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## Chargers Training Camp Media Availability

Thursday, July 28, 2022 ⚡ Jack Hammett Sports Complex ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

### OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR JOE LOMBARDI

#### **On 'how much he plans to involve' TE Donald Parham Jr. in the offense:**

"Quite a bit. Obviously, he has great size and receiving skills. He's a better blocker than I ever would have thought. It's a good thing about our tight end room, I think all — at least the guys that are one, two, three on the depth chart right now — they're all adequate-to-good blockers and adequate-to-good receivers. It's nice when you have tight ends that can serve both of those roles. He's a guy that, I think, can do a lot more than maybe we did last year. The hard part is that you have a lot of players that you want to get the ball to. I think his ability to go up and catch the ball, high-point it — his height and size differential is really something that we really want to tap into."

#### **On 'if anything has stood out' about the offense over the first two practices:**

"It's still so early. We're just kind of installing the plays and running. We haven't even hit any third downs yet. I think the guys are locked in. Today, I think we had a few alignment errors that we need to get cleaned up, but the guys are in shape and locked in and ready to go. Still early, no pads, but we're looking forward to keep looking at them and evaluating."

#### **On WR Joshua Palmer's growth over the last year:**

"He's a guy that jumped out early to us. I think he keeps getting better and more confident. Especially your first year, as the offense gets installed, there's a volume aspect that can be overwhelming to a rookie. I think that part, he's through that hurdle, so that he can really just go out and play fast. He looked really good yesterday. I'll watch the film today. He's another guy, we keep saying this, that I think we can get involved more."

#### **On Palmer's development since starting against the Giants in Week 14 of last season:**

"I think it's huge. I think it helps his confidence. It opens our eyes a little bit, seeing him doing it in a real NFL game, knowing what he's capable of. I think it built a lot of confidence all the way around."

#### **On what will 'decide' the right tackle competition:**

"Consistency, guys that you can count on play in and play out. I think [T] Storm [Norton] is just going to get better. I think when [T] Trey [Pipkins III], kind of like, Josh [Palmer], when Trey went in and played last year, it built some confidence, I think, in him and us having confidence in him. That's going to be a very important one. Right now, again, we're out here in just helmets. We're not getting as much information as we'll start getting in a few days when we put the pads on, and then the preseason games will be real important, but I think we're going to end up being a lot better there, regardless of who wins that position, and I think that we're going to feel real good about the depth, as well."

**On competition for the second running back role:**

“They’re not really getting hit and breaking tackles, so it’s too early, really, to know anything yet. But as these pads go on, I think the preseason games will be really important, because even when we put the pads on, they’re not getting tackled to the ground. I expect to see growth from [RB] Larry [Rountree III] mentally, just being more reliable from that perspective. I’ll be excited to see [RB] Isaiah [Spiller] get going. Obviously, we felt good about him as a prospect. So, see how he transitions. Then, [RB] Josh [Kelley], we know a little bit more about. It’s another guy that we feel good about. That’ll be very important to see who rises and kind of wins that two spot.”

**On if a player will ‘distance himself’ at the second running back position:**

“Injuries are obviously going to be a big factor. I think the good thing is, we know that there’s a floor with all those guys — that’s not bad, if that makes sense. I think we feel confidence, certainly in the three guys that we know a little bit better, and Isaiah [Spiller] I’m sure will develop confidence, but you’re hoping someone it kind of separates themselves where you feel real good about them. Maybe all three are playing real good, where you feel good about them. Time will tell. You hit the two positions that we’re really keeping a close eye on.”

**On RB Austin Ekeler’s role projection:**

“I’m not expecting any kind of dip in usage with him. But, like any running back, unless you’re 250 pounds, sometimes there’s a pitch count on those guys. It’s not something that you want to lose halfway through the season because you overused them. Just being smart with how many times he’s getting hit every game is something that you have to keep an eye on. We’re going to count on those other guys to pick up the slack when he’s not in there.”

**On TE Tre’ McKitty’s ‘projected jump as a pass-catcher’:**

“ I think time will tell. I’m not complaining, but there are so many guys that are capable. Every time you’re trying to work someone else a little bit more into the offense, you’re taking touches away from [WR] Mike [Williams], [WR] Keenan [Allen] and [RB] Austin Ekeler. He’s more than capable to do it. We’ll just see how he works in the progression, but still expect him to keep growing as a blocker. A little healthier at the start of the season, hopefully that helps him. But, I would expect him to get more touches this year, but we’ll see how it all plays out.”

**On McKitty’s development as a blocker:**

“He’s definitely not a throw-away as a receiver. You have some of these blocking tight ends that you’d really rather not use them at all as a receiver, they’re almost just like an extra offensive lineman. He’s definitely not that. If he’s a guy that is in there all of the time in the run game, he is going to have to run routes when we do play-action, at times. He’s more than capable of doing that.”

**On the competition at fullback:**

“I think special teams will be huge. A big part of that position is physicality. [FB] Zander [Horvath] was more like a tailback in college, so see how he takes on that role. I mean, he certainly looks the part. Protection, sometimes as we get in third-and-longer, you kind of bring in a bigger body to do some of the past protecting for you. We’ve done that in the past, where you bring a fullback in to block some of the third-down protections and see how those guys can do that role. There are a number of factors that come into it.”

**On an example of a fullback’s role in pass protection on third down:**

“Like when you’re in shotgun, instead of having Austin [Ekeler] in there, because you know that there’s a lot of blitzes that are coming and this guy might have to block a 250 pound linebacker, at times, you put a bigger body in there, if they’re able to mentally figure out who to block. We’ll give those guys an opportunity figure that out. There are a lot of factors that go into it. A lot of it is figuring out exactly what these guys are good at. Is this guy going to be able to run ISO and block a WILL linebacker? Maybe that’s not what he’s strong at. Maybe we put a tight end to do that role, but this guy will work some of the sifting rolls. Zander’s a pretty good athlete. [FB] Gabe [Nabers] did a good job last year catching the ball. All of those things come in, and you kind of figure out what you got, and can I use it? Maybe he’s not the traditional fullback. I wouldn’t be surprised if Zander, in the preseason, got some runs — line him up as a one-back and see what he does there. I think there’s a discovery process that will happen with him, and Gabe will keep developing. We’ll see how

that falls out. It's early to say right now because we don't have the information, but we're going to keep putting those guys in the situations and evaluate it as we go."

**On competing against a pass-rush that features OLBs Khalil Mack and Joey Bosa each practice:**

"You definitely have to have protection at the forefront of your mind — understand your matchups, understand who needs help, where you turn in the center, who's going to get a chip, all of those things. It probably takes up more of our time than your average fan would think. The protection plan is as important as anything we do every week because keeping the quarterback upright and healthy and confident is our number one priority. It's going to be a challenge. Luckily, these guys were pros so we won't get hit in practice. I think it'll be great for the development of our tackles and our tight ends to have to block those guys because it's going to be an all-day affair when you come out here versus those guys. I think it'll help us get ready for you the monsters we're going to have to block come season. I hate that we have to face those guys during the season, but I'm glad that we're getting good training here in camp getting ready for them."

## **WIDE RECEIVER KEENAN ALLEN**

### **On 'how it feels' entering Year 10:**

"Like Year 1. It just feels good, running around and not hurting. I'm feeling young. I'm 30, so the game has slowed down. Just having fun."

### **On competing against the additions in the secondary:**

"It's great. First two days in the books. It's been tough already. The defense is already looking like a 360 team. They kicked our ass today, which is a good thing. Hopefully, we can keep building on it."

### **On developing within the offense in the second year of the system:**

"Just getting more comfortable. Understanding what [Offensive Coordinator Joe] Lombardi likes to call and why he calls it, understanding where we need to be. Then, [QB] Justin [Herbert] being more comfortable."

### **On 'the biggest adjustment' a young receiver experiences entering their second season and how WR Joshua Palmer has handled the transition:**

"Angles, timing and understanding your quarterback. In college, I had my brother, so I didn't have to adjust a lot. I already knew what he liked, knew where he wanted me to be and stuff like that. Come up here and I had Phil [Rivers]. It was a whole different type of game that I had to play. You just have to be in tune with what the quarterback likes, what the offensive coordinator likes, where you're supposed to be, when you're supposed to be there and the angles you have to take to get to those spots."

### **On the 'expectation to block' as a developing receiver:**

"Definitely. It's always been like that, though. Once you have that mindset, that [former NFL receiver] Hines Ward mindset of tearing an [opponent's] head off on the run plays, that'll help you get in there on the pass plays."

### **On Palmer's development:**

"He's definitely polished. He was polished last year, but now he is coming in and understanding more ways to do moves, more ways to get open on routes. He'll just keep learning along the way."

### **On if he has 'any thoughts' S Derwin James Jr.'s contract situation:**

"Not really. I'm pretty sure that they'll get that handled. That's a guy that we definitely need. He's the heart of the defense, heart of the team pretty much. I'm pretty sure that they'll get that done."

### **On his 'mindset change' entering Year 10 compared to his rookie season:**

"Just understanding the game, understanding that I don't have to do too much, just try to get in shape. I don't have to do too much, just try not to get injured, try to last. They added another game, so, hopefully, if we play this game the right way, we'll be in the playoffs. Definitely trying to be ready for that."

### **On the fans present at practice:**

"It's great. The fans have been loud. They're doing a hell of a job keeping the energy up. The new defense, they kicked our ass today, so it's going to be tough for us to get things moving, just because they have so many pieces. They're competing over there on defense. It's tough. We'll find a way."

### **On competing against CB J.C. Jackson:**

"I haven't actually went against him. I've been in the slot. You know, they like to label me as a slot guy now [laughter]. It's pretty bad, actually [laughter]. You'll see in one-on-ones."

## **OUTSIDE LINEBACKER JOEY BOSA**

### **On today's practice:**

"It was good. We were competing. I think we're all just getting our legs under us, it's the second day, obviously. A little sore after day one, but it's like what [Head] Coach [Brandon Staley] just said, it's going to go back-and-forth every day. We compete, but it's all about respect and getting better on both sides. We shake it up, and it's always great competing against some of the best guys on offense in football. It's just going to make us both better."

### **On how the defense has performed with the new additions:**

"It's been great, just a lot of great personalities. It feels like we've kind of been together for longer than we have. Me and [OLB] Khalil [Mack], I feel like we're definitely going to have a close bond by the end of this year. We're kind of together all practice talking football the whole time. We have complementary styles, I think. We rush quite differently, so we can both learn a lot from each other. Obviously, all of the guys inside, it's a big addition to have."

### **On learning from Mack:**

"I think sometimes those are the best people you can learn from because it's a different feel and they see things that you don't see. They use technique that maybe you haven't learned or haven't used before. So at the end of the day, we both do similar things here and there, but we definitely have different styles and we've just been practicing and learning from each other. I try to teach him and the young guys as much as I can, but at the same time, I just try to watch him and learn what I can just from watching him."

### **On if he and Mack have watched film on other pass-rushers across the league yet together:**

"Not yet. I think we're planning to watch my brother's sacks today. We're going to watch somebody's sacks every day and break it down a little bit. We haven't watched too much film together yet, but it's just the beginning. We're going to have plenty of time to dive into all of that."

### **On S Derwin James Jr.'s contract situation and 'what he would tell him':**

"Nothing that I'm going to say right now. I've been talking to him on the side, obviously, and he's, I think, doing the right thing. He obviously deserves whatever he's going to get. He puts in 100 percent every single day. He's just making the best decision for him right now, but the fact that he's out here coaching the guys, fully involved, 100 percent locked in every day, it obviously means a lot to all of us and I'm sure the coaches see it and really appreciate it. He's obviously one of the best, if not the best, at his position in the whole league. I think he's going to get what he deserves. He should."

### **On 'what has to happen to bring the defense together':**

"I don't know. I think we just need to keep on this track. I think we're doing great. The guys are really smart that we've brought in. They're picking up the scheme quickly. [Run Game Coordinator/Defensive Line Coach] Jay [Rodgers] and [Outside Linebackers Coach] Giff [Smith] are obviously doing a really good job coaching them. I think we've had a good start. It all started at OTAs. I feel like we're already a tight group. It feels like we've been together longer than we actually have. I think if we just stay on this track, we'll be looking good come Week 1."

### **On veteran leadership on the defense impacting younger players:**

"I think that's a major part of why it's not going to be a huge acclimation period for everybody. When you bring in guys with experience like that, they know how it is, they come in and they learn quick. [OLB] Khalil [Mack] and [OLB] Kyle [Van Noy], Kyle is with the middle linebackers right now, but he's back and forth with the EDGE. Having guys like Khalil and Kyle, both vets, I felt like I was the vet last year, which was weird — I had [former Chargers OLB] Kyler [Fackrell] with me — but it's nice to have some older guys to lean on. I think that's a big factor in why we're feeling close and why they are picking it up really quickly is because there are veterans that have played on Super Bowl teams. They know what it takes to win. There are great additions all around."

**On if he discusses last year's Super Bowl win DL Sebastian Joseph-Day and LB Troy Reeder:**

"I asked Sebastian yesterday about the ceremony. We haven't really gotten into much detail. It's not like a weird feeling or anything like, 'Oh, you were with the enemy,' or whatever. I think it's a benefit and a positive for us to have guys that have gone the distance. These seasons are really long. They know what it takes to make it through and win the big game. The fact that they go from there to here means a lot. They see that there's the same opportunity here to go and win."

**On the 'young' EDGE players:**

"Chris [Rumph II], Jamal [Davis II], Ty [Shelby], we got Carlo [Kemp] in recently. I think they're all working hard. We've got E [Emeke Egbule] coming back, I think it's his fourth year now. We're going to need those guys to step up with [LB Kenneth] Murray out with the surgery for a while and [OLB] Kyle [Van Noy] going to middle linebacker. We're definitely going to need this — [Rumph] is not a string bean anymore; he's an asparagus stock now [*laughter*]. I gave him a couple of pounds [*laughter*]. I think he's doing well. He's out of his head a little bit from his first year. He's getting some size, some strength. I think he's going to be a big part of our defense, and we're going to need him."