

Chargers Training Camp Media Availability

Wednesday, July 26, 2023 ⚡ Jack Hammett Sports Complex ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

On QB Justin Herbert's contract extension:

"It's a special moment for the club. So much respect for Justin [Herbert] and his team. We can't say enough about [Executive Vice President of Football Administration/Player Finance] Ed McGuire and [Director of Football Administration] Katie Sylvan and the investment from the Spanos Family. This is a great way to start the season, for sure."

On 'if there were any concerns going into camp' that the deal wouldn't be completed:

"No. He was focused the whole offseason. He had a really good summer of training. He came in ready to play, as you guys saw today. The respect on both sides was really high. The communication was really good. I thought that it was a really good contract for both sides."

On his conversation with Herbert after the signing:

"The conversations between him and I are always going to remain private that way. He's just so focused. I think the reason why he earned this contract is because of who he is; the type of person he is, the type of leader that he is and the type of player that he is. There's no one that cares more about this game and this team more than Justin Herbert. I'm just really excited for him and our team that we were able to get this season started off the right way."

On the impact of the signing:

"We're so fortunate. I think that the history of this team will tell you that this franchise knows how to find quarterbacks — when you go all of the way back to [Hall of Fame QB] Dan Fouts and Stan Humphries, Philip Rivers and Drew Brees, and, now, Justin — we're very, very fortunate. 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."

On placing three players on the Physically Unable to Perform list and their timelines:

"No timeline on those three guys. Those three guys all had good summers. We're going to make sure that we take the full amount for them to come back healthy."

On if CB J.C. Jackson was a 'full participant' at practice today:

"You saw him out there, I think that that says so much about him. [Director of Player Health, Wellness and Performance] Marco Zucconi and [Head Athletic Trainer] Sal Lopez, our training staff, that group of people — [Director of Sports Performance] Anthony Lomando and [Head Strength and Conditioning Coach] Jonathan Brooks — it took a village to bring this guy back. For him to go out there today and compete, it says so much about J.C. and our team. There's a long way to go, but for him to be out there practicing, going full-speed, we have to ramp him up — just because he's cleared to be out there, that doesn't mean that he's cleared to play a full game. We just have to make sure that we ramp him up the right way. He played well today."

On the receiving corps:

"It's a complete receiver group. That's what you're looking for, offensively, is to have a group where they have to defend everybody on the field. [WRs] Josh [Palmer], Keenan [Allen] and Mike [Williams] have done so many good things in this league that we've already seen, they continue to improve. Then, to add somebody like Q [WR Quentin Johnston], with his ability, it makes it exciting. To think about our tight end and running back rooms, we have to take this time in training camp to figure it out. That's what we're going to do, figure it out, but it's certainly the right group to be coaching."

On Offensive Coordinator Kellen Moore:

"Kellen [Moore] has been fantastic, not just from an offensive perspective but from a team perspective. From a coaching staff perspective, what he is about, that is what we're about. All of his experiences as a player and as a coach, being able to build on some of those and the success he and [Quarterbacks Coach] Doug [Nussmeier] had in Dallas, I think that it has made all of us better. To see him leading our offense, as you see out there, the energy that our guys are playing with, just looking forward to the work ahead because there is a lot of work ahead. We're far from a finished product. We have to take this training camp, and it's going to happen well into the season, to figure out who we are. Our guys are putting in the right work, that's for sure."

On his message to the team entering camp and if it is the same as last year:

"Every year is a different year. My message with this group was that we have a really good football team, and what we have to make sure is that we take the field right every single day with that mindset, to compete at a Super Bowl standard. You start in training camp and you build it all the way until your last game. I love coaching this group of guys. Training camp is where the hard work is done, so that's what we're focused on."

On 'changes' to the training camp practice structure:

"I think that you'll see some nice, subtle changes. As I've told you guys, you get better at this as you go. You improve so much and figure out what you need and how you need to do things. We're gearing it so that these guys can come out every practice and compete. That's what we've really tried to do, is that these guys don't have to pace themselves. That was my big message to the group; when we come out onto this practice field, it's designed for you guys to compete at a high level. That's what we're going to try and get done. We're going to try and put a good show on for these fans every single time we come out because training camp is about these fans, and we want to make sure that we put on a show every time that we come out."

On position placement in the secondary:

"Every year is a new year in the NFL and there is natural transition, but when you can have less of it, I think that we would all take that. I think that really creates the energy that you're looking for, when you know each other. You guys have heard me talk about relationships and competition, I just think that the energy every day in the pros is different when you are familiar and you're confident in who you are and what you're doing and how you're doing it. I'm excited to bring this team back. I think that this team is really, really good. Now, we have to put in the work."

On Hebert's upbringing and his development:

"I think that those people that know him from all of the way back in Eugene, they know how much this game means to him. Earning this contract can be explained by how much he loves the game and how much he cares about improving. Where he started as a high school player is not where he is right now. Where he started at Oregon is not where he is right now. Where he started in the NFL is not where he is right now. He just pours into it. The people that cover our team have heard me say it, he's just at the beginning. There's so much in front of him. The thing about him is that he is wired for the work, he is up for it. He loves it. I'm really glad that we have him."

On CB Asante Samuel Jr. and 'where he fits into the secondary':

"In a big way. Asante [Samuel Jr.] is a starting-caliber corner in the league. He has made a lot of big plays for us in his first two years. I think that he has proven himself against the top receivers in the league. We've trusted him that way. We're going to try and keep training him in multiple spots because we know that he can play inside, too. Now that we have a healthy J.C. Jackson and [CB] Michael Davis, it's going to allow us to try him out at some new spots, too. Where, in the first two years, that probably wasn't the case. He had a really good season for us last year. Like a lot of our guys, he just needs to keep making the improvements. Asante really cares. He's a competitor. We have a ton of confidence in him."

On if Samuel could play more 'Star' than before:

"Maybe in the pass. The depth of the corner room right now, I think that we have more flexibility to play him in there where, before, I don't think that we had as much depth on the outside, for one reason or another. Just excited to keep working with him because he has had a really good two years with us and made a lot of plays. Him going into his third season, we're going to keep pouring into him."

On specifics of Samuel's usage at Star:

"That's to be determined. We have the flexibility with Derwin [James Jr.], as well. Just like I was talking about with Kellen [Moore] and the offense, there's so much to figure out on defense, too, about what our best combinations are. The fact that we have the ability to have different combinations is what excites us. Now, we're going to take these five or six weeks and figure it out."

QUARTERBACK JUSTIN HERBERT

On his contract extension:

"First off, I'm so thankful to the Chargers organization, the Spanos Family. [General Manager] Tom Telesco for believing in me three years ago. [Executive Vice President of Football Administration/Player Finance] Ed McGuire, [Director of Football Administration] Katie Sylvan. Words aren't enough to express how thankful and how glad I am to be part of this organization. I had complete faith in them from the get-go. I've never wanted to be anywhere else. This is where I've wanted to be for, shoot, as long as I've been born and playing football. It's a dream come true. I'm just really excited to be back out there with the team today."

"I think there is a lot of good that we can do with it. Giving back to the community here, the city of Los Angeles has supported us so much. And especially, Eugene [Ore.], my family and all of the coaches, players and teammates that I've grown up with and have gotten me to this position. I'll never forget where I came from and those people that helped me along the way."

On the process of the extension:

"For me, it was just to focus on football. To be the best quarterback that I can be. To rehab my shoulder. To make sure my ribs were good to go. I had complete faith in the front office and the Spanos Family, Tom [Telesco], Ed [McGuire] and Katie [Sylvan]. They all have done such a great job of working together through this process. I'm super thankful and just can't wait to be out there."

On 'how much bait tackle you can buy' with the new contract extension:

"I haven't really thought about that, but that's something to be addressed at a later point. Thankfully, we're just playing football now, so come offseason next year, we'll get around to that."

On getting the extension done before training camp:

"I think it's huge because now our focus is on football. It's to be the best football team that we can be. It's not going to be a distraction for us. I'm just so thankful for those guys out there who have supported me along the way. I'm not here without them. Now, the focus is back on them. We're worried about playing football and being the best Chargers team that we can be."

On the Chargers organization being where he wants to be:

"I think the Spanos Family has done such a great job of dedicating themselves to this team. They're willing and going to do anything possible to win. I'm so thankful for them and everything that they've invested into us as players. They've taken incredible care for us. The locker room that we have in there, the culture that we've built with [Head] Coach [Brandon] Staley, I'm super proud to be part of it."

On Offensive Coordinator Kellen Moore:

"He's been incredible. 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. He has a lot of experience. He does things the right way and he's an incredible guy leading our offense."

On thanking his teammates for helping him get to this point:

"I think I owe them a lot of dinners. [OLB] Khalil Mack has done an incredible job [last year] of taking care of our offense and taking care of the defense, as well. We know there are some really selfless guys on this team. I'm just so loyal to them and so thankful to their support along the way. I think it might be my turn to make up for some of that."

On how he 'celebrated' the extension:

"I was just in the team room with all of my teammates, hanging out with them. They were super supportive and thankful. It was really cool to be part of it with them and kind of celebrate with them."

On what emotions he felt when signing his extension:

"Words are hard to find for this process. I'm still trying to process the whole thing. I feel free and just excited to go play football. That's the biggest focus right now, is just football. I don't have to worry about anything else. I'm exactly where I need to be with this team. We have the right guys in that locker room. This offseason was a lot of fun with them. I'm just looking forward to this camp and upcoming football season."

On if 'expectations change' with the extension:

"I think I just get to play football now. I think that's the best part about it, is that I get to play free. I get to play fearless. We go out there and get to play our type of ball. I know when we're playing at our best, we're a tough team. These next couple of weeks of getting together, working together. I think they're going to be huge for us. We're going to show a lot of improvement."

On where his mind went when he found out the contract extension was completed:

"That's a tough question. I think you kind of summed it up pretty well. It's all of those people. It's not just one person, it's the family. It's the teammates. It's the coaches that have gotten me to this position. It's all of the guys that I've played with that are no longer around. It's the coaches that are on other teams, but have had a huge impact on me. I could go on and on for all of the guys that helped me along the way. I've gotten to most of them and just tried to say thank you. It was never easy, but to have them in my corner, I think that meant the world to me."

On how his high school self would take the news of his extension:

"To be honest, I didn't really have high expectations back then. I thought I was going to be a baseball player. It worked out. I'm super thankful for my coaches who have stuck with me, pushed me and have made me a better player. My brothers, who I competed with more than anyone. They've done such a great job of taking care of me and supporting me, that I couldn't have done it without them and wouldn't be here without them."

On what he's looking forward to in the season:

"I think it's working with our receivers. [WRs] Keenan [Allen], Mike [Williams], Q [Quentin Johnston], Josh Palmer, [TEs] Gerald [Everett], Donald Parham [Jr.]. All of those guys have done such a fantastic job. I'm just excited to air the ball up and throw them the ball."

On WR Quentin Johnston:

"He's been incredible. He's a playmaker and he's going to be a star. He's picked up the offense really quickly. He's fast. He has a huge catch radius. I'm really looking forward to throwing him the ball."

On the importance to continuing the team legacy of a franchise quarterback:

"I have so much respect for those guys [Hall of Fame QB Dan Fouts and former QB Philip Rivers]. Growing up, watching them and being a fan of them, I know how important that role is to the team. Those two were class acts and about as good as it gets on and off the field. I'll do my best to uphold that legacy and make sure that I'm honoring the Chargers legacy."

On his leadership role:

"I think that's kind of the role of the quarterback, is to have that big responsibility. I look forward to that challenge. I've grown each year. I've gotten better at that. There is still room for improvement, but I'm going to be the best quarterback, teammate, whatever the team needs me to be. I'm up to the challenge and willing to do it."

On any on-field goals for the season:

"I think one of the things is just to make sure that we're throwing the ball down the field and taking those shots. We have those guys on the outside that are able to make those plays. My role as a quarterback is to get them the ball and put them in a position to win. When you have guys like Keenan [Allen], Mike [Williams], Q [Johnston] and Josh [Palmer], you're going to be able to throw the ball downfield. To get them the ball, I think that's my main priority."

On Bengals QB Joe Burrow:

"I'm rooting for Joe. He's done such a fantastic job playing football. I have so much respect for him as a quarterback. I know he's a competitor. He's earned every penny. I'm rooting for him and pulling for him."

On the fans:

"It's just been awesome. To walk through the fan section over there and see that many people excited about football and excited about this season, we have a lot of high hopes. I feel like we're going to bring a lot of energy. We're going to see a lot of energy at the stadium. I'm really looking forward to it."

On offensive continuity:

"I kind of talked about earlier. Keenan [Allen] and Mike [Williams] have such a great understanding for the game, that we might be calling something else, but we can go back to the previous year's offense and say, 'It's similar to this or similar to that.' They're able to pick it up really quickly. Kind of the verbiage changes, but those guys, it's all ball and they understand it pretty well."

SAFETY DERWIN JAMES JR.

On camp today:

"Amazing. Year six for me coming in, it felt good today."

On QB Justin Herbert's contract extension:

"So excited for him. I've seen how hard he's been working, every year, day-in and day-out. Couldn't have happened to a better guy. We're just so excited for him, we know he's going to lead us to great places."

On the difference between this camp and previous years:

"I'd say just the energy and everybody knowing what we're here to do. Everybody has already been — 95 percent of this team is back, so we're all kind of familiar with each other. So, I'd say more familiarity with everybody and just the confidence."

On having CB J.C. Jackson back on the field:

"It felt good, he even had a play against [WR] Keenan Allen today. Just getting that confidence back out there. For him to be out there day one just speaks a lot to how hard he's been working in the offseason trying to get back out there. I just told him to take it day-by-day, he's going to make plays."

On what is says about Jackson getting back on the field after injury:

"He knew the expectations were on him. He's a guy that's hard on himself day-in and day-out and I've seen it in every day. Like you said, every day he got better. He wouldn't be able to be out here day one if he wasn't working. That's just credit to him."

On if Jackson is too hard on himself:

"I don't think there's such thing. I think he's good."

On the money that quarterbacks are making:

"That's insane, it's crazy. Like I said, I'm just happy man. It's a hard position that they play, one of the hardest positions on the field. I'm excited for him."

On the team message this camp:

"Our way. Just doing things our way and don't let our opponent dictate the way we play. Start fast, come out here and work every day."

On challenges and differences playing against the offense of Offensive Coordinator Kellen Moore:

"I'm just excited, like I said a lot of guys over there are confident. Justin Herbert is getting the ball. If you see our receivers, they're tall. We've got a lot of speed over there, and our line is good too. Just having all those weapons, just getting the ball into the play-makers hands, and with Kellen Moore calling plays. I feel like we're going to do a great job."

On WR Quentin Johnston:

"Big, fast, athletic and a lot of confidence. He's going to be a great player for us."

On what he worked on offseason:

"Being more of a leader and getting better myself. Not being settled and elevating my game to another level."

On anything in particular he worked on:

"Everything. All-around, just everything."

On what LB Eric Kendricks brings:

"A communicator that's been in the league, that's seen every formation, every quarterback, every tendency. He's got a lot of energy — I love his energy. He's always smiling, no negativity. Even if he makes a mistake, he's never negative. So having a good, positive player out there, I feel like is going to help the whole defense."

On Herbert's contract helping the locker room:

"We try to leave upstairs business out of our locker room and stick to what we can control on the field. As a team, it's definitely exciting that's out of the way and we can move forward. Like I said, we're excited for him."

On his sixth season:

"Hard to believe, for sure."

On Herbert owing the team dinner:

"I don't know, we've got to go on the rooftop somewhere with the contract that he got. He's going to take us somewhere, I know he will. He's always a great guy, it'll be fun."