'd send Mack to, including how a warm-weather team would benefit the 31-year old at this time in his career.

"The big thing was just letting him know how much the organization appreciated him, how much I appreciated his career," Poles said. "I think the world of him. But also to let him know that it's best for the club that we go in different directions. But I took the time to let him know that I was going to make sure that he was going to be put in a situation that was going to be good for him, where he could compete."

Poles probably wasn't going to get pushback from Mack, who moves from a team in transition with a new coaching staff to a team with Super Bowl aspirations in Los Angeles for his former position coach. Trading for Mack was a seminal moment for the Bears in the past decade, but moving him signaled a change, and that might have been a tough decision for George McCaskey to give the OK.

In the new power structure at Halas Hall, Poles reports directly to the team's chairman, and McCaskey is nothing if not a die-hard Bears fan.

"Well, Khalil is a great player," McCaskey said. "And showed on many occasions for us how he can take over a game, so when you have a player like that, you want to have a good discussion. (Poles) explained to me the reasons why he thought the Bears should do it and it made sense to me."

Trading the highest-paid player in Bears history wasn't an easy decision for new head coach Matt Eberflus, left, and general manager Ryan Poles. (Nam Y. Huh / Associated Press)

Another important person in the organization who might have had to be sold? Eberflus. Imagine being a new head coach, one with a defensive background, and getting the opportunity to work with a player like Mack, only to see him traded less than two months into the job. But Eberflus understands the business, and what Poles is trying to build.

"Yeah I mean, Khalil has had a great career," Eberflus said. "He's going to continue to do well and do a lot of good things in the future. But we just thought what was best for the organization going forward, looking at the whole piece of it, you know, the contract, looking at everything. Going forward for us, the club, it was the best move for us. We all signed off on it. It will be good for us in the long run."

Poles had everyone on the same page, but he still called the move one of the hardest moments of his first two months on the job.

This wasn't just any trade, and Poles didn't treat it that way, starting with his call to Mack.

"I wasn't going to send him somewhere that he wasn't happy," Poles said. "I wanted to make sure he knew that I cared and I wanted to put him in a good situation. I think he really appreciated that. I know the agent appreciated that. It's really ... I think a win-win for Khalil, the Chargers and the Bears in terms of the direction that we're all going. (But) that was a hard thing to do to move on from a guy like that."

Mack was at home watching the new Peacock drama “Bel-Air” — a re-imagining of Will Smith’s classic ‘90s sitcom “The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air” — with his fiancée, rapper and actress Brianna Perry, and his infant son, Deuce, when his phone rang.

It was his agent, Joel Segal, and there was some news to share.

Like the main character in the show, Mack would be making an unexpected move to Los Angeles.

“Kind of a strange coincidence,” Mack said.

The Chargers had traded for him, and Mack would be reuniting with Staley.

Mack said he went through a range of emotions after hearing the news. But he settled on a positive note because of that familiarity with Staley.

“It was weird to hear,” Mack said of his initial thoughts. “But understanding the team and the coach, having a relationship with Coach Staley and knowing his mindset and knowing his passion for the game, it went from bittersweet to kind of excited; knowing who I’m dealing with — the type of man he is, first and foremost — and how much he truly loves the game of football. You can feel it whenever you speak to him.”

Staley did not have to ride the same emotional roller coaster.

The negotiations had progressed quickly. Staley said Telesco and Poles first connected around the NFL combine in early March. After the two sides agreed to terms on March 10, Telesco walked to Staley’s office and told his head coach that the trade was happening.

The only feeling for Staley: Elation.

“Tom came down to my office and (was) pretty casual,” Staley said. “He acted like he’d been there before.”

Telesco, though, had not been here before. In his previous nine years as general manager, Telesco had traded picks for a player only twice — a conditional seventh-round pick for defensive tackle Sean Lissemore in 2013 and a conditional seventh-round pick for quarterback Cardale Jones in 2017.

This was new territory for the organization. And it is evidence, more than anything else, of where the Chargers stand entering 2022.

They traded for Mack. They signed the top cornerback on the market in J.C. Jackson.

The time to win is now.

“You partner up with a GM who believes in what you do, and you have a vision for how you’re going to build a team and what you need,” Staley said. “And so it was just exciting to see it all come together.”

Based on Poles’ moves and focus on the long-term view, it’s evident how he evaluated this roster. But he said he didn’t take the job thinking, “I’m going to trade Khalil Mack.” The volume of calls made it a reality.

The move, however, tracks with his plan. That’s not to say it will ultimately prove to be the right plan or the correct approach — a lot of that will depend on Fields and how the Bears use their draft picks, then what they do with their extra resources in 2023 — but moving a player like Mack to get a second-round pick signaled the start of the strategy.

“To me, it kind of just kicked it off in terms of executing our plan to be successful and to get this roster to where it needs to be,” Poles said. “But it was definitely mixed emotions because it’s a guy who’s a good football player. I know what he’s meant to this organization. I remember that night game when he first got to Chicago, it was incredible.

“That’s a tough player to move on from, but again, when you know what you need to do for the betterment of the club, it was like, let’s go, the clock has started. We’ve got to move and do what we can to improve the roster.”

Poles said they took a look at analytics, Mack’s age, his playing time, and then the timing element — when could they get the best compensation for Mack?

“If you wait, what does that look like? If you do it now, what does it look like?” Poles said. “And we just thought, right now it would allow the Bears to have more ammunition to add more players.”

From his first day at Halas Hall, Poles noted the low number of draft picks the Bears had in 2022 — only five, in part because of the Fields trade. That’s a difficult foundation for a GM who wants to infuse the roster with young talent and ultimately try to build through the draft.

The Mack trade might have added only one more pick to the 2022 Bears haul, but it’s a significant one, as it’s in the top 50.

“It was just looking at our future,” Poles said. “It was looking at where we needed to go. Again, the (number of) picks were low. And like I mentioned, using the different tools, analytics, everything, it just seemed like the right time to do it in terms of value where we can help this team out now and in the future.”

Mack has still been a dominant player ... when healthy. That durability question mark, his age and his cap hit are all going to be viewed through the prism of the team’s direction. While the Chargers believe they acquired someone who gets them closer to a Super Bowl, the Bears believe this move gets them closer to where they want to be as well with the extra draft picks and cap flexibility for a franchise that was not going to contend in 2022.

Staley is a defensive coach. Yet the priority in his first head-coaching gig was elevating Herbert and ensuring his continued growth and development.

“We had to get that right,” Staley, who played quarterback in college, said in January.

That started with protection. The Chargers signed three starters in free agency — All-Pro center Corey Linsley and guards Matt Feiler and Oday Aboushi — and drafted a franchise left tackle in the first round in Rashawn Slater. They added two more offensive players in the top 100 of the draft in wide receiver Joshua Palmer and tight end Tre’ McKitty. They signed tight end Jared Cook, who also played under Lombardi with the Saints, and Daniel. The Chargers hired Lombardi from the Saints, where he was Sean Payton’s longtime quarterbacks coach, and he brought a version of that New Orleans passing offense to Los Angeles.

The vision for the structure around Herbert turned into production. The Chargers finished fourth in both TruMedia’s offensive EPA/play and Football Outsiders’ offensive DVOA. Herbert passed for more than 5,000 yards and finished third in the league in QBR.

The defense, though, struggled.

The Chargers had one of the worst defenses in football in 2021. They finished 28th in EPA/play and 26th in DVOA. They could not stop the run consistently. They could not get off the field on third down. They did not generate enough pressure on the quarterback. They did not force enough turnovers.

Their Week 18 loss to the Raiders provided the final evidence that the Chargers needed to shore up their defense in 2022. (Stephen R. Sylvania / USA Today)

The Chargers had built an offense for Herbert. Now they needed a defense that could take some of the pressure off his shoulders. Herbert can keep the Chargers in games almost single-handedly. He put together one of the most remarkable comebacks in recent NFL history in Week 18 against the Raiders in Las Vegas with a heroic three-drive stretch in the fourth quarter and overtime of that season-ending loss. Herbert is capable of doing those things, but that does not mean the Chargers want to live in that world.

“It’s not just enough to outscore people in this league, because there’s going to be a game where you don’t shoot it well, and you’ve got to win in a lot of different ways in this league,” Staley said. “When you have a quarterback, it’s not just surrounding him with offensive weapons. It’s surrounding him with a complete team where the pressure isn’t on him every single game to score 35, to throw for 350, to bring you back. And I think that’s what we’re trying to do.”

The Chargers had several key defensive players hitting free agency: edge rusher Uchenna Nwosu, linebacker Kyzir White, defensive lineman Justin Jones, nickel corner Chris Harris Jr. and defensive lineman Linval Joseph. That meant a boatload of cap space and open starting positions at all three levels of the defense.

Mack was the first piece in reassembling that defensive puzzle. The team was initially interested in re-signing Nwosu as its second edge rusher opposite Joey Bosa, but then the Mack trade materialized. It was no longer financially feasible to bring back the 2018 second-round pick. Nwosu ended up signing a two-year, \$19.055 million deal with the Seahawks.

In Mack, the Chargers believe they have added a player who can affect all facets of their defense, tangible and intangible. His edge-rushing prowess is well documented. But he is also an outstanding run defender, and, along with the interior additions of Sebastian Joseph-Day and Austin Johnson, the Chargers are expecting significant improvements in that area.

“He brings a lot of the elements that our team needs right now,” Staley said. “He brings the play style that we really value, that toughness. He’s a complete player. I think that from a culture standpoint, we really wanted to have somebody join up with Derwin James up front. Derwin plays in the secondary, he’s our signal caller, but someone up front that can really maximize him.”

Mack is coming off a foot injury that limited him to seven games last season. But the Chargers are confident that he has good football left in him. Part of that confidence is embedded in Staley’s existing relationship with Mack.

When Mack was traded to the Bears in 2018, he arrived in Chicago less than a week before the season opener against the Packers. Staley, then the Bears outside linebackers coach, spent hours and hours with Mack, late into the night sometimes, teaching his new star player the complex Fangio playbook.

Staley got Mack ready to play, and Mack had a strip-sack, a fumble recovery and a pick-six — in the first half.

“I don’t think y’all understand how fast I really had to learn a whole defensive playbook,” Mack said, “and he made it easy.”

Staley now has a full offseason to integrate Mack into his Chargers defense.

“You’re not envisioning the fit or projecting the fit. You know the fit,” Staley said. “You know exactly how to use that player, so the ramp-up time is going to be very short with that guy.”

The Chargers still have 10 picks in April’s draft after trading for Mack. That additional capital made parting with the second-rounder more palatable.

“You’re trading for one of the best players in the game, and you know exactly what you’re getting,” Staley said. “The cost was very minimal for a player of his caliber. I think it was an excellent trade.”

In a month that saw Russell Wilson, Deshaun Watson, Carson Wentz, Matt Ryan, Davante Adams and Tyreek Hill change teams, the Mack trade took a back seat. It is an offense-first league, after all.

But Mack himself has become the symbol of the direction of a team in two separate offseasons.

Nearly four years ago, the Raiders moved Mack to a Bears team that saw an opportunity to win in 2018, and he led them to a 12-4 record while his former team hoped to take advantage of its extra draft picks.

Then near the start of the 2022 league year, a Chargers team that sees its Super Bowl window as right now made the move for Mack, while the Bears hope to make the best of their additional draft picks, as they are now the team in transition.

Before the 2019 draft, Pace quipped that when the Raiders were on the clock for the first-round pick they received from the Bears, the personnel department would turn on a highlight reel of Mack’s first season in Chicago. At that time, the Bears still had high expectations, and Mack was a major part of it. He had 12 1/2 sacks and six forced fumbles. He was the centerpiece of the league’s best defense.

When the Bears are on the clock at No. 48, maybe Telesco and Staley will flip on clips of Mack, and let their minds wander as to what he can mean to the 2022 Chargers. And maybe in Lake Forest, Ill., Poles will let his mind wander with that pick, and whatever he does with it, hoping it will help get the Bears to be where the Chargers are.

It’s the right move at the right time for both teams, using different roster-building strategies. But the Chargers get to reap the rewards of their side of the deal much more quickly. The Bears understand that. This is part of their plan.

Mack hears the doubters. He is aware of what he calls “the narrative” — that he has lost a step, that he is not the same player.

“Turn on the TV. You’ll hear what they’re saying,” Mack said. “And it’s like, OK, bet. You know what I mean? I’ll bet on myself any day.”

The Chargers bet on him, too. This is their big swing. And if the Chargers want to win a Lombardi Trophy in the 2022 season, then all parties involved — from Mack, to Staley, to Telesco, to the Spanos family — need those bets to cash.

“If people are saying that, then they certainly don’t know him. At all,” Staley said. “And if they are saying that, then good luck to them. Because you’ll see. You’ll see.”

Chargers coach Brandon Staley, linebacker Khalil Mack were a dynamic duo before

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
March 17, 2022

The remaking of the Chargers defense took its most tangible step forward yet Wednesday when Khalil Mack was introduced at a news conference.

The Chargers traded last week for the three-time All-Pro edge rusher, bringing him in to help upgrade a unit that was the team’s shortcoming last season. They also signed three young veteran defenders in free agency: comeback J.C. Jackson and interior linemen Sebastian Joseph-Day and Austin Johnson. That trio will speak over the next two days.

Mack was first to go. Here are the highlights of the day from the Chargers’ Costa Mesa training facility:

Hard-hitter in more ways than one: The Chargers are looking for Mack to make an impact that can be accurately described as profound. Head coach Brandon Staley has seen it before.

Staley was coaching the outside linebackers in Chicago when the Bears acquired Mack from Oakland just before the start of the 2018 season.

“When he got to Chicago, our entire team changed,” Staley said. “We were a top-10 defense. ... When he got there, we became the No. 1 defense. We had a good defense. When he came, we became the best defense.”

Staley explained that Mack will affect the Chargers both on and off the field, saying he can change cultures as much as he can games “because of who he is on a day-to-day basis.”

“He’s not one of these guys that’s going to tell you something,” Staley said. “He’s going to show you. And you feel that right away.”

Indeed, Mack called himself “an action guy” and “not a talker.” Staley suggested the Chargers’ lacked enough of that type of presence on defense last season. It was notable that Staley also referenced his desire to pair Mack with safety Derwin James Jr., the widely acknowledged heart of the defense. This is a partnership upon which the Chargers will lean in 2022.

Sacks and a whole lot more: On the field, Staley said Mack’s impact should be easy to spot. He talked about his consistency, durability and toughness.

“He also brings a style of play that we really believe in,” Staley said. “I don’t think we had enough of it [in 2021]. Not even close.”

The Chargers struggled last season particularly against the run and on third down. They gave up an average of 138.9 yards on the ground, one the worst single-season performances in franchise history. Their season — and playoff chances — ended in the most fitting of ways when they failed to prevent Las Vegas from converting on a third-down run in overtime in Week 18 and lost on the field goal that followed.

Staley said Mack's 76.5 career sacks tell only part of story of how Mack impacts offenses, which is especially important for the Chargers. "Complete defender because he can do everything," Staley said. "He can dominate the edge in the run game, which is where it starts. He's athletic on his feet to be able to run and catch anybody."

Staley explained that the ability of edge rushers to move is vital in today's NFL with "the ball on the perimeter as much as it is." This was another area where the 2021 Chargers no doubt lacked.

A player-coach reunion: Mack almost certainly wouldn't be a Charger without Staley also being here. Their relationship is rooted in the long hours they spent together after Mack joined the Bears in early September 2018. Following the trade, Mack had barely a week to prepare for Chicago's opener against Green Bay.

"He made it easy," Mack said. "You could see his passion through it, understanding he knew how much I wanted to get out there for that first game, and we were able to do it."

Against the Packers, Mack had a sack, a forced fumble, a fumble recovery and an interception, one he returned 27 yards for a touchdown. How's that for instant impact? The time together for Mack and Staley was brief, Staley leaving after the '18 season to join Vic Fangio's staff in Denver. "It was bittersweet in Chicago," Staley said. "It was an amazing year. All these great things are happening. But then it was like, 'Man, that didn't last long enough.' To be able to go do it again, is very special."

Healthy and motivated: Mack said his surgically repaired foot is "100%, good to go, whatever you want to hear." He missed the final 10 games last season after being injured in late October. Before going down, Mack had six sacks, which represented a single-season career-best pace. He hasn't reached double figures in sacks since that '18 season when he finished with 12½.

Mack, 31, suggested he has heard rumblings about his fading production. He dismissed the notion by saying, "I'll bet on myself any day."

"If people are saying that, then they certainly don't know him at all," Staley said. "And if they are saying that, then good luck to them. Because you'll see. You'll see."

Added Mack: "It's going to be fun. I know ya'll going to enjoy watching it for sure."

More defensive help on the way: The roster rebuild will continue, Staley saying the work is far from complete.

Even with the addition of Jackson, he said the search for defensive backs won't stop. As for the defensive front, Staley said there would be more to come. "We're much closer to where we need to be," he said. "We're not there yet. But we're much closer. ... It's about depth in this league."

KENNETH MURRAY JR.

Los Angeles Chargers' Kenneth Murray Jr. playing with heavy heart in aftermath of brother's death

By Shelley Smith
ESPN.com
October 4, 2021

COSTA MESA, Calif. -- You can hear the sadness in his voice. It's not outwardly noticeable if you didn't know to look for it, but it's there -- the kind of sadness you would never wish on anyone.

Los Angeles Chargers linebacker Kenneth Murray Jr. is a 6-foot-2, 241-pound chiseled athlete who cares passionately about the game of football. He also cares passionately about his family, especially his adopted siblings, all of whom have a chromosomal abnormality known as deletion.

His father, a Baptist minister, and his mother, a retired police officer, learned of the children from his church congregation and took them in when Murray was 11. And when their middle son, the one he was closest to, Lenny, died unexpectedly in April on what would have been his 14th birthday, Murray was devastated.

Murray had pledged to take care of the kids if something happened to his parents. But nobody expected something like this to happen to one of the children.

"One day I was doing something with football and I got a phone call and I kind of had to drop everything and jump on a flight and go through that," he said. "Since then I've just kind of stayed to myself."

He took to Twitter to process his grief:

Not wanting to divulge more details, all Murray would say about Lenny's death is that it was "like a bad nightmare," and something he tries not to think about.

"It's too hurtful to do in the media," he explained simply.

The children, Niya, Lenny and James, were born with deletion, a condition in which part of a chromosome is missing crucial genetic material. Lenny was the most severely affected and used a wheelchair. He was also Murray's biggest fan.

"He was super enthusiastic about coming to the games," Murray said. "That's what makes it such a sore spot for me."

The family would often make the seven-hour drive from their home in Missouri City, Texas, up to Norman, Oklahoma, where Murray played for the Sooners. He started at linebacker for three years and racked up 334 tackles and 9.5 sacks. His biggest year came as a sophomore in 2018, when he had 155 tackles, including a school record 28 in an overtime win over Army.

Murray was co-Big 12 defensive freshman of the year in 2017 and second-team all-conference in 2018 before being a first-team All-Big 12 and third-team All-America pick in 2019. His work ethic was legendary. He'd often watch five to six hours of film a day early in the morning before class. And when he was selected in the first round of the 2020 draft by the Chargers with the No. 23 pick, his entire family was with him as GM Tom Telesco made the call that would change his football life.

He's carried his work ethic with him to the NFL, where he had 107 tackles as a rookie a year ago and 20 through three games this season with the Chargers (2-1), who host the Las Vegas Raiders (3-0) on Monday Night Football (8:15 p.m. ET, ESPN). Murray will miss Monday's game with an ankle injury suffered in practice Saturday.

"We have just a great group on defense including Kenneth, we have him and [S] Derwin [James Jr.]," Chargers defensive end Joey Bosa said. "All the guys during practice every week, every day, they always bring energy so they have been great."

"He has worked extremely hard," Chargers defensive coordinator Renaldo Hill said. "We have talked about playing him downhill, being back and being able to run sideline to sideline. He has all of those traits."

When the children arrived at the Murray home 11 years ago, Murray and his biological sister, Kimberly, had to grow up fast. With their parents, they helped shuttle the kids to various doctors' appointments and therapy.

Niya is now 19 and reads at an elementary school level. James, the youngest, is 12 and uses a wheelchair. Lenny was the sports fan in the group and used to spend hours in front of the TV watching whatever sport was being played. And they all loved traveling to Oklahoma to watch Murray perform.

Lenny and Murray would go out in the backyard and do whatever they could to emulate playing catch and other sports and activities.

It's been a painful five months since Lenny died, but Murray says his family and his faith have gotten him through the hardest times. Of his compassion, he points directly to his parents.

"I'm from them," Murray said. "It's where I get all of this."

In his pre-draft interview, Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones asked Murray what challenge has made him who he is on and off the field. He pointed to his experience growing up with his siblings.

"I look at it not as a setback, but as a blessing," he answered. "When I was growing up, my mom and my dad did things that were true acts of selflessness."

It's what inspired him to work as a church counselor during summers growing up. He also volunteered at El Modena High School in Orange, California, last month to help honor the Chargers' high school coach of the month, Matt Mitchell, and be part of El Modena's pregame coin toss. Murray is an active member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and regularly visited the Children's Hospital at the Oklahoma Medical Center. His first task after the draft was to set up funds for his siblings for long-term care.

Murray cherishes every interaction that he has with his siblings, which is why Lenny's death hit so hard.

"He had special needs and you learn to appreciate the small things because you know the small goals that a lot of times, we as human beings we take for granted," Murray said. "And you learn to appreciate them when you see somebody who can't do those things and still finds a way to be happy."

"That was Lenny."

Okoye's journey: Chargers defensive lineman from Nigeria records a sack in his first football game

*By Joe Reedy
The Associated Press
August 16, 2023*

COSTA MESA, Calif. (AP) — Imagine never having played cricket before and then taking a wicket in an Indian Premier League match your first time out, or never seeing a rugby match in person and scoring a try in Australia's National Rugby League.

That might give you a better understanding of what CJ Okoye did Saturday night.

The 21-year-old defensive lineman from Nigeria recorded a sack in his first organized football game at any level during the Los Angeles Chargers' 34-17 victory over the Rams. Okoye chased down Stetson Bennett for a 16-yard loss late in the fourth quarter.

"It was an amazing moment for me," Okoye said. "It was amazing seeing my teammates and my D-line room go crazy like that. I wish to go back there again."

Okoye came to the Chargers this year through the NFL's International Pathway Program, which was established in 2017 to increase the number of international players in the league. While he had shown enough to be allocated to an NFL team, he hadn't played organized football before.

Okoye didn't even know he recorded a sack until a teammate told him. He broke out his version of a sack dance as the Chargers sideline celebrated the moment.

Okoye also received a game ball from coach Brandon Staley in the locker room after the game.

"Just to see how he's been working, it brought me back to when I first started playing and was kind of green to the game, back in my senior year of high school," offensive guard Zion Johnson said. "Those moments are what craft you and push you forward to want to become a better player."

The sack was even more impressive because it didn't come on a straight rush but a stunt. Bennett eluded pressure from defensive tackle Jerrod Clark in the pocket before Okoye chased him down.

"It was the play we normally run, so we just need to run and twist," Okoye said. "We communicated, and (Clark) said, 'I'm going in. You just wrap around.' He did a good job. I just needed to finish it."

Before arriving in the NFL, the 6-foot-6, 315-pound Okoye had played basketball in a local league in Nigeria. Ejike Ugboaja, drafted by the Cleveland Cavaliers in 2006, was scouting one of the games and asked Okoye about trying out for Osi Umenyiora's Uprise football camp. Umenyiora, who was born in London to Nigerian parents, has been at the forefront of football development efforts in Africa.

Even though Okoye struggled during his tryout, he showed Umenyiora enough to take a chance on him.

Okoye was initially projected to be an offensive tackle and showed enough potential to be named the Offensive MVP during the first NFL Africa camp held in Ghana last year. From there, Okoye was one of 38 players from 13 countries to participate in last year's NFL International Combine in London.

Okoye came to the U.S. in January as one of 13 accepted into the International Pathway Program. That group underwent a 10-week training camp at the IMG Academy in Bradenton, Florida. In May, he discovered he was one of eight players who made the final cuts and was allocated to the Chargers.

"This time last year, I was in Nigeria. I didn't even know if I would come to the States or play football," he said. "Sometimes it hits me, 'You're in the States with the Chargers in the NFL. You need to make the most out of it.' I'm shocked every day, but I still need to go out and do my thing."

Since the program started, 37 international players have been allocated, drafted, or signed as free agents. Four players were on their team's active roster during the offseason, including Jordan Mailata. The Australian started at left tackle for the Philadelphia Eagles in February's Super Bowl.

The seven players remaining in this year's program saw at least one snap during last week's preseason games.

Kansas City offensive lineman Chukwuebuka Godrick saw the most action with 20 snaps against New Orleans.

Denver defensive lineman Haggai Chisom Ndubuisi assisted on two tackles during his four snaps against Arizona. Green Bay defensive lineman Kenneth Odumegwu also received a game ball after being in for 12 plays at Cincinnati.

All but one of the rookies in this year's program are from Nigeria. At the end of training camp, they will be eligible for an international player practice squad exemption, which gives teams an extra practice squad player. They also could be elevated to the active roster during the season.

Chargers defensive line coach Jay Rodgers said this is the first time in his 15 years coaching in the NFL that he has had an International Pathway Program player. He has been impressed with how quickly Okoye has picked up things.

"Every day is a new experience for him. Even some of the terms we use in football, those are terms that he has never heard before that other people take for granted," Rodgers said. "He moves pretty well for a big man. The more reps he gets mentally in the meetings and on the field, you'll see his play speed start to take over because we know his physical ability."

How many snaps Okoye will get in the final two preseason games remains to be seen, but he is taking everything in stride.

"I don't think I'm a celebrity yet. It's just my story. I have never played football, I just magically got a sack," he said. "I won't lie, it's an awesome feeling, but you just stay in the middle and do your thing. I want to learn more plays and learn more techniques."

JOSHUA PALMER

With his friend's health on his mind, Joshua Palmer aiming for bigger Chargers role

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
July 31, 2022

His position coach called him “so, so serious,” adding that Joshua Palmer is “straight-laced” to the point where it becomes “almost too much.”

To be more businesslike on the field, Palmer would have to line up in a three-piece suit. Yet before opening his second training camp with the Chargers last week, the 23-year-old wide receiver was heavily into his emotions.

Palmer's childhood friend, John Metchie III, had just revealed that he'll likely miss his rookie season with Houston after being diagnosed with leukemia.

“You hear about these things, but it never hit so close to home,” Palmer said. “I was just speechless. You don't know what to say or how to say it.”

Palmer and Metchie grew up together in Canada, in a town called Brampton, a suburb of some 600,000 northwest of Toronto. Their friendship goes back so far that Palmer said, “I don't remember not knowing him.”

Both eventually moved to the United States to pursue football and ended up in the SEC. Palmer played at Tennessee before being drafted by the Chargers in the third round last year while Metchie at Alabama before the Texans took him in the second round in April.

They were scheduled to share the field again this season in Week 4, when the Chargers play at Houston. But their next reunion is on hold indefinitely.

“John's a soldier,” Palmer said. “Right now, he's just in a different camp, a different camp that he has to get through. He'll come out with a full head of steam next season.”

With his friend on his mind, Palmer arrived in Costa Mesa for what the Chargers hope is a season of significant development. After Keenan Allen and Mike Williams, there's a need for more consistency at the team's third wide receiver spot.

Palmer finished his rookie season trending upward. Starting in Week 14 against the New York Giants — a game Allen missed because of COVID-19 — he had 18 of his 33 receptions and three of his four touchdowns. He caught a 23-yard scoring pass from Justin Herbert to convert a fourth-and-21 play late in the fourth quarter of the Chargers' dramatic season finale in Las Vegas.

“That Giants game was a huge boost for him,” Chargers wide receivers coach Chris Beatty said. “He was able to do multiple things in Keenan's role and see, ‘Hey, I can do this.’ Now, he has the confidence and it's more about mastering what he wants to do.”

Beatty almost worked with Palmer long before the two came together with the Chargers. He was an assistant at Maryland and recruited Palmer out of Fort Lauderdale's St. Thomas Aquinas High.

Palmer also nearly played in Southern California long before he was a Charger. Before committing to Tennessee, his college visits included a stop at UCLA, where a higher source evidently intervened.

“Someone told me it doesn't rain in California,” Palmer said. “The one time I was there, it rained the whole weekend. So I took that as a sign.”

Palmer's serious nature showed itself when he left Canada for South Florida to finish high school, St. Thomas Aquinas a traditional football powerhouse. At the time, he described it as “a business decision.” He was 15.

At a position that famously can produce divas and distractions, Palmer retains something closer to tunnel vision. His personality, Beatty explained, is the quietest among the Chargers' receivers.

“He's different like that,” Beatty said. “He balances the room. You can't have all comedians in there. With Josh, everybody else is joking and he's over there looking at his iPad.”

That's not to suggest Palmer lacks a lighter side. Asked if he played hockey growing up, he said only the street version before adding, “I could skate. I just couldn't stop.”

Palmer is an athlete who prefers to remain locked in. At Tennessee, Palmer prepped for the NFL on and off the field. He said during his final year of college he pretended he already was in the league. He became a harsher self-critic. He studied more film. He started taking better care of his body and tried to develop the routine of a professional athlete.

Beatty praised Palmer's approach and commitment but admitted there are times when he can dig in too deeply. The coach offered the example of Palmer trying to improve on an otherwise perfect route because the ball didn't come his way.

“He's just really so straight ahead, which is good in a lot of ways, but sometimes you overthink things,” Beatty said. “That's kind of where he is, trying to learn how to get out of his own way a little bit.”

The one thing Palmer has mastered entering this season is perspective, the situation involving Metchie and how his friend is handling it are both reminders of what's most important.

Palmer said the two have been in touch, adding that Metchie already is bouncing back. “The whole thing is hard to describe in words,” Palmer said. “But John's going to be fine. He's going to get through this.”

DONALD PARHAM JR.

Chargers' Donald Parham Jr. on injury: 'A life-flashing-before-your-eyes kind of thing'

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
April 18, 2022

DELAND, Fla. — He re-emerged here, on a small set of metal bleachers, next to an empty practice field, 2,500 miles from SoFi Stadium.

On a windy and warm spring afternoon, Donald Parham Jr. sat alone with a visitor sent to chronicle his comeback.

Nearly four months had passed since Parham disappeared from view under much brighter lights. A national television audience and sellout crowd watched as he was strapped to a stretcher and rolled out of the most frightening scene of the 2021 NFL season.

The Chargers tight end remembers all of it: the touchdown pass slipping from his grip, his head snapping back onto the turf, his body stiffening and ignoring the pleas to move even as the tremors shook his otherwise rigid arms.

"I was just thinking about if I'll ever play again," Parham said. "Really thinking about everything else I still wanted to do. It was a life-flashing-before-your-eyes kind of thing. Was it all going to be taken away from me in that instant?"

Watching the game from the family home in Lakeland, Fla., Felicia Parham said she and her husband, Donald Sr., were pulled from their seats and found themselves pacing. And praying. Mostly praying.

On their TV came a close-up of their son's face. His eyes were shut, and he wore no discernible expression.

Just moments earlier, Felicia said, she had been bouncing on the couch, shouting at the TV and rooting on her firstborn — just as always — much to the concern of the family's anxious, barking Pomeranian, Cash.

"All of a sudden," Felicia said, "everything went on pause."

Before long, she was on the phone, first with her son's girlfriend. Then with his agent. Then his girlfriend again. Then his agent's secretary. Travel plans had to be made — and right now.

A few sleepless hours later, Felicia was headed to the airport in Tampa for a 6 a.m. nonstop to LAX, an uneasy 5½ hours for a mother to do little more than think.

Brittany McGee, Parham's girlfriend, picked her up and they drove to Harbor-UCLA Medical Center.

At that blurry-eyed moment, Parham's future was very uncertain. He had talked to his mother on a video call hours earlier from the hospital, had told her he would be OK and assured he would play again. But Felicia needed to see for herself.

By the end of the weekend, everyone knew that, yes, Parham was going to be fine. But not many know the details of a situation so sobering that today Parham has no memory of that video call.

What follows is a collection of those details, an account that began with a quiet conversation on a small college campus.

Stetson University is a private school of roughly 4,300 students located among mossy oaks and waltzing palms about 40 miles north of Orlando.

Parham played here from 2015-18, two plaques displayed in the athletics building commemorating a final season in which he was the NCAA per-game leader in receptions and yards.

This is where he first truly stood his tallest, where he grew those final two inches to reach 6-foot-8, fulfilling forecasts of the pediatricians who had repeatedly told the Parhams their son was, size-wise, "off all the charts."

Parham is a student here again, working toward a communications degree he hopes to complete in the spring of 2023.

His picture hangs along the fence that encircles the practice field. A wall inside the football offices will soon feature another giant likeness, one of Parham in action as a Charger.

"He has lived up to all the expectations and become an overwhelming figure for this program and our league," said head coach Brian Young, who was the defensive coordinator during Parham's time as a Hatter. "Donald is Stetson."

State Road 44 passes next to campus and is dotted by nearby businesses with names such as Dolly's Olde Time Tavern, Lucky Ducky Arcade and DeLand Feed & Pet Supply.

To be sure, this is not a road that traditionally leads to the NFL. Parham and former teammate Donald Payne are the only Stetson players to make it to the league since the school reinstated football in 2013 after a half-century hiatus.

In that sense, the horrific scene in Inglewood on the night of Dec. 16 was another twist on a path that has seen Parham overcome going undrafted, failing to make it with a handful of NFL teams and ending up in the now-suspended XFL before the Chargers signed him.

"He's already had a detour coming out of the XFL," Payne said. "He worked his way up from that detour to make it to the biggest stage ever, catching touchdown passes on 'Monday Night Football.' Those of us who know Donald know he's got this, 1,000%."

That night, Kansas City won the coin toss and deferred, giving the Chargers the ball to start a matchup the NFL couldn't have scripted better. Young superstar quarterbacks Justin Herbert and Patrick Mahomes would battle with the AFC West lead going to the winner. Set up by a 75-yard kickoff return by Andre Roberts, Herbert and his offense quickly moved to the Chiefs' five-yard line, where it was first-and-goal. Three incompletions brought fourth down and coach Brandon Staley's decision to go for it.

"A routine play," Parham said. "We ran it a few times in practice. We were comfortable with it."

Lined up in a standing position on the right side, Parham cut inside between two linebackers, working his way toward the back of the end zone, where he ran away from safety Tyrann Mathieu as fellow safety Daniel Sorensen closed in.

He went airborne lunging for Herbert's spiral and landed on his back before coming to rest on his right side, Parham's body frozen with his arms extended in front of him and bent upward at the elbows in what experts call the fencing response, a condition that can follow trauma to the brain.

Running back Austin Ekeler arrived to help Parham to his feet before realizing something was wrong. Medical personnel were summoned and rushed from the Chargers' sideline.

Many of Parham's teammates began to gather around him. Tight end Stephen Anderson knelt nearby, dropping his head. A TV camera caught linebacker Drue Tranquill staring solemnly from one knee.

With this being a Thursday night, there were no other NFL games being played. The next day, it would be determined that 18 million people — the second-most to watch the Chargers all season — were tuned in.

"It was all very traumatic," Felicia said. "Then to be so far away and not be able to ... I was sick with my stomach. My husband was sick to his stomach. I immediately packed my bags. I had to see him."

Amid the scrambling, she sent a text message to a group of friends she called "prayer warriors," seeking support.

Payne, who also was watching the game, said his ongoing group chat "started blowing up, you know, praying for him. It was definitely something intense."

It was something familiar, as well. In August 2017, a sophomore linebacker named Nick Blakely collapsed at a Stetson practice and later died. An autopsy revealed that he had an enlarged heart.

"The Stetson community already had something along these lines happen," Payne said. "So to be in another situation where it was one of our own who was down made it even scarier."

Only 93 seconds into the most-anticipated of games, the mood inside SoFi Stadium struggled to recover, the image of Parham being wheeled out through an end-zone tunnel powerful and lasting.

And then his arms — restrained but still trembling in a way that was visible to all — caused wild speculation from people who couldn't possibly know the specifics.

"It was extremely scary," Felicia said. "To see him shaking, I didn't know what that was. So I'm checking social media and I'm seeing things about people counting him out, talking about him being paralyzed."

"I was so disheartened to see people say these things. They're not thinking about how he has a family. How are they saying such things when he's got a mom and a dad and a brother and others who love him?"

Parham said he was intubated in the ambulance en route to the hospital and remembers nothing more until awakening early Friday. He started by trying to wiggle his fingers and called his body's immediate response "a blessing."

He underwent a variety of scans and other tests, all the signs encouraging. Doctors repeatedly checked Parham's motor skills, those results similarly positive.

By mid-morning, the Chargers were able to provide an official update, announcing on Twitter that Parham had been diagnosed with a concussion and would be leaving the hospital soon.

Later that day, he posted a photo of his right hand flashing the thumbs-up and a proclamation that he'd return better than ever. The tweet was liked more than 80,000 times.

"The doctors assured me nothing was wrong in terms of paralysis or anything like that," Parham said. "My first thought was, 'OK, well I need to get out of here.' That was the biggest thing, getting out of there and getting back to reality."

He ended up spending three nights at Harbor-UCLA, his mom and girlfriend sleeping in his room on chairs, Brittany's pulled up next to his bed so the two could hold hands.

Around noon Sunday, they all left the hospital together.

A few days later, Parham walked into the Chargers' Costa Mesa facility, headed toward the locker room and was greeted by a series of friendly but disbelieving faces.

"They were freaking out, almost like they were seeing a ghost," he said. "It was kind of funny. A lot of the guys were like, 'Just go home, bro. You don't have to be here.' I was like, 'Oh, OK, my bad.' And I left."

He wanted to return as quickly as possible, Parham said, because playing in the NFL has been his truest passion for years. He also wanted to prove he was tougher than even the scariest of career-threatening incidents.

Parham has a very practical, measured approach looking back on something that has so much emotion attached.

"I didn't have to dive," he said. "I could have possibly stayed on my feet or slid almost like a baseball player. But it happened. I have to learn from it and grow from it."

"Really, it's just a learning experience. Nothing more now. I gotta protect myself. That's just my character. I'm pretty even-keeled, level-headed. I'm always able to re-evaluate and reassess and go from there."

After missing the final three games of the season, Parham was medically cleared in early February. He said he expects to rejoin his teammates for offseason workouts in May, after the semester ends at Stetson. The first day of offseason workouts for players is Monday. His want to play has not been diminished, he promised, adding that he anticipates no issues the next time he's hit or takes a hard or awkward tumble. He said he never thinks about the play, unless someone asks about it. He called the whole scene "an afterthought."

Football is "just what we do," Parham explained, his father having played running back at Albany State and his little brother, Donovan, now a linebacker at Robert Morris.

As for those tremors, Parham said no one has been able to provide a specific reason.

"One doctor explained it as having seizure-like symptoms," he said. "But they weren't sure. I saw a specialist and he said they weren't exactly seizures. No one could really pinpoint it. It was just a reaction to what happened."

The Chargers' expectations for Parham will only grow in 2022. At 24, he's entering his third NFL season and will be part of a tight-end rotation that includes veteran Gerald Everett and 2021 third-round pick Tre' McKitty.

Parham will be counted upon to stand tall again, this time after taking the most frightening of falls. Following a pause that could have been so much longer, so much worse, a twisting NFL journey will continue.

Recalling the moment she first entered her son's hospital room, Felicia said she can still feel the relief.

"I was finally able to put my eyes on him and see that he was alert and OK," she said. "It was, 'Thank you, Jesus.' It was great to see him and see that he was Donald. He had stuff wired up to him and all that, but he was Donald."

They talked about family and about faith, Felicia studying her son's answers by the word to make sure he was all right.

The subject of the game didn't really come up, Parham, in fact, admitted he was unaware the Chargers had lost — 34-28 in overtime — until days later.

But there was one thing from the night before he did mention.

"Mom," Felicia remembered Donald Jr. saying, "I should've caught that ball."

RASHAWN SLATER

Chargers left tackle Rashawn Slater feeling '100 percent'

By Lindsey Thiry
ESPN.com
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COSTA MESA, Calif. -- Los Angeles Chargers left tackle Rashawn Slater says he is feeling "100 percent" after undergoing season-ending surgery last season.

Slater earned Pro Bowl recognition as a rookie and was anticipated last season to produce an encore performance. However, Slater exited a Week 3 loss to the Jacksonville Jaguars after rupturing his left biceps tendon and subsequently was placed on injured reserve for the remainder of the year.

"It's great," Slater said about his injury on Wednesday after organized team activities. "I would say it's been 100 percent for a while now, so at this point it's just - the more reps I get the more confident I'll feel."

Slater was designated to return from injured reserve after the Chargers' regular-season finale and coach Brandon Staley expressed optimism that he could appear in the lineup if they were able to make a playoff run.

However, the Jaguars defeated the Chargers, 31-30, in a Wild Card playoff to eliminate them from the postseason

"It was very close," Slater said when asked if he could have played if the team had advanced. "That's kind of what we were going after. Now I get more time."

Slater missed 15 games in total, including the playoff.

"I feel like the biggest thing I learned from that was just how easily this can be taken from you," said Slater, who turned 24 in March. "You only get so much time as it is in the NFL... so really feel a lot of urgency to get to where I want to be."

In Slater's absence, rookie Jamaree Salyer -- a sixth-round pick from Georgia -- took over at the position. Salyer is expected to maintain a starting role this season at right guard, where Zion Johnson is expected to move to left guard. The Bolts also return veteran center Corey Linsley and right tackle Trey Pipkins, who re-signed on a three-year, \$21.75 million deal over the offseason.