



Josh.Rupprecht@chargers.nfl.com ⚡ Jennifer.Rojas@chargers.nfl.com ⚡ Jamaal.LaFrance@chargers.nfl.com

Brock.Anderson@chargers.nfl.com ⚡ Danny.Markino@chargers.nfl.com ⚡ Jordan.Colquitt@chargers.nfl.com ⚡ Leonie.Strehl@chargers.nfl.com

Chargers Training Camp Media Availability

Saturday, August 6, 2022 ⚡ Jack Hammett Sports Complex ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR JOE LOMBARDI

On early impressions of the offense through nine practices:

“Overall, a lot of positive things. We’re kind of getting to the end of the bulk of the install, so, hopefully, from here on, we can start polishing and cleaning up some of the alignments and details on the splits and some of our protection adjustments versus the different looks that the defense is starting to give us. A lot of little things to clean up, but I think that there are a lot of good players out here that are performing well, so excited about that.”

On QB Justin Herbert’s performance thus far in training camp:

“Good. He’s a lot more comfortable this year. Probably experimenting a little bit out here with some throws, being a little more aggressive and testing the limits of things, but he’s good, he’s locked in. I’m really pleased with where he is at.”

On G Zion Johnson:

“A real mature player. Strong. Really excited about both of these rookie guards — [G] Jamaree [Salyer], as well — both are incredibly strong. The pocket is very firm in there and they can get movement in the run game. Both of those rookies, our defense does have some challenging line stunts, so, right now, that’s their biggest challenge; the set patterns and recognizing when those things are coming and reacting to them. I think there is a lot of upside with both of those guys.”

On how he determines when Johnson ‘is game ready’:

“Practices like today, the scrimmage tomorrow — certainly, in the preseason games, I’m sure that he’ll get some reps. You just want to see, like I talked about earlier, physically, I don’t think that there are any questions. It’s just recognizing stunts and working with the guys next to you, learning the combinations. That maturity level that comes with just reps of playing next to guys, working with the guys next to you, is where we’re really hoping to see the growth.”

On the benefit of playing next to C Corey Linsley for Johnson’s development:

“A ton. As you guys all know, he’s just such a savvy veteran. He has so much knowledge and wisdom to share with those guys, so that’s invaluable.”

On RB Isaiah Spiller’s development:

“Good. Today was our third padded practice, but we’re still not really tackling yet. With all of the running backs, the story is yet to be told. I really like his route-running and his gap instincts. He knows where to take the ball. You can see his short-area quickness and some elusiveness. He’s a real smart guy. I’m impressed with how he is picking up our third-down protections, picking up some of these pressures — he had a really good one today. I’m excited with where he is at, but I still think that there is a lot to find out with all of those runners.”

On expectations for Sunday's scrimmage:

"It'll be the first time that we're out here when we don't have a script going into practice. Guys getting in and out of the huddle, getting lined up correctly and playing fast. Again, it won't be full tackle to the ground, so it's still not 100 percent football yet, but that's the main thing — we're going to run more plays tomorrow than we normally do in a normal practice, and it's going to be unscripted. They're still in the huddle listening to plays, it's not like they memorize the script, but there's a familiarity because they've reviewed the plays that we've run in that practice, so tomorrow will just be more game-like, as far as the operation is concerned. Clean operation is going to be the biggest thing."

On if the players are looking forward to a scrimmage setting:

"I'm sure that a lot of them are, I'm sure that some of them are, you know, not as enthusiastic [*laughter*], some of those guys that are a little more sore. I think that everyone is excited for it. It'll be a fun night."

On WR DeAndre Carter:

"He really started showing up in OTAs last spring. You saw a guy that had a lot of good instincts, route-savvy, short-area quickness, suddenness, exciting after the catch. He's a guy that the quarterbacks immediately — you can tell — started trusting. They knew where he was going to be and what he was going to do, and trusted him to get open. He's a guy that I can definitely foresee a role on offense for. We'll define that more as we go on, but you can already start seeing what that's going to be forming."

On 'differences' he notices in Head Coach Brandon Staley as the pair enter their second season together:

"For all of us, your second year through, you kind of have a pattern of how you do thing. You're in your battle rhythm a little bit more than you were your first year. Like all of us, just a little bit better comfort level, knowing how you're working with the people around you. It seems like he's enjoying himself a little bit more. But I thought that he was doing great last year, so I can't say that it's been a huge difference. Maybe just a little more settled into the role."

On the competition at right tackle:

"I'll say this, I'm kind of happy with both of those guys. A little bit like I said about the running backs, the story is still to be told on that. I'm really pleased with both of them right now. We'll see how it falls out. The preseason games and the practices against the Cowboys, and as we get more consistently into pads here, that will define itself a little bit more. Maybe [Baseball Hall of Fame inductee] Yogi Berra said it, 'Our depth is deep.' [*Laughter*] But, I do feel really good about our depth up there."

On T Trey Pipkins III:

"I feel like there's confidence. More consistency, understanding that you have to come out every day and be ready to go. I haven't seen some of the dips, maybe, that we saw last year in his performance. A lot of consistency. He's a talented guy. He's been playing more like what you would expect from him so far in camp. I just see more confidence and consistency."

On the matchups between T Rashawn Slater and OLB Khalil Mack:

"They're both really good. Rashawn just always amazes me at his ability to sit down on power. The flexibility that he has in his body to absorb and transition from blocking a speed rush, and that thing goes to power, his ability to sit that down, he's so strong, but strong in a unique way. I look forward to turning those [one-on-ones] on every day."

On Slater's growth from last season:

"That's a good question. Those guys that are really good, sometimes they are so critical of themselves — like we'll come out here, and Justin [Herbert] will be throwing up a route to a receiver, and he's mad at the way he's throwing it, and they all look like A-pluses to me [*laughter*]. I think that Rashawn [Slater] is probably a little bit the same way. I thought he was damn good, but I'm sure that he's looking for consistency in how he sets in anticipation of kind of a game plan when the ball is snapped, rather than just, 'I'm blocking this guy, how am I setting? What am I expecting of him? When I see this, I'm expecting this move from him.' Just those Football 202 things that come from knowledge of the game and experience. I'm sure that he's working on all of that stuff."

On 'the physicality' through nine practices:

"These guys have come out ready to go. Like I said, we're really strong inside on the O-line, between [C] Corey [Linsley] and Anchor — which is what they call [G] Matt Feiler, I don't know if everyone knows that [*laughter*]. I just heard them saying it and I adopted it. Feiler, Corey and those two rookies, along with [G/T Brendan] Jaimes and [G] Ryan Hunter. All of those guys are strong. You feel the line of scrimmage moving in the run game. You feel a real sturdy pocket inside in the pass game. I've been really pleased with the physicality. I'll look at the film today, but it felt like we were rolling upfront, so I'm excited about it."

GUARD ZION JOHNSON

On training camp:

"It's been going well. I've been learning a lot. My goal has been to get better every day. I feel like I've done that. It's been good to build chemistry with the other offensive linemen, with our quarterback, with all of the other guys on the offense. I just love to get better every single day."

On the biggest challenge in adjusting from college to the NFL:

"I would say just the attention to detail at all times. In college, you can sometimes get away with things better than others. But, in the NFL, you have to be detailed and specific on everything at all times. That's something that's a bit of an adjustment, but I feel like I've been kind of taking the initiative in that adjustment and doing well with that."

On if he has had an 'I belong here' moment in training camp:

"I mean, yeah. At the end of the day, I'm just out here playing football. It's definitely different in college than the NFL, like I said. At the end of the day, I'm still an offensive lineman and my job is still to block people and I'm glad to go out and do my job every day."

On how he judges his performance in non-padded practices:

"The way our coach kind of described it to us is we want to work on our hands. We want to work on our footwork. There is a little bit of a difference when it comes to when you don't have your pads on. Defenders can get away with certain things, but as an offensive lineman, there are certain things, like my hands and my footwork. I can work on even in those days."

On C Corey Linsley's guidance:

"He's been very valuable. He's played a lot of football at a high level and he's a guy that I can bounce things off of, ask questions, and he helps me become a better player. Him, along with [G] Matt [Feiler] and [T] Rashawn [Slater], and even [T] Storm [Norton] and [T] Trey [Pipkins III], all of those guys have had some experience playing at a high level. They've helped me a lot."

On Linsley and Feiler:

"They try to help me the most they can. At the end of the day, I am still a rookie, but they've been awesome. They're open to any questions I have. They show me things to help with my technique, with learning the playbook. I couldn't have asked for better vets."

On if Linsley and Feiler's compliments provide confidence:

"Absolutely. When you know someone who is very good at playing offensive line says good things about you, it really does help your confidence."

On 'remaining calm and confident':

"I think it comes from my view of the game. I love playing football. Like I said, it's my job to go out and block people every day. What more can I ask for? I'm going to come out every day, try to get better, and have fun."

On what helps him remain calm:

"My approach. I'm going to pick one thing and I'm going to get better at that every day. If I want to work on my hands or my footwork, doing a certain thing in any given play, I pick that thing, I work on it each day, and it helps me kind of focus on how I'm tracking how better I'm getting each day."

On if he feels pressure:

"I don't. At the end of the day, I'm playing football and I love the game. I want to win. I want to be here. I want to win games. I don't feel the pressure. There may be some, but at the end of the day, I'm just playing the game with my teammates."

On if he feels 'heightened expectations' following Slater's rookie season:

"I don't think so. He's Rashawn Slater, and I'm Zion Johnson. We're different people. We're good at different things, but I think I can play at a high level, as well. I'm going to do my best to be the best player I can be."

On conversations with Slater about being a rookie:

"He's talked to me a lot about game day, just the feelings, the emotions, the hype behind it. He's another person I talk to and helps me. He gives me little tips and things to stay calm, to really focus on my job. He's just a great resource for me."

On his relationship with fellow rookie G Jamaree Salyer:

"Jamaree is awesome. I got to train with him at EXOS. I was with him at the combine, at the Senior Bowl. We had a relationship already. We have a thing where we watch film together, we work on our stuff together. He's really a resource, like I said. We're a resource to each other to get better and be the best players we can be."

RUNNING BACK ISAIAH SPILLER

On how his first training camp:

“It’s going pretty good. I’m just learning a lot, soaking it in. It’s been great, just getting better every day.”

On if playing in Texas A&M Head Coach Jimbo Fisher’s pro-style offense has helped him adapt to the NFL:

“For sure. The offense is more in-depth than Jimbo’s, but it’s helping me get off to a great start. I’m just learning now. I’m getting more comfortable seeing nickel blitzes and MIKE linebacker blitzes. I’m just getting more comfortable with that and just getting better every day.”

On the ‘most enjoyable part’ of an NFL training camp:

“The three days, and then the off day, I’ve never experienced that [*laughter*]. You usually go like nine-straight days, then one day, and then you go eight straight days. It’s very different from college, just being a professional every day, in and out, coming to work. It’s a blessing.”

On whom he has talked to get advice for training camp:

“[RB] Austin [Ekeler], J.K. [RB Joshua Kelley], [RB] Larry [Rountree III], all of those guys who have been here before me. Just soaking it up, being the sponge, listen to what they have to say. It’s been great.”

On the competition within the running back group:

“It’s been fierce every day. Coming out, having the right mindset going against the linebackers. Coming out here in full pads, it’s been great. I’ve been adjusting well, so I’d like to keep going and get better.”

On the speed of the NFL:

“It’s been a little faster, it’s the NFL, but nothing really too dramatic from the SEC. I think I’ve been transitioning pretty well in my eyes.”

On if the playbook has been ‘easy to learn’:

“Yeah, a little bit easier. Similar plays to my pro-style offense that Jimbo [Fisher] ran, so it was kind of easier to help me out. Actually, [Running Backs] Coach [Derrick] Foster helped me out a lot with the schemes and concepts.”

On how RB Austin Ekeler provides guidance:

“It’s been pretty good, the things you can hear when the quarterback is talking to just click in your head, so you know what the play is, stuff like that. He’s just been a really big help to me.”