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Chargers Week 1 Media Availability

Wednesday, September 6, 2023 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

On 'embracing expectations for this season':

"What we're focused on is each and every day. I think that we're not looking to the future, we're just trying to stay in the moment with this team, make sure that we do everything at a Super Bowl standard. It's really about each day for us."

On Week 1:

"I think that there's just so much build up with this sport now. With 24 hour news, this is the most popular sport in the world, by a lot. The first game, there is always going to be that build up. It's exciting because people care about football. There's no sport like it. We're no exception. We're excited to play."

On if CB J.C. Jackson 'will have any limitations on Sunday':

"It's to be determined. He has practiced well. We'll see how it goes in the game."

On how Jackson 'looks in practice':

"He looks like himself."

On just two players listed on today's Injury Report:

"Just what we expect, we expect our team to be out there. They have practiced well throughout training camp. I think that they have had a really quality offseason. I think that this group is hungry to play."

On 'what is left to determine' regarding Jackson:

"Just seeing them through a game. We've seen him in practice, now we get to see him in a game. We're excited. He has practiced well. We'll see how it goes."

On the Sports Performance staff:

"You can't say enough about [Director of Player Health, Wellness and Performance] Marco Zucconi leading the way and [Head Athletic Trainer] Sal Lopez, [Director of Sports Performance] Anthony Lomando, [Head Strength and Conditioning Coach] Jonathan Brooks, [Team Dietician and Nutritionist] Paige Crawford and her staff. It's been a team effort. But these players are the ones that deserve the credit. They're the ones that are out here putting in all the work. This is a special group of guys. They have put in the right work to get themselves ready for Week 1."

On if LB Daiyan Henley 'has a chance to play on Sunday':

"To be determined."

On former Defensive Coordinator Renaldo Hill now being on the Dolphins' staff:

"It won't have an impact because they're a lot different and so are we. This game has a life of its own. This matchup is going to be a lot different than the last one."

On last year's matchup against the Dolphins and how that could benefit preparations:

"You can watch it, but the teams are going to be vastly different. Once we played them after that game, the next stretch of games for them — including the playoff game — they were a different team. They have a different team now in all three phases, new coaches. It will be a different matchup."

On preparing for the Dolphins' offense 'over the offseason':

"We've improved in all ways. Now, it's time to prove ourselves. But, you have to play team defense. That's what we're trying to do here. This is our first chance of proving it."

On Dolphins Defensive Coordinator Vic Fangio and his relationship with Fangio:

"He's an outstanding coach, one of the top coaches in the game. They're going to be different than how he has been in the past, too. You take a look at what he has done in different places and that's a snapshot of it. He has a new group of players. We'll have to make adjustments throughout the game."

On QB Justin Herbert:

"Justin [Herbert] has been fantastic. I think the energy that he has played with each day in practice, through training camp and through the preparation, and just, I think, the way that he affects everybody in the organization, you just see the comfort that he has within this team and his role within the team, and that's what you want. He has continued to improve every year that I've been with him. Knowing those close to him, going a long way back, that's one of the secrets is how much it means to him. He is going to make the adjustments. He is going to make the improvements. He's been fantastic for us. We're all excited to see him play."

On Dolphins QB Tua Tagovailoa:

"Tua [Tagovailoa] had an outstanding season last year. He is really, really accurate with the football. He makes quick decisions. I think the big reason why their passing game is so prolific is the timing that he plays with. He throws a really catchable football, which allows those skill players to run with it. He had an outstanding season last year and we have a lot of respect for him."

On OLB Chris Rumph II:

"In practice, he had a hamstring issue."

On is CB Asante Samuel Jr. 'is going to be the guy at Star':

"It's fair to say that Asante [Samuel Jr.] will be there sometimes, but we're going to play a lot of guys there. You're going to see Asante outside, too. He had a really, really good training camp. I'm excited to see him play."

On the 'biggest challenge in trying to defend' Dolphins WRs Tyreek Hill and Jaylen Waddle:

"Every play, you have to respect that this play could go a long way. They have that impact that few do in the NFL, where every play, a big play could happen. They have that type of ability in the deep part of the field, in Level 2 and Level 1. They can do a lot with the football. Their year last year, as a tandem, was as good as anybody in the game. We have a lot of respect for them."

On Samuel Jr.'s 'response' to his three-INT performance in the Wild Card Round last year:

"Since he has been here, one of Asante's top qualities is his toughness. He is physically tough, mentally tough. He is a competitor. He has improved each year as a player here, in all ways. He has had an outstanding training camp. I think he's been able to showcase, inside, that he has top Star ability in there. We're expecting a big year from him."

On the group of captains:

"This has been a great group to coach. We had nine captains, it could have been 15, 16, 17, 18 captains. We have that many guys who have that type of leadership qualities. If you looked at our vote, there were so many people that were worthy of that mantle. I think that this is a group that really cares about each other. When you take a look at the group, it's a diverse group, but I think that it goes beyond just those nine guys. This group has a lot of leadership characteristics. I think there are a lot of young guys that we have who are eventually going to become captains in the NFL. It's a great sign for us moving forward and a real credit to our organization of drafting and onboarding the right guys."

On LB Eric Kendricks being named a captain in his first season with the Chargers:

"I think he has had a quick impact here. Any time you're a veteran player that has accomplished a lot someplace else, that transition, I think people minimize how tough it is. A lot of it is just going into a brand new place and how you fit in. The person you were, can I be that person here? He's just very authentic, he's a very authentic player. I think that that is the type of leader that all of us respect. He has not changed who he is, but he has adapted and fit into this group, in the same way that I think you've seen some of the other guys that we've brought from other places, like [OLB] Khalil Mack, [DL] Sebastian [Joseph-Day], some of these guys who were captains in their first year. He has done all of that. You interview our guys, our coaches, he has been fantastic for us. We're excited to go compete."

On 'if it is easier for a veteran player to make that transition':

"It depends on the person. I think it depends on the organization that you're going with. I think it can happen for young players. You've seen it work out with other guys that are young players that maybe get traded or something like that, they go to a new place, and then bam, they blossom. It just depends on who the guy is. Those guys that have the feel and the instincts, and that care about fitting into a new place and how to do that well, I think that's what we've done a good job of, bringing guys who really care about fitting into the team. Yeah, they're going to play at a high level, but how I fit into the team chemistry and how can I enhance the team chemistry by how I fit in?"

On 'figuring out which of the nine captains doesn't get the C patch':

"I don't know, there aren't a lot of people dying to go out for the coin toss these days [*laughter*]. I'm sure that the subtraction won't be difficult. I know that the coin toss has become a less popular place for players. It won't be hard to subtract, that's for sure."

On the 'Star rotation' and where S Derwin James Jr. 'fits into that':

"You just have to take a look at their personnel and how you think they're going to play you. And, being able to adjust throughout the game. The matchups are always something that we're looking at. I think we've developed the depth there and the quality where we have multiple options. That's certainly been a goal of ours, is to be a team that can match up a lot of different ways and use our guys the right way."

On how 'eager' he is about 'seeing how the rushing offense performs':

"It will be a good challenge against this front. They have outstanding personnel in the front seven, so it is going to be a good matchup for us. This matchup will show us where we're at."

On if the offense 'could go three or four deep, in terms of ballcarriers' on Sunday:

"To be determined. I think that all of those who are active on gameday, they will all have a chance to carry the ball."

QUARTERBACK JUSTIN HERBERT

On Week 1:

"It's always exciting to go play football. We're looking forward to the opportunity. We have a good team coming here on Sunday. We have to get ready for them."

On preparing for the Miami defense:

"Just watch as much film as we can, whether that's from Denver from a couple years ago, whether that's Miami in the preseason. Whatever we can get the feel for their defense and how they play — they're really well-coached. They have a lot of athletic guys on that side of the ball. It will be a tough task, but I'm looking forward to the opportunity."

On adjusting to Miami's defense:

"That's part of the plan. That's the tough part of the NFL, is that you're going to face a new defense like that. We'll make those adjustments as we see fit."

On the importance of a good week of practice:

"It's important to have a good week of practice and preparation of going through the game plan and knowing what we're doing, offensively. Those guys are dialed in. I know they'll be focused for the week and heading into Sunday."

On Kickoff Weekend:

"It's another opportunity to go play football. It's the thing that we've been looking forward to all year. Guys have been working hard in the offseason. It's another chance to go play football out there. We look forward to the opportunity."

On familiarity with the Miami defensive scheme:

"[Head] Coach [Brandon] Staley has been very helpful. He's got a great relationship with him [Dolphins Defensive Coordinator Vic Fangio]. We've talked about ball and talked about their defense a little bit. He's always bouncing in and out of the quarterback room. It's always great to have him around, especially as knowledgeable as he is about defenses."

On the offense:

"I think there are a lot of good things that we did last year and things that we're adding this year. The whole goal of our offense is just to get the ball out in space to those guys to make plays. My job is just to be the point guard and get them the ball, whether it's through the run game or through the pass game. To put us in the best position to move the ball and score touchdowns. Offensively, I think we've done a good job of learning and growing together. I'm really looking forward to the offense playing on Sunday."

On Dolphins S Jevon Holland:

"Jevon is a really athletic guy. He's really smart. From our time at Oregon, he made plays. That's what he did best. He went out there, literally showed up as a freshman and he made plays. I think that's the best thing about him, that he went in there — whether it was last year or a couple of years ago — I think he just went out and balled. It's kind of what he's done for the past couple of years. I haven't been surprised at all by all of his success."

On Holland saying Herbert is 'faster' than he looks:

"I do my best to be in my best athletic shape. I appreciate that from Jevon. He's always been a good guy, so I appreciate that."

On differences between this season and last season:

"We're learning a new offense. I think having [Offensive Coordinator] Kellen [Moore], that's kind of just been the difference this year. We have a lot of similar guys. Just learning a new offense."

On the offensive weapons:

"That's the tough part about the NFL. You're going to face adversity and injuries like that. It's Week 1. It's a long season. Everyone has to do their best to stay healthy for as long as they can. You take it one week at a time. I think that's been the good thing about our offense so far, is just taking each day as it comes. Staying focused on the preparation and practice. We're looking forward to the challenge on Sunday."

On the offensive potential:

"I think there is still a lot of room for improvement for us. Things we can fix, things we can get better at. I like the way we're going. I think everyone has picked up the offense fairly quickly, especially during OTAs. To have all of those guys out there, to have the offensive line like we do, we're just trying to move the ball as best we can to score touchdowns in the red zone."

On personal experience playing against Dolphins Defensive Coordinator Vic Fangio:

"I think those are games that you watch, as well. Seeing the defense, how they play us, how they play our personnel. We've got a lot of similar receivers as we did a couple of years ago. You can kind of figure out how they played them. I think it is very helpful to go back and look at that film. Whether it was a win or a loss, there was a lot of good things on offense that we did and things that we need to fix, as well."

On the Miami defense:

"Their front seven is very athletic. They've got about as good of a front seven as it gets. They have some cover guys that can do really well on the back half of the field. They're a complete defense. They're going to require all of our attention. We're going to have to have a great week of practice and preparation to have any chance on Sunday."

On Dolphins QB Tua Tagovailoa:

"I've just watched him over the past couple of years. I've only met him maybe once or twice. He seems like a great guy. I have a lot of respect for him, so I'm always rooting for him."

On what he has said to rookies going into their first NFL regular-season game:

"Let's have fun. To play free, to play fast. To enjoy the environment. Go do what you've always done. Go make plays. Never let the moment be too big for you."

On Offensive Coordinator Kellen Moore emphasizing throwing the ball downfield:

"I don't think anything changed over the past couple of years. I think we've had that emphasis of trying to throw the ball downfield. Injuries and adversity — things happened like that last year. We didn't exactly play the way we wanted to play. Going into this year, we know we have the guys to be able to push the ball downfield and the guys, especially, that are able to make the plays downfield."

SAFETY DERWIN JAMES JR.

On how he feels:

"Healthy and ready to go."

On the preparing for Dolphins WRs Tyreek Hill and Jalen Waddle:

"It's hard to simulate the speed that they have. We have guys on our team that have been giving us great looks. It's been good for the defense."

On beginning a new season:

"I'm just looking to start the season fresh, that was last season. I'm trying to come out to this season and get rid of that feeling. Focus on this season."

On the success against Miami last season:

"It starts in practice with the preparation. Those guys were prepared to play by the time the game came. That was last season. This season is different. We have to come out and be ready to play this year."

On the defense being healthy going into Week 1:

"It's more fun, you can do more. It allows us to be who we are. It's a lot of fun having your brothers out there, who are supposed to be out there with you."

On Dolphins QB Tua Tagovailoa:

"He gets the ball and spreads it around to his receivers. The guys with speed and all the guys around him. We just have to be ready."

On how Tagovailoa has changed since playing against him in college:

"He's grown a lot. A lot more confidence. He's in the NFL now, an NFL quarterback and a top-five pick. He's doing a lot over there, getting better each game, each week. He's doing a great job over there."

On covering the Miami receivers:

"It's definitely challenging. Like I said, they present a lot of challenges. We have to come out here, prepare and get ready as best as we can."

On insight from Defensive Coordinator Derrick Ansley, who coached at Alabama:

"It's a lot different now, Tua [Tagovailoa] was a college kid. Now he's in the league so now he's a different player. Of course, DA [Ansley] did coach at Alabama."

On the difference of this team compared to last season:

"We have all of our guys out there ready to go play. We just have to go do it. All of our guys weren't ready to play last year. This year feels a lot better."

On OLB Joey Bosa and OLB Khalil Mack:

"Those two guys almost have 100 career sacks each. They can cause a lot of havoc, cause a lot of game plan problems. It's good having them on my team."

On the Miami offense:

"It's fun. Like I've said, if you consider yourself one of the best, why not go against the best?"

On if there are any 'question marks' on the defense:

"I don't have any question marks about us. We just have to go out there and play whenever Sunday gets here."

On CB J.C. Jackson:

"Big difference. He's one of the best man-corners in the league. He can make a big difference out there."

On the approach to the season:

"We just have to come out there one game at a time. I feel like we'll go out there each game and present each game as it is. Everyone will see it themselves."

On the defensive identify:

"Go out there and make it about us. Don't make it about anyone else. If we go out there and make it about us, we'll like what we see out there."