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## Chargers Media Availability

Thursday, September 1, 2022 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

### HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

#### **On the signing of RB Sony Michel:**

"He fit right in yesterday. Got in there and had a bunch of carries in the practice. That's how the NFL is, it never ceases to amaze me, and that's why I love the NFL. He fit right in with us yesterday. He and his fiancé just had a baby recently, so there's a lot going on with the Michels. We're certainly happy to have him. We see a complete runner. I've known about this guy since he was in the eighth grade playing varsity football at American Heritage [School] down in Plantation [Fla.], Broward County, Florida. I've known about him since he was a 14-year-old kid. Just really respect the resumé. He's a complete runner, even going all of the way back to Georgia, him and [Browns RB] Nick Chubb teaming up. I faced him when he was with New England, and, certainly, joining up with those guys last year and helping them win a Super Bowl. Just a very complete back. We're excited to have him.

#### **On how he knew about Michel 'since he was in eighth grade':**

"I recruited South Florida when I was in college. He's kind of a legend down there. He was an eighth grader that played on the varsity. His reputation precedes him down there."

#### **On C Corey Linsley not participating in practice the last two days:**

"Just a couple of veteran days there. He'll be out at practice today. Taking care of him more than anything, getting him some rest. Nothing to be concerned about."

#### **On the running back repetition distribution:**

"We have to see how it's going to go. With [RBs] Josh [Kelley] and Isaiah [Spiller], we know how those guys have played for us this preseason. I've commented on the improvement of Josh in a big way, in being a core contributor for us on special teams. Then, I think Isaiah was able to show a lot of good things in the preseason. Just had the ankle, but we have him out at practice now. Just felt like it would be a move that would really help solidify our running back corps. I think that yesterday was a good practice for him to fit right in and for our guys to see that. He's been working. Very pleased with how that practice went yesterday for Sony [Michel] and for that running back group."

#### **On if Spiller is 'back to 100 percent':**

"He's getting close. He felt, certainly, good enough to be out there at practice. Definitely trending in the right direction. Hopefully, after today, get the long weekend off, and then be ready to go next week."

**On Michel ‘playing complementary’ to RB Austin Ekeler:**

“Yeah, I think you saw Sony do that in New England with [former Patriots RB] James White. James White had a lot of the stuff that Austin has. James White was a heck of a back, a lot of respect for him. I know that he just retired, so much respect. Glad that we don’t have to cover him anymore [laughter]. I see similar complementary styles. The thing about Sony is that he’s a three-down back. He can run any can fit any type of run style; tight zone, wide zone, gap scheme, shotgun running under center. A very complete back pass protection. He has been in good offensive systems in the NFL, so he knows how to protect the quarterback. He has soft hands in the passing game, the screen game.”

**On Michel being a ‘veteran presence’ for Spiller:**

“Great point. I think so. I think any time that you can see a back that’s kind of gone on this path, first-round draft pick, Super Bowl champion two times, but also that has been around a bunch of teams now. I think it’s good for young backs to see that, and see what it takes to be successful in the league.”

**On why Michel was not acquired earlier in the offseason:**

“I think we spoke about that around draft time. We felt like, going into the draft, that that was going to be the best way to attack the running back position, based on how the other groups on our team were doing. Then, we were going to see, based on our draft and based on our training camp, whether or not we would revisit that. I think that our running back core is much deeper than it was. We have depth of youth, too. We have guys that are still relatively young for that position. I think that [General Manager] Tom [Telesco] and [Director of Player Personnel] JoJo Wooden did a really good job of making this happen with Sony.”

**On if Michel’s release was ‘surprising’:**

“Yeah. Anybody of Sony Michel’s caliber, you’re obviously surprised. But, it worked out for us.”

**On if a decision has been made on who will be the No. 2 quarterback:**

“Not yet. We’re going to get through the weekend, and then we’ll go into game week next week and attack that question. I’m really proud of both guys. I felt like they had really quality camps. I’m glad that both of them were on our team, for sure.”

**On if the No. 2 quarterback ‘will fluctuate’:**

“It could, for sure. That was kind of our approach last year, too. I think that’s a fair assessment.”

**On his reaction to a QB Justin Herbert trading card ‘bidding for over one million dollars’:**

“He’s come a long way since Sheldon High School. I’ve met a bunch of the people that he grew up with. He’s come a long way.”

**On an injury update for CB J.C. Jackson:**

“J.C. is working out. He’s trending positive. He’s working out hard. He’s in good spirits. I think, over this weekend, we’ll be able to tell you a lot more about his practice prospects for next week. He’s making good progress.”

**On if Jackson ‘still has the boot on’:**

“Yes, he does, as of right now.”

**On ‘the key to making a successful backfield work with so many rushers’:**

“I think that you have to have a plan for the flow of the game. I think running backs aren’t too dissimilar to other positions, you have to get them into a rhythm. I think that that’s always something that we’re trying to do, and that we did the same thing last year with Austin and J.J. [former Chargers RB Justin Jackson] and J.K. [Joshua Kelley] and all of those guys. We’re trying to get them into rhythm, and also get them in runs that they’re comfortable with, I think, early in the game. Then, from a pass-protection standpoint, when you’ve seen as many looks as Austin and Sony have, it’s kind of all the same, it’s just fitting what you’ve learned to what you’re joining up with now. But that’s one of the reasons why we were attracted to him, is that we could play him on all three downs.”

**On 'if this is the team that he wanted when he first took over the job':**

"Last year's team was the one that I wanted because my dream was to be an NFL head coach. Any team that's in front of me every day, that's my dream. To answer your question, to where it's maybe going is, I think that our team is taking shape and our organization is taking shape. That's a process in order to make that happen. A lot of people are required to make that happen. I like what I see out there and I'm excited to get this group out there next week in the game week and see us compete together."

**On the advantage of Week 0:**

"I think that's a great question. I think that it gives the guys a chance to breathe a little bit. You can't minimize what these guys just went through with training camp and three preseason games. There was some travel involved. I think it allows you to get healthy, I think it allows you to focus on fundamentals, and it allows you to, maybe, test some things schematically. But I think that this week, there's a lot of roster stuff that's changing, too, and it kind of allows that to take shape, as well. Then, you get into game week, and you know that you're headed somewhere. I really like this week. I think it's really smart by the NFL. If you keep these players in mind, I think that they'll continue to have this week before a game week."

**On evaluating the defense without all players contributing in the preseason:**

"Also a good question. I think that you know how it should look, you have a vision of what it should look like and it's defined. Your players know, when they're playing to that type of standard that you don't need to do it in a game because every practice, for us, is a game. I think that's difficult for people to understand, but every practice, for us, is a game. Our guys know what we expect from them. I think what [[DL] Sebastian [Joseph-Day] is referring to is that our defense is finally playing together. There were a bunch of guys that were out there for a while and we didn't really get to play together. We got [S] Derwin [James Jr.] back, and then we got some linebackers healthy. We started to get to play together. When you get to play together, you improve together. That's what should take place. When have guys like Sebastian who are leading the way, that improvement can happen quickly."

**On the value of a few of the defensive additions having prior experience in this system:**

"It's an advantage if the players that you bring in are the right players, because you can know the scheme inside and out, but if you're not good enough, then it's not going to do much good. It's still about the quality of the players. I think what it does is it allows them to be that extra coach on the field within a position group. It gives an extra reminder of, 'Hey, I went through this experience, and this is how it worked for me. Maybe this is how it can work for you,' give some history of some play calls like where Sebastian [Joseph-Day] can say, 'I went through this against Seattle in the playoff game,' and he can maybe help [DL] Otito Ogbornia, or somebody like that. [CB] Bryce Callahan can teach a [DB] Ja'Sir Taylor and say, 'Hey, man, when I was in my first year as a nickel in Chicago in 2015, this is how we played, and then when Coach [Staley] went to Denver, this is how we played, and then now this is how we're playing,' and he can translate that information and that can help you in a big way. [OLB] Khalil [Mack] can give Joey some context, like, 'Hey, man, when I was with Coach [Staley] in 2018, this is what it was like, now this is how it's changed, this is something that I like about it, this is something I don't like about it and this is what we've changed.' All of those types of things. That was a big reason why we did that, it's that our players are good enough and that they would be able to help us from a leadership perspective."

**Closing remarks:**

"Is that it for questioning? Because I don't know if you guys watched Serena Williams last night, but I know that I did because I was here too late, but you're talking about the greatest of all time. You just cannot explain it. I had it on mute, but just watching her last night light that tennis court on fire, that was just amazing. You guys know that I'm a huge tennis fan, huge Serena Williams fan. She was just amazing last night. She was just on one last night. She played fantastic. I just want her to know that the Chargers are rooting for her in the next round. She's amazing. I get a chance to have a press conference, so I'm going to tell her how I feel. Good luck, Serena."

**On how Williams' performance 'can translate to his players':**

"Our guys all know Serena Williams. I don't need to say anything. If they don't know Serena Williams, then we have bigger problems."

## **RUNNING BACK SONY MICHEL**

### **On returning to Los Angeles and joining the Chargers:**

“It feels good. It’s a cool opportunity. One that’s slightly familiar, but not too familiar because it’s a whole different organization and it feels good. I’m excited and I can’t wait to get it started.”

### **On his first day with the Chargers:**

“Day 1 was great. Getting around the guys, trying to understand the culture, get implemented a little bit, getting to the playbook, getting around the coaches, running around a little bit. A little bit of everything. I’m excited how Day 1 went.”

### **On how the Chargers’ culture is different than teams he’s played for in the past:**

“It’s the standard that the leaders on this team, the guys that have been here have set, the way they practice, the way they carry themselves in the building. It’s a cool environment.”

### **On how it long it takes to get acclimated to a playbook after joining a new team:**

“I’ve been in a similar situation where I got traded and kind of had to learn the playbook. It takes time because, yes, you have to know the information, but you have to also know how to apply it. With that, it takes reps, it takes practice reps, it takes game reps, and eventually, you are going to get into a good routine and good flow.”

### **On if he tries to learn the playbook all at once or in pieces:**

“I try to learn as much as I can. I try to take a bunch in. Am I going to absorb it all? Probably not, but once we get into the regular season, a lot of things are broken down, so it’s a lot easier to kind of put things in groups. It’s not too bad.”

### **On ‘what his mindset was after being released by the Dolphins and how his mindset has shifted since signing with the Chargers:**

“Anybody that’s in this business understands the business, myself included. I kind of understand the business that sometimes it might not work somewhere else, but you can’t get down on yourself. The next day, went out to work out on my own because I was kind of hoping that another opportunity would come and it did. You kind of lose no steps in that sort of way.”

### **On his opportunity with the Chargers:**

“This is a huge opportunity for me. Just to be a part of a great team, a great organization, and to get a chance to be a part of something special.”

### **On the running backs on the roster and how his skill set complements the group:**

“All of the running backs on this roster are guys that can do special things with the ball in their hands. Great people off the field and I’m just glad to join a great group. I think when you hang around good people, great athletes, it helps you elevate yourself.”

### **On if it helps to have teammates on the roster that he was with last year on the Rams:**

“It helps just to see some familiar faces walking around the building, help guide you around where places are because my first day, I’m lost.”

### **On if he relies on his experience of being traded last year to help him with joining a new team on short notice before the regular season:**

“Same approach. My mindset is putting my head down and go to work. Whatever it takes. It’s going to take those late nights, me staying up trying to study a little bit extra, staying out here, meeting with [Running Backs] Coach [Derrick Foster] a little bit. Just tugging on different players just trying to get as much information as I can.”

### **On if he went to the Rams’ Super Bowl ring ceremony:**

“No. It was like three days before camp.”

**On if the Chargers showed interest in him during free agency:**

“Not that I know of.”

**On if he was surprised he didn't get interest:**

“I wouldn't say it's a surprise because the business — especially the position I play, positions become available all over this league. Guys go down, guys get traded, guys get cut. I'm never anticipating a certain team to reach out. I'm always open-minded.”

**On if the team communicated with him what they want his role to be in the offense:**

“When I came, yes, we talked a little bit about roles on offense. Being a running back, my role has always kind of been the same is to try to be the best version of myself. Kind of come into this locker room and try to add to another piece to the puzzle. My role would basically be dictated off of what I can learn, what I do out of practice, and hopefully that can kind of shape out on its' own.”

**On how he can fit in with RB Austin Ekeler:**

“It'll be a great fit. Austin Ekeler is a hard worker. It's going to help me push myself. He's going to help me push myself in the weight room. He's going to help me push myself on the field and in the meeting rooms. He's a great person to be around.”

**On if he and Ekeler have the same style of play:**

“I would say we kind of have similar styles. He can do it all. I try to think of myself as a player that can do it all, too. He's a playmaker. He makes plays with the ball in his hands and that's what I try to do.”



## **DEFENSIVE LINEMAN SEBASTIAN JOSEPH-DAY**

### **On DL Breiden Fehoko:**

“He has a lot of good energy. He’s a really positive guy. He just loves football. He’s a really rugged guy, loves double teams, loves pressing blocks and he does a really good job. He’s had a really good camp and we’re expecting a lot of big things for Brei.”

### **On ‘if he has gotten a sense from the returning players about wanting to silence critics from last season’:**

“I just think everyone has been motivated in the sense that they don’t want that to ever be the case. If I’m correct, I think it was last in the league in run defense. Honestly, we just try to not even talk about it. Last year was last year. This is a new year, new people in the building. Our standard is our standard.”

### **On ‘if the defense is doing anything new in practice this season to emphasize run defense’:**

“I just think it’s a mentality. Obviously, we’ve done things -- we definitely had a physical camp, a real physical camp. A lot of good on good, a lot of pods, stuff like that. But also, I just think it’s kind of the mentality, as well, every time we step on the field. The man that’s lined up across from you, you’re not going to lose. It’s really just a mentality and it’s kind of, hopefully, a thing that I kind of brought in the room. That’s kind of the way that I was kind of taught through my journey and stuff that it’s kind of that run defense is a mentality. It’s not just relying on the D-line. I think it counts for everyone on the defense. All 11 guys have to be sound on that. They have to know what gaps they have to play. They have to come downhill and they have to not shy away from contact. It’s just being tough and being physical. So, it’s really a mentality.”

### **On ‘how eager the defense is to play and show who they are as a unit’:**

“We’re super eager, but at the end of the day, I try to be real present. I try to take it one day at a time. I think everyone else is doing that as well, but we are super eager. Each day, you can tell the cohesion of the team is getting better and better on both sides. I just try not to look too far ahead, at least me personally. I feel like each day is a blessing and each day we can always find a way to get better, whether it’s assignments, gap fits, communication. I just try not to look that far ahead.”

### **On how much he can help RB Sony Michel get used to the new team:**

“He plays offense, so I’m really not helping him with the plays [laughter]. I don’t know anything about that on the offensive side. Sony is a great guy. As you can see, he contributed big time to the success of last year’s team, of the Rams last year for them going to the Super Bowl. It’s a blessing to have him on our team. He’s a real good guy and a real good football player, so I’m super excited.”

### **On playing with former teammates again:**

“It’s a blessing because you definitely don’t see that often and I think that also speaks on the character of the guys. Not only are they great football players, but they are great men. I know [Head] Coach [Brandon] Staley really prides himself on not just having the right players that are great on the field, but also great people as well. I think that speaks a lot on their character. So, it’s pretty cool. It’s very unusual.”

### **On ‘how much of a sense he has on if the defense is going to be good this season’:**

“I think I have a pretty good sense just based off not just only camp, but practicing against Dallas. I just think the improvements we made from, let’s say, that Dallas practice until now. That’s why I say I try not to look -- at least, my mindset is I try not to look too far ahead because I feel like each day is so important in the NFL, especially during camp, because each rep, each mistake, you learn from it. It’s a learning experience. You can build off of it and it’s all about momentum. I think from what we saw from that Dallas week to now, I think we have improved and I feel like we’re going to be a pretty solid defense. On top of that, also, I would probably say to back that up is when you first put a team together, a defense together, I feel like we’re so many moving parts. You’re not necessarily a team yet. I feel like once you are able to build that cohesion and learn how to play with [DL] Austin Johnson next to me, learn how to play with [DL] Morgan Fox next to me. That’s why I say those days count because you get more familiar with those people. Hopefully, that answers your question in the way that you wanted.”

**On the defensive line group:**

"I think our defensive line room, we have great personalities in it. But also, when it's time to work, it's time to work. I'm a funny guy. I like to laugh a lot. I like to make jokes. And Brei is a great dude as well, so is and Austin and Fox. But, when it's time to get to work, we all know what the deal is. We have to get to work and we have to get better and each day we are out here isn't a wasted day. So, that's the way we kind of look at it."

**On 'who was the guy for him that he is to Fehoko':**

"I've been blessed. I think what honestly helped me a lot in my career was my rookie year. My rookie year, I made the Rams, surprisingly, I didn't think I was going to make it because, at that time, we had [former Rams DL] Ndamukong Suh, [Lions DT Michael] Brockers, [Rams DT] Aaron Donald, [former Rams DT] Dominique Easley and [Cowboys DE] Dante Fowler [Jr.]. It was insane, a bunch of first-rounders. I made the team, so all I did was shut up and just watch those guys every day in practice, ask them questions, pick their brains. I think it was a combination of Suh, Brock and Aaron, and then, the following year, when Suh left, then it was like Brock and Aaron. Then, Brock left, and it was me and Aaron. I've been blessed in that regard to have some really great individuals to learn from and pick their brain and just call my friends."

**On his on-field personality:**

"Football is a violent game. You definitely have to know when to turn it on and off. Sorry if I'm perceived in a bad mood right now, I was legit just watching film, so I'm a little still in that mode [laughter]. That's why I'm not my bubbly self. It's actually really funny that you say that. I was talking to I think [DL Morgan] Fox about it, and I was laughing about it, because I got one of the tight ends mad yesterday. One day I got [QB] Justin [Herbert] upset because I was talking trash to Justin. I got to get under his skin a little bit [laughter]. I was like, 'Don't be sensitive, Justin.' Then, yesterday, I got one of the tight ends mad. I was just talking trash back and forth. But it's good, though. I think that breeds competition. I think that breeds competitive excellence. I think you need that, you need someone in your ear talking because, now, I may be annoying Justin or I may be annoying that tight end, but then they're like, 'Man, freaking Sebastian, man, he's freaking annoying. He won't shut the hell up. I'm about to block the shit out of him this play [laughter].' You know what I mean? Then, Justin will be like, 'If Sebastian won't shut the hell up, I'm about to throw this strike down the field.' Believe it or not, it's a method to my madness, the way that I look at it. I like it. I like the jawing back and forth. I'm doing it all in a positive sense, just to help bring the best out of everyone, and vice-versa. It would only be right if they aren't talking trash back to me. I want it that way. It makes me go harder."

**On if he learned the traits from anyone in particular:**

"No, I don't think that I learned it from anyone in particular. It's just something that I just kind of picked up along the way since I've been playing in the league. I think it got to a point where I think it maybe got a little too quiet for me. Actually, I lied, I got it from [Lions DT] Michael Brockers. That's where I got it from now that I'm thinking about it. Brockers used to be the guy that used to be able to talk trash and stuff like that. I saw how it did make it more competitive, how it did make it more fun. It really did bring the best out of everyone. When someone is mad at you, they want to prove you right, or prove you wrong and go even harder. That's where I got it from. Shout to Brock, man, he's the goat."

**On if he 'is the same way in games':**

"Yeah. We get right in games, too. Definitely."

**On 'the particulars of trash talking in games':**

"I think it depends. In a game is, I think, a different scenario. In a game, there's trash talk, but I'm not really the person that is going to talk trash directly to a person unless they are talking to me, right? Then, obviously, something is going to be said. If I make a big play, my boy makes a good play, there are going to be little antics going on. It's all part of the game. It's all love."

**On the defensive additions being 'basically a year removed from the scheme':**

"Honestly, I think it helps us greatly. I wouldn't say [LB] Troy [Reeder] and I are even a year removed, we were still in it. [DL] Morgan [Fox] is a year removed, but it helps tremendously that I get to go right back to the scheme that I knew for the majority of my career. It's very helpful."

**On if OLB Khalil Mack asks for advice on the scheme:**

“Oh, no. Khalil comes from the system, as well, because of Coach Staley. Khalil knows. A lot of dudes do know; Khalil, Bryce [Callahan], Joey [Bosa] was in it last year. Our whole D-line was in it last year. Morgan was like a year removed. Troy was in it last year. It’s been a pretty smooth transition, by the grace of God. I’m super thankful for that.”